

Is Bill Murray THE LAST OF THE GHOSTBUSTERS???

BARON MUNCHAUSEN True facts about the world's greatest liar

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Why it failed

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Martin Brundle
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as Beth Logan



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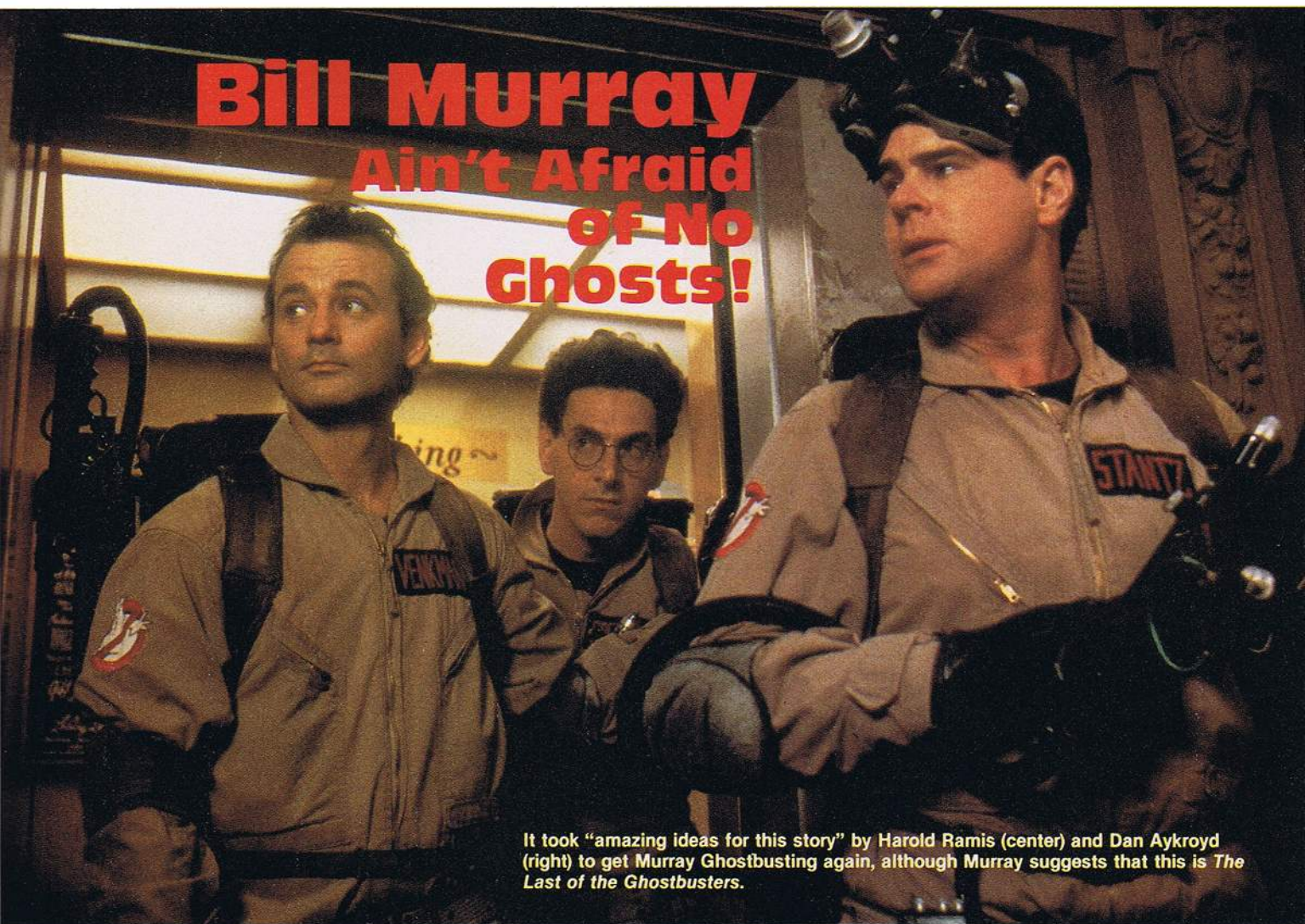
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Bill Murray Ain't Afraid of No Ghosts!



It took "amazing ideas for this story" by Harold Ramis (center) and Dan Aykroyd (right) to get Murray Ghostbusting again, although Murray suggests that this is *The Last of the Ghostbusters*.

Dusting off his proton blaster, this Ghostbuster prepares to scare up new laughs.

