

MURPHY'S LAW

AXEL FOLEY'S BACK IN BEVERLY HILLS,
COURTESY OF EDDIE MURPHY AND DIRECTOR JOHN LANDIS.
THE QUESTION IS: WHAT TOOK THEM SO LONG?

INTERVIEWS AND STORY BY DAVID SALCIDO.



Murphy serves up a third helping of comedic action with co-star Judge Reinhold

It's been seven long years since Detroit cop Axel Foley last turned Beverly Hills upside down with his special brand of street-smart heroics. A long time to wait, certainly, but for some there was never any question that he would be back someday. The character has a very strong following, as does the man who created him, **Eddie Murphy**. "What's cool, and the reason I think people respond to Axel is, he's a regular guy," Murphy says. "He's so normal and I think that's why they like him. And he's funny. You can identify with him. He's a lot like your friends or a lot like yourself, y'know?"

His fans, who come from all walks of life, couldn't agree more. One of the biggest is director **John Landis**, whose talent behind the camera has produced such hits as *Animal House*, *An American Werewolf In London* and two of Murphy's earlier hits *Trading Places* and *Coming To America*. "I really like Axel Foley," Landis says. "He's a really great char-

acter. He's got a very strong sense of values. He's funny. I like that he enjoys himself. He cracks himself up."

And so it was that a collaboration was inevitable. What was a bit unexpected, however, was Landis' insistence that this third installment in the hit series wouldn't be just another sequel. "I wanted to stay away from that," he says. "I wanted to make the next Axel Foley adventure—like *Tin Tin*, or *Superman*, or *Indiana Jones*, or *James Bond*. Well, specifically *James Bond*. We even used the Axel theme like the James Bond theme."

"Yeah, I heard John say that," Murphy says when informed of Landis' comparisons to that other serialized dispenser of justice. "I agree with him in that Axel Foley—the Axel Foley series—can be just like any of those *Lethal Weapon* or *Die Hards*. It's the same thing as Bond, which keep going as long as audiences respond to them. So I guess in that sense—he's a cop who's a step ahead of everybody—I guess that's the way he meant it."

But, even Bond had his Miss Money Penny and Q. Axel Foley is no different. One of the first to climb back onboard the Foley express was **Judge Reinhold**, reprising his role as Detective Billy Rosewood. "Because of the success of the second one I always figured there'd be a third one," Reinhold says. "It's been seven years and in the past three years people have been accosting me on the street to see this next film."

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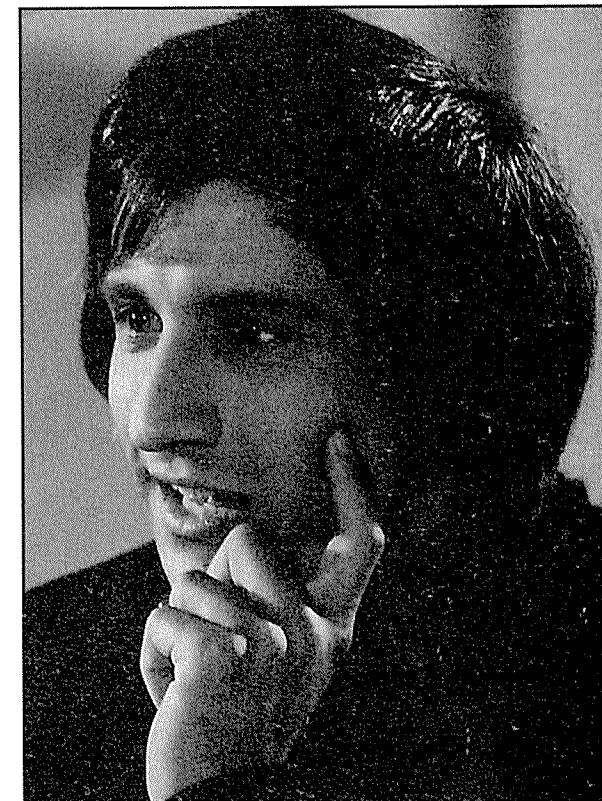
—JOHN LANDIS

So it was that he returned to his role with relish. "I really enjoyed making this movie," he says enthusiastically. "There were several times during the making of this movie that in the middle of the day I'd say, 'I'm not working hard enough. I'm worried that I'll walk through this because I feel so comfortable.' I've never been so comfortable. I felt like I should have been more neurotic and more stressed out. I was having such a good time that I hope it doesn't come through as being lazy."

