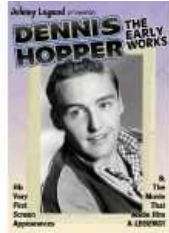




Dennis Hopper: The Early Works DVD Review

Posted by Christina Zaw adiw sky on December 24, 2010 in DVD Review s | 5 Comments



Dennis Hopper had a pivotal year as an actor in 1955, we learn in **Dennis Hopper: The Early Works**, out on DVD on December 7th, 2010, by Video Service Corp. In January, February and March of 1955, Hopper appeared in three well-known TV shows, *Medic*, *Public Defender*, and *The Loretta Young Show*, playing a wide range of characters, from a hardened juvenile delinquent to a misunderstood epileptic. (Later that same year, bolstered by these appearances, he starred as James Dean's right-hand man in *Rebel Without A Cause*, which garnered him much acclaim.)

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The above-mentioned television shows appear in their entirety on this DVD. Then we see a performance from January of 1964 on *Petticoat Junction*, so early in the series that the familiar (from TV re-runs) theme song has entirely different lyrics. Hopper plays Alan, a poet-beatnik from Greenwich Village dedicated to unveiling all hypocrisy while shouting "in the atrophied ear of America," yet Uncle Joe (Edgar Buchanan) and Kate (Bea Benaderet) prove wiser, Kate especially exposing Alan's unartistic greed as he tries to write a four-line jingle for a dog food commercial to try to gain \$2,000! After being called "a corpse in a cemetery" by Alan, Uncle Joe quips, "You can't expect a corpse to answer you back, especially if your name isn't Pops."

Two previews of the era, with Hopper playing the head of a juvenile delinquent gang named *Cowboy* in *Key Witness*, and sailor *Johnny Drake* in the film *Night Tide*, seem very out-dated in black and white, particularly the former, where kids in gangs are "out for kicks and they don't care how they get them or who they hurt." But the true jewel of this DVD is in the film *Night Tide*, shown in all 84 of its glorious minutes in black and white Letterbox, officially released in 1963 under the directorship of Curtis Harrington. Inspired by Val Lewton's famous *Cat People*, the movie is based on a quotation by Edgar Allen Poe, "And so all the night long, I lie by the side of my darling, my life and my bride/In her sepulchre by the sea, In her tomb by the sounding sea," and in it Hopper, as on-leave sailor *Johnny Drake* in Santa Monica, California, meets *Mora* (Linda Lawson), a real (or is she? because the film keeps us guessing throughout) mermaid! She also plays a mermaid in a tented side-show and the film is filled with fortune-tellers, voo-doo dancers, people from other planets and a sea captain who tries to explain away some murders. Intriguing and mysterious, as "the answer already lies in your heart," we wonder if *Johnny Drake* falls in love with what is really an illusion, or if he is being deceived and in great danger of losing his life.

Throughout, Dennis Hopper is young, vital, extremely magnetic and charming, vibrant, and an excellent actor. We can see why his star rose quickly and he remained in the eye of the American public! This entire vintage DVD is a joy and a pleasure to view, and Dennis Hopper fans certainly can't afford to miss seeing Hopper's very first screen appearances and the movie, *Night Tide*, that made him a legend!

[Hopper, Dennis - The Early Works](#)
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DVD Release Date: December 7, 2010

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DVD Release Date: December 7, 2010

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Total Running Time: 3 hours, 11 minutes

Black & White Letterbox/Mono

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About Christina Zawadiwsky

Christina Zawadiwsky is Ukrainian-American, born in New York City, has a degree in Fine Arts, and is a poet, artist, journalist and TV producer. She has received a National Endowment for the Arts Award, two Wisconsin Arts Boards Awards, a Co-Ordinating Council of Literary Magazines Writers Award, and an Art Futures Award, among other honors. She was the originator and producer of Where The Waters Meet, a local TV series created to facilitate the voices of artists of all genres in the media, for which she won two national and twenty local awards, including a Commitment to Community Television Award. She is also a contributing editor to the annual Pushcart Prize Anthology, the recipient of an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association, and has published four books of poetry. She currently reviews movies for <http://www.moviescribes.com>, music for <http://www.musicroomreviews.com>, and books for <http://www.bookroomreviews.com>.

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JP

December 26, 2010 at 8:44 am

I've always liked Dennis Hopper. He can play characters that are good and characters that are evil, and he is very intense and magnetic.

[REPLY](#)



Chris

December 26, 2010 at 8:45 am

Many people don't know that Dennis Hopper had an artistic side (visual arts) where he did a lot of photography and artwork himself. It's good to see this DVD when he's just recently passed away. May his memory live on.

[REPLY](#)



Pat

December 26, 2010 at 8:46 am

One of America's legendary iconic actors, Dennis Hopper, which makes getting this DVD almost a requirement for film buffs!

[REPLY](#)



Joan Colby

December 27, 2010 at 5:26 pm

What an extraordinary talent Dennis Hopper was. It is interesting to learn more about his early career as most fans became aware of him in Easy Rider.

[REPLY](#)



gman

December 29, 2010 at 2:18 pm

I love Dennis Hopper but did not know about his early career in film. To think that he starred in black and white films is amazing to me. I think this dvd is a must have for Dennis Hopper fans.

[REPLY](#)

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