By IAN SPELLING

It had been four long years since Bill Murray haunted movie theaters with *Ghostbusters*. But this past Christmas, Murray resurfaced to raise different spirits as Frank Cross, the curmudgeonly network president who tried to siphon every last buck from the pockets of holiday television viewers in *Scrooged*. In the tradition of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*, Cross' life was forever altered by the appearances of ghosts past (David Johansen), present (Carol Kane) and future, each of whom instilled in him the true meaning of Christmas.

The opportunity to make *Scrooged* first arose well over two years ago, but Murray elected to wait and enjoy his free time. Finally, the desire to perform again hit. "But when I wanted to work, the scripts were just *not* good," Murray explains.



Will the team of Murray and Carol Kane be reunited in future films? "Over my dead, lifeless body," reports the actor.

Then, he returned to the *Scrooged* idea. "We tore up the script so badly that we had parts all over the lawn. There was a *lot* I didn't like. To remake the story, we took the romantic element [Frank's relationship with his former girl friend, Claire, played by Karen (Starman) Allen] and built that up a little more. It existed in the script's original version, but we had to make more out of it. The family scenes were kind of off, so we worked on that.

"We shot a big, long sloppy movie, so there's a great deal of material that didn't even end up in the film. It just didn't work. You tend to forget what was wrong. It's hard. I just figured that anyone who's good could step into this part and have a *lot* of fun with it. It's sort of a wicked character. The idea of making a funny *Scrooge* was an

IAN SPELLING, NY-based writer, profiled Martin Landau in issue #139.

All Scrooged Photos: Copyright 1988 Paramount Pictures

Back off, man, Bill Murray is a
Ghostbuster again!



inspired touch. That's what was appealing to me about it."

After collaborating with writers Mitch Glazer and Michael O'Donoghue (who penned *Saturday Night Live's* first *Star Trek* spoof, published in *STARLOG* #14), Murray felt confident enough to begin shooting. Director Richard Donner (*STARLOG* #93, 97), who has helmed such diverse projects as *Ladyhawke*, *Superman* and *Lethal Weapon*, had never before dealt with an improvisational comedian as his leading man. Donner considered his task as simple or as difficult as keeping his star in control and positioning performers around him. As time passed, however, Donner discovered the true actor in Bill Murray.

"You don't direct Billy, you pull him back," admits Donner. "Billy really became an actor to me during *Scrooged*. I had always thought of him as an entertainer. Now, having worked with him, I could see him playing a heavy. He's a good enough actor. You give him a platform, make him as comfortable as possible, and he comes at you in every direction. He did for me."

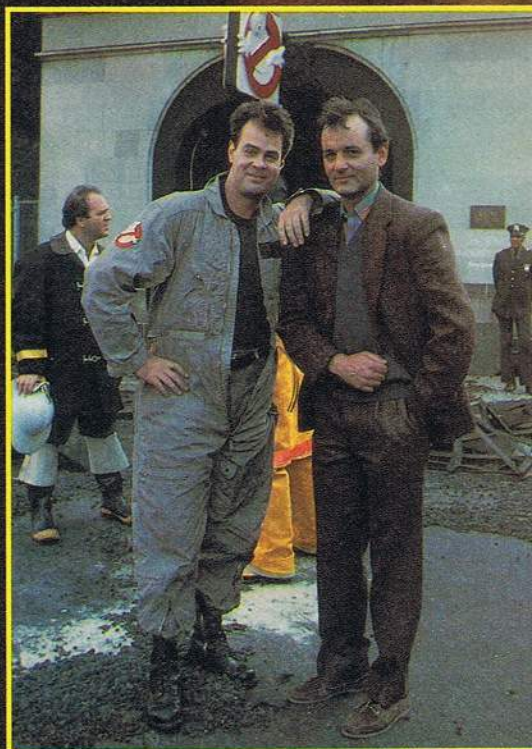
Seasonal Spooks

Despite Donner's assertion that Murray came into his own during the *Scrooged* shoot, Murray himself claims to have learned more about the pressures of singlehandedly carrying an entire production. *Ghostbusters* starred Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Sigourney Weaver, Rick

Moranis, Ernie Hudson and Murray, spreading the on-the-set responsibility among the leads. "*Scrooged* was harder [than *Ghostbusters*] because I was by myself, really. Even though there are a number of people in the movie, they only had cameos. They would stroll in for a day or two and split. I was there every day," Murray notes, "and it was like flunking grade school again and again."

Worse yet, Frank Cross evolved into a physically demanding role when Murray began sharing scenes with Carol Kane. As the Ghost of Christmas Present, Kane punched, pinched and pummeled Murray frequently.

