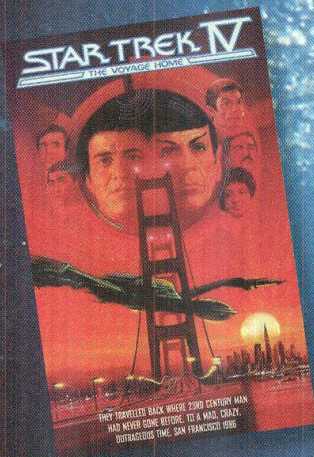


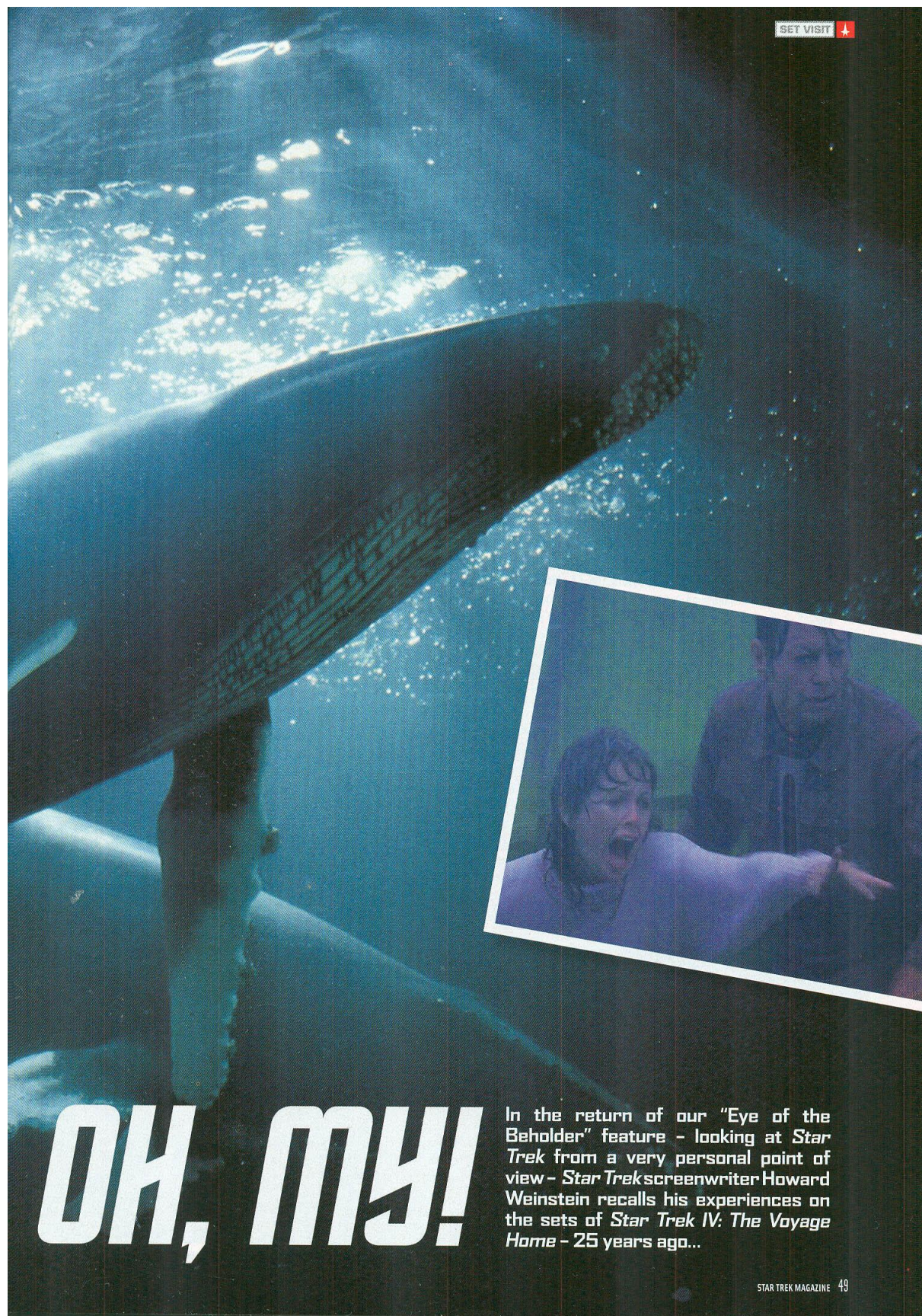
STAR TREK[®]

