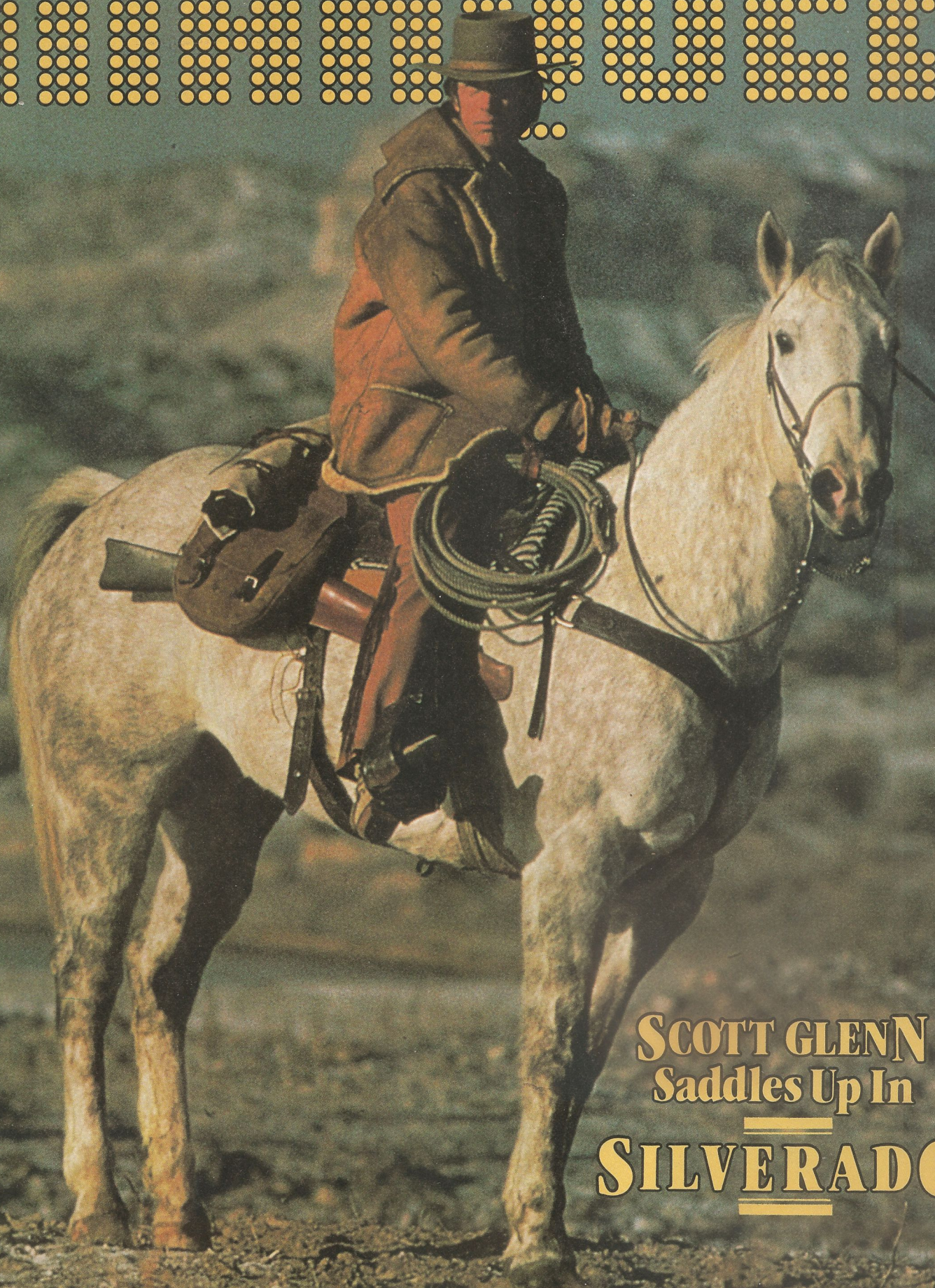


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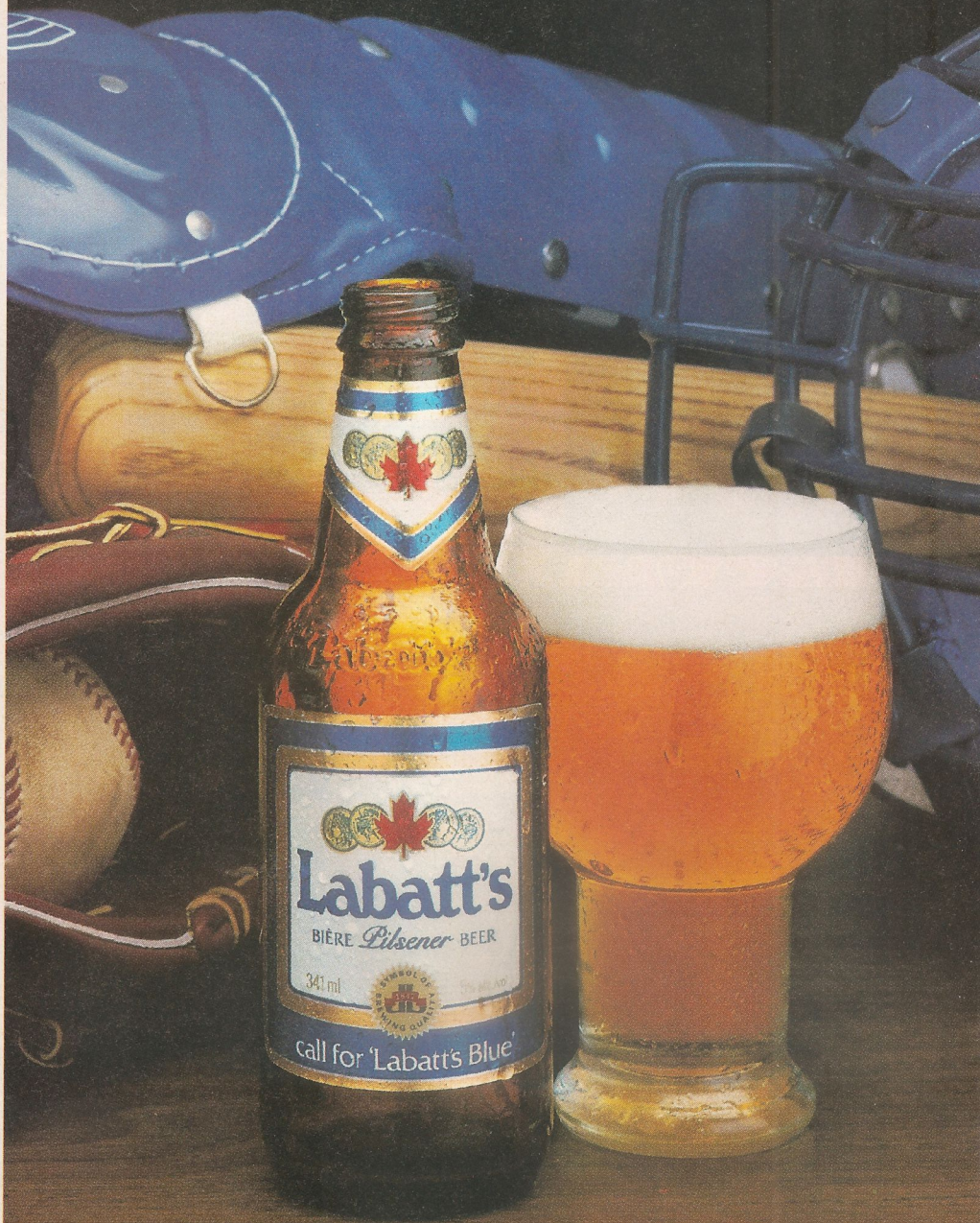
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MAJOR LEAGUE



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Past Perfect

Director Robert Zemeckis recreates the fifties from an eighties perspective in *Back to the Future*. by Nancy Mills

LOS ANGELES — *Back to the Future* is about Marty McFly, (Michael J. Fox), a high school senior who plays in a rock-and-roll band. He hangs around with an eccentric scientist (Christopher Lloyd), who is trying to create a time machine out of a DeLorean sports car. During an experiment, Marty accidentally gets sent back to 1955, where he bumps into the teenagers who are going to become his parents.

Marty's mother (Lea Thompson) develops a crush on him, thereby losing interest in his father-to-be (Crispen Glover). If she dumps Marty's father, how will Marty get born? Marty desperately wants to get back to the future before things get too complicated, but he's trapped.

