

BRITAIN'S BEST SELLING MOVIE MONTHLY

REVIEW

DECEMBER 1985 80p



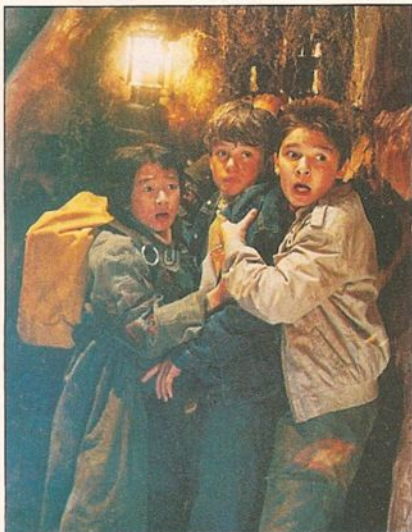
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**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

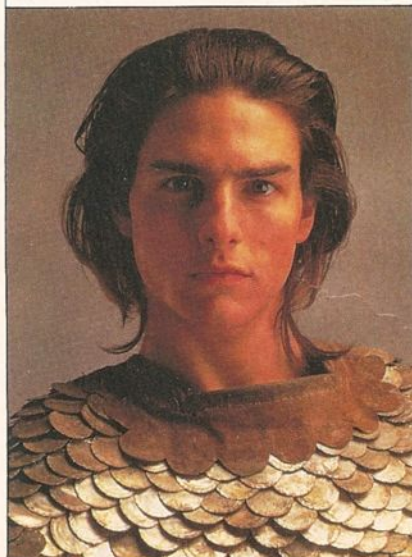
MICHAEL J. FOX
STAR OF SPIELBERG'S

BACK
TO
THE **FUTURE**

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST SELLING MOVIE MONTHLY



Teenage treasure-seekers in *The Goonies*



Tom Cruise as the mythical hero of *Legend*



David Huddleston in *Santa Claus - The Movie*

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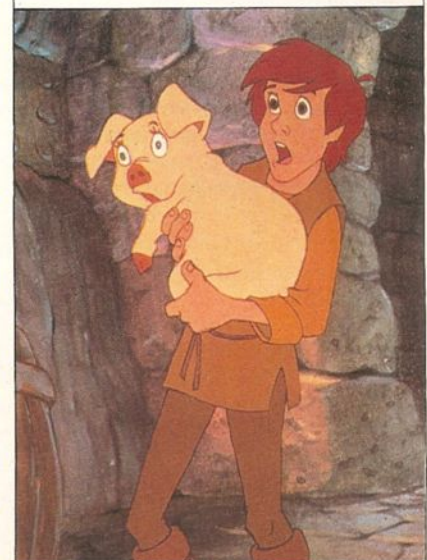
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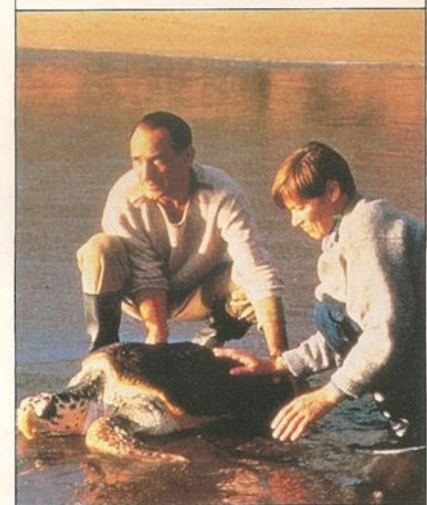
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Michael J. Fox in *Back to the Future*



Heroic swineherd in *The Black Cauldron*



Ben Kingsley, Glenda Jackson in *Turtle Diary*

MICHAEL J. WHO?

YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU SEE *BACK TO THE FUTURE*

Michael J. Fox is bigger than Rambo. That's not to say that the 5ft 5in Canadian has bigger biceps or a more striking physique than the demented Vietnam vet, but he's bigger in the financial sense.

While all the Hollywood executives were warmly tipping the *First Blood* sequel to be the most popular American movie of 1985, along came *Back to the Future* featuring one Michael J. Fox in his first starring role. It took the honours hands down. It is fast becoming the most financially successful movie ever.

But Fox's fortunes don't rest there, however. While *Back to the Future* was the most popular film throughout the summer, his second movie, *Teen Wolf* (released after but actually shot before *Future*) was riding at Number Two in the American charts, shooting the 24-year-old into the realms of megastardom.