IV

THE VOYAGE HOME

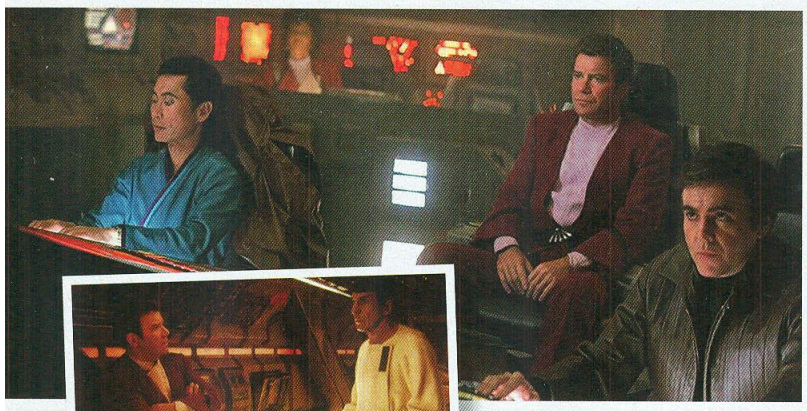


**WET ACTORS,
WHALES
& STORMS...**



OH, MY!

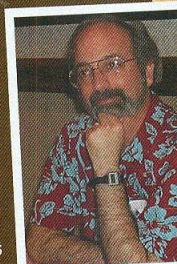
In the return of our "Eye of the Beholder" feature - looking at *Star Trek* from a very personal point of view - *Star Trek* screenwriter Howard Weinstein recalls his experiences on the sets of *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* - 25 years ago...



HOWARD WEINSTEIN

Howard Weinstein's writing career launched at age 19 with "The Pirates of Orion" episode of NBC's Emmy-winning animated *Star Trek* series in 1974. Now he's a co-founder of internet-based Crazy 8 Press (www.crazy8press.com). Howard thinks web-based e-publishing may be the creative wave of the future (or possibly the Fifth Horseperson of the Apocalypse).

His most recent *Star Trek* novel is *The Blood-Dimmed Tide*, part of the giant 2009 *Star Trek: Mere Anarchy* trade paperback, which collected six stories into one epic tale spanning 30 years of *Star Trek: The Original Series* history. In addition to seven *Star Trek* novels, Howard's *Star Trek* credits include short stories, comics and graphic novels. Other books include *Puppy Kisses Are Good for the Soul*, his heartwarming account of life with wonderful Welsh Corgi Mail Order Annie; and a biography of New York Yankees star Mickey Mantle. Howard has appeared at *Star Trek* conventions since 1976.

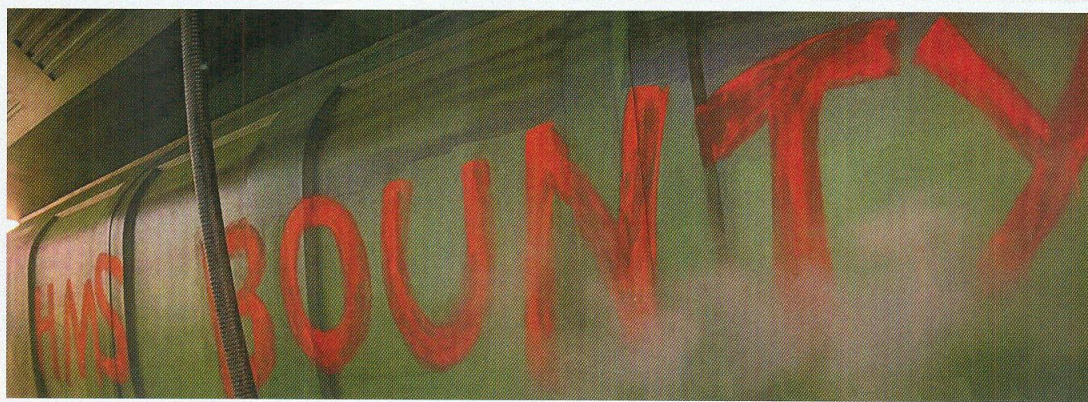
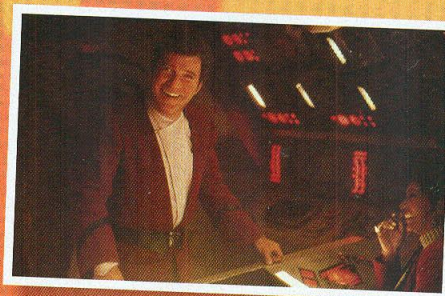


