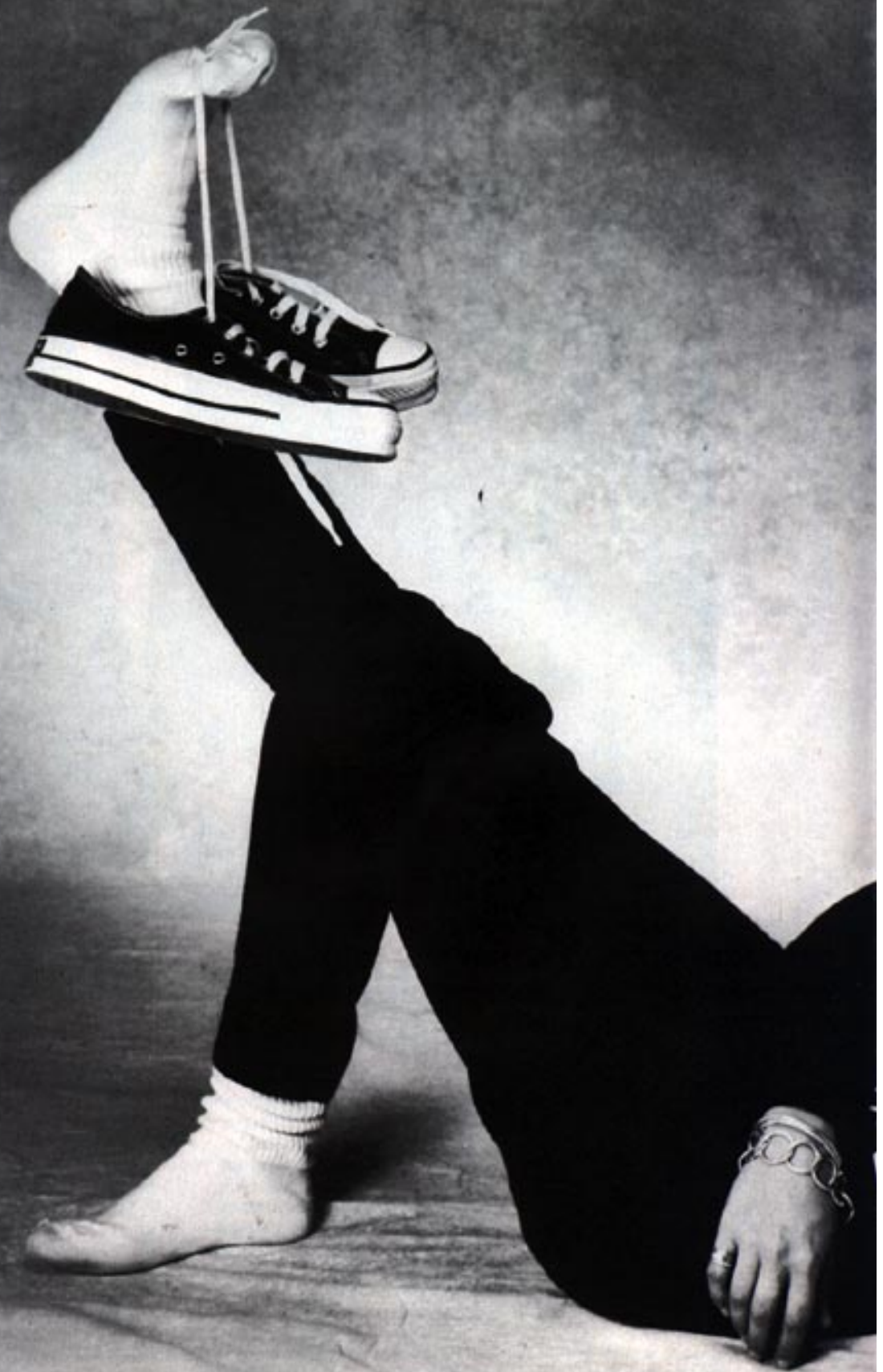


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Photograph by Joe McNally/Wheeler Pictures