He is now probably the hottest property in Hollywood. But most British cinemagoers would still be justified in asking, "Michael J. Who?"

Yet he almost didn't get to be in *Back to the Future*.

Unknown to him, Gary Goldberg, the producer of Michael's tv series *Family Ties*, had been approached by Steven Spielberg who was told that the actor couldn't possibly be released from his tv commitment for the length of time it would take to make the movie.

"Gary didn't tell me," says Michael, "and I think it was humane of him not to. He realised that if I'd known about it I'd have been broken-hearted at not being able to do the film."

So an unaware Fox went on making *Family Ties* while Spielberg and director Bob Zemeckis cast Eric Stoltz (of *Mask* fame) in the lead role of Marty McFly, the 17-year-old guitar whiz who finds himself zapped back to 1955.

And then fate dealt a strange hand.

Five weeks into filming *Future*, Zemeckis realised he had a serious problem. "I could see Eric wasn't playing the character I had in mind," he says. "He wasn't doing anything bad - if he hadn't been performing well, I'd have known straight away. But it wasn't that - it was just that I found myself with a very good actor playing the wrong part."

Zemeckis decided he had no choice but to release Stoltz from the movie and look elsewhere, even though it meant that recasting and refilming would add an extra \$3m to the original \$14m budget.

At that point *Family Ties* had only eight weeks left of filming. Still keen to pursue Michael J. Fox, Spielberg sent a script of *Future* to Gary Goldberg who called an unsuspecting Fox to his office.

"I thought Gary was going to talk to me about appearing in another of his shows," says the actor. "But he threw down this script and said, 'How would you like to do this movie?' I said, 'Sure, when?' and he said, 'Monday!'"

Starting work on *Future*, Michael soon discovered he'd almost bitten off more than he could chew. After all, he was still doing his tv

Family Ties, Marty in *Back to the Future*, and myself. But as the two characters I was playing were distinctly different, it was easy to separate them. And if at any time my energy started to drop, Bob Zemeckis would snap me out of it."

Fox didn't let taking over from another actor (Stoltz) faze him. "There were times I had to replay scenes standing in exactly the same spot Eric had used," he says. "That was a little uncomfortable, especially when the camera operator would tell the director, 'Well, the last time I did that . . .' But I didn't have time to develop a complex about it.

"I always had wanted to do a big budget film with huge splashy effects," he says, "and I've always wanted to be a rock 'n' roll star. I get both my wishes with *Back to the Future*."

"When I first started on it, we shot several special effects sequences, and I remember I was intimidated by it all. On the first day of work, I climbed out of a Delorean wearing a yellow spacesuit, into a barn full of smoke and hypnotised chickens.

"As for being a rock 'n' roll star, I played in garage bands when I was 14 or 15. I wasn't very good but I was dedicated. I gave it all up after I started acting, but when I saw one scene in the script, I knew this film was for me. It's the scene that takes place in 1955 when I do Chuck Berry's classic *Johnny B. Goode* for a high school dance. That really was exciting."

Back to the Future is quite an exceptional film widely regarded as one of the most inventive, additively funny adventure yarns ever to hit the screen. What's more, it's worked both financially and critically - a rare feat these days. Director Robert Zemeckis has had two cult hits in the past - *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and *Used Cars* ("cult," says Zemeckis, "is just another term in Hollywood for unbankable"), and he became more universally known when he directed Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner in *Romancing the Stone*.

Fox was born on June 9, 1961, in Edmonton, Alberta, the fourth of five children in a middle-class family, then raised in Vancouver B.C. He started his acting career at the age of 15, playing a 10-year-old in the Canadian Broadcasting show *Leo and Me*. Working on the stage in *The Shadow Box* at the same time, he became so busy that he



Fox in *Back to the Future*

series, and the workload became incredibly arduous, giving him only a couple of hours sleep at night. "Early each morning," he says, "a driver would pick me up and take me to the tv studio where I would work on *Family Ties* until six. Then he'd whisk me to Universal Studios where I'd film *Future* until 2.30 in the morning.

"Still, I knew it would be a gruelling schedule when I took the job. I got into the habit of sleeping in sweat pants and a t-shirt so I could just get up in the morning and go. I learned to live with it. If I can't handle it at this age, I might as well get out of the business.

