

'Flashback' an instantly forgettable movie



Kiefer Sutherland and Dennis Hopper star in "Flashback."
Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

By John Payne
Staff Reporter

There must be two Dennis Hoppers. What other explanation can there be? Yes, that's it, two guys named Dennis Hopper who look and sound exactly alike, but make drastically different choices with movie roles.

The first Dennis Hopper co-wrote, directed and starred in the American watershed "Easy Rider." He was a doped-up psychopath in

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"Blue Velvet," a doped-up photojournalist in "Apocalypse Now," and just plain doped-up in "River's Edge."

The second Dennis Hopper gave us "My Science Project" as well as one of the most offensive, worthless flicks ever, "Texas Chainsaw Massacre II."

So which Dennis Hopper shows up for "Flashback," the new, generation-gap action/comedy? Well, 1990 is just underway, but "Flashback" is an early favorite for "most idiotic movie of the year" honors, and the second Dennis Hopper has reared his ugly head once again.

The story begins in Washington, D.C., where FBI rookie John Buckner (Kiefer Sutherland) is assigned to transport a recently-arrested political activist from San Francisco to Spokane, Wash. Huey Walker (Hopper), has been on the run from the feds for 20 years, ever since he played a practical joke on Vice President Spiro Agnew during a campaign speech.

Walker was arrested for the prank and became a counterculture folk hero after he escaped custody in 1969. As Buckner's Boss

explains: "Walker made the FBI look foolish. We don't like to look foolish."

Buckner then flies to California to ensure that the bureau doesn't look foolish again. Of course, the two can't take the one-hour flight from San Francisco to Spokane, because, darn the luck, the airport is fogged in. So they travel by train, and an eventful train ride it is.

Seem familiar? It should; this premise has been used many times, and much better by movies like "Midnight Run" and "48 Hours." "Flashback" offers nothing fresh in the way of the standard buddy movie.

Hopper simply isn't suited for comedy, and the lame script given to him by writer David Loughery doesn't help. The laughs are few and far between, and Hopper's ranting hippie character wears thin quickly.

But what is most annoying about "Flashback" is that it pretends to say something substantial about modern-day norms as compared with '60s values.

The flower-power allusions are simply thrown in to camouflage a very tired movie formula. There should be a law discontinuing the use of "Born to be Wild" in movies; it's been done far too often.

Kiefer Sutherland is an interesting young actor, but frankly, he cannot carry an entire film at this point in his career. He often is asked to do so in "Flashback," playing straight-man to Hopper's stupid one-liners.

The idea of a '60s radical befriending an '80s conformist, although not altogether original, might have made for an interesting movie. However, a standard, predictable story line and overacting by Hopper make "Flashback" an instantly forgettable flick.

"Flashback" is playing at the Plaza 4 Theater, 201 N. 12th St.

Pamphlet details efforts of music censors

By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

"There's a healthy way to be Big Brother."

-- Middlesex (New Jersey) County District Attorney, whose office runs a computer surveillance network directed at heavy metal bands and fans

The editors of "Rock & Roll Confidential" magazine have published a pamphlet which details the continuing efforts to restrict or ban access to many forms of rock music.

"You've Got a Right to Rock: Don't Let Them Take it Away" describes recent incidents in cities across America which are part of an organized effort to regulate rock music in this country.

The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) gained instant notoriety in 1985 with a combination of strong political ties and overblown rhetoric about the evils of rock music.

PMRC and similar groups with ties to the religious right thrived on blanket condemnations and political muscle-flexing.

Since PMRC evolved, concerts have

been banned, records have been slipped behind the counter or banned outright, and trials have been held. Musicians and fans have tried to resist attempts at censorship and intimidation with varying success.

The "Right to Rock" pamphlet highlights the growing organization of the efforts of some to resist the agendas of PMRC and similar groups.

The cover price of \$3 is a little much for a 16-page pamphlet, but the information inside is valuable. The pamphlet is full of amazing examples of music censorship in action.

Heavy metal, rap and punk are the most common targets of censorship efforts, but some of the most innocuous musicians also have been targeted.

