



**Why STAR TREK V failed:
Readers dissect the sequel**

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BACK TO THE FUTURE II

Behind the
scenes
with

**Michael J. Fox &
Christopher Lloyd**



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Klaa & Vixis Klingon couple of the year!
Robert Lansing Call him Gary Seven
Jeff Corey Blacklisted Cloud-Minder

Plus: Little mermaids, Connie Willis & ROGER RABBIT

STARLOG

NUMBER 149

DECEMBER 1989

THE SCIENCE FICTION UNIVERSE

Ariel is *The Little Mermaid* in the new Disney animated film opening this month. For more on mermaids, see page 17.

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Bob Zemeckis is big on balancing his home and family life, so much so that the director who framed *Roger Rabbit* doesn't blink an eye when a scheduling conflict finds him directing *Back to the Future II* while babysitting.

"OK, I'm ready to shoot this," yells Zemeckis while his young son squirms in his lap. Crew members, in response, test rock the time-traveling DeLorean which, for a simple process shot being filmed on Soundstage 27 at Universal Studios, is balanced on an elevated stand in front of a blank screen. Dean Cundey, veteran cinematographer who is heading once again *Back to the Future*, is sizing up some camera angles to Zemeckis' right.

"Hey, Dean," questions Zemeckis as his son hops off his lap. "What about this if it's going the other way?"

"Yeah, that could work," replies Cundey.

Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd wander onto the set. Fox appears relatively normal as is befitting the character of Marty McFly. Lloyd, as Doc Brown, looks wild-eyed and crazy. Lloyd climbs into the driver's seat of the DeLorean. Fox coo-coo's Little Zemeckis before joining Lloyd in the car. Big Zemeckis calls for action.

Cameras roll. The car rocks.

"You're not going to believe this, Doc, but we've got to go back to 1955!" screams Fox.

"I don't believe it!" replies Lloyd.

Zemeckis runs through the scene a few more times. Fox jumps out of the car, goes behind the camera to a playback device and, in conference with Zemeckis, dissects the last take before returning to the car for another go.

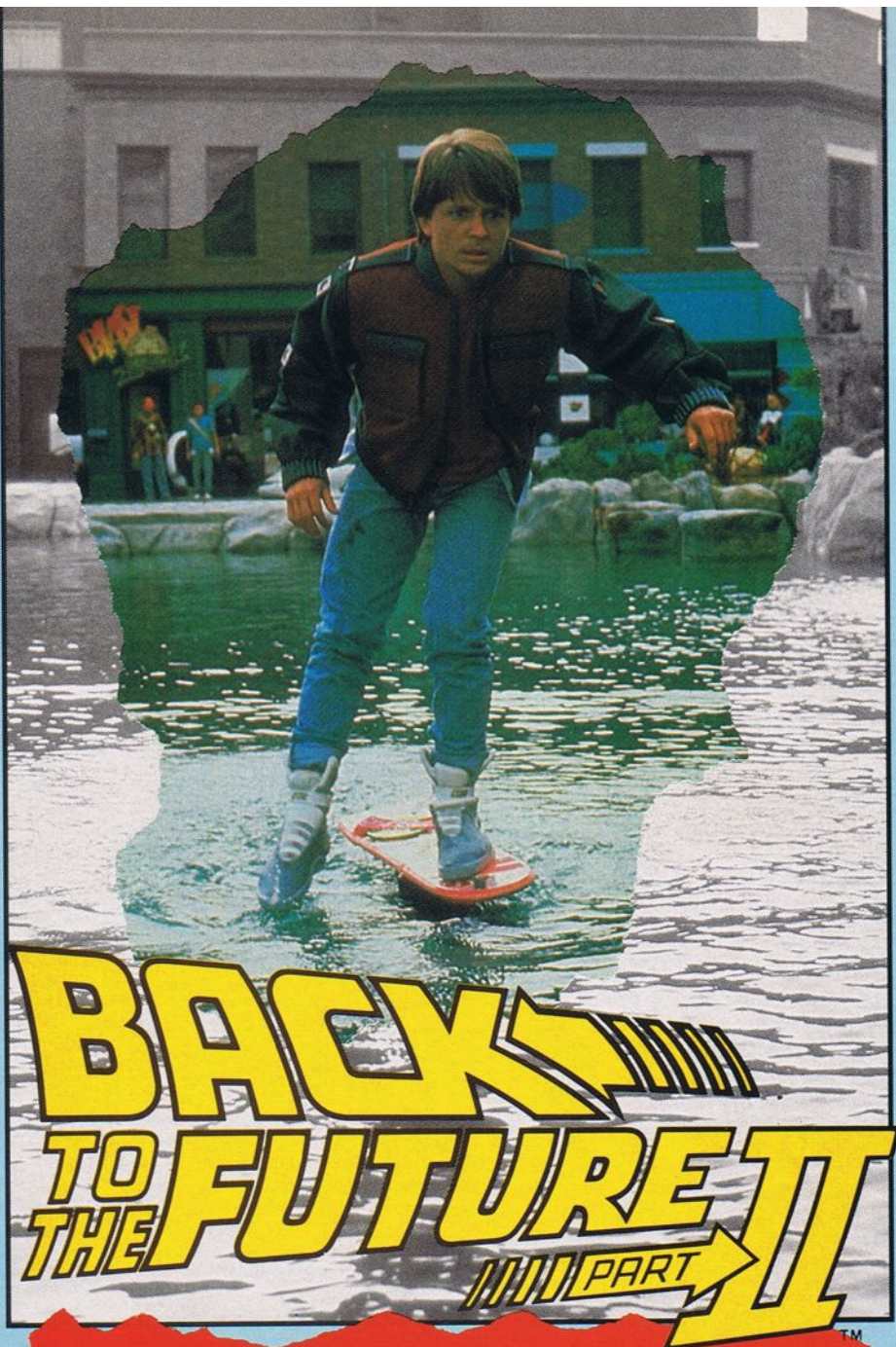
Back to the Future II, which reteams *Future* vets Fox, Lloyd, Lea Thompson and Thomas Wilson, is into the last week of shooting, primarily pick-up and process shots, before a three-week hiatus and the beginning of filming of *Back to the Future III*. The second part of the time travel trilogy, which began lensing in February for release this month, has been meticulously prepared. Hence, no anecdotes worth writing home about.