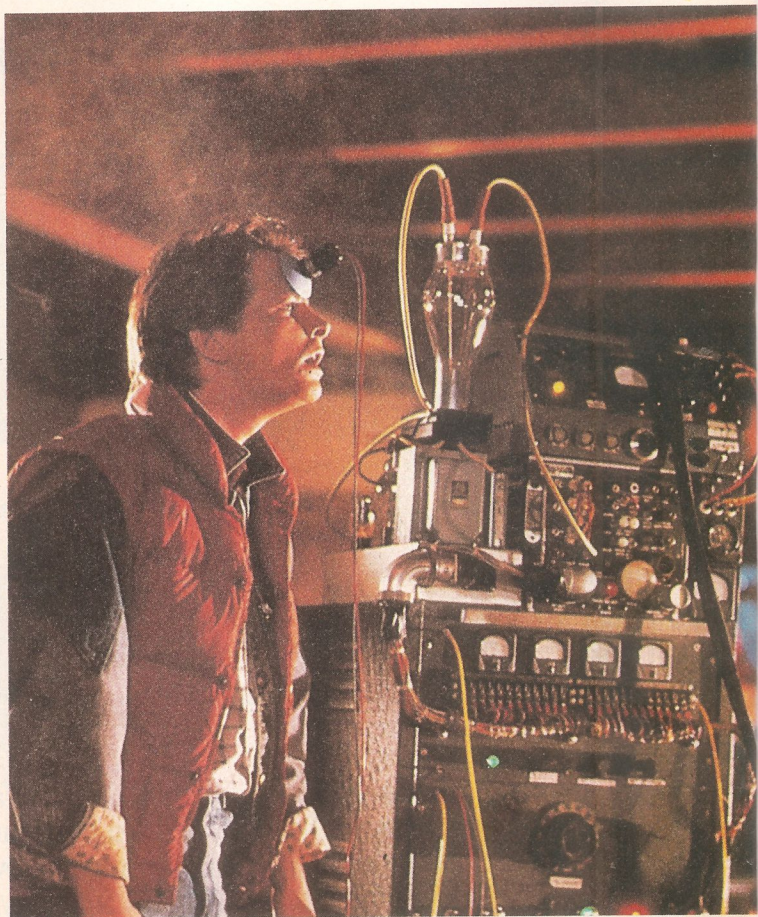
Although the plot to *Back to the Future* has been kept under wraps, director Robert Zemeckis is now ready to give away a few secrets. "I don't think people would go and see a movie if they didn't know what it was about," he says. The title *Back to the Future* is almost as obscure as the title of his last picture, *Romancing the Stone*.

"You've got to get that buzz happening in those school playgrounds," Zemeckis believes. "That's what will get their parents in. The whole business rests on the shoulders of 15-year-old kids who are completely keyed-in to what's going on in the movie business."

"It's tough for older people to run out and see everything. I hope Michael Fox's presence will get them in, although people who watch high-rated TV shows like *Family Ties* don't necessarily go out to the movies. I think Michael is a cross between James Cagney and Cary Grant. He has all the energy that Cagney used to have."

Fox almost didn't get to star in the film, produced by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment Productions. "We had considered Michael in the beginning," Zemeckis says, "but we couldn't seriously think about him because of his commitment to *Family Ties*." So the production started last November with another actor, Eric Stoltz, and then changed gears in January.

"Eric is a wonderful actor," Zemeckis says.



"He worked hard, diligently and responsibly. But when I started to edit the film, I realized we were getting a different character from the one we had written. The movie hinges on him because the story is told through his eyes."

Stoltz and Zemeckis came to the agreement that Stoltz would leave the project. Then Zemeckis set about trying to get the actor he had thought of in the first place. "Finally we sprung Michael at the eleventh hour," he recalls. "Actually, we didn't really spring him. He just worked around the clock."

Zemeckis was particularly concerned about the casting because he is co-author of the script. Fellow author Robert Gale is producing the picture. "We wrote the screenplay five years

"The fun for me in making movies is creating the characters."

ago," Zemeckis says. "It's a great coincidence that the fifties are now popular.

"For a fun, high-spirited movie, it's a good decade to write about, more so than the sixties. And it's logistically important because of the story. For reality, certain dates had to be locked in. Our hero had to go back before the birth of rock and roll.

