

measuring 65 feet across (or 80 feet if you went from stern to the tip of the mandibles) by 16 feet high. According to Alan Arnold: "The building of the *Falcon* had brought a taste of the space age to this remote community, and there was much gossip in the pubs as to what exactly was being built in the hangar on the shoreline."

To assist the crew in moving the behemoth around, compressed air hover pads are fitted to its feet. With the pumps running, the set hovered a fraction of an inch above the ground and allowed it to be repositioned with little effort.

NORWAY FILMING PREPARATIONS

Arrived in Finse's 1222 ski resort/hotel several months prior to the main unit, a small production crew begins location pre-production work (rather than building an entire camp to support the crew, the hotel and the nearby railroad will be utilized for the film team instead, with extra tent structures being built as work and storage areas). Overseen by Production Supervisor, Bruce Sharman, a section of trenches, previously planned for by Kershner in his November 1978 trip, are cleared and a large selection of props are either transported to or built directly at the location. In addition, two base camps, Camp Kurtz, and Camp Sharman, are set up containing emergency tents, survival rations, and storing of props and costumes (with a nearby specially built and heated pad/hut containing a Lama helicopter for the films aerial photography sequences). Specially designed winter clothing is fabricated for the cast and crew to wear in the cold outdoor temperatures (wearing at least seven layers of clothes, going to the toilet at the location would soon prove a nightmare-you couldn't do it, with the crew, at the end of a days filming, rushing to use both the toilets and the sauna room), and a medical team is to be on permanent standby (looking out for the first signs of frostbite (one special effects crewman would have to be evacuated from the site when he becomes seriously ill with it, whilst other crewmembers would get mild frost burns)).

Gary Kurtz's filming schedule plans are that Kershner and Director of Photography, Peter Suschitzky, will spend the first shooting week in Norway with the required main cast after which they will return to ELSTREE for commencement of studio filming, then the Second Unit, headed by Peter MacDonald (who previously worked on SUPERMAN II, and would later go on to direct RAMBO III),



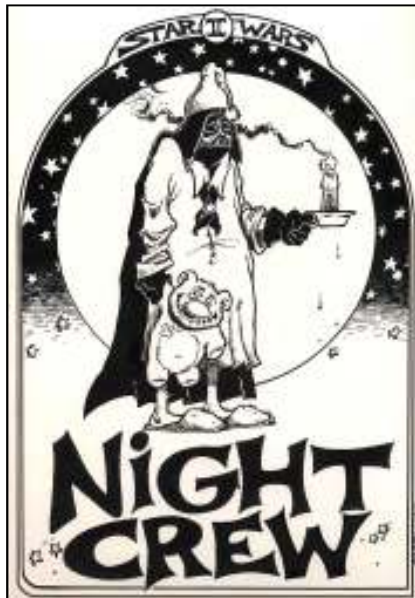
Having attended a press call at the *Scandinavia Hotel* in Oslo, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Gary Kurtz proudly show off their new EMPIRE production jackets to the world.

would continue filming action sequences and other insert shots (mostly of a double standing in for Mark Hamill) for another month.

Fate, unfortunately, is to conspire against Kurtz's plans...

23RD JANUARY (ALSO REPORTED AS HAPPENING ON THE 24TH)

With post production for EMPIRE having gone relatively smoothly so far, events take an unexpected turn when a fire breaks out at ELSTREE STUDIOS on Stage 3, where filming on Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Stephen King's book, THE SHINING, is continuing. This set, adjacent to one of the EMPIRE stages causes the fire to spread into that of the STAR WARS sequel, destroying several of its erected stage sets in the process. With heavy filming equipment blocking the lot, emergency crews can't get to the stages in



I need my teddy!! An amusing sketch from Ken Ralston, in charge of the night shift duties at ILM's side of filming during 1979.

time before they are completely destroyed. Not only do LUCASFILM lose the use of that stage for a lengthy period, but Kubrick now takes over two of the EMPIRE stages needed to finish his production, with one of his destroyed sets having to be partially re-built to a higher scale. With all of these problems, a juggling of the schedules is required, resulting in small conflicts between the EMPIRE and THE SHINING crews, with the EMPIRE team having set construction on the movie being put back by a crippling, now over schedule, period of three weeks, leading to a delay of nearly three months before full filming across the soundstages can be

done (with the advent of the fire, only seven stages are currently available). EMPIRE will eventually continue filming on eight stages (including the soon to be completed STAR WARS STAGE), but it is a problem that the film's principal photography will never properly recover from, with the schedule for construction and filming dates having to be constantly re-jigged. Fortunately, the filming to take place in Norway is still on track.

With the careful plan for live action footage to start coming to ILM from February now delayed, the group carry on with what effects shots they can do without live action intercutting. The company itself is still settling in at this point- a beehive of construction workers, electricians and matte artists. Lucas stays at ILM for long hours, often not coming back home to Marcia until 9pm.

