

Sequel pales to original; shallow plot hurts 'Roses'

NEW YORK (CNS) — The biggest rip-off to come down the pike in years, "Back to the Future Part II" (Universal) is nothing more than a succession of commercial endorsements for such high-visibility products as AMC cars, AT&T, Pepsi, Nike running shoes and its own sequel (prior to the closing credits of Part II, we're sitting ducks for a lengthy trailer for Part III).

Christopher Lloyd returns as wired scientist, Dr. Emmett Brown, whose DeLorean car is still a time-traveling marvel. This first sequel opens where the original film closed. It's October, 1985, and Doc is out to save Marty McFly's future progeny from being led astray by young hoods.

Along with Marty (Michael J. Fox) and his girlfriend Jennifer (Elizabeth Shue) in tow, Doc heads for the year 2015 where Marty must stop a chain of events that threaten to destroy his wimpy son Marty McFly Jr. and enhance his own reputation as a loser.

Chief adversary in 2015 is Griff Tannen (Thomas F. Wilson), grandson of Marty's father's nemesis, Biff. But old Biff (also played by Wilson) makes a creaky comeback when he steals the DeLorean and travels back to 1955 (site of Part I) to give his younger self a gift that will miserably alter the 1985 future of everyone forever.

Basically, this is just an empty show of technical wizardry by director Robert Zemeckis ("Who Framed Roger Rabbit") and a snappy litany of scientific mumbo jumbo concocted by screenwriter Bob

Gale, both of whom were responsible for "Back to the Future." Fox provides the film with a warm center, but his mugging and endearing charms will not be enough for adults who loved the unexpected originality and corny family humanism in Part I.

In essence, Part II is a cold, calculated revenue machine primed to drum up business for Part III, which is set for summer 1990 release.

Due to some minimal rough language laced with incidental sexual innuendoes, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

War of the Roses

Recalling the rise and fall of an upwardly mobile married couple, "The War of the Roses" (20th Century Fox) is told through the eyes of divorce attorney Gavin D'Amato (Danny DeVito).

DeVito also directed this slick black comedy that pulls lots of punches in its profile of the romantic meeting, mating and marriage of Oliver and Barbara Rose (Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner).

Based on the book by Warren Adler, the film zeroes in on the couple's 18-year evolution from happy penury to wealthy discontent as Oliver works his way up the ladder of success in a prime Washington law firm. Materialism seems to be Oliver's



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Actors Christopher Lloyd (left) and Michael J. Fox return as Doc Brown and Marty McFly in 'Back to the Future Part II.'

middle name as he pushes Barbara to become the perfect wife and to create the perfectly well-appointed home and children.

In the end, neither Barbara nor Oliver will win any sympathy votes for their behavior. The film does a good job of satirizing the anger, greed and community property angles of modern divorce settlements, but there is only vague sensitivity to the problems that led Barbara to end the marriage in the first place.

Although it's obvious that this marriage was devoted more to consuming collectibles than nurturing, loving and communicating, those issues take a back seat to the war that results during divorce negotiations.

Oliver's attorney, Gavin, is the only winner in this prizefight since the Roses' behavior inspires him to change his womanizing ways, marry and devote his life to building his marriage not his career or possessions. But despite DeVito's attempt to impart a comforting moral to the Roses' bleak, shallow story, some audiences may be unsettled by the no-holds-barred elements of this nasty battle of the sexes.

Due to some rough language, brief explicit sexual encounters and nasty cartoon violence between a husband and wife, the U.S.C.C. classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The M.P.A.A. rating is R — restricted.

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