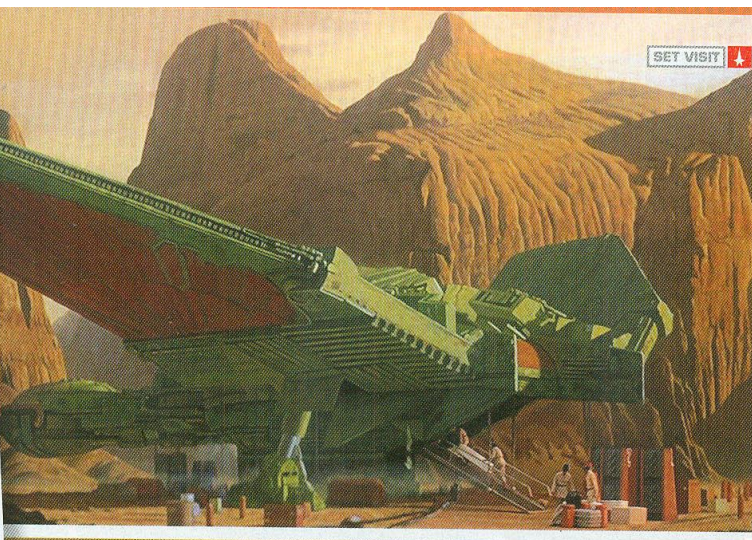
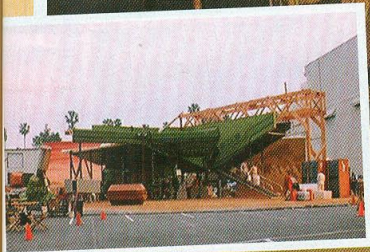
You can keep your crowded multiplexes with their sticky floors and overpriced popcorn. I'll happily watch movies at home, where unlimited snacks are free, nobody's kicking the back of my seat or checking their BlackBerrys – and I can enjoy DVDs with all those behind-the-scenes extras and interviews. I've always been fascinated by how films are made, and just once, I was able to visit a Hollywood studio and see it for myself – with *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, a movie that's extra-special to me.

In October 1984, I was invited unexpectedly to meet with director Leonard Nimoy in New York for one of several early, idea-stirring chats he'd been having with assorted writers and scientists – right after I'd gone on a whale-watch cruise to see humpbacks frolic off the Massachusetts coast. So whales and whale-like critters were among the many ideas swirling through our conversation. I have no idea how much (or little) I may have contributed to *Star Trek IV* story development, but when I learned later that whales were to be featured, I really wanted to see some of the movie being shot. Friendly Paramount publicist Eddie Egan arranged for me to visit the studio during production in April 1986: *Howie goes to Hollywood!*

I was lucky enough to spend two afternoons at Paramount. First up: Bird of Prey day! After a quick look at the Klingon bridge set (surprisingly small and cheap-looking – which makes it even more amazing to me that it looks big and real on film), Eddie took us out to a parking lot between soundstages to see the life-size lower section of the Klingon Bird of Prey. It stood on tons of reddish dirt and sand brought in to represent the arid surface of Vulcan (as seen early in the movie when Kirk and friends are preparing for departure). The mock-up included just the left side and rear of the ship, with one landing leg, a wing stub, and an open cargo ramp leading up... to nowhere, since the rest of the ship didn't exist. But the name HMS BOUNTY was scrawled on its flank, thanks to Dr. McCoy's "fine sense of historical irony" regarding their status as Starfleet mutineers.

I half-kiddingly contemplated scooping up some red dirt and taking it home to package and sell at conventions as "Real Vulcan Sand." Even though Eddie noted drily that fans would probably snap up souvenir vials of the stuff, I did not pursue this brilliant but illicit idea. (Had I been caught in the act, Paramount might have shipped me off to Rura Penthe!)





