

## Back to the Future III ★★

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**Year of Release:** 1990

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** Skip It

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*Back to the Future II* ended with Doc Brown and Marty McFly buried up to their necks in time-travel mayhem. The fun of *Back to the Future III* should have been watching Marty and Doc solve all the paradoxes they created in part two. But unfortunately, director Robert Zemeckis and screenwriter Bob Gale somehow got sidetracked with the idea of making a Western.

Virtually all of *Back to the Future III* is set in the Wild West, circa 1885, so you have to judge the film *first* as a Western and *then* as a time-travel movie. As a Western, *Back to the Future III* is as flat as a pancake. The plot is merely a sequence of ho-hum clichés, from the big showdown to a train hijacking. They say the Western is dead; *Back to the Future III* seems determined to prove it.

Worse yet, the movie doesn't seem to care if its story line is consistent with the first two films. Parts one and two were meticulously thought-out in terms of the dangers of time travel. Part three, on the other hand, shows blatant disregard for the time continuum. The filmmakers sweep all of the dangling plot strands from part two under the rug and then expect you to forget about them. You're supposed to believe that in one fell swoop, Marty

and Doc fix all of the paradoxes in all four of the time periods.

*Back to the Future III* is the only installment in the series that wastes the supporting cast. Thomas Wilson sparkled in the last movie as the various versions of Biff, but here he gives a tiresome, one-note performance as "Mad Dog" Tannen, Biff's ill-tempered, Wild West ancestor. Lea Thompson, who always has been so charming as Marty's mother, has two meaningless scenes as his Great Great Grandmother. Mary Steenburgen has the unenviable task of bringing to life a half-baked love affair with Christopher Lloyd, who, according to the *New York Times*, receives his first ever screen kiss in *Back to the Future III*.

There's a sense of complacency about part three; it seems as if the filmmakers just phoned the movie in after they came up with the Wild West gimmick. The film lacks the creative flair and whimsical imagination that has made the series so much fun. Even Bill and Ted's adventure was more excellent than *Back to the Future III*.

P.S. How does a city boy, like Marty McFly, know how to ride a horse so well?