"Nothing unexpected or unplanned ever happens on my movies," Zemeckis says, deadpan. "There's no room for funny in my movies."

Sequel Secrets

Back to the Future II's storyline is being kept largely in the dark, but writer/producer Bob Gale, while Zemeckis puts his charges through their paces, concedes this much detail: "We go into the future. Then, we go back to 1955. We meet Marty's kids and family and we wind up going back into the past to keep a future incident involving his kids from happening." He chuckles, "That's as much of the story as I'm going to give away."

Gale, in low-key good spirits as he watches Zemeckis from the sidelines, claims that the ending of the original *Back to the Future* did not initially foretell a follow-up.



Even as cast and crew try to warp time to finish one sequel, another arrives.

By MARC SHAPIRO

"We used that ending because we felt it was funny," explains Gale. "At that point, we never intended to make a sequel. But when Universal said they wanted a sequel and that they wanted Bob and I to do it, we both felt it would be a cheat not to at least start the film where the other one left off. To our way of thinking, the ending told us where this movie's beginning would be."

However, Gale (STARLOG #110) points out that before there was the hint of a beginning to *Back to the Future II*, there had to be the first film's original cast.

"It was important to find out *who* would come back before we started writing the script. Obviously, if Michael or Chris didn't

want to do another one, there would be no movie. We felt nobody would be interested in a *Back to the Future II* that did not have Marty or Doc in it."

Fox and Lloyd (STARLOG #82) were interested (as was the rest of the original cast except for Crispin Glover) and so Zemeckis and Gale set out to write the script.

"We were coming up with many great ideas," recalls Gale. "The problem was that we had much more great stuff than we could put in one movie and not have it be real long and real expensive. Universal wasn't too happy with that. If we could make two movies, then they could justify the expense."

"It has been exciting to know we could

start something in *Part II* and finish it in *Part III*. We all felt it gave us a much bigger canvas to work with. Doing two movies at once was a pretty insane idea, but it's a kind of insanity that appealed to everybody."

Gale, giving away a little bit more of the story, concedes that there will be a definite difference in tone between *Back to the Future II* and *III*.

"This one is heavy on special effects [opticals courtesy of Industrial Light and Magic], and believe me, it's a real pain in the ass to make a car fly. *Part III* will be more human-oriented with less emphasis on special effects."

As assistant director bellows, "Can we please have quiet?" Before Gale is forced to close his mouth, he drops one final tidbit about the all-important future setting of *Back to the Future II*.

"Our future is definitely not a *Blade Runner* kind of place. Our future is a nice place to live."