Behind the abbreviated Klingon ship, there was a painted backdrop of mountains and sky – looking like something from a high school musical, not a big-budget Hollywood picture. Of course, I only saw the live elements which would be enhanced by Industrial Light & Magic's matte-painting wizards, adding the rest of the ship and Vulcan's soaring, copper-hued peaks and desert sky. If you have the *Star Trek IV* Special Collector's Edition DVD, check out the visual effects featurette *From Outer Space to the Ocean* – just under 11 minutes in, you'll see a ship's stumpy rump in a parking lot transformed into a captured Klingon vessel on the red sands of Vulcan. It's a neat little clip, and a great demo of movie magic.

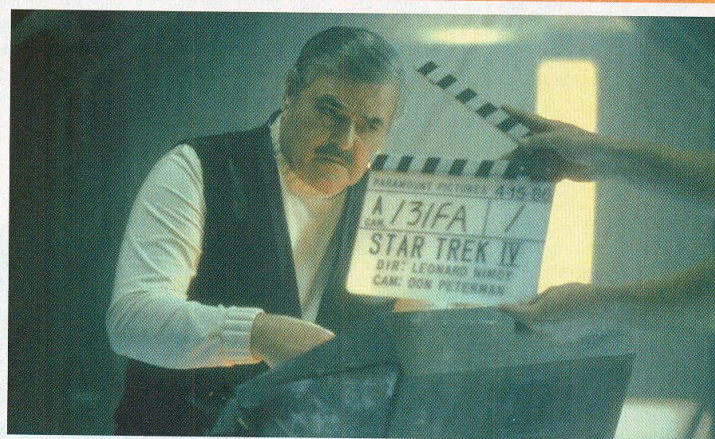
With cast and crew back from lunch, we returned to the soundstage for a scene in the Bird of Prey cargo bay. Before shooting began, two stagehands brought in a trash-can-sized smoke machine. One guy released the smoke, and the second waved a large board to waft the smoke throughout the set. (I briefly considered pursuing a cool Hollywood career as a smoke-wrangler.) Once the smoke was ready, Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner did their tension-filled take. Kirk has just learned from perky cetacean biologist Gillian Taylor (Catherine Hicks) that the whales they so desperately need will be released into the ocean – *tomorrow*!

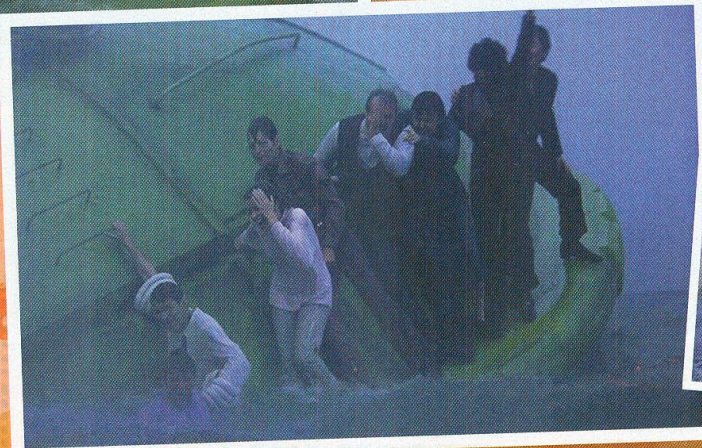
"We have the two perfect whales in our hands," Kirk says, "but if we don't move quickly, we'll lose them!"

"In that event," Spock says, "the probabilities are that our mission will fail."

"Our mission!? Goddam it, Spock, you're talking about the end of every life on Earth. You're half human, haven't you got any goddamned feelings about *that*?!" And Kirk stalks off. Watch the movie, and the smoke-effect is largely undetectable – so why use it? Because it adds atmosphere and does make the set look bigger – a trick that probably dates back to D.W. Griffith!

"I HALF-KIDDINGLY CONTEMPLATED SCOOPING UP SOME RED DIRT AND TAKING IT HOME TO PACKAGE AND SELL AT CONVENTIONS AS 'REAL VULCAN SAND'."