"Mind you, it was like being three different people every day - Alex, the guy I play in



flunked his high school diploma, failing drama, of all things.

A part in a tv special called *Letter From Frank* followed, co-starring Art Carney who advised the young man to move to Los Angeles. This he duly did, managing to secure work on a Disney picture called *Midnight Madness* and guest parts in tv series like *Alex Haley's Palmerston USA*, *Trapper John MD*, *Family* and *Lou Grant* before he secured his big break in *Family Ties* as Alex Keaton, the conservative smart aleck college-age son of Sixties flower children.

Fox is now entering his fourth season as the ultra-conventional yuppie in what has become a Top Ten tv show, receiving over 10,000 fan letters a year that make him the most popular tv actor on the Paramount TV lot. For American audiences then, Fox hasn't come from nowhere.

Had Fox envisaged how phenomenally successful *Future* would become? "I greatly admire both Steven Spielberg and Bob Zemeckis," he says, "and I knew this was going to be a special film, but of course you never know about success."

Wise words indeed, for the last time Zemeckis collaborated with Spielberg was on

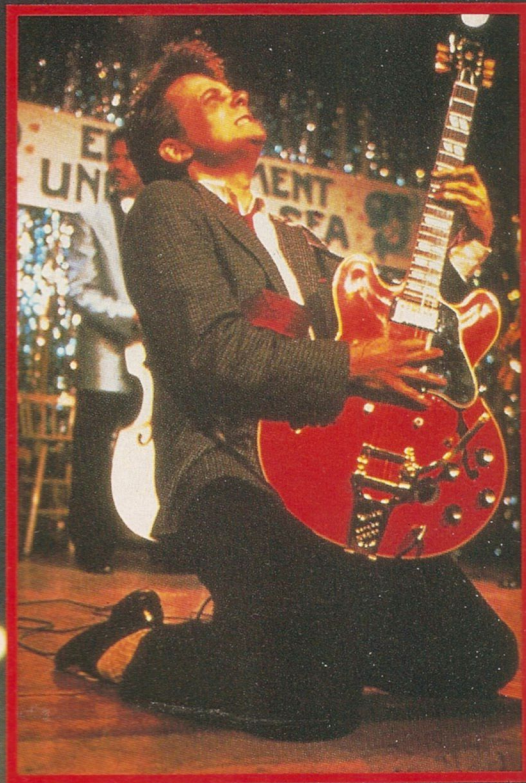
the unmitigated disaster *1941*, a film one critic thought "about as funny as watching a spoilt kid burn money".

Now that the team has hit upon a winning formula, is there going to be a sequel? "Yes," says Fox, "there is talk of one. I know Bob Zemeckis and writer Bob Gale are already thinking about it."

As for his own future plans Fox is reluctant to speak, saying diplomatically, "Yes, I am discussing a variety of projects but none of them are firm yet." There is talk that one film is set for March, but again Fox isn't naming names, preferring to keep his mind on the forthcoming season of *Family Ties*, the programme which already means that he's missed out on a lead role in *Pretty in Pink* for director John Hughes (*The Breakfast Club*, *Weird Science*).

In the meantime, apart from *Back to the Future*, British fans (of which there are bound to be thousands soon) can look forward to *Teen Wolf*, which is set to hit cinemas early in the New Year. Although not in the same league as *Future*, it tells the story of a boy who wishes there was something special about him, but when it does happen it ranges from winning in love and basketball to becoming a werewolf! ▶

Fox invents rock 'n' roll in *Back to the Future*



Fox with Christopher Lloyd, inventor of the time machine



Claudia Wells plays Fox's girlfriend



BACK 
TO THE FUTURE

MORE ON BACK TO THE FUTURE OVERLEAF

As for the actors and actresses Fox admires, and the direction he wants to take his career, there is only one man – Jimmy Cagney. Being somewhat wary of every young actor's dream of becoming another Brando or Dean, or at the very least a Method actor following in the footsteps of De Niro or Pacino, Fox's favourite actor is James Cagney.

He cannot pick one film that stands out in Cagney's work – it's Jimmy's ability to play many different roles with the panache of a movie star that's attractive to Fox. So while the Mickey Rourke's of the acting profession are emulating Brando et al, Fox sees himself as trying to be like Cagney. When asked what his ambition is as an actor, he smartly replies, "To do a film on the life of Jimmy Cagney."