STARLOG is willing to give Gale the benefit of the doubt but, when an extended break in the action arises, there's an oppor-

tunity to wander out to the Universal backlot where Marty McFly's hometown circa 2015 stands deserted and, as Gale stated, it is a really "nice place to live."

Pop culture and futuristic kitsch is the order of the day on this town square and its surrounding streets. The ever-reliable 7-11 store is still around. So is a movie marquee that proudly proclaims: "Jaws 19 Directed by Max Spielberg."

There's a 1980s' nostalgia restaurant and a store that dispenses steroids. This is a future that gives off a definite vibe and getting those vibes right is once again the job of cinematographer Dean Cundey.

"Each time period in this film has its own subtle but distinctive look," explains Cundey (STARLOG #103). "The past is going to have a warm and pleasant feel. The future is human and interesting, a future you would enjoy living in. We're also dealing with two different versions of 1985 so this movie is providing us with many opportunities to take liberties." But not too many.

"Because this is a direct sequel, we're

locked into the continuity of the look and keeping that continuous feel between *I* and *II* and subsequently *III* has been the biggest challenge.

"And we're using just about everything but a Steadicam to get that continuity of look," he continues. "We're using a lot of wide lenses and moving camera set ups. And then, there's going to be all kinds of opticals added by ILM."

Still, Cundey offers that keeping on the cinematic best side of the actors has been the easiest chore on *Back to the Future II*.

"All the actors have aged quite gracefully, so we haven't been faced with shooting a certain way to avoid wrinkles. As far as I can see, Michael doesn't seem to have any."

Cundey is called away and into another conversation with Zemeckis for a continuation of the process shot that will have moving scenery projected on the screen behind the DeLorean.

"Let's tilt the projector all the way down so the top frame is all the way down to the plate," says Zemeckis. "That will give it a real sense of movement."



The sequel picks up right where the first one ended, as Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd) takes Marty (Fox) and Jennifer (Elisabeth Shue) to deal with their troubled children.

Cundey agrees and goes off to position the projector, leaving Zemeckis (STARLOG #85, #99, #134) to chronicle his approach to directing this second trip *Back to the Future*.

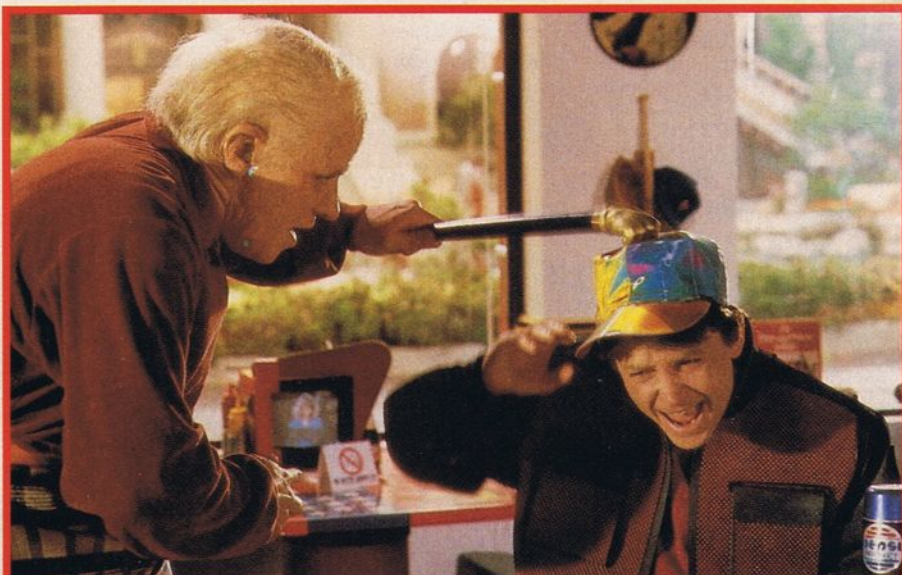
"My style has definitely changed on this one," says the director. "We're using computer-controlled cameras and a lot of effects although they're the kind of effects you won't see. This is not *Star Wars*."

Zemeckis agreed to take on *II* and, subsequently, *III* because he felt the story was good and the original cast was back.

"You've got to have the integrity to bring back the original cast or the audience is going to see right through to the fact that you're doing nothing more than trying to capitalize on the first film's success without regard for creativity," says Zemeckis.

