

HOLLYWOOD PREMIÈRE

HOLLYWOOD ballyhoo is frequently employed to give an artificial build-up to something which does not usually merit the "stupendous-colossal-spectacular" adjectives applied to it; yet this was certainly not the case on April 17th, when the U.S.A.F., Lockheed and General Electric shared in the unveiling of the world's fastest combat aircraft, the Lockheed F-104A Starfighter. As we described in some detail last week, this remarkable aircraft is designed for speeds approximately twice that of sound, and, with some compromise in performance, can be adapted for a multitude of military tasks. These photographs, specially taken for us at the unveiling by Harold G. Martin, are certain to evoke wide interest.

(Left). Believe it or not, the unveiling of the Starfighter actually took place not in a public theatre but at the south-west end of Lockheed's production flight building at U.S.A.F. Plant 42, Palmdale. Observe the notice.

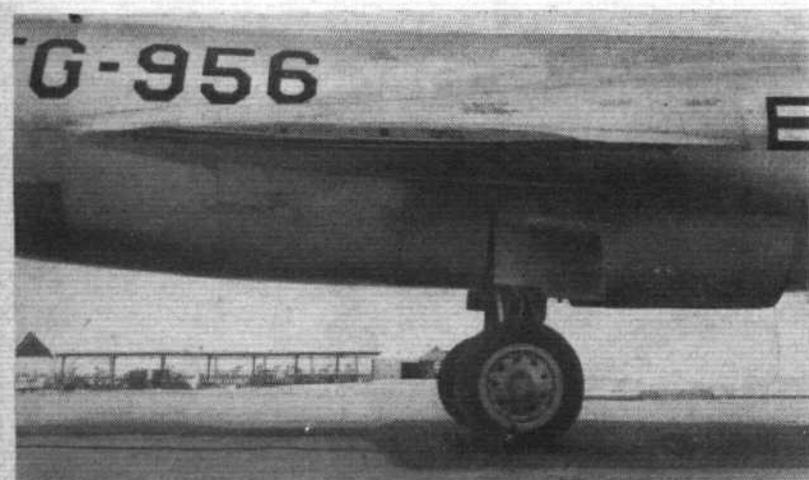
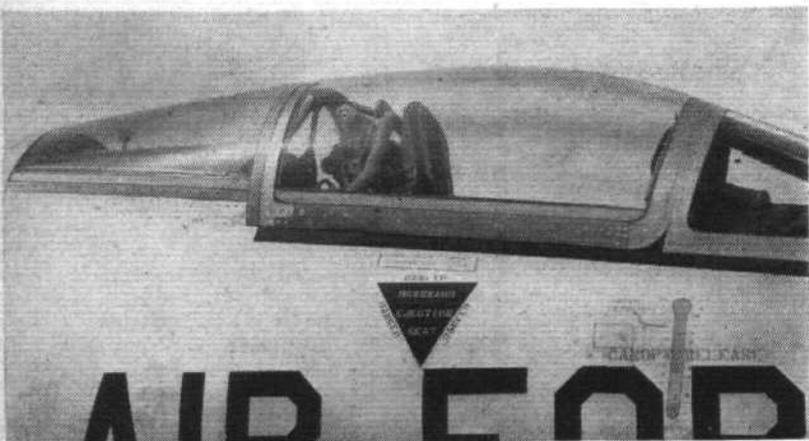
(Right). The button was pressed by Gen. Otto P. Weyland, Commanding General of the U.S.A.F. Tactical Air Command and thus the first customer of the Starfighter. With him is Mr. Robert E. Gross, Lockheed president and board chairman.



(Left). Although the jettison seat ejects downwards the pilot climbs aboard conventionally by opening the finely profiled canopy.

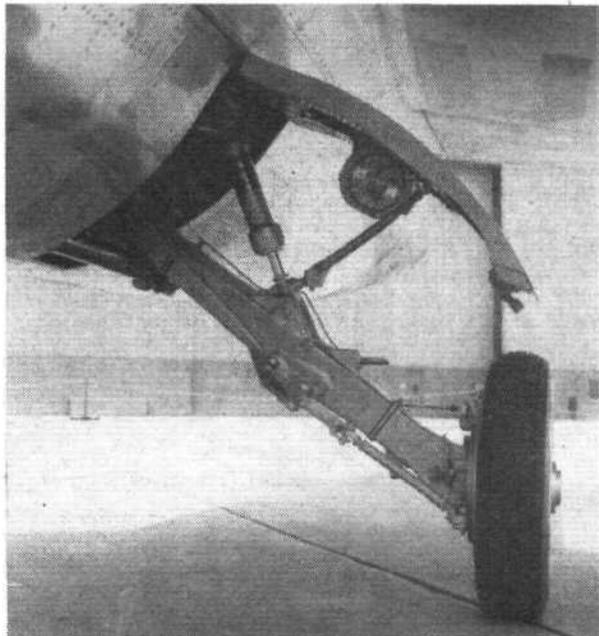
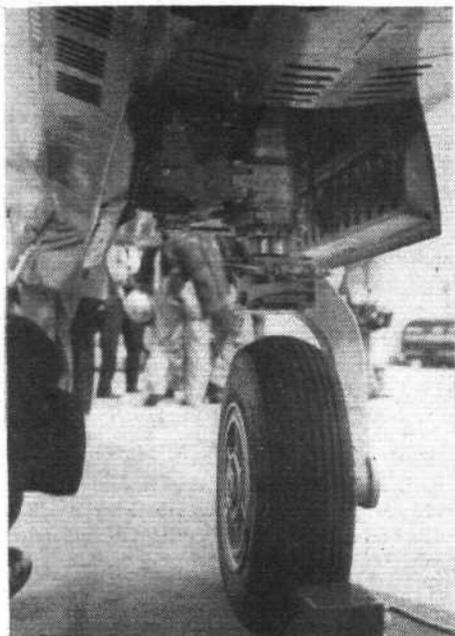
(Left, below). Here, we tried to record the profile of the 3.4 per cent wing, the characteristics of which were described in some detail last week. Incidentally, the aileron booster jacks are not in the fuselage.

(Below). The U.S.A.F. pushed a blanking cap over the Starfighter's rear end to prevent people from measuring the propelling nozzle. We hear that they were inspired to do so after reading "Flight's" assessment of the Tu-104. In spite of this, the thrust of the J79 is accurately known.





After the unveiling, the F-104A —with its intakes blanked off, as we lamented last week—was rolled outside on to the apron. There our photographer found the test pilots "Fish" Salmon (left) and Joe Ozier, who shared the flying on April 17th.



Undercarriage geometry was described in some detail last week. All F-104s have four wheel doors, the rear pair being linked to the unusual main legs. The nose undercarriage unit (far left) is steerable.

At take-off the YF-104 presents a fearsome aspect, the incongruity of which is in no way lessened by the grotesque retraction sequence of the landing gear. The photograph was taken 5,000ft from the end of the Palmdale runway; speed was approximately 240 knots. (This aircraft is a J65-powered prototype. No production F-104A was allowed to fly close to the ground, owing to the secrecy surrounding its intakes, which have shock-forming wedges extending well forward to give multi-shock diffusion.)



Landing, the same aircraft—one of the J65 Sapphire-powered prototypes—streams its braking parachute to ease the wear and tear on the Bendix multi-disc brakes.