With a *White Heat* or *Yankee Doodle Dandy* under his belt, Fox could perhaps avoid the pitfalls of typecasting that must surely be threatening the scope of his career on the big screen. To date he's played nothing but a teenager, and nobody without a sugar coating.

When asked whether he prefers making feature films or tv series, he says, "I find working regular hours on a tv series quite relaxing, and it's quite different from the pressure in working on a feature film. But I enjoy both."

Until now he's been a television rather than a movie star and doesn't agree with the general "snobbishness" accorded to American films over tv work.

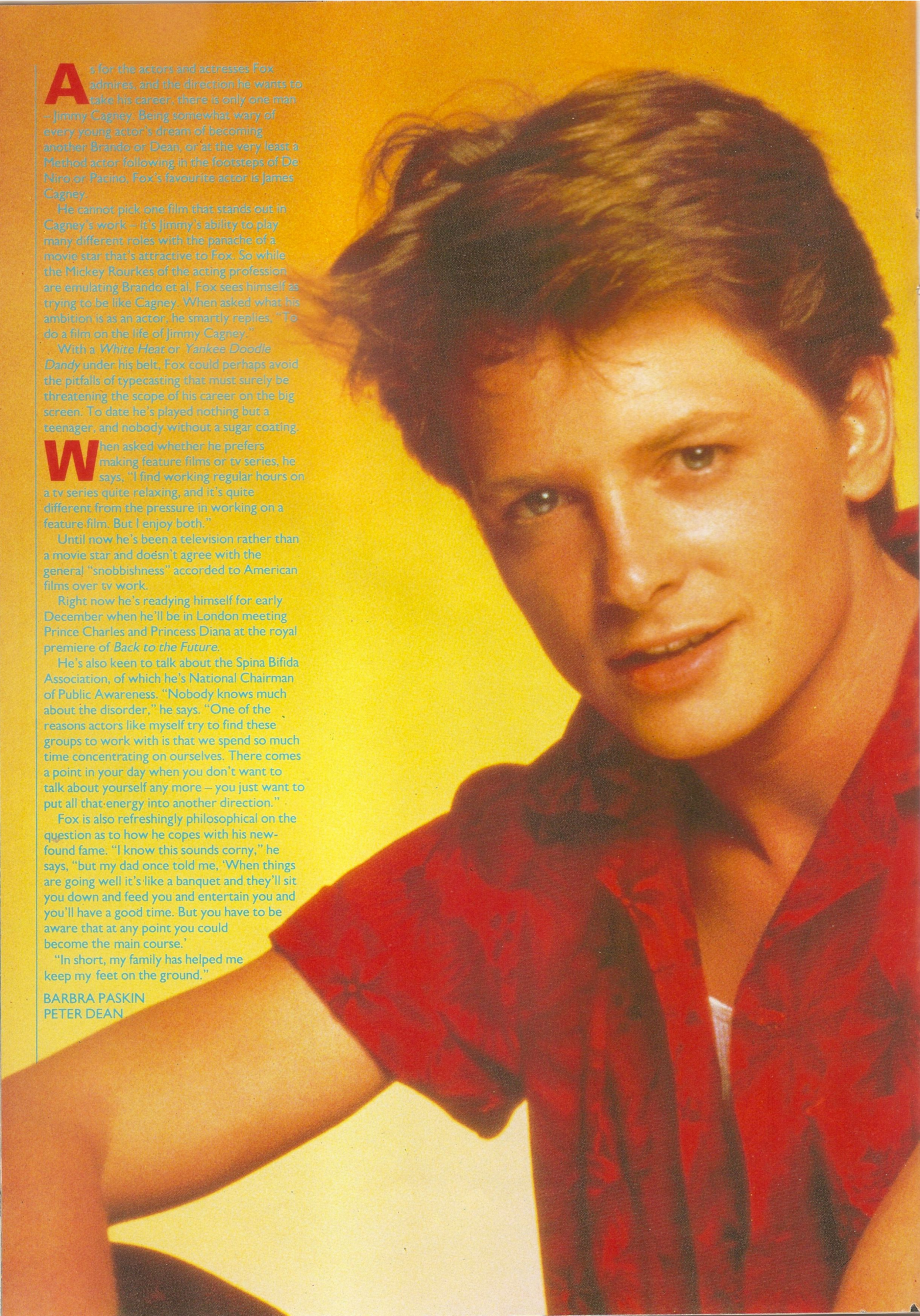
Right now he's readying himself for early December when he'll be in London meeting Prince Charles and Princess Diana at the royal premiere of *Back to the Future*.