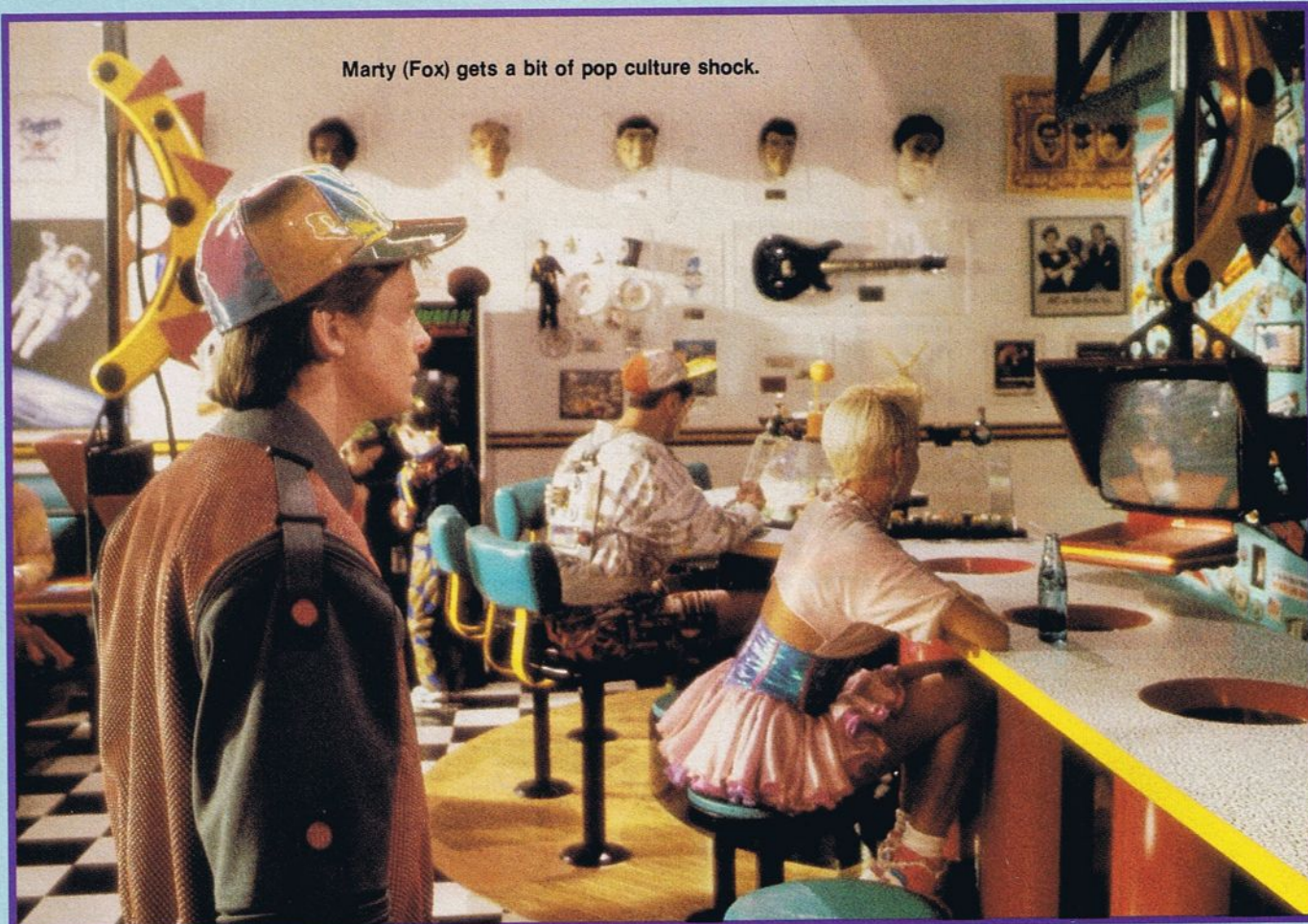
Story and cast aside, Zemeckis knew a sequel teemed with land mines that cast and crew are taking great pains to avoid.

"The one big trap we did *not* want to fall into was looking back too much at the first film and competing with it on any level. In fact, the only concession I believe we made to the original *Back to the Future* was to



Even in the future, Biff (Thomas Wilson) is still a pain.





Marty (Fox) gets a bit of pop culture shock.



Biff Tannen's little boy Griff. "There are many more sides of Biff in this film," declares Wilson. He plays 'em all.

make the sequel a continuation of the original story. But, that's basically it.

