

INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC

Path to the Death Star



May 1975 - Special photographic effects supervisor and founding member of ILM John Dykstra finds what he considers the ideal location for an FX company: an empty warehouse in Van Nuys, California.

June 1, 1975 - ILM officially opens in its Van Nuys location.



September 1975 - The ILM model shop completes models of the Star Destroyer, X-wing, Y-wing, Skyhopper (originally a good-guy fighter), a landspeeder, a small Death Star sphere, a TIE ship, and a sandcrawler.



December 1975 - ILM completes construction of the motion capture camera system.



January 14, 1976 - The first special effects tests for the Star Wars, which includes "laser swords, R2-D2 model, and illuminated control boards" are completed.

August 11, 1976 - Artist Ralph McQuarrie starts work on "I.L.M. Star Wars T-shirt Art," the first Star Wars t-shirt ever made.



September 1976 - ILM begins shooting the escape from the Death Star sequence.



September 18, 1976 - ILM is at a "somewhat fictional" 10 percent-complete mark for Star Wars effects.



October 11, 1976 - ILM works on the complex shot of the Millennium Falcon being pulled into the Death Star via tractor beam.

October 16, 1976 - The shot of the Death Star firing a laser cannon, photographed by Dennis Muren, becomes the first "accepted" effect of the film.



November 1976 - ILM films explosions, eventually blowing up seven models in their Van Nuys facility.



December 1976 - ILM begins work on the climactic Death Star battle scenes.



January 24 and 25, 1977 - Inserts of additional aliens in the cantina scenes at a small studio on La Brea Avenue are completed.

February 4, 1977 - Shooting begins for the Death Star trench run and surface attacks. Explosions are shot outside in the ILM parking lot.



April 1977 - ILM completes work on the Death Star battle scenes that end the film.



May 1977 - ILM finishes its remaining photography. One of the shots -- number 114, the iconic jump to hyperspace -- had been months in the works.

