



Superb panoramic shot of Stage 3 showing the half prop MILLENNIUM FALCON within it's DEATH STAR docking bay surroundings. To the far top left, about to film their escape scene, Carrie Fisher, an un-masked Anthony Daniels and Mark Hamill get ready, whilst in the bottom right corner, Harrison Ford and an un-masked Peter Mayhew confer with other members of the film crew.

1971 (NET Festival-LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI for PBS) -- arrives on the ELSTREE soundstages after receiving a call from his office one day in mid-1976. He recalls to STAR WARS INSIDER: "STAR WARS was news in 1976 because it was a mega-budget U.S. production and all the interiors were to be shot at ELSTREE with a large UK crew. I can't recall being over-impressed by what seemed a big budget version of FLASH GORDON, but having seen THX 1138 and AMERICAN GRAFFITI, I was interested to see how George Lucas worked and intrigued why one of the new wave of independent producers wanted to do what I saw as an out-of-character movie."

LIGHTSABER CHOREOGRAPHY BEGINS

First batch of lightsaber choreography begins between Dave Prowse and Alec Guinness, supervised by Peter Diamond and watched by George Lucas, over a two to three week



A selection of scenes showing cast and crew in between takes on the DEATH STAR hangar set.

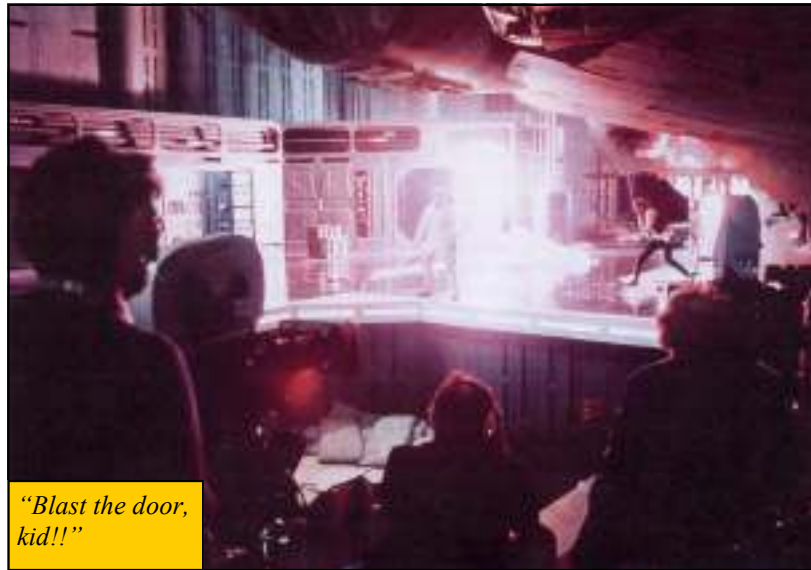
period in an unutilized part of a sound stage housing some of the DEATH STAR sets (either Stage 2 or 4, or both). Apart from what was in the script, there was very little information about either Obi-Wan Kenobi or Darth Vader and, in between filming scenes and fight rehearsals, Prowse and Sir Guinness would have chats with each other about both roles because neither were told anything about the Sith or Vader's background.

FRIDAY MAY 21ST, MONDAY MAY 24TH, TUESDAY MAY 25TH

MILLENNIUM FALCON COCKPIT INTERIOR (INCLUDES FILMING ON 16TH JUNE)

The FALCON cockpit, on Stage 8, was not built adjacent to its main interior set. Firstly, because the script didn't require them to be next to each other, it was sufficient to see an actor turn down

the set of the hallway and, following a cut, walk onto the cockpit set. Additionally, the cockpit had to be raised eight feet from the floor to allow enough clearance for early back projection attempts and later the bluescreen, which was necessary for shots of the actors looking out into space. Thirdly, the set was built on an "inner-tube rig"-that is, stacked on a number of truck tire inner tubes, so that the cockpit could be shaken by stagehands to simulate explosions rocking the ship. The cockpit set was just small enough to be mounted on one of these rigs. The other interiors were too large, so side-to-side movements were created by shaking the cameras and body language from the actors.