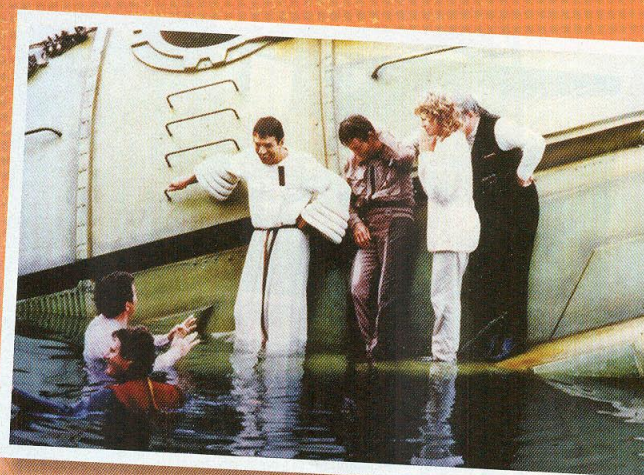
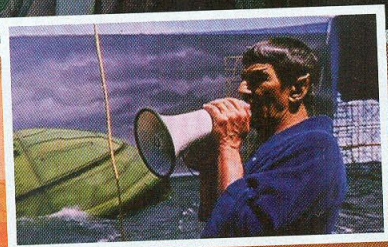
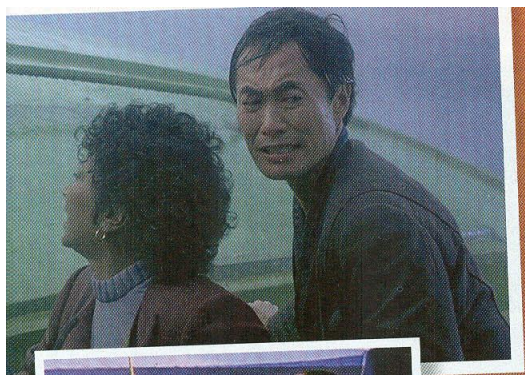


Next day, we got to see movie-making on a grand scale. Eddie took us out to Paramount's B-tank – normally, a sloping parking lot for 150 cars, where a shoulder-high wall can be set up to enclose an area about as long and twice as wide as a hockey rink. Add 914,000 gallons of water, and...voila! You've got a four-foot-deep sea, with a six-story painted "sky" backdrop, suitable for battle scenes in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *The Winds of War* mini-series (with

20-foot-long battleship models) – and, perhaps most famously, the parting of the Red Sea in DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*. Toward the back of "San Francisco Bay," the full-scale top of the ditched *Bird of Prey* hull stuck out of the water. A huge silk canopy stretched overhead, shading the entire tank from warm California sunshine. That day, the company was shooting the crew's escape from the sinking ship, and the actors really earned

their pay on that wet set. Following a morning of shooting, they were back from lunch – and back in their damp costumes to take their places along the narrow ledge girding the ship's hull. But someone was missing...where's Kirk? Shatner was the last to join his mates in the tank: escaping from the cargo hold after heroically releasing the whales, Kirk will pop to the surface like a cork, gasping for breath, in danger of being swamped by the waves, and Spock must pull him to safety.





“WHEN SHATNER RECORDED HIS DVD COMMENTARY YEARS LATER, HE RECALLED HOW COLD IT WAS SHOOTING THOSE STORM SCENES, EVEN THOUGH B-TANK’S WATER WAS HEATED AND THE ACTORS WORE THIN WETSUITS UNDER THEIR COSTUMES.”

First, however, as if conjured by Prospero’s spell, the tempest came to life. Three powerful fans with 10-foot blades added the wind, whipping jets of water into a driving, horizontal rain. Sofa-sized wave machines at both ends of the tank churned the placid pool into choppy seas. Up on two 20-foot-high platforms, technicians flashed electrical arc devices to simulate lightning. You can see how all these elements came together in the DVD featurettes *Future’s Past: A Look Back* and *From Outer Space to the Ocean*.

