

# Back to the Future III: The last blast to the past

## Hollywood Beat

By DAVID GIAMMARCO

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of close to \$80 million, over the course of a year. "But at the same time, it was the most difficult thing I've ever done. It's just very hard to do—I wouldn't recommend it to anyone."

"I jumped at the chance to work with Bob again. It's been such a real education for me just to be on the set with him," says Fox, who confesses he wouldn't have returned for the sequels had Zemeckis and Gale not been aboard.

Comic actor Tom Wilson, who reprises his role as Biff "Hey Butthead" Tannen for *III*, recalls vividly the original game plan for the intended sequels. "The first meeting we heard the storyline with Zemeckis, Gale, Fox, Lea Thompson, Chris Lloyd and myself. We were sitting at this table in the Amblin offices and Zemeckis and Gale go into this long, detailed explanation of what will happen in *Back to the Future II* and *III*. We were just blown away by it. The explanation took over an hour! But by the end of it, we were very excited by it all. We were literally jumping up and down in his office, just chomping at the bit to start this thing because it was such a huge undertaking."

For *III*, Wilson plays once again, another incarnation of Biff, this time forefather of the Old West, Buford "Mad Dog" Tannen. "He's the genetic link to the Tannen family—the bad seed. Something happened with his DNA molecules. He's the ancestor of all the Tannen genetic mutations," Wilson says proudly.

"You'll see Buford through most of the film and you'll see another characterization of the Biff that we saw in the present. But it's less jumping around from time to time. It wraps up a lot of loose ends that have been left by the first and second movies. It

answers a lot of questions. It's action packed but it goes back to the heartwarming aspects of the first movie," and with a gleam in his eyes adds, "I think it's a kinder, gentler movie."

Zemeckis, who juggled the shooting of *III* with the editing of *II*, agrees that *Part III*—which was filmed extensively in Sonora, California—was a picnic compared to *Part II*. "The second movie was just, every other shot, an elaborate special effect and it was all being done at the studio and Michael was still on his night schedule with *Family Ties*. But when we started this one," he says with a relieved sigh, "we went up to Northern California and we were in the beautiful locations and the weather was great and we were doing all the Western town sequences. We had horses all around and it was very quiet and peaceful and it really relaxed everyone. They've all rose to the occasion and I think that's what makes *III* such a great movie."

With *Part III*, Michael Fox plays yet another variation on the McFly family tree, this time his great-great grandfather Seamus, an immigrant Irish farmer who is the first McFly to settle in America.

"I tried to stay away from the stereotype, but there's no denying that he's a bit of a leprechaun," Fox laughs. "The make-up for Seamus wasn't nearly as extensive as old Marty or Marlene in *Part II*. But as I was sitting there, watching each new piece being applied, the character started to emerge. By the time it was finished, even though I wasn't consciously making the attempt, I suddenly found myself speaking with an Irish brogue."

Playing Lorraine McFly once again as well as Seamus' wife Maggie was quite an easier task for Lea Thompson, mostly because the prosthetic applications were far less extensive than in *Part II*, where she played three different versions of Lorraine. "I don't know what all that make-up does to your skin, but I'm blam-



Doc (Christopher Lloyd) and Marty (Michael J. Fox) see the effects of their intervention in the year 1885 on the space-time continuum.

ing my new set of wrinkles on it," Thompson says.

"It's the first time I play a completely new character. Maggie is a stern prairie woman and the great-great grandmother of Marty McFly. So it's actually very odd that I look so much like me and it's not really my family line—it's the McFly family line," Thompson says smiling. "There's something very kinky in there!"

A new addition to the returning cast is actress Mary Steenburgen, who plays an 1885 love interest for Christopher Lloyd and opens up another side for the wide-eyed, eccentric character of Doc.

"In *III*, it's a real tour-de-force," says Zemeckis about Lloyd's manic character. "The dimension

of his role is expanded. And he has so many more levels that he has to play rather than just the 'mad scientist.' You really get to see his full range as an actor in *III*."