The work frustrated the emotional actress, who, according to both Murray and Donner, melted into 20-minute-long crying jags at inopportune moments. As painful as the role was for Kane, Murray suffered more for his art. "There's a piece of skin that connects your lip with your gums and it was really pulled away," recalls Murray of one encounter with Kane. "She really hurt me, but it was my idea to be physical and it was her idea just to hit me as opposed to pulling the punches."



Convincing Murray to again don his proton pack alongside buddy Dan Aykroyd wasn't easy. "I was the last holdout," admits Murray.



All work and no play? That's not true as David Johansen and Bill Murray are caught out of character and costumes in this candid shot on the *Scrooged* set.



All Ghostbusters Photos: Copyright 1984 Columbia Pictures



"Billy really became an actor to me during *Scrooged*," says director Richard Donner.

Asked if he would consider teaming with Kane again in the future, Murray chuckles, and in a sly does-he-really-mean-it tone, he replies, "Over my dead, lifeless body."

The word "pressure" pops up often. Though Murray tries to laugh it off, there's truth to the thought that a great deal—his stature in Hollywood and his immense popularity with audiences—may have been riding on the box office fate of *Scrooged*. "I've had some success in movies, so I really don't think about success. You *like* to have it," Murray admits in a reflective moment, "but I'm not desperate for it. I'm pleased if people really like *Scrooged*. If many people see it, I'll be happy, not just because it makes money, but it would mean people said, 'You should go see this movie.'"

"*Scrooged* was a miserable gig. I had much more fun on *The Razor's Edge*, which made *no* money. But I got to go around the world and meet all kinds of people. On *Scrooged*, I was trapped on a dusty, smelly and smokey set in Hollywood for three-and-a-half months, having a lousy time by myself, and just coughing up blood from this fake snow that was falling all the time. So, the work *is* everything."

A happier relationship will resume as Sigourney Weaver floats back into Murray the Ghostbuster's life.

Spectral Sequel

Murray promises the wait for his next movie won't be nearly as long as the one for *Scrooged*. "It's *not* going to be called *Ghostbusters II*," he reveals. "We'll burn in hell if we call it *Ghostbusters II*. I've suggested *The Last of the Ghostbusters*, to make sure there won't be anything like a *Ghostbusters III*. But the script is nowhere near ready, and we start shooting soon. [Filming, in fact, began at presstime, November 28.] Jeez, *more* pressure. We'll figure it out... or we won't."

"I was the last holdout. They finally just waved too much money in my face," laughs Murray. "I really *didn't* want to do it for all the obvious reasons, but the reasons *to* do it were obvious, too. With Dan and Harold and Moranis and Sigourney, we really had a ball. That's really the most fun I've had on a movie. It's the most fun group to be with."

"We weren't so crazy about making money, or being desperate, and it worked," he confesses. "Finally, Dan and Harold said, 'We've got some ideas here. What do you think?' We spent a couple of days talking, and they did have some *amazing* ideas for this story."

Shortly before presstime, even Murray couldn't confirm Sigourney Weaver's participation in the sequel. In the years since the original *Ghostbusters*, Weaver (STARLOG #109) has established herself as a major Hollywood force. Based on her Academy Award-nominated performance as Ripley in *ALIENS* and the financial triumph of James Cameron's film, producers consider the actress "bankable," meaning she wields enough clout to see as controversial and un-

commercial a movie as *Gorillas in the Mist* brought to the screen as a vehicle for her. Though Murray jokingly refers to *Gorillas* as "The Monkey Movie," Weaver's star has risen to the point where accepting a minor role in a *Ghostbusters* adventure could represent a poor career move.

"She's not even in the *cartoon*, so I don't know if she's going to be in the film," Murray says. "The original idea was that she *would* be in it. The ideas they sold me on to say, 'OK, let's do it,' are no longer in the script. Sigourney was one of those ideas."

"They've gone all the way around trying to figure out how to make it. I had to audition with some actresses, but we all like Sigourney. The only problem with Sigourney is she's *so* tall. Naaah, I'm just kidding. She's tall, but she's not *too* tall. The problem is that you would wind up with a story that was tilted and like the *Flinstone* family. Sigourney and I would be this major thing and it would be hard to figure out how the *Ghostbusters*' dynamic would grow. The sort of story they were writing ended up not really needing the other three guys."

Fortunately, though, matters have been settled. Reached at presstime, Weaver confirms she *will* be in *The Last of the Ghostbusters* as "the female lead, as far as I know."

Murray looks forward to the filming—sort of. "Oh, what the hell," he sighs. "Even if it's a dog, this sequel's going to make money because so many people are going to say, 'Let's see if they ruined it' or 'Let's see if it's any good.' It's a creative process and that's all that counts. We've got a few weeks yet," Bill Murray notes. "It should be interesting." ❄️

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