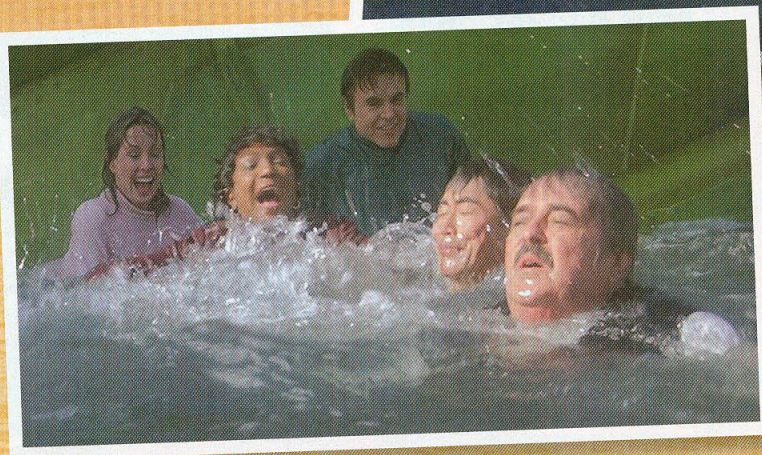
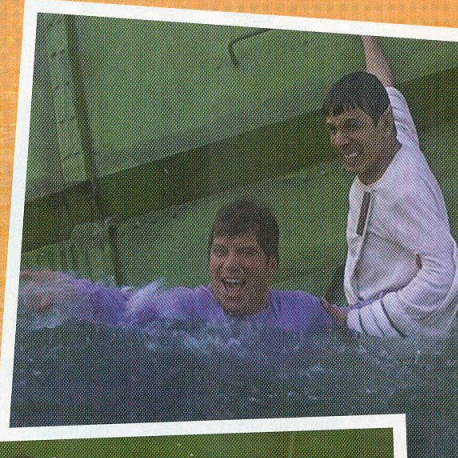
“The wind is blowing all that spray,” Nimoy recalls in his DVD commentary. “The pellets of water hitting us actually hurt – it was not comfortable!”

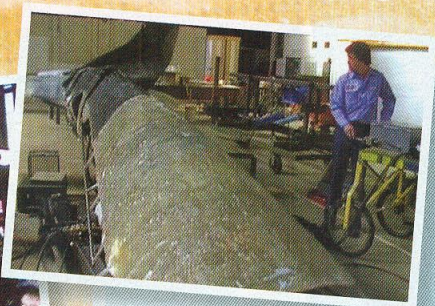
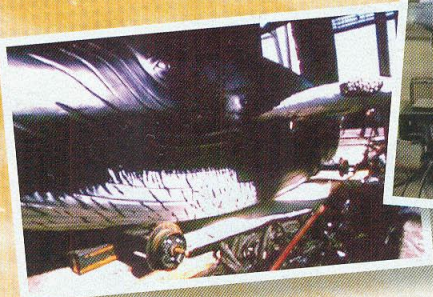
While waiting for the wave machines to get the water rough enough to look dangerous, I noticed Nimoy kept shoving Shatner’s head underwater – playfully, I presume! Once the last shot was done, the movie set turned into a pool party. The actors jumped off the ship and splashed around, including Jimmy Doohan doing a well-executed belly-flop – with the camera still rolling. I don’t know if this was planned, or spontaneous; the script says nothing about the characters celebrating in the water, but Nimoy chose to use that action rather than words to show their joyful relief once they know the planet’s been saved.

We got a bonus on the set that day, thanks to a crew shooting video for a *Making of...* featurette. During lulls, actors, crew and visitors all gathered

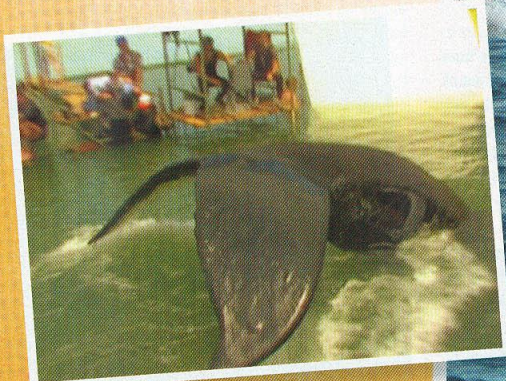
around a poolside monitor to watch footage from the morning – including Scotty clambering out of the hatch, then accidentally slipping on the wet hull and bouncing down into the water. Everyone laughed – and Jimmy’s agent jokingly called out, “Stunt pay for Mr. Doohan!” You can see Jimmy’s bumpy landing in the montage behind the closing titles, during the sound effects credits.