"I like the past that has a pop culture feel to it. The story really isn't a fifties movie. It's a story about an eighties kid who just happens to go on a time adventure in the fifties. The film never leaves the attitude, style and point of view of the eighties."

Zemeckis is too young to look nostalgically back to the fifties. He was born in 1951. "I don't remember much about that period," he says. "What I know about the fifties is what I saw in movies made in the fifties. Actually, I think the fifties ended in 1964, the day the Beatles arrived in America."

Zemeckis is intimately familiar with this period

started. I've always been a great fan of his. I think he is the best director since Alfred Hitchcock."

Born in Chicago, Zemeckis started making 8mm films in high school. He enrolled at Northern Illinois University and transferred to the School of Cinema at the University of Southern California two years later. While at USC, he produced, wrote and directed a 14-minute film entitled *A Field of Honor*, about a paranoid ex-G.I. who was frightened back into the hospital. The film won many awards, including a student Academy Award.

Zemeckis and his writing partner Gale soon came to the attention of Spielberg and John Milius, who asked them to develop a script for *1941*, a movie Spielberg directed and Milius produced. The two men then wrote *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and *Used Cars*, both of which Zemeckis directed. Then he directed *Romancing the Stone*.

"What I know about the fifties is what I saw in movies made in the fifties."

because of the first feature film he directed: *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* (1978). It was a comedy about teenagers trying to get their hands on tickets for the Beatles' first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. Steven Spielberg was the executive producer of *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and is working in the same capacity on *Back to the Future*.

"I couldn't ask for a better filmmaking situation and relationship between producer and director," Zemeckis says. "Steven obviously gives his filmmakers their own head. Only if the movie seemed out of control would he interfere. I think he came to the set five or six times to say hello.

"I'd describe my relationship with Steven as exactly what I perceive his relationship with George Lucas was on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (which Lucas executive-produced). We discuss only the big issues, not day-to-day filmmaking.

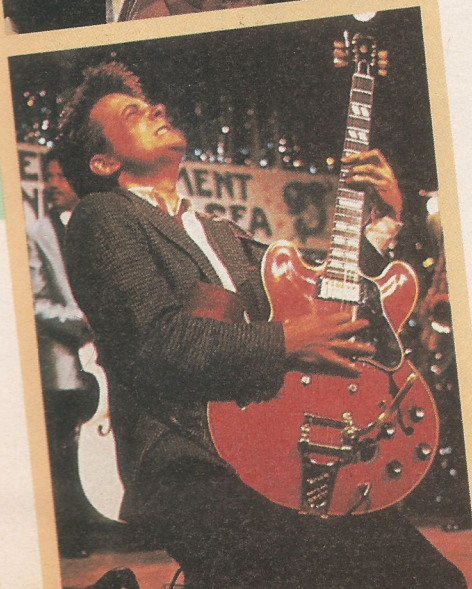
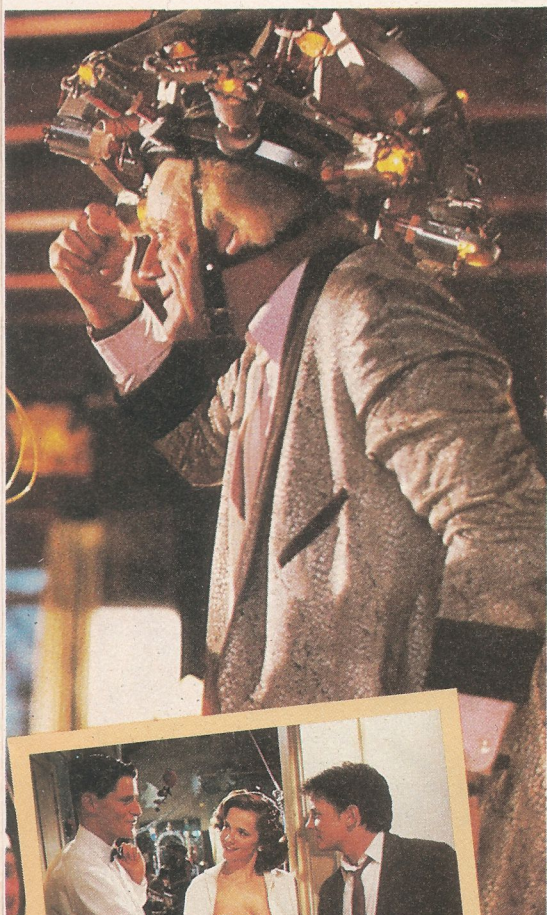
"The great thing about Steven is that, because he's a director, he knows what's happening in the trenches. He doesn't ask for the impossible, because he knows what can be done.