He's also keen to talk about the Spina Bifida Association, of which he's National Chairman of Public Awareness. "Nobody knows much about the disorder," he says. "One of the reasons actors like myself try to find these groups to work with is that we spend so much time concentrating on ourselves. There comes a point in your day when you don't want to talk about yourself any more – you just want to put all that energy into another direction."

Fox is also refreshingly philosophical on the question as to how he copes with his new-found fame. "I know this sounds corny," he says, "but my dad once told me, 'When things are going well it's like a banquet and they'll sit you down and feed you and entertain you and you'll have a good time. But you have to be aware that at any point you could become the main course.'

"In short, my family has helped me keep my feet on the ground."

BARBRA PASKIN
PETER DEAN



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Certificate: PG Running time: 116 mins.

Cast: Michael J. Fox (Marty McFly); Christopher Lloyd (Dr Emmett Brown); Lea Thompson (Lorraine Baines); Crispin Glover (George McFly); Thomas F. Wilson (Biff); Claudia Wells (Jennifer Parker); Marc McClure (David McFly); Wendie Jo Sperber (Linda McFly); George DiCenzo (Sam Baines); James Tolkan (Mr Strickland); Frances Lee McCain (Stella Baines).

Director: Robert Zemeckis; Producers: Bob Gale and Neil Canton; Screenwriters: Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale; Music: Alan Silvestri; Cinematographer: Dean Cundey; Editors: Arthur Schmidt, Harry Keramidas; Production Designer: Lawrence G. Paull; Costumes: Deborah L. Scott; Special Effects: Kevin Pike; Production Company: Universal; Distributor: UIP.

Teenager Marty McFly is accidentally transported thirty years into the past. There, he stumbles across his 17-year-old mother who instantly falls for him. If he can't get her to fall in love with his nerdy father, he'll never be born and will be trapped in the no-man's-land of the Twilight Zone.

Back to the Future has the golden stamp of Spielberg all over it. For a start, there is the familiar chaos of domestic technology as previously witnessed in Spielberg's *E.T.*, *Close Encounters*, *Poltergeist* and *Gremlins*. There is the nerdy genius picked on by the school bully (even shades of autobiography here). And there is the break-neck speed of the narrative, conjuring up memories of *Raiders* and *Indiana Jones*.

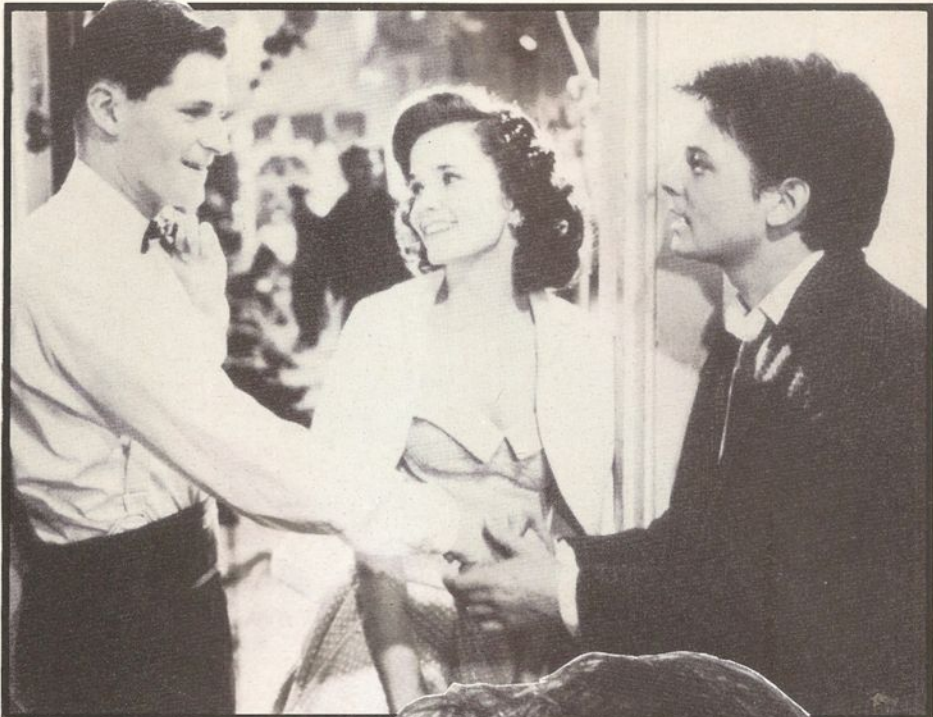
From the very beginning our attention is held. The Teasmaid is brewing without a teapot, the toast is popping down into the toaster, and Fido's bowl is suffering from an overload of dogfood - courtesy of a robotic tin-opener. It is first thing in the morning and things are already going wrong. An appropriate place to start as any for a Spielberg film.