"Blast the door, kid!!"

for the navi-computer to calculate the coordinates" took at least eighteen takes for Ford to say successfully

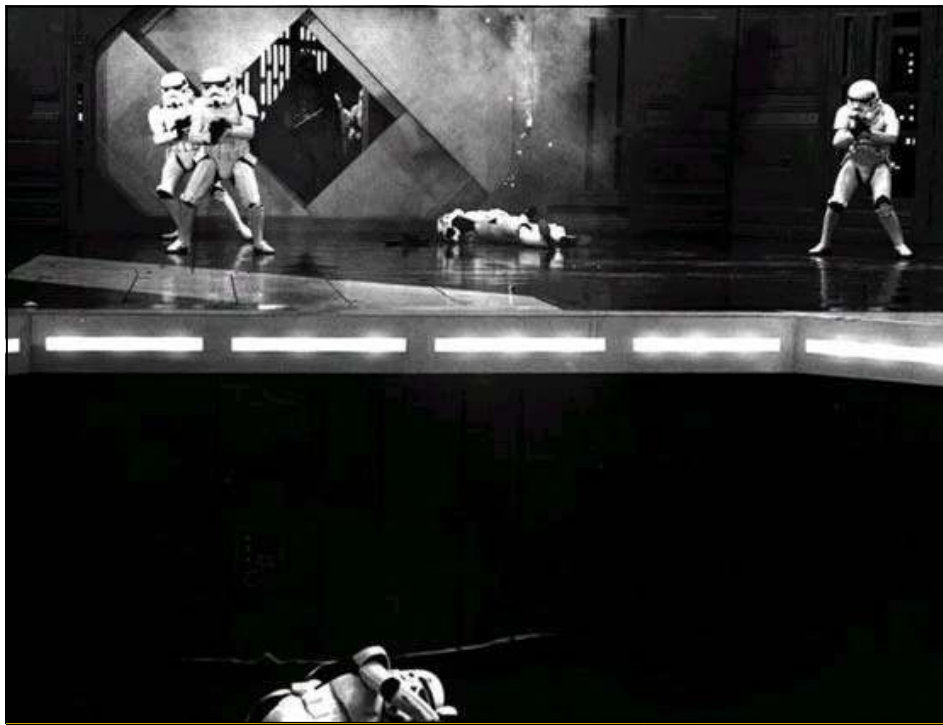
(filmed Friday May 21st). With this piece of dialogue, which Ford knew was an essential piece of terminology in the STAR WARS universe yet also felt clichéd, the actor threatened at that point to tie George Lucas up and make him repeat his own dialogue, saying "You can type this shit up George, but you can't say it!!." Ford would later say that he was

proved wrong!!! (Recalled Ford to Charles Lippincott in a late seventies interview: "This is one snatch of dialogue from a scene that runs about five minutes and which was played under chase conditions. It's a scene of sustained pace. There's a chase, and there are things

According to Pablo Hidalgo on the Official STAR WARS website, the FALCON cockpit set is in error, as the visible number of spokes showing is different looking out (from the set) than there are looking in on the miniature.

As we see the cockpit for the first time, where Chewie enters it to start up the ship's controls, look carefully above the Wookiee's head. Are they the STAR WARS equivalent of tied up car dice dangling in the air??

With the scene in which Han and Chewie blast the ship off, if you apparently watch the widescreen version of the film, look out for a technician in a green shirt behind them in a scene. Obviously, he's not meant to be there as he backs away nervously after a few seconds!!