"We decided early on that we would not take the time to reintroduce these characters for the benefit of anybody who hasn't seen the original film. We're making this movie

and *Part III* for the true fans of the first film and you've got to be faithful to the faithful."

Zemeckis points over his shoulder at an example of how faithful they're trying to be. Taped to a whole section of wall are hundreds of storyboard drawings indicating every scene and scene breakdown in this film. They're being crossed out only after each element is completed to the director's satisfaction.

"And that's not all," says Zemeckis as he turns back around to survey the shot being set up. "I've gone over the first film and have even taken a look at outtakes that never made the first film. We're comparing angles and the number of seconds that scenes play and doing our best to make *II* look *exactly* like the first film. I defy anybody to find a mismatch between them."

Zemeckis sidesteps *Future* momentarily to provide a *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* update. He still hasn't seen the completed film.

"I'm getting to the point where I might finally take a look at it," he explains, "but I'm not in any big hurry. It's not like I'm afraid to see it. It's just that I lived with it for so long that I basically saw the whole film while I was making it."

"And no, I won't do a *Roger Rabbit* sequel. I've done it once. Doing that kind of picture once is enough for me."

One would guess that Zemeckis might have the same opinion about shooting *Back to the Future II* and *III* back to back.

"I don't feel like I'm in a time warp with these pictures yet," he says. "But I know that's going to change when I'm editing *II* at the same time we're shooting *III*. I'll probably be a space cadet at that point. Right now, the only problem we're having is that people are starting to reach the runner's equivalent of the wall. They're beginning to get tired."

But, that doesn't get in the way of Zemeckis having the last laugh at memories of how hard it was to get *Back to the Future* off the ground.

"When Bob [Gale] and I wrote the original *Back to the Future* and were trying to drum up studio interest, I had one top executive tell me that time travel movies are *not* moneymakers and they never work. Well, guess what?

"Now they work."

Sequel People

Zemeckis' wife appears on the soundstage, kisses Big Z, gathers up Little Z, who has been giving the sound man some helpful hints, and takes him home to a chorus of goodbyes from the cast and crew.

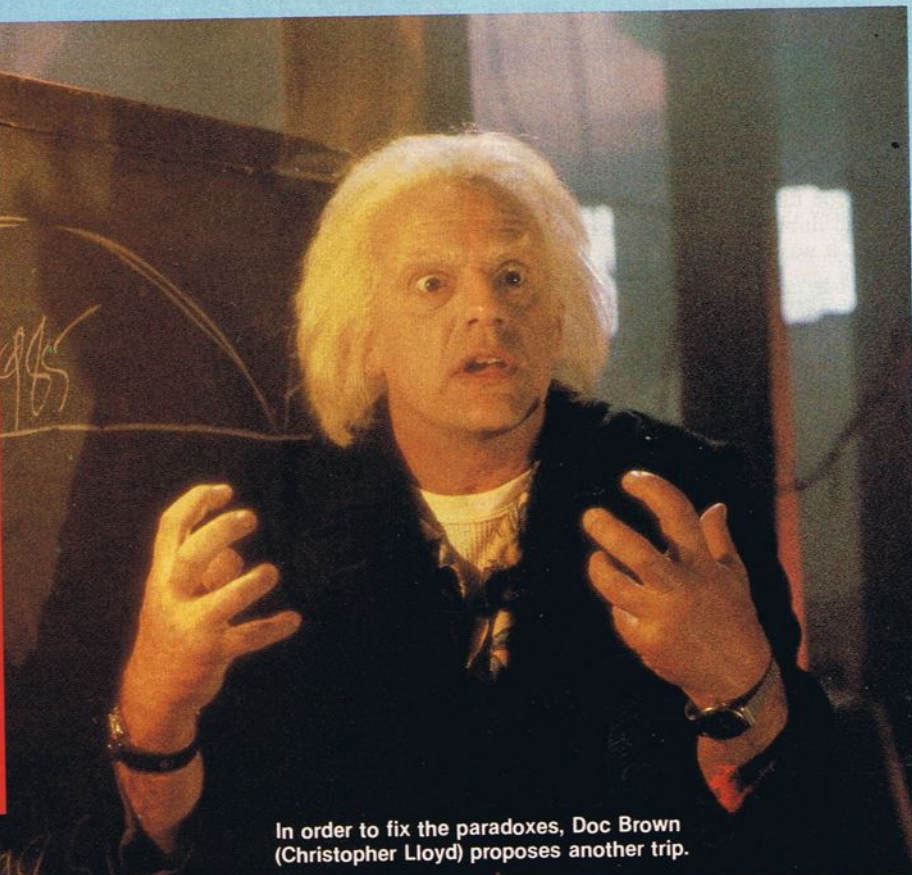
Fox and Lloyd return to the DeLorean and rattle off another burst of dialogue and an exaggerated right turn while projected countryside flashes by on the screen.