The technical paraphernalia, we learn, belongs to one Dr Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd) and it is Michael J. Fox who discovers his machinery on overload. The doctor is elsewhere, it transpires, testing his time machine, a souped-up, nuclear-powered De Lorean.

After establishing the local township and its inhabitants, the film whisks us back to the same place in 1955 - where the Four Aces croon *Mr Sandman*, where the black mayor is still a floor sweeper, and where the porno fleapit is showing Ronald Reagan in *Cattle Queen of Montana*. From here on the film has great fun in swapping the past for the present, and doesn't miss a trick.

In short, *Back To The Future* has a failsafe theme, a darned good story, some superlative performances from a crisp young cast, and the best special effects Industrial Light and Magic can provide. There are plenty of laughs, old-fashioned thrills and a script so tight that there isn't room for a single superfluous word. *Back To The Future* is probably the all-round best film Steven Spielberg has produced.

JAMES CAMERON-WILSON



Dr Brown (Christopher Lloyd) demonstrates the art of subtle science



Marty McFly - a little exhausted from time travel?

DEFENCE OF THE REALM

continued from page 31

Denholm Elliott looked tired, his clothes were rumpled, his hair dishevelled. It was the end of the day, and the star was on his way home. Elliott was also still in character as the seedy, hard-line, bibulous reporter on the Daily Despatch. He looked an absolute wreck.

"I didn't accept the part on the strength of the wardrobe," the actor joked. "No, the role fitted in nicely between the film I have just finished, *Underworld*, and my next project, E.M. Forster's *A Room With a View*, with Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Daniel Day-Lewis — the whole 'A' Team.

"I found the subject matter of *Defence of the Realm* so interesting, with a very intriguing story. And my part was interesting, sympathetic... What more can I say?"

Well, how about his research for the role?

"I don't do much research. I looked round a newspaper office to see the sort of things they do, the way they behave. For instance, you [pointing at me] wear your tie like a typical journalist. You have a tie — in case the editor calls you in — but it's invariably loosened. I found that journalists like to think of themselves as being very relaxed, very Hemingwayesque.

"Bayliss, my character, is a serious fellow and I think he would probably subscribe to *The Guardian* or *The Times*. Personally, though, I can't handle thinking first thing in the morning, so I take the Mail; it suits me a treat. I work up



Journalist Elliott in *Defence of the Realm*

to the heavier stuff — like *The Guardian* — at around 11 o'clock."

Denholm Elliott has been a favoured character actor of the British screen since his wet-behind-the-ear characters of the early Fifties (*The Sound Barrier*, *The Cruel Sea*). Later, he was to corner the market in more sinister roles (*Nothing But the Best*, *Alfie*), and has recently emerged as one of England's most engaging and best loved players. *Trading Places*, in which he played Eddie Murphy's faithful valet, was the biggest in a string of recent surprise successes, and his first major introduction to an American audience.

Overtures from America naturally followed.

"I was offered the lead in an American television series the other day, playing a butler," the actor glowed. "I rather liked it, but my wife told me it was terrible so I didn't take it. Oh, well."

At the ripe old age of 63, Denholm Elliott has never been in more demand. To what, I asked, does he suppose he owes his sudden popularity?

"People have their time, you know, when they're at their peak. My own psychological states as regards acting and as regards life have sort of finally merged. I now have a lack of fear in front of the camera that I never had before, and a technique that has been polished over forty years. Do you see what I mean?"

And on a final note: "I do hope it all keeps on happening. I do enjoy it, you know. For me it's still dressing up for mummy and daddy. Awful fun."

JAMES CAMERON-WILSON

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

A ROBERT ZEMECKIS Film

He's the only kid ever to get into trouble before he was born.

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Executive Producers STEVEN SPIELBERG KATHLEEN KENNEDY and FRANK MARSHALL Directed by ROBERT ZEMECKIS

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