MICHAEL J. FOX AND HIS *FAMILY TIES* FLAME COURTNEY COX HAVE A BIG ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE—THEY'RE NOT DATING

She's one of the most written-about new actresses on TV, yet she's as genuine as the proverbial girl next door. Something seems amiss. Is this really the face that launched a thousand rumors? Yes, but apparently through no fault of her own, alas. In 1984, when she bopped with the Boss in Springsteen's *Dancing in the Dark* video, drooling dweebs kept coming up to her and saying, "You're Bruce's new girlfriend, right? Or his sister, right? Or his daughter, right?" Wrong on all counts. Today, at 23, Cox still has the potential

for causing canards. The minute she was signed to play Michael J. Fox's girlfriend on NBC's *Family Ties*, rumor mills went into triple overtime, reporting that Fox had dumped snuggle-bunny Tracy Pollan and was twisting the night away at boltes on both coasts with Cox. Wrong again. "It's really funny," says Fox, 26. "People always want to read there's romance when it's just two actors having a good time working with each other. I'm having a great personal relationship with Tracy and a great profes-

sional relationship with Courtney."

As for Cox, she howls: "I've never been to a nightclub with Michael. I've never even been to some of the clubs the tabloids named. Even my stepfather called me up and said, 'So, I hear you're busy for Thanksgiving.'" Matter of fact she was busy—spending the holiday with friends in L.A., not cavorting with Fox. She plans to make her annual trip home to Birmingham, Ala., for Christmas, when she'll be bringing a trunkload of gifts for her parents, step-parents and 12 siblings.



"I knew I was never going to be a big model," says Cox. "I don't have the look. I'm not glamorous."



Cox stays in touch with chums (like family friends Kate and Charles Simpson) by keeping nine phones in her house.

"The kiss scene didn't need many takes," Cox says of her first buss with Fox. "We did it a couple of times to get it locked in."

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The youngest of four children, Cox was 10 when her parents divorced. Her mother married a man with five kids; her father, a woman with four. Courteney, who considers herself part of both families, says there are advantages to being the youngest in a baker's dozen. "There were too many kids to be spoiled," she laughs. "By the time I came around, it was, 'Courteney, please, I can't be bothered.'"

After graduating from high school in Birmingham, Cox headed for a modeling and acting career in New York. A few jobs came along, but *Dancing in the Dark* was the one that really clicked. Competing with 300 other women, Cox was asked by director Brian De Palma what her experience was. "Two days on *As the World Turns*," she responded, "but I guarantee you can change that for me." He did. Though Cox wasn't a Springsteen fan—"I knew who he was, but I was into Earth, Wind and Fire"—her future employers apparently were. On the strength of the video, she was cast in two movies, *Down Twisted* and *Masters of the Universe*, and one NBC series, 1985's *Misfits of Science*—bloopers all, but at least she was working.

She'll have better luck with *Family Ties*, a proven hit for the past six seasons. Cox plays a psychology major studying overachievers, and she finds a natural subject in Fox's Alex Keaton. Their relationship started in the first episode this season with one of the steamiest kisses ever seen on the show. Since then it's progressed to a full-fledged relationship.

But no, art in this case does not imitate life. Cox is dating but has nothing steady going on. Her last serious romance, a three-year relationship with an East Coast music agent, came to an end last year. "We didn't break up, per se," says Cox. "We're still good friends. Bicoastal relationships are hard." Usually avoiding the L.A. club circuit—"I'm a lightweight when it comes to alcohol, and I'm too shy to be a big dancer"—she spends much of her time in her new \$265,000 two-bedroom ranch home. Her hobbies: playing the drums—a big, black Rogers kit that she swiped from the *Masters of the Universe* set—and cooking down-home Southern meals for friends. Kind of a dull existence? Not exactly, Cox shrugs. "It's just that there's not really any good dirt." We can wait.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