"I owe my entire career to Steven. He got me

He has no regrets about not directing *Jewel of the Nile*, the sequel to *Romancing*, now under way in North Africa. "The fun for me in making movies is creating the characters," he explains. "The idea of being a traffic cop for a whole bunch of action — that starts to sound like making a TV series.

"A clever plot and lots of action is fun, but the real key to movies is creating people. A sequel to *Back to the Future* would be more a continuation. Marty's adventure could go on, now that we have a functioning time-travel machine. We'll know about a sequel this summer. If the movie is well-received, I'd definitely want to see further adventures of Marty McFly. I could introduce all kinds of new characters."

After *Back to the Future* opens, Zemeckis plans to sit down with Gale and put together a screenplay about the Shadow, an old radio character. There are many alive today who remember hearing the come-on: "Who knows what evil lurks in the mind of man? The Shadow knows!" Zemeckis says, "I see The Shadow as a combination of Indiana Jones and Dracula. He'll be very heroic. I always thought it would be fun to make Dracula a hero." ●



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Fifties Film Fox's Future

TV sitcom success earns Michael J. Fox his first starring movie role in *Back to the Future*.

by Nancy Mills

LOS ANGELES — "Michael J. Fox is charming, handsome, funny, sensitive and youthful," *Back to the Future* director Robert Zemeckis says. "He's everything his character needs wrapped in one." Unfortunately, when Zemeckis was casting his film last fall, Fox was too busy to take on the role of Marty McFly. He was in the middle of making an NBC series — *Family Ties*. But eventually this paragon of castability was persuaded to work double-time.

Sitting in the Universal Studios commissary and picking at a green pasta salad, Fox well remembers the day his life became complicated: "The *Family Ties* producer called me into his office and gave me a copy of the *Back to the*

Future script. He said, 'Steven Spielberg and Bob Zemeckis want you to do this movie — next Tuesday. You can't tell anyone.' I read the script and said yes."

Luckily for the 23-year-old Canadian actor, Paramount TV, the company that makes *Family Ties*, gave him its blessing. "The major concessions were made by Universal," Fox acknowledges. "Paramount was co-operative and nice. They didn't have to let me do it at all."

For the first seven weeks of shooting, Fox arrived at Universal after putting in a full day on the set of *Family Ties*. "I averaged four to four-and-a-half hours sleep a night," he says cheerfully. "It's one of those

situations that taxes your sanity, but what was I going to do? This movie had to be done.

"When I get in a tough situation, the last thing I try to do is remind everyone how tough it is. I didn't make any noise until after the rough part was finished." Fox grins and gulps down some diet Coke.

"I'd got to the point where I'd wake up and couldn't remember going to sleep or even having been asleep. A driver would bring me home at night, open the door and lay me on the bed. Then another driver would come back in the morning, get me up and drive me to work.

"When I'd get to the set, everyone who was lounging in their chairs would suddenly open ►



The success of *Family Ties* has provided Fox with a large teenage following.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

their eyes. They tried never to take naps in front of me. Because I was so tired, I said to the director, 'Bob I trust you. My brain is cheese. I won't be able to be as sharp as I'd like to.'

"There are places where I felt like Mohammed Ali — no offence to him — but I couldn't enunciate. 'Please Bob,' I'd say, 'don't ask me to do that take again!'" Fox, of course, is joking. He worked as long and as hard as Zemeckis wanted him to.

"My mother told me, 'Michael, you shouldn't overextend yourself.' What should I say, Mom? 'Gee, Steve. I'm bushed. I'd like to make your blockbuster film but...'" You just do it. It's going to be a neat movie.

"We reshot most of the scenes," Fox adds about the work done in the first six weeks before he replaced Eric Stoltz. "Bob called it a great dress rehearsal. I looked at it as a challenge. I didn't care what might have gone on before. I'm just happy for Eric that his movie *Mask* did so well. He's not to be pitied."

