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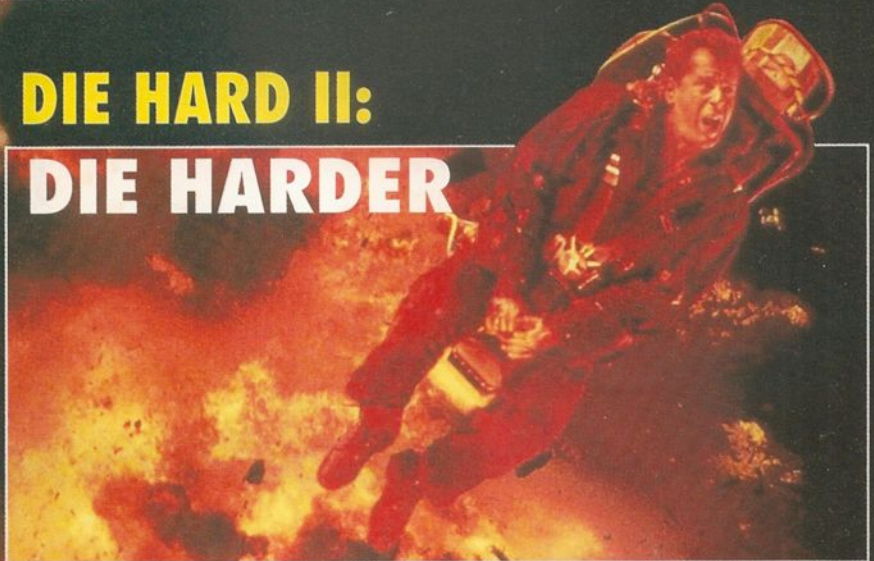
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Bob Zemeckis,
Mary Steenburgen
and Bob Gale talk about
BACK TO THE FUTURE III
DAYS OF THUNDER

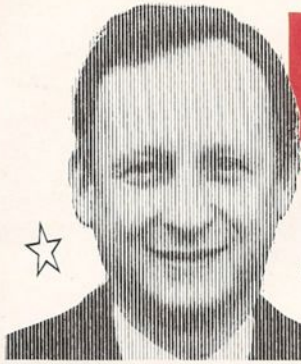
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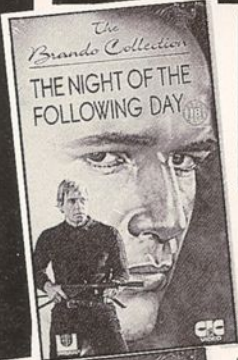
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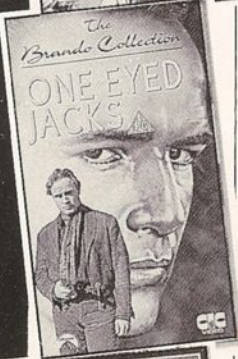
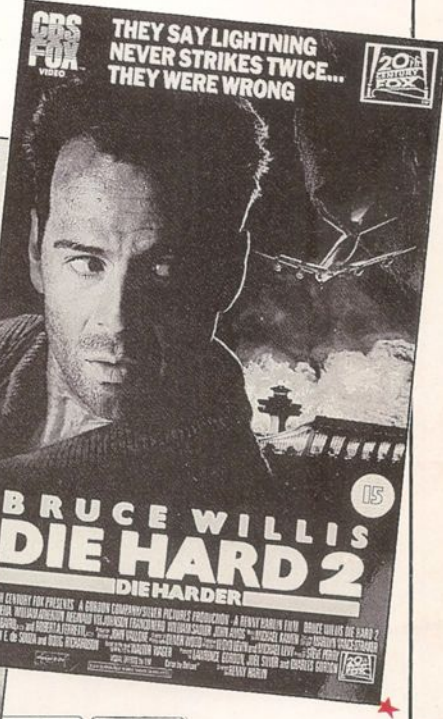
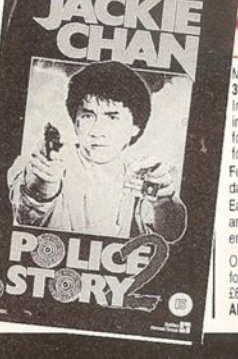
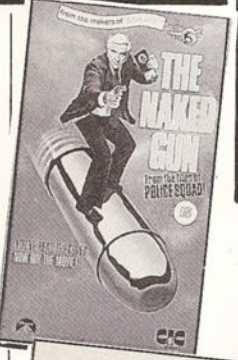
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Step toe & Son Ride Again
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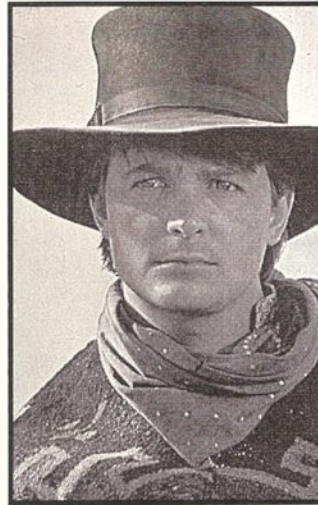
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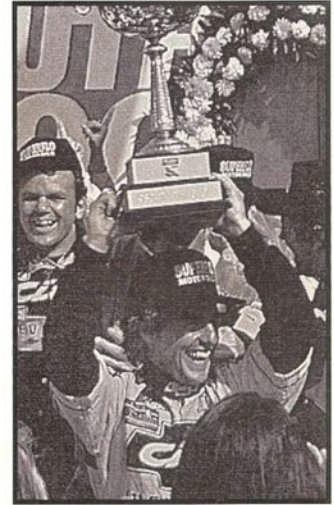
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BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III