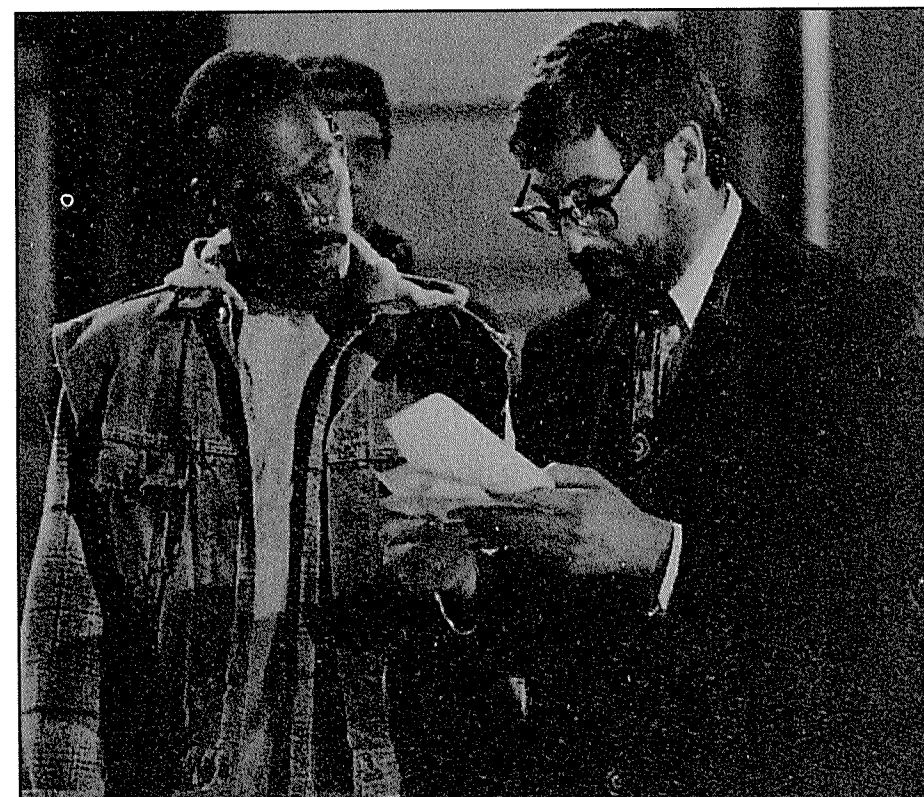
Then there's the return of Serge, played by **Bronson Pinchot**, a character from the first film who, according to Landis was the perfect choice for Foley's "Q". "The key to Axel, and the

one which made me realize that I would like to make a movie about this man, is the scene in Cop I with Serge" says Landis. "They couldn't be more different. I love the way they are together. I think it's so sweet, I mean, I just love the way Axel enjoys him. I like them together and to me that was the key to his character."

So if all the ingredients were there all along and everybody was eager for a replay, why did it take seven years for Foley to make his return? "The reason it took so long getting this picture together,"



Bronson Pinchot returns as Foley foil Serge



"I wanted to make the next Axel Foley adventure" Landis says of his third collaboration with Murphy

Murphy says. "Was getting the right environment for Foley to be who he is and still make it interesting. The amusement park—it took a while to put it all together, but that's the perfect setting. It's so sterile. No profanity, pick up all the trash, people in stuffed animal costumes and you've got Axel saying, 'There's a murderer here!'"

Reinhold agrees with that assessment. "I'm proud of the fact that we haven't stuffed a sequel down the public's throat every two years," he says. "I think it's to Eddie's credit that he didn't do one right away. He wanted to wait."

Does that mean it'll be another long wait for the next installment in the Axel Foley series? Well, according to Murphy, returning to the role isn't the problem. "Oh, yeah," he says. "I'd do another one if we could make it make sense. It's just that, it took us seven years to make it make sense this time. Maybe we'll do *Axel Foley In The 21st Century*, with spaceships and chicks in shiny jumpsuits and Axel saying 'Beam me up, Scotty.' What'd'ya think?"

Hm. Well, maybe waiting for the "right environment" isn't such a bad call after all.