Coming in at the last minute, Fox had no time to prepare. That didn't bother him too much. "I'm a product of the media generation," he explains. "I probably know more about the fifties than fifties kids did. I play Baby Boomer Trivial Pursuit. I know who Nikita Khrushchev was. In my dressing room I listened to the soundtracks of *Diner* and *American Graffiti*, with a little Los Lobos thrown in.

"The great irony to me is that three weeks before I was cast in this film, *Family Ties* did a show where Alex goes back in time in a dream and convinces Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence. Now, time travel can be my forte."

When Fox was cast in the NBC sitcom three years ago, he was virtually an unknown face in Hollywood. He had had a small role in the CBS series *Palmerstown, U.S.A.* and guest-starring roles in such series as *Trapper John, M.D.*, *Family* and *Lou Grant*. He had also appeared in the movies *Midnight Madness*, *High School U.S.A.* and *Class of 1984*.

But the success of *Family Ties*, which focuses on conservative teenagers growing up with liberated, sixties-generation parents, has provided Fox with a large teenage following. His character Alex P. Keaton wears pin-striped shirts and idolizes Richard Nixon.

"There are tons of conservative youngsters out there," Fox says. "But the main message of



"I didn't want to struggle. I fail to see the romanticism in being 45 and trying to get by on \$200 a week."

Alex is that kids are kids. He's just a bright, ambitious kid. He could even be a Democrat. I was born to play him. I love him so much. You'd have to forcibly remove me with guns to make me quit that show. That's my job, and it's home.

"Marty McFly is a young, bright, funny, ambitious, wiry guy like Alex, but his sensibilities are different. He's a Tom Sawyer kind of guy. Alex would have been on to him right away.

"When you first meet Marty, he's a very happy, rock-and-roll kid. He goes home, and his parents are like nimrods. Bob Gale (the producer) calls it 'suburban surrealism.' Marty doesn't want to deal with it.

"Then he gets zapped back to the fifties and finds out why they are like they are by meeting them. He short-circuits when his mom gets this crush on him.

"This movie isn't really about the fifties. It isn't *Diner* or *American Graffiti*. It's not a nostalgia trip. The idea is let's take an eighties kid and

throw him into the fifties. Everything is seen from an eighties perspective. Why is that man pumping gas for that lady and cleaning her windshield? The fifties we present will be like a Fellini movie — all the strange stuff.

There was a point in the movie important for me to find. Once Marty is back in the fifties, there's no way out of it. So he tells himself he'd better get his butt moving and figure out how he can motivate things in his favour.

"He does make a half-assed effort to comb his hair in a different way. He takes fifties things and changes them into the way he likes. And there's a place where he gets to live out every guitarist's dream.

"Marty's not a yuckster. Hopefully humour will come out of the situation. He's a feisty kid who doesn't take a lot of crap from anyone. He doesn't back down. I think I'm more of a wimp."

Fox likes to make fun of the fact that he is short. He is about 5'4" and could easily pass for 16. "Us little guys are gonna take over the world," he jokes. "Instead of thinking, 'Michael J. Fox is too short to play this role,' directors will

say, 'We'll have to change this part. It's written too tall for Michael J. Fox!'"

Fox's one regret is that he had to leave Canada in order to work. "My dream come true would be if I could do what I'm doing now in Haney (outside Vancouver). I've got a visa and I pay American taxes, but I'd never become an American citizen.

"I left Canada because I wanted to be an actor in films and television. I'd gone as far as I could in Canada. Actors are virtually office workers there. They're struggling to make \$180 a week. I said, 'I won't do that. I'm outta here.'

"I didn't want to struggle. I fail to see the romanticism in being 45 and trying to get by on \$200 a week. Now I'm happy. It's nothing against Canada. It's just very tough to get to the point in Canada where you can be a financially independent actor and set up and control your own projects. I'd love to go to CBC with a great pilot and hire all my friends." ●

A Flair to Remember

Lea Thompson conjures up her own particular brand of fifties style for her role in *Back to the Future*. by Nancy Mills

LOS ANGELES — "The fifties is such a different mental period in terms of teenagers and what girls were thinking about," observes Lea Thompson, who has spent the last eight months immersed in 1955 for her leading role in *Back to the Future*.

"It was a sweet, joyous period of time. To get in this naive frame of mind, I read all the period magazines — *Life*, *Modern Screen* — and studied the ads. Also, I looked at a lot of old pictures of my mother. She wore all this red lipstick. Yuck. The hairdos were so different. They made me put my hair up in pincurls."

