

MICHAEL J. FOX ON BACK TO THE FUTURE

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MICHAEL J. FOX

BACK TO THE FUTURE

BY SEBASTIANO CASSINELLI
PAIEWONSKY

Michael J. Fox was born in Vancouver, Canada, a long way from Hollywood, U.S.A. Eventually though he would find himself playing Alex P. Keaton on the popular television comedy, "Family Ties". It wasn't until the release of Back to the Future though that Michael J. Fox became a household word. The film about Marty McFly's comic encounters in his parents past was a box-office smash and its creators are currently working on a sequel. Fox also starred last summer in Teen Wolf. Fox will soon be seen in Paul Schrader's Around the Corner To The Light of Day .

GJ: HOW DID YOU GET THE ROLE OF MARTY MCFLY IN BACK TO THE FUTURE?

MF: Well, Steven Spielberg and Bob Zemeckis are both fans of Family Ties and they watch it all the time. When they needed someone for the role of Marty they just said well let's get Alex of Family Ties. So they went to my producer and talked about it. They finally worked it out with him and he told me about it. The next thing I knew I found myself doing Back to the Future.

GJ: SO THEY REALLY DIDN'T AUDITION YOU FOR THE PART?

MF: I didn't. They auditioned a bunch of actors and they even shot for about six weeks with another actor, Eric Stoltz. [He] is quite good, I think they just didn't get what they wanted.

GJ: DID YOU HAVE TO PREPARE FOR THE PART AT ALL?

MF: I really didn't have anytime to. Fortunately, there were enough things about

Steven's since USC film school. They're both like kids. They like to make movies that entertain themselves. And if they're entertained, then they're happy. And they're pretty sure that everyone else will be entertained. They like fast paced movies, but both of them like alot of heart. Essentially, even though it's a quiet movie about people and relationships, about patience and understanding.

GJ: MARTY GOES BACK TO 1955 AND HIS MOTHER FALLS IN LOVE WITH HIM. THAT MUST HAVE BEEN AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION.

MF: Yes, it was perfect. It was a very easy moment to play. If you just think about sitting on a bed with your mother while she goes for your underwear. Marty has a certain amount of self-control, demeanor that he likes to stay in. And this kind of tested that. He was trying to remain cool; that's kind of the rule of the 80's - to remain cool and calm. And this kind of put him on the edge of that. Playing restrained panic is one of the most fun things for an actor to do.



Marty that I could already find in myself.

GJ: HOW DID YOU WORK WITH ROBERT ZEMECKIS. DID HE TELL YOU WHAT TO DO?

MF: In general ways. He would give me general notes. He is such an enthusiastic guy, such a motivator. You're so inspired by his energy and enthusiasm. He wanted to keep the whole thing at a certain pace. To him you just keep moving. He doesn't like pauses, spaces, or gaps.

GJ: THERE IS WHERE YOU FEEL THE INFLUENCE OF SPIELBERG STRONGLY. MOST OF HIS MOVIES ARE LIKE THAT.

MF: Yes, Bob has been kind of a protege of

GJ: SPIELBERG AND ZEMECKIS ARE VERY AMERICAN IN THAT THEY PLAY OUT THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THEIR MOVIES.

MF: It's television. They make movies for the television generation. We have a million more influences than our parents or grandparents because we have this box. It's a big upper hand. There are alot of areas that filmmakers can satisfy or touch upon or relate to and so they take advantage of that and fill as many of those senses as they can.

GJ: MANY EUROPEANS INVOLVED WITH THE CINEMA FEEL THAT IN GENERAL MOVIES PRODUCED IN AMERICA ARE

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BORING; THAT ONLY ONE CLASS OF MOVIES ARE BEING MADE. THEY WOULD SAY IF YOU COMPARE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN FILMS, EUROPEAN MOVIES ARE MORE ARTY...

MF: What I think is that maybe European make movies to satisfy their artistic needs and Americans make films to satisfy their bank accounts. There is nothing wrong with that. They make movies to make money. Everytime people buy tickets they vote. It is kind of art by democracy. If they don't vote for something then they won't make another movie like that. If Americans were dissatisfied with a lot of these movies they wouldn't go and see them. American filmmakers feel they are doing the right thing. Everybody is happy. They're making money and the public is paying the money so they are happy.

GJ: DON'T YOU THINK THAT IT'S A PROBLEM THAT FILMMAKERS CONSIDER MOVIES THAT DEAL WITH IMPORTANT, VALID THEMES, FINANCIAL RISKS?

MF: What's valid? If people go and see it, its valid for them. I really don't have too much of an opinion on it. There are films that I like and others that I don't like. I think that Back to the Future satisfies some of those needs, emotional needs, so there are things being said besides a bunch of flash and glitter. Some movies break new ground and some movies just stay on the same ground because the audience obviously had enough yet. And they don't want to leave.

SEBASTIANO CASSINELLI PAIEWONSKY has interviewed Michael J. Fox and George Stevens Jr. for the Justice, the Brandeis University newspaper and is a senior. This is his first article for the Galactic Journal.

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After the unpleasant experiences of seeing some previous screenplays adapted to the screen by other directors Holland insisted on remaining faithful to his screenplay. "I have a career of director's who didn't [stick to screenplays]. I'm sure as hell going to shoot what I wrote." Despite some of the problems he has experienced, Holland is pleased with both Mark Lester's work on his screenplay for Class of '84 and Richard Franklin's Psycho II.

THE DARK SIDE OF FRIGHT

Although there are some Hitchcockian elements evident in both Fright Night and some of his earlier screen work he does not feel that there was a conscious influence by Hitchcock on his work, "God knows I know his work, but I know John Ford and Howard Hawks too. I think if you are going to do a thriller you can't sort of not touch on Hitchcock. He discovered so much of it."

Two screenplays of Holland's are still unproduced, The Crystal Tower, a variation on the Arthurian legends and Border Crossing, a film noir. However it does not appear as though either will be made in the near future. "You mention noir out here and the studios go into a state of shock," Holland says of studios reluctance and pure ignorance to the classic 1940's film genre. He attests to the many difficulties in getting films made, but does not feel his work is mainly shaped by commercial considerations. "Film is a big business. It's a marriage of art and greed and I've never been greedy, but I want to make movies and [the studios] they have to be convinced they'll make money. Would you give me 8 million if you knew I was going to lose it all? There's always that kind of pressure that comes from the studios."

THE END?

And what of a sequel? "Evil Ed has got a terrible curse on him," exclaims Holland. "I was thinking that if Charlie was his friend he'd help him. I think it would be alot of fun." What would he call the sequel? "The Return of Evil Ed," he jokes.

And now with the success of Fright Night, what does the future of the genre hold according to Holland. "I think we'll be seeing alot of vampire films from now on."

GJ