Cut off by a blasted shield door, Vader can only watch as the Imperial Stormtroopers attack Luke Skywalker and the departing heroes in the docking bay hangar. Note the Stormtrooper safely landed on a mattress at the bottom middle of the picture.

happening, and it was all done without the special effects so that you couldn't see them. It was a technical problem. It was a matter of getting the words out. It was about a five-page scene, and I blew it about four or five times, and then I got really ticked off at myself. It took me about four or five takes to come out of that, and then we got it. That was the most takes I've ever done. I'm usually about a four-take actor,

and they end up printing the first and the last. The first one is usually right on but spoiled in some technical way. And the second two are an attempt to get back to the spontaneity of the first one").

The line in which Ford says: *"It will take a few minutes*

Mayhew would fondly remember the cockpit set to JEDI JOURNAL: “In the FALCON (on STAR WARS), where one of us had a lean-back to the panel at the back of the cockpit, pushing buttons. There were actually no buttons, but it looked good.” Lucas would also fondly recall Ford enjoying improvising the way that he piloted the controls of the FALCON cockpit- developing his own system as to how the ship would make the jump to lightspeed (Ford, however, would state that he created the system because, after jibing them several times, neither Lucas or John Barry had any idea as to what

relationship between Chewie and Han developed because of Harrison and me. The dashboard of the FALCON was essentially a piece of plywood with three buttons and three levers. There’s a scene when Harrison is trying to do all the navigations and he stuffs it up every time. I look at him and say, “You can do it.” He says, in a friendly way, “Mind your own business,” After the tension of that scene, we just cracked up. It was hard work but the relationship was always there, and that worked on screen, all the way through to (RETURN OF THE JEDI).”



Opposite left: whilst Tony Wayne shouts through a bull-horn, George Lucas and Peter Mayhew get ready for a scene. Above: Lucas and one of the British camera crew. Opposite left: STAR WARS film documentarian, Mike Dodds, outside one of the movie soundstages.

controls he should be operating!!). Whilst Ford expertly maneuvered the hyperspace levers, camera hands would shake the cockpit for the scene where the ship is under attack from Star Destroyers. For the later sequence in the cockpit, when Chewie reaches out to an overhead panel in order to jam a TIE fighter’s communication signals, Peter Mayhew’s enormous fur costumed hand outstretches too fast, unintentionally catching a blow to Sir Alec Guinness’s face, quickly knocking him for six as he was delivering a line of dialogue. In an interview several years later, George Lucas recalled that, despite the heavy blow, the always reliable Guinness managed to remain in character for several moments- despite almost being almost knocked senseless by a highly apologetic Peter Mayhew!! Of working with star Harrison Ford, Mayhew would enjoy developing the Chewie character with him, recalling to JEDI JOURNAL:“I learned a lot from Harrison, and the

The cockpit scene, filmed in sweltering heat conditions, where the crew watch the Imperial TIE fighter attacking them and then heading towards a “small moon”, would be filmed on Monday May 24th with the camera shooting behind the actors as they looked towards the cockpit window, whilst specially filmed ILM effects footage was front projected to face them (though at the start of the filming, there isn’t any effects footage ready. Recalls Kurtz to IGNFF: “Originally, we were going to shoot the cockpit scenes from projectors, with front projected backgrounds, but ILM didn’t come up with any backgrounds for us, so the day came to shoot the first front projection shots, and they had failed to deliver these backgrounds, which was a bit scary for us, because we didn’t know what they were doing back in Los Angeles. They were supposed to have these ready, and they didn’t. So we had to use the front projector as a blue screen projection rig, basically, as an emergency, which

we did. As it turned out, it actually was a better idea to do it that way, because we could time the background look and what happened in what frames better than we could have done it if we had done it in front projection. So it was one of those happy accidents that worked out fine. But it did make us a little wary of John Dykstra and the ILM people”). When early effects superimpositions, for



continued use of blue screen, Lucas and his team would still try several other attempts at back projection filming in the next few months to come—though those too would also prove unsuccessful.