What we also get to see, or rather not see, are the complex special effects that, according to Zemeckis, top the last two films but remain seamless to the untrained eye. "The effects in this one are even better than in *II*. What we do in *Part III* are effects that are so invisible that they're in fact more elaborate and they are much more state-of-the-art than in *II*. But because they're so good, you can't even see them, Zemeckis says, almost disappointed that they audience will never know that high-tech wizardry involved. "There's nothing in there to say,

'Of God—that's a flying car!' We do things in this movie that have never been done before and you won't even see them. People just don't expect to see special effects in a western setting. People who are really sharp will see them. But there are some that really defy explanation."

However, not even the top special-effects magician could duplicate the essential horseback riding scenes, involving Tom Wilson, Michael Fox, Mary Steenburgen and Chris Lloyd.

"Chris knows how to ride, as does Mary Steenburgen. Michael Fox has ridden a little but he didn't really know how and Tom Wilson didn't know how to ride at all," says Gale about his cast of makeshift Western heroes. "So while we were shooting *Part II*, Tom and Michael, on weekends or while they weren't shooting, would go out and take riding lessons so they'd get comfortable

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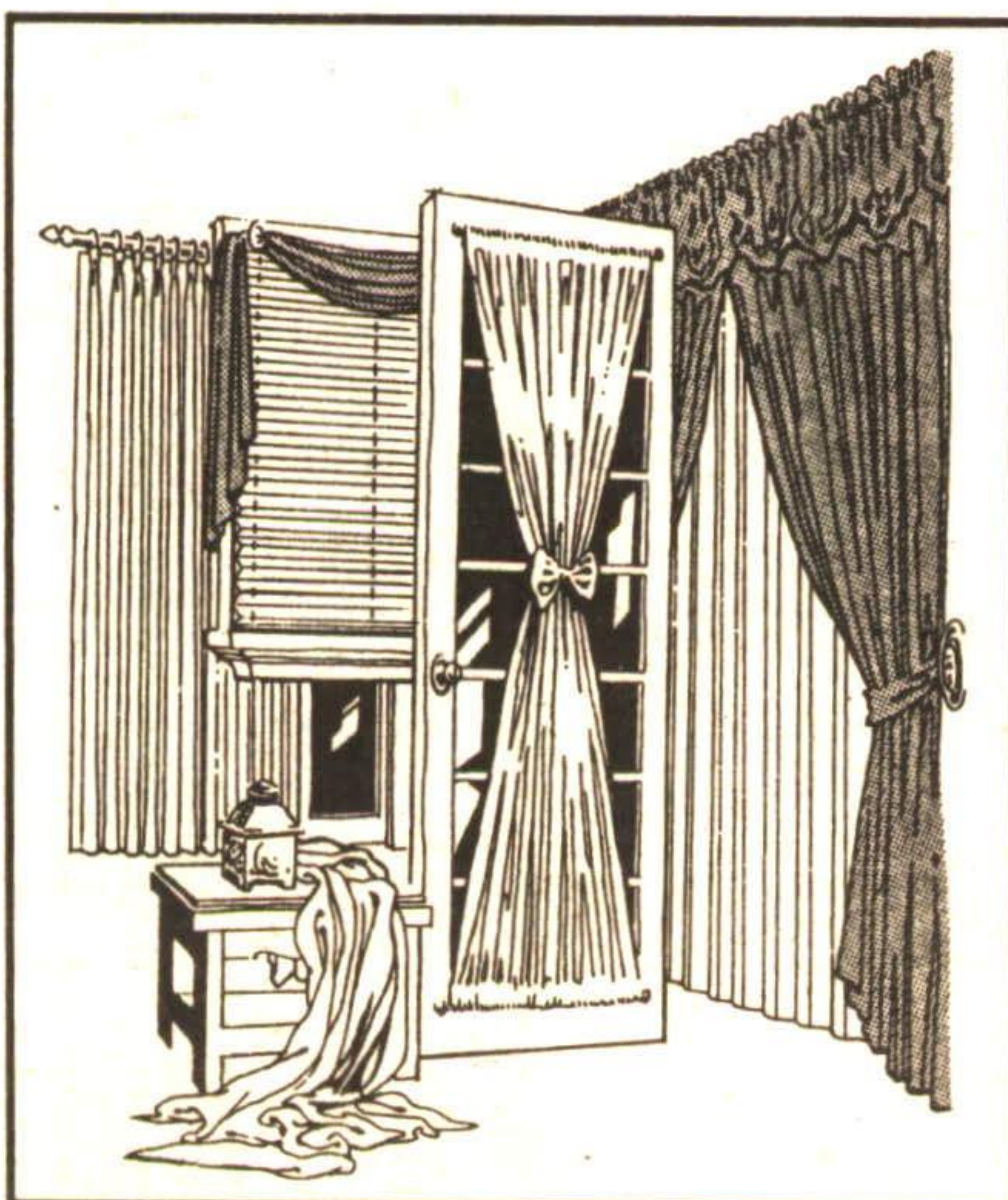
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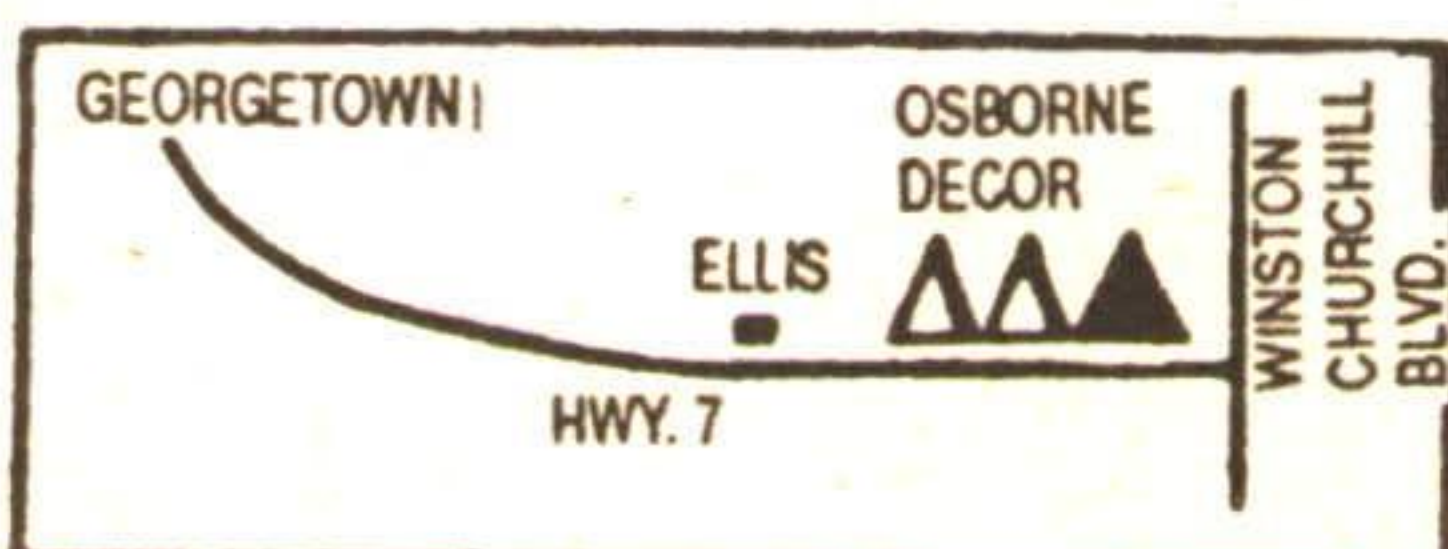
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