Martyn Clayden talks

to cast and crew.

The conclusion of the Michael J. Fox time travel fantasy has at last arrived on video, yet as screenwriter, Bob Gale and director, Bob Zemeckis readily admit, there was more than an ounce of luck involved in the whole project getting off the ground in the first place.

"The idea that Bob G. and I always had", says Zemeckis, "was simply 'What would it be like for a teenager to see his father at the same age?' Everything grew out of that - the Doc's character, the necessity for a time machine and going back to the fifties."

For Gale, "Both Bob Z. and I grew up liking science-fiction in movies and magazines, so that's why we opted for a time machine rather than getting hit on the head, or a wish, or something along those lines."

Speaking almost in tandem, it's easy to see how the two Bobs finally managed to break down the stone wall of Hollywood conservatism about the whole project. "At the time", says Gale, "no one seemed to have faith in Bob Z. and my ability to make a movie that anyone would want to go and see, based on our previous record of doing films which didn't have great box office. So that's what coloured everybody's perception of the movie: Hollywood gets nervous about things that are too original. This was at the time when the most popular films of the day didn't have any story at all but were sort of expanded MTV rock videos."

Zemeckis finally directed *Romancing the Stone* and suddenly the *Back*





to the *Future* script looked a lot more attractive to the producers, but he still insisted that very few changes should be made: "There are little things changed in the script, but it's basically the same as the one we wrote back in 1980".

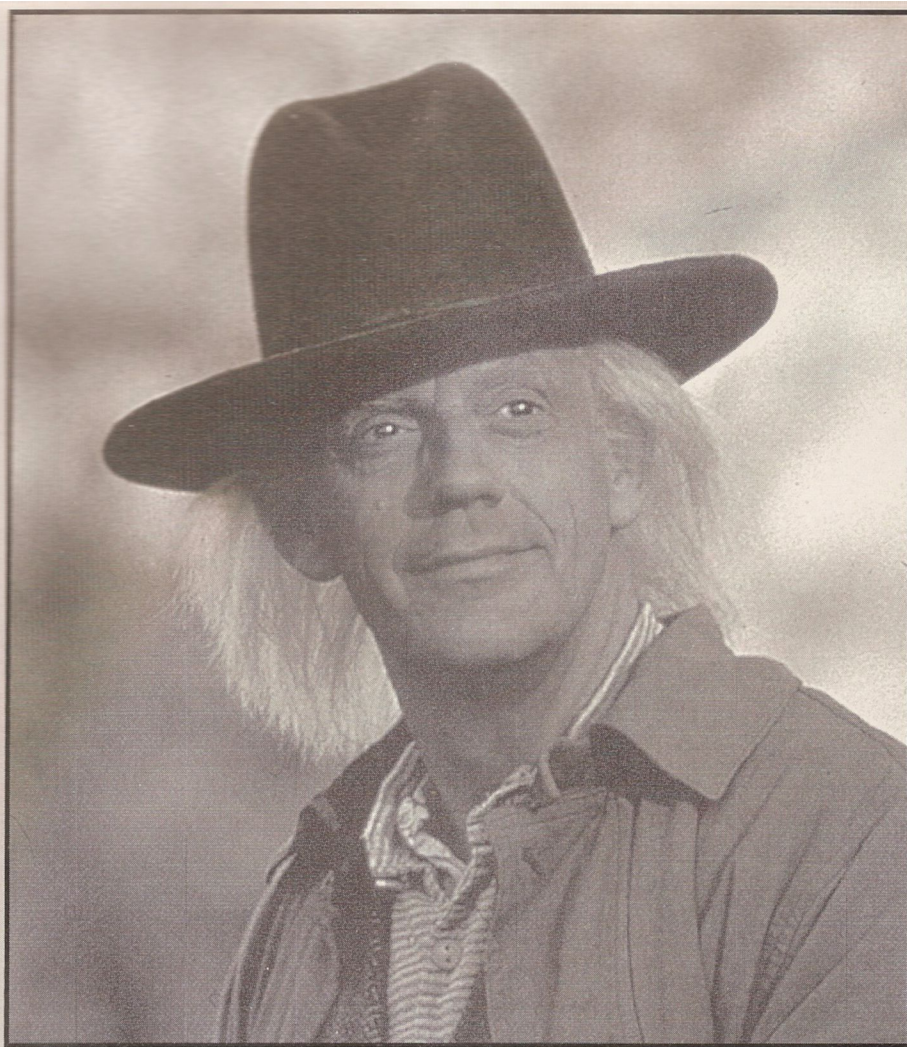
After the mammoth success of Part I, Parts II and III were shot back-to-back, which certainly presented some logistical headaches. At least in Part III the emphasis was shifted to the love story between the Doc and the local schoolteacher (Mary Steenburgen), and the setting was a tribute to the classical Westerns. The in-joke of Marty McFly choosing Clint Eastwood's name as an alter ego wasn't decided without due consultation!