Thompson twirls her blue-frame sunglasses and fidgets in the chair in her publicist's office. "If I had been a fifties teenager, I'd probably be married and have a few kids by now." Instead, the 23-year-old actress is dating actor Dennis Quaid and making her sixth movie.

Here I am in high school again standing by my locker," she grins. "Since I've become an actress, I've only played 17-year-olds. I would like to graduate to college pretty soon."



"Since I've become an actress, I've only played 17-year-olds. I would like to graduate to college pretty soon."

Thompson has been rapidly building up her film biography since she started acting in 1983. She played a water skier menaced by you-know-what in *Jaws 3-D*. After escaping unharmed, she went to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, to be Tom Cruise's girlfriend in *All the Right Moves*.

After that, director John Milius hired Thompson to play a freedom fighter in *Red Dawn*. In *The Wild Life*, she worked behind a doughnut counter in between brief encounters with a policeman in the storeroom. She plays a rich Beverly Hills brat in the upcoming *Yellow Pages*.

"Several personalities roam around under

the guise of Lea," the actress explains, talking about how she can look so different in each role. "Certain costumes just change me. This is my 'be comfortable, mobile and friendly kind of costume,'" she says, referring to her worn jeans, wrinkled blue and white striped shirt and silver tennis shoes. "I like clothes that make me laugh. These shoes make me laugh."

Thompson had researched the fifties before, although not on purpose. "Filming *All the Right Moves* was like being in the fifties even though it was set today," she says. "I went to school there and studied those girls. They were still in the fifties, down to their hairstyles.

"*Back to the Future* is a fantasy. It's a little bigger than life. They worked really hard to make it early fifties, which I guess was more like the late forties. The costume designer didn't go for stereotypes. There's not a single poodle skirt in the whole movie, and nobody makes any jokes about hula hoops. I didn't have to wear saddle shoes. I wear white bucks.

"I was surprised I was cast in this," she adds. "I didn't see myself playing a fifties girl or a mother. But it's really neat when a director sees something in you that you can't see yourself. Usually it's the other way around. Bob could see some silliness in me."

"I have cousins (Matt and Neil Barry) who are actors in New York. They thought I should do commercials, so they introduced me to an agent. That's how I got my start in acting.

"I was one of those professionally motivated kids. I really wanted to be a dancer. When I was 12, I was crazed. 'My arabesque isn't high enough!' I'd scream. We were really poor, so that motivated me. I had to earn money to get my own point shoes. I needed a scholarship in order to study dance, so that meant I had to be one of the top two in my class."

Thompson skipped two years of high school and graduated when she was just 16. About that time her mother, a professional artist, musician and songwriter, moved to Montana. Thompson chose to stay in Minneapolis and get her own apartment. "I was dancing with a professional company and earning my own money," she explains.

"In dancing it's hard to act because everything is given to you — the cock of your head, the turn of your wrist. I'd always worked on my acting so I tended to stand out, not be bland like all the others. When I was 16, a director at a children's theatre in Minneapolis said, 'I've seen you dance. I know you're a good actress. Will you do the lead in *The Little Mermaid*?'"

"When I was a dancer, I was willing to do it all for \$75 a week — destroy my knees, wreck my ankles, starve myself. Money is a blessing, but I was never prepared to deal with it. It's great that I'm learning about my acting and getting better while people keep giving me work.

"I'm the youngest of five. I started out wanting to keep up with my brothers and sisters. I was motivated to get their respect. Now the roles are reversed, and they're a little surprised. I'm the one with all the money." ●

STEVEN SPIELBERG Presents

BACK TO THE FUTURE

A ROBERT ZEMECKIS Film

He was never in time
for his classes...

He wasn't in time
for his dinner...

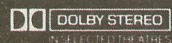
Then one day...
he wasn't in his
time at all.

"BACK TO THE FUTURE" Starring MICHAEL J. FOX
CHRISTOPHER LLOYD · LEA THOMPSON · CRISPIN GLOVER
Written by ROBERT ZEMECKIS & BOB GALE Music by ALAN SILVESTRI Produced by BOB GALE and NEIL CANTON
Executive Producers STEVEN SPIELBERG KATHLEEN KENNEDY and FRANK MARSHALL
Directed by ROBERT ZEMECKIS



Directed by

ROBERT ZEMECKIS



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