FEBRUARY

19TH FEBRUARY

Correspondence from Irvin Kershner to George Lucas begins regarding revisions to pages 143-160 of the screenplay.

20TH FEBRUARY

A Fifth Draft shooting script by Lawrence Kasdan is put out to the cast and crew. This is the new shooting script, though there will still be changes made to it by the actors/director during principal photography.

As the construction of the *Falcon* continues into February, the local residents of Pembroke Docks realize that something secret is being undertaken there. With the workers now sworn to secrecy and the project at the dockyard being kept under wraps, the local rumor mill is in overdrive- all that the inhabitants of the town know is that the project is being called "Magic Roundabout", taken from a popular BBC

children's television program of the time. Word soon starts leaking out that there is a flying saucer being housed in one of the old hangars at the dockyard. With a number of local UFO sightings fresh in the memory of every resident in the town, people begin believing that the government's Ministry of Defense is building a spaceship...

Having hoped that he would shoot his few remaining scenes elsewhere, leaving them free to re-build the damaged stage and create the Dagobah swamp set on it so as to catch up on lost time, Stanley Kubrick, to Gary Kurtz and the ELSTREE STUDIO's administrations dismay, is continuing to monopolize ELSTREE STUDIOS and it's facilities for the filming of THE SHINING. Having underestimated Kubrick, the eccentric, dedicated filmmaker insists on the letter of his contract. Once more, EMPIRE's filming schedule is damaged, with the Dagobah set, though originally planned for later filming anyway (due to the lengthy creation period of bringing Yoda to life) now having to be built on the new STAR WARS STAGE once its Hoth Rebel base scenes are completed (even before its completion, the then un-soundproofed STAR WARS STAGE is forced into action by Stanley Kubrick, as the Colorado lounge of the snowbound *Overlook Hotel*). Kurtz and Lucas are not happy about the situation, but if it continues to get Kubrick's film completed and EMPIRE finally back on schedule, it has to be done...

FULL INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC FILMING COMMENCES

Despite the fact that they are still settling in at their new premises and working out the kinks in their newly hired or built technology (there

are delays due to the building of the new optical printers needed for the film, headed by Richard Edlund (but once its working



everybody is thrilled with the results), as well as suppliers sending defective equipment which has to be replaced), full effects filming for EMPIRE now commences at ILM, with the company soon making up for lost time. Dennis Muren, calculating that double shift

and his handle the night shift, six days a week, with the separate optical department working 24 hours a day. Lucas sees the dailies shooting of the effects footage, offering advice and comment. Work also begins on the first batch of fifty matte paintings to be seen in the movie.

MID TO END OF FEBRUARY

Harrison Ford gets to read the EMPIRE script (this version does not have the Luke/Vader scene). Recalled Ford to STARLOG: "You'd expect development of the characters in a second act, I was expecting it and I wasn't surprised when I saw a different version of Han Solo in the script. We got to know him better."

MARCH

Legendary science fiction enthusiast, Forrest J. Ackerman, publisher of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND

magazine, is handed, over a lunch meeting by a friend, the plotline for EMPIRE, followed by an outline for the script with all the key story movements. Ackerman decides not to publish it-if this is the actual story, he doesn't want to spoil it for anyone and is worried that people may

think that his old friend Donald F. Glut, who is hard at work on the novelisation of the film, may be considered as the leaker. Suffice to say, all of the leaked information provided to Ackerman thankfully turns out to be false upon the films release in 1980.



The first day of filming begins as Mark Hamill bravely endures some of the worst weather in Norway's history for the scenes of the disorientated and injured Luke Skywalker wandering Hoth's frozen plains.



FIRST WEEK IN MARCH (EXACT DATE UNKNOWN)

Prior to the commencement of filming in Norway of EMPIRE,

George Lucas telexes a personal memo to the cast and crew, given to Gary Kurtz to take out on location at Finse, wishing

everybody luck on the forthcoming shoot and offering them encouragement on their "pending expedition to the cold white planet of Hoth."

The WESTERN TELEGRAPH, Pembrookshire's first newspaper, blows the UFO hangar building rumour story wide open as it reveals to its readers that "a massive flying saucer has been built and flown in a huge aircraft hangar in Pembroke Dock." By the time the veil of secrecy has been lifted, the spaceship has already departed the Welsh town, leaving the residents to make do with the tales being told by those who worked

on it. The *Falcon* soon arrives in London, brought there in sixteen interlocking sections by a convoy of trucks for re-assembly at the studios (though other people also recall seeing it being transported to the site in one piece). The size of each section means that only one could be loaded onto each truck. As the fleet of low-slung flatbeds eased their way out of the dock gates and passed the high street shops, traffic was stopped and the police cordoned off the sidewalks to keep



With the articulated Tauntaun prop from Stuart Freeborn not operating in the deep cold, one of the mock up heads is utilized for close up filming with Mark Hamill instead.