Thomas Wilson, struggling actor and comic as well as Biff in the original *Back to the Future*, sidles up to give the abridged version of *II*'s new and improved Biff.

(continued on page 54)



The elder Marty (Fox) settles with his future fame or is it infamy?



In order to fix the paradoxes, Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd) proposes another trip.

All Back to the Future II Photos: Ralph Nelson/Copyright 1989 Universal City Studios

Future II

(continued from page 40)

"Biff's still basically a thug," says Wilson, "but there's much more texture and much more for me to do in the sequel. There are many more sides of Biff in this film. The plot revolves more around his actions. I'm more of an antagonist in this film. In the first one, I was more of a speed bump."

Wilson wanders off to trade rim shots with crew members and is replaced, once again, by Gale who seems intent on denying any further *Future* beyond the currently planned trilogy.

"We've tried to put a definite close on the third film because, if there ever is going to be a fourth one and we're doing it, I wouldn't want to be saddled with an old idea."

"But, to be perfectly honest, I don't think there will be a *Back to the Future IV* which, in a way, makes the fact that we're doing these films back to back very opportunistic. In four years, Michael is going to be too old to play a kid and he and everyone else will have moved on to other things," says Gale. "If we didn't make *III* now, there probably would never have been one."

The *Back to the Future* cast and crew breaks for lunch and Fox repairs to a trailer outside the soundstage to collect his thoughts, something the 28-year-old actor claims has not been as much of a problem the second time around.

"Actually, the big change between the first and second film was that I was only semi-conscious during the first one," Fox

admits, "and in this one, I'm a bit more aware of what's going on. Bob has such a distinct style of directing that bouncing back and forth between the film and *Family Ties* the way I was doing, I really didn't know a hell of a lot about what was going on."

"In this one, I think I get it. In the first *Back to the Future*, I felt more like a tool. In this one, I feel more like an accomplice."

Fox was still bouncing back and forth during the early weeks of *Future II*.

"Fortunately, we were in our seventh and final season of *Family Ties* and I was able to manipulate the situation," says Fox. "I was able to go to the *Family Ties* writers and say, 'I've got a couple of heavy weeks on the film coming up, so could you write me light in the next couple of shows?' They did and that helped a lot."

It also helps that Fox, fresh off the rigors of *Casualties of War*, is in decent shape.

"Tell me about it," chuckles Fox. "This has been an intensely physical movie, and the way Bob shoots things, it always had to be me doing the stunts or people would know it was a double. I've been jumping over cars moving at high speeds and hanging from the rafters 40 feet over a hardwood floor."

"He has had me doing some wild stuff, and let's face it, I'm five years older than when I did the first *Back to the Future*. I'm feeling it much more in the morning."

Fox claims that he jumped at the chance to work with Zemeckis again and that there was no reluctance about doing a sequel. Especially when he discovered that a whole new set of wrinkles had been added to the character of Marty McFly.

"In the last movie, Marty was pretty much a victim of circumstance," the actor observes. "He starts out that way in this one but we also discover a weakness in his personality along the way that tends to stir the pot and make things interesting."

"Marty has gone through enough of this time traveling stuff to think that manipulating it might benefit him. He thinks that, in an innocent way, playing with time just might help him out."

Fox (who discussed *Future I* in STARLOG #98) concedes that making the two films back to back came as a surprise.

"It's definitely turned into a bigger undertaking than I expected. We started in February and probably won't finish the principal photography on the next one until November. But, it's worth it."

"I'm real pumped and excited about doing these films. There has been a desire on many people's part to see a sequel. I know there are many people out there laying [in wait] for this film and me. But, I want to make it very clear that nobody connected with this film is merely trying to cash in. We're just out to make a great movie and have a good time."

A lunch tray is brought to Fox and he prepares to dig in, but not before he backs up Zemeckis' "being faithful to the faithful" comment.

"We're not laying pipe in this film for the benefit of those who didn't see the first *Back to the Future*," Michael J. Fox says. "There's not a lot of telling you things you already know. The film starts. Boom! Doc and I are in the car!"

"And stuff's happening!"