WEDNESDAY MAY 26TH, THURSDAY MAY 27TH, FRIDAY MAY 28TH

DEATH STAR DOCKING BAY MAIN HANGAR



Filming of the lightsaber duel begins in one of the DEATH STAR hangar bay alcove corridors on Stage 3 at ELSTREE STUDIOS, with Alec Guinness and Dave Prowse using light reflected tape rod blades that, when lit by the camera crew, become lightsabers!! This page: a selection of scenes showing Obi-Wan in mortal combat with Darth Vader. Bottom right: an example of the light reflection in action during a cut scene.

front projection footage, are eventually available and completed, when looked at in the rushes, Lucas discovers that the footage proves unrealistic, resulting in the decision to use the earlier filmed blue screen footage instead, additionally deciding that the method of effects filming will continue to be used on the rest of the shooting (Recalls Peter Mayhew: “We had no idea what was going on. They were telling us that special effects would be going on afterwards. It was difficult to realize what it all meant. George was so uptight, super enthusiastic, he wanted everything done exactly as he said”), with the required optical effects having to be superimposed onto the footage in post production a year later. Despite the failures in the cockpit, and the



Knowing that they would not be able to remove the life-size MILLENNIUM FALCON prop from what was, at that time, ELSTREE’s biggest stage (3), John Barry’s

production crew's work on dismantling the Tatooine Docking Bay 94 set previously built around the craft and constructing the DEATH STAR hangar around it instead is now completed (the team making sure that the back of the set (including the lighted entrance area that leads into space) matches the model work that will be completed by ILM in Van Nuys). For a couple of sequences requiring the craft to be seen from a high angle, the

uncompleted part of the FALCON prop would be filled in with a matte painting originally by Joe Johnston, which would not be used in the film, then re-painted, over the original Johnston work, by newly arrived US effects specialist Harrison Ellenshaw in California later in 1976 (for the 1997 SPECIAL EDITION re-

release, a further new matte painting would be used, maintaining hangar bay visual continuity with the sequel films). Additional areas built on the set include a far left entranceway leading to another section of corridor (where Ben Kenobi and Darth Vader have their famous lightsaber duel), a further door and small section of

corridor facing opposite the FALCON's ramp, and a small alcove section (where Threepio and Artoo hide and check on the whereabouts of Luke Skywalker and co, and shut down the garbage smashers, with clever camera angles concealing just how close to the main entrance it actually is), Additionally, the use of wide angle lenses make the huge set look even more impressive.

Up to thirty costumed extras are required to play Stormtroopers for the scenes where the FALCON is tractor beamed into the DEATH STAR hangar bay

(originally, the serial number of the guard with the faulty transmitter coming down from the FALCON ramp (Luke in disguise) was going to be "THX-1138", but this was changed). A small elevator floor plate was specially built slightly away from the middle of the hangar for the scene where a group of troopers ascend to the hangar bay and join their comrades in line by the pirate ship (once the scene was shot, the lift would be dismantled

for an upcoming stunt sequence). It is unknown who played Captain Khurgee, the Imperial officer who talks to Vader, though the presumably English actor would also have his voice re-dubbed in the US during post production. Additionally, Jerry Baker was one of the two human Imperial scanning crew personnel that go up the FALCON ramp and never come down again!!

At least eighteen takes were filmed for the simple scene where a hiding Han, Luke, Leia and Chewie, seeing the guards distracted, run from an alcove corridor to the FALCON, due to numerous cast/technical problems (ranging from the actors only going to a certain point of the set, to the sound mike constantly coming into picture). By take eighteen, Ford, Hamill

and Fisher would start to playfully tease Lucas and the UK crew as to whether this scene would ever get finished!!!