"ice cavern" but the huge Overlook Hotel set that had been built for THE SHINING.

Once the studio's carpenters had fitted the frame (made from welded steel girders with the wooden superstructure on top) and bolted it back together, the detailing that gave the ship its final "used universe" look was added. Due to pressure from the fast approaching shooting schedule, Brian Johnson elects to use existing mechanical parts and miscellaneous pieces from car wrecks found at the numerous junkyards dotted across London, while local company NORANK ENGINEERING,

the fleet of trucks arrived in Borehamwood, Norman Reynolds puts the select team of four men, who had traveled up from Pembroke Dock, to work on re-assembling the huge steel construction in the middle of the 1,372,500-cubic foot STAR WARS STAGE (of which some work on the Rebel base/hangar set has begun). They spend a week overseeing the rebuild before handing the rest of the task over to the studio's gaffer and his crew. John Clark, from Pembrookshire, oversaw the team and worked with Norman

situated a few roads down from ELSTREE's main gates, constructs the pneumatically-driven landing ramp. Cladding the *Falcon* takes a further two months work before the final touches, including a rotating radar dish and the internal cockpit decorations, are put in place (it is not an exact match to the *Falcon* of STAR WARS though—having to appear in several new dark locations, the remake is given additional new lights that are built into it's underside). A section of



Left: the malfunctioning full size Tauntaun (note the snowed in tracks by the creatures foot). Above: Mark Hamill sits atop the inoperable prop for publicity pics.

the curious out of harms way—a memory that many people in the town still remember even now. The next day, when

Reynolds to get the *Falcon* ready on time, his lasting memory of his first and only STAR WARS experience not being the

the *Falcon*'s interior is also built within the prop—most notably the cockpit and a small part of it's interior corridor (facing



Snowed in and unable to reach the glacier, filming continues outside the 1222 hotel-this time the dead Tauntaun prop is brought out for scenes involving Han's rescue of Luke.

stand that much punishment in the cold. Like the nightmare of filming in Tunisia in 1976, Finse would prove equally terrifying. The location's constantly bad weather, part of an already strong winter affecting northern Europe, creates camera problems causing both them and the film stock within them to automatically freeze up and become brittle and cracked (with the cameras having to be electrically heated every night so the film would move smoothly through the sprockets and the batteries would retain their charge), and necessitated theirs, and other technical equipment, to be continually checked and maintained for operating order (having to be kept cold and winterized with special light weight oil in the gears to stop them from freezing up). Using the equipment, you could only do 20-30 seconds of filming in the cold before the camera lens would cloud over due to condensation and if the camera was touched without gloves on, the person's hand/s would be stuck to it, needing a razor blade to slice away the

what would have been the hatch area, previously seen in STAR WARS, with it's distinctive wall paneling being seen upon going up the ship's ramp).

THURSDAY 1st MARCH

Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, and Gary Kurtz (with wife Meredith) attend a press conference in Oslo (at the *Scandinavia Hotel*) for the start of filming of *EMPIRE*. Their train journey to the 1222 resort for filming is plagued with delays due to ten avalanches affecting the railway tracks.

herself available in case she is suddenly needed), and Denis Lawson (remembered from STAR WARS, and by Hamill, whom he had become friends with in 1976. With both their wives currently expecting a baby, Lawson once again plays the fighter pilot Wedge for the scenes with Hamill at both Norway and later at ELSTREE). It has been pre-decided that Harrison Ford's scenes, with Peter Mayhew, will be done on set at ELSTREE.



Above top: Kershner and Kurtz take a brief break from filming, top middle and right: various images of a weary Harrison Ford newly arrived in Norway to film his scenes as Han Solo-scenes that were originally to have been shot in London, but now changed at the last minute.



The filming omens are not good...

MONDAY 5TH MARCH

PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN NORWAY BEGINS

The seventy strong crew, including the arrived First Unit, are now assembled, with the main cast of Mark Hamill (whose pregnant wife has accompanied him), Carrie Fisher (who was not needed for the filming but traveled with the group anyway (with a girlfriend named Charlie (surname unknown) for company, and bringing her costume along, making

Location filming commences, with location stills photographer George Whitear present, amongst some of the worst weather Norway has ever had in its history (with ten days of blizzards and 30-40mph winds). It is soon discovered that filming will have to be achieved in temperatures even lower than first acclimatized to- in 20 degree below weather, for fourteen hours days. The Norwegian helpers advise the STAR WARS team to be careful with the filming schedules- that the human body will not be able to

