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Dennis Hopper: The Early Works Features ...



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# Dennis Hopper: The Early Works Features a Hopper We Hardly Knew

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When you think of Dennis Hopper, what images come to mind? Fresh faced? Innocent? Naïve? Quiet? Decent? Kind? Thoughtful? Loving? Respectful? Well, maybe not. But back in 1955 (the year he appeared in *Rebel Without a Cause*, when he was making his first television appearances, he was the model of the American boy. Some of the roles in which he was cast were troubled characters, but they were troubled in such an *acceptable* way.

Johnny Legend (is he real? Is he legendary?) just released *Dennis Hopper: The Early Works*, a



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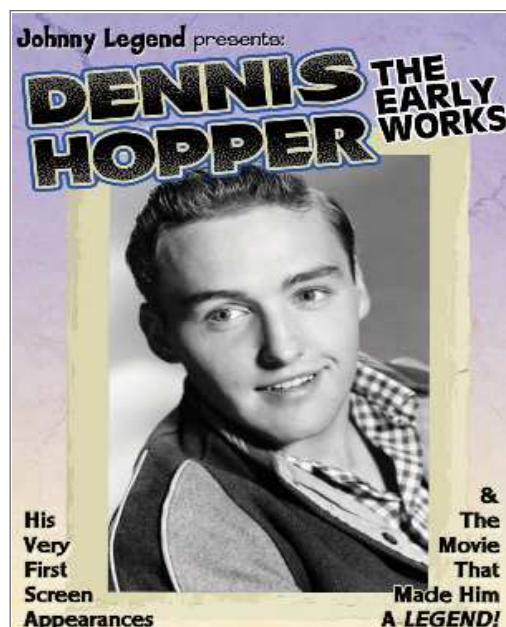
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collection of early Hopper appearances on classic shows like *Medic*, a program many children were not allowed to watch because it was too “graphic” (Those were the days!), and in *Night Tide*, his first “serious” leading role.



In January 1955, an 18-year-old Hopper appeared as the “Boy in the Storm,” on an episode of *Medic*. He portrayed a young epileptic in an episode designed to make the public aware that epilepsy and insanity were not synonymous. His poignant portrayal is marred by the viewer constantly asking, “This is Dennis Hopper?”

The following month, he was featured in the “Mama’s Boy” episode of another series (like *Medic*) with heavy-handed narration, *Public Defender*. In this meaty role, he plays a boy accused of murder after a friend came at him with a lead pipe (do all friends fight like this?), then died when Hopper pushed him away.

Then, in March 1955, Hopper played a spoiled rich kid on *The Loretta Young Show*. This episode is a challenge for the audience; between the film quality and Loretta Young’s extremely heavy, fake Swedish accent, it’s nearly impossible to understand half the dialogue. Hopper’s role was notable for being one of his earlier antisocial personality displays.

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