When Shatner recorded his DVD commentary years later, he recalled how cold it was shooting those storm scenes, even though B-tank’s water was heated and the actors wore thin wetsuits under their costumes. He wasn’t exaggerating: by the end of that waterlogged day, poor Catherine Hicks literally had chattering teeth and blue lips.





In addition to the pair of radio-controlled, four-foot-long whales used for all underwater shots, the film's climax needed a face-to-face emotional payoff: Kirk and his crew seeing George and Gracie swimming off to save Earth. To accomplish that, tracks were laid across the bottom of the tank, so a nearly-life-sized partial mechanical whale could "swim" past the ship and give the humpback's signature tail flip and a wave of its long, graceful pectoral fin. The day we were there, the whale was on break — I found it out of the water, near the tank, impressively large if not quite whole, all rubber skin and visible internal hydraulics. In the finished film, the mechanical whale certainly looked like the real thing.



"THE DAY WE WERE THERE, THE WHALE WAS ON BREAK — I FOUND IT OUT OF THE WATER, NEAR THE TANK, IMPRESSIVELY LARGE IF NOT QUITE WHOLE, ALL RUBBER SKIN AND VISIBLE INTERNAL HYDRAULICS."



STAR TREK[®]

IV

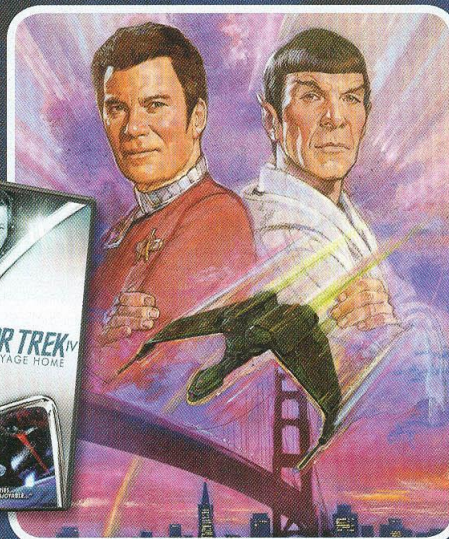
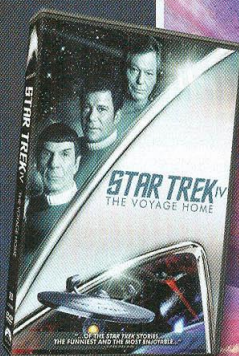
THE VOYAGE HOME

SCREENPLAY: STEVE MEERSON
& PETER KRIKES AND HARVE
BENNETT & NICHOLAS MEYER

STORY: LEONARD NIMOY
AND HARVE BENNETT

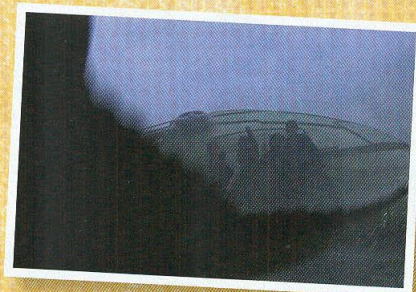
DIRECTOR: LEONARD NIMOY

RELEASED: NOVEMBER 26, 1986



Speaking of which, here's a footnote: Among the hallmarks of *Star Trek IV* are the magnificent miniature-whale effects, which simply *had* to look realistic in order for Nimoy to tell his story, once he concluded existing documentary footage wouldn't work. Interestingly, the only real humpbacks in the entire movie are a few brief shots of whales breaching and playing happily, intercut with the "pool-party" shots.

Had *Star Trek IV* been made today, visual effects ranging from routine to spectacular would likely have been done with CGI, motion-capture and other high-tech tools able to cook up pretty much anything from digital thin air. But much of the creativity, crafts and skills needed to produce films like *Star Trek IV* could soon become lost arts, rendered obsolete by computer graphics. Why build miniature whales and model starships when computers can do the same and more?



Yeah, yeah, I know CGI is an amazing art-form all its own. But I like knowing that skilled artisans and technicians used their brains and hands to imagine and build so much of what's seen in *Star Trek IV*, whether it's making whales from rubber, gears and gizmos – or conjuring stormy seas from a parking lot. Twenty-five years later, when special effects spring mostly from computers, I'm thrilled that I was fortunate enough to witness movie-making the old fashioned way. **A**