There are extremes in any art form, but by confusing these extremes with entire genres, PMRC supporters have opened themselves up to the sort of criticism found in this pamphlet.

This pamphlet shows how would-be censors try to label everything associated with certain musical styles to be "immoral" or "obscene," among other vast generalizations.

It also reveals how control over

music is only one part of a much larger agenda for many groups similar to PMRC. The notion of protecting children from harm seems innocent enough, but many groups want to control much more than just music.

Consider some examples from the pamphlet:

"The Rev. Shane Westhoelter, of Missouri Project Rock, calls Catho-

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lics 'cannibals' and claims Bruce Springsteen put satanic messages on 'Dancing in the Dark.'

"Project Rock distributes tapes claiming that Hollywood promotes race mixing (referring to Martin Luther King Jr. as 'Martin Lucifer' King) and that the Holocaust never happened."

"St. Paul-based ministers Dan and Steve Peters stage record burnings around the country as they denounce Tina Turner for her Buddhist faith." They also claim, "The Jewish star is the universal symbol for Satan."

These may be some of the most extreme examples, but the sheer

number of less extreme examples is staggering. PMRC has mainstream appeal, as well as the support of numerous corporations, ranging from Coors and 7-11 to Marriott and 7-UP.

"You've Got a Right to Rock" examines the wide range of musicians who have become targets. Outrage over KISS, Ozzy Osbourne, NWA, the Dead Kennedys or WASP is not surprising.

Some groups produce music merely for its shock value and are no more threatening than a street corner revolutionary, while others may be truly threatening, yet no such distinction is made by many who seek to control music.

To see that the music of Bruce Springsteen, the Rolling Stones, U2 and others has been pulled from store shelves or blacklisted shows the potential power and scope of efforts to control music.

In its "Two Faces Have I" section, the pamphlet details some ironic results of trying to label all rock music as bad in a society which approves and embraces such music.

According to the pamphlet, "Strom Thurmond, South Carolina senator,

tried to deport John Lennon and steered the Child Protection Act through Congress. His wife is a member of the PMRC, yet Thurmond helped to get his 16-year-old daughter Nancy auditioned for a job as an MTV VJ in 1987."

This pamphlet is exhaustive in documenting absurd or excessive attempts at controlling music. But in the final pages, different tactics are used. The pamphlet proposes eight ways to "blunt the coordinated nationwide attack on rock and roll."

Confronting legislative efforts, circulating petitions, calling press conferences and spreading information among the music community all are included.

Despite occasional, unnecessary swipes at those it opposes, "You've Got a Right to Rock" makes a strong case, and should do much to pull musicians and fans out of apathy before their music is pulled away permanently.

"Rock & Roll Confidential" is available from Box 15052, Long Beach, Calif. 90815. A one-year subscription costs \$19.95.

Ministry LP abandons pop sound for blaring guitars, buzzsaw vocals

By Michael Deeds
Senior Editor

Ministry
"The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste"
Sire Records

Change is a rare thing in the heavy metal music industry, but when it strikes, the results can be breathtaking.

Take Ministry, the Al Jourgensen/Paul Barker combo that cut some of the most danceable synthesizer music in the mid-'80s.

Ministry is still here today. But forget the pop stuff.

Abrasive, industrial grind has replaced smooth, synth rhythms.

Screaming guitars and buzzsaw vocals cover programmed drum patterns and sampling.

Jourgensen, the eclectic main man of Ministry, proclaimed nine

months ago that he had been taking LSD onstage for the past four years. Ah-ha!

Last year's "The Land Of Rape And Honey" scared the pants off critics everywhere. "The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste" shoves

a fist down their throats.

Suddenly, Ministry has become Depeche Mode's evil twin. The duo's latest release is a sonic assault at times, an ethereal, drug-induced dream zone at others.

But at no time is it pretty. The opening cut, "Thieves," is a cybernetic, speedmetal rage -- a driving, anguished barrage of distortion, vocals and mechanical sampling. Happiness doesn't exist in the land of Ministry, only anger and drifting confusion.

Next comes the guitar crunch of "Burning Inside" and "Never Believe." Both tracks instill a sickening fear that Ministry has gotten

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Courtesy of Sire Records