For the later filmed scene where Luke, mortified at Ben's death, strikes back at the no longer distracted Stormtroopers, stuntman Peter Diamond played the lead Stormtrooper who, when shot, falls down the elevator shaft- in actuality landing ten to fifteen feet below the set on a sandbag/box rigged floor. Additional stuntmen for the scene include Bill Weston and Lightning Bear (all of whom have experience working on large, big budget



Above top: Alec Guinness confers with Peter Diamond (left) and George Lucas on the lightsaber duel (watched by Tony Wayne background right). Above middle left: Dave Prowse and Alec Guinness pose for a photo. Above middle right: Lucas and Guinness rehearse Kenobi's "death" scene. Bottom left: Vader and the Kenobi cloak, with lightsaber attached, rigged to detonate and collapse to the floor in an unsuccessful effects sequence that would ultimately not be used in the final film.

action pictures- in particular, at that time, the JAMES BOND series).

LATE MAY/EARLY JUNE

Arriving at ELSTREE for the first of what he remembers as 10 selected days of behind the scenes filming at ELSTREE in 1976 (sadly, the period from mid-June to late July 1976 would not be covered by any behind the scenes crew), UK documentary cameraman, Mike Dodds

isn't quite sure what to make of the exotic sets, characters, and props. "Coming in cold on a large set with a large crew, all of whom seemed to know each other, was a bit daunting," says Dodds, who recalls his first day was spent shooting core cast members on a corner of the main stage. "I was a bit wary of approaching Alec Guinness as he was by far the major star -- but he was cool and very professional and didn't seem to mind me sticking my camera up his nose. Mark and Harrison seemed to be having fun and seemed settled with my presence and with my soundman's mic. George was smaller than I imagined and alternated between looking terrified and worried by turns."

As the intensive filming continues, Dodds would recall to STAR WARS INSIDER: "The more we saw the more we realized what a huge undertaking this was. Everywhere you looked on the ELSTREE lot there was feverish activity. The construction and paint shops were putting the finishing touches to various bits of the fighter planes or the DEATH STAR. On the set, stormtroopers in various stages of undress were sitting around or being attended to by make-up and costume dressers. A vast section of the DEATH STAR was in place and ready for a big set piece; stormtroopers were rushing around firing their weapons, Mark and Harrison were looking tense, C-3PO was looking uncomfortable in his gold suit, and there were explosions and bangs everywhere. Also, there were problems with R2-D2-he kept falling over and the

whole set had to stand by until his wiring was checked."

Between takes, Dodds would manage to sit down with the core cast, most of which were probably the first-ever filmed interviews of the actors discussing their STAR WARS roles. "We had chats with Carrie Fisher who seemed destined for great things and with Mark who to me seemed the one that could easily slip into the traditional leading man role in future movies. Harrison just looked like a pretty boy who could have easily

drifted into B-movies in the BAYWATCH mould. Of course, he became the biggest star that the STAR WARS saga created." Dodds also filmed a rare interview with Alec Guinness on set, which survives as one of the only recordings done by the veteran actor discussing his work on STAR WARS. The documentary footage shot at ELSTREE featuring Dodds' name on the clapperboard would go on to include rehearsals and setting up for Obi-Wan disengaging the tractor beam, the heroes escaping to the FALCON in the DEATH STAR hangar, the Docking Bay 94 escape (intriguingly, Dodds is listed as having worked on the film from June, but he did this early work in April as well?),

and the scenes in the DEATH STAR control room.

In addition to covering the ELSTREE stage, Dodds would also be on hand to capture some of the scenes being shot at SHEPPERTON STUDIOS in Middlesex, including the vast Rebel hangar set built on the facility's Stage H. The other set built at SHEPPERTON, the Massassi Throne Room, had been shot and struck the previous month, with no documentarians on hand to capture it.

Though originally recorded for marketing purposes such as TV specials, newsbites, etc., the collection of footage casually captured by Dodds and others now survives as the only real-time document of the film's creation.

Unlike the more recent prequels, where nearly every



Scenes are now filmed on Stage 2 within the DEATH STAR Command Office. Above: Peter Mayhew, Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill share a joke. Below left: filming a tense moment between Han and Luke. Below right: the infamous Stormtrooper bangs his head moment-left in the film!!