"We sent the script to Clint and he read it and was very flattered that we wanted to use his name. Of course we asked him: you don't want Clint Eastwood to be angry at you - he strikes fear into our hearts!"

With that formidable obstacle overcome, the Bobs set to work with a vengeance, and for newcomer to the set, Mary Steenburgen, it was a golden opportunity:

"I'd only done one other Western before and that was my first film, which also featured Chris Lloyd, so with the fact that he was also in this, and that I wanted to work with Bob Zemeckis, and Bob Gale was writing a wonderful script - how could I





refuse? Also, women don't get asked to do action-adventure films very often, so it sounded like a great lark!"

While Mary obviously had the assistance of a stunt lady to help her with the toughest scenes, she didn't shirk the odd physical encounter. "I had an amazing stunt double who was a really gifted rider. She did the whole of the buggy sequence at the beginning of the film but I really got excited about doing the riding as much as I could - right up to the back of the train, and then she'd do the transfer. We decided

one day that I'd do the dangerous stuff and she'd do the really dangerous stuff!"

Her preparation for the role included a thorough background briefing from her two children. "They had a lot to say about everything because they were huge fans of Part I. They went from thinking I was just mum to a cool mum because I was working with these guys. Michael in particular is so funny and as far as I can tell, has remained totally unspoiled in a situation that would have turned most people into a major Primadonna. As for Tom

(Wilson, who plays the villain, Tannen), his victory walk down Main Street when he thinks he's shot Marty is one of the funniest things I've ever seen."

For Mary, it's a return to the sort of light comedy she used to do when she first started out in the movies. "At the beginning of my career", she says, "they called me a comedienne, then I did *Ragtime* and suddenly I was a serious dramatic actress, and wasn't offered any more comedy for a long time. If I was offered *Back to the Future IV* I'd do it, but I'm probably the only one who's dying to do it - the others are probably sick of it by now."

The two Bobs are adamant that they don't see another sequel in the offing, not least because of their love-hate relationship with the time machine car they finally destroyed in Part III. "We blew it up because we got fed up with having a car that didn't run. We really cheered - we'd been waiting months for the opportunity to smash this car! The DeLorean grew out of a joke that we put in the first film, that a farm family in the 1950's would find this thing in their barn and think it was a flying saucer. The DeLoreans at the time happened to be stainless steel with a gull winged door that looked like a hatch, then everything else that happened to the DeLorean company was an added bonus. We even got a fan letter from John DeLorean after he saw the first movie, thanking us for immortalising his car!"

So is there absolutely no future for Marty and Doc?

"They should live happily ever after, but as Doc said 'The future's up to you', so wherever they are in the space-time continuum we hope they do the right thing....."

BACK TO THE FUTURE III



This third and final part of the series picks up where *Back to the Future I* left off and *Back to the Future II* opened; in 1955 as the lightning strikes the clock tower. This time Marty's left all but stranded in 1955 while a dazed Doc. Emmett Brown is catapulted back to 1855, to the wild west. Such a time is not to everyone's liking, but the mad scientist is happy as a pig in poke among the cowboys and indians and sends word to Marty to leave him there. But, Marty unwittingly

discovers that Doc is about to be murdered in 1855 by old adversary Biff or, as the gun toters call him, Buford 'Mad dog' Tannen. So Marty rushes back to help his friend and stop the showdown.

The plot's familiar, only the date varies, but this is an improvement on *Back to the Future II* which was too clever for its own good. One can only keep up so much with the time travellers. *BTF III* also has the added bonus of a romance for the Doc. in the form of a lady school mistress, Clara Clayton played by Mary Steenburgen.

As we've come to expect, the effects are superb, the script nearly

as sharp as the original, and Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd (slightly calmer than the prequel), are in fine form.

Thus the trilogy ends with more of a bang than a whimper, but I'm glad they're leaving it there. Having grossed \$900 million to date, it has served its purpose well but has run its course and should be allowed to die in peace. **EN**

Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd,
Mary Steenburgen
CIC
113 mins

