

MOVIES

Hokey 'Hackers' logs into the computer culture



"Hackers" has the same problem that many computer systems do. Held back from its original release by several months, this state-of-the-art computer thriller already seems out of date.

The skateboard-riding bad guy (Fisher Stevens) goes by the handle "The Plague" and he has created a virus that will cause computer-navigated oil tankers to capsize. Of course he blames the impending environmental disaster on those meddling kids.

Realize early that this is pure silliness and "Hackers" can actually be a good time. Filling the movie with garish colors and slabfont characters all thumbing to a modern rock soundtrack, director Iain Softley tries to inject the same excitement into computers that he did with the young Beatles in the underrated "BackBeat."

He opens the movie with a shot of Dade approaching New York City by airplane. From directly above, the skyscrapers and city

streets dissolve into computer chips with electrical impulses darting around like so many Big Apple taxi cabs.

Now, every time a character boots up their computer, an explosion of wild colors fills the

screen in psychedelic virtual reality. For these kids, using the keyboard to penetrate confidential files is the ultimate in unsafe sex.

The actors are surprisingly likable, especially Miller's young genius on parole from the on-line mischief he got into at age 11. And despite Bradford's post-punk posing, it's hard not to like a ho-

oine who sleeps with a full-size poster of Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" above her bed.

Ironically, "Hackers" intended audience of teenage computer geeks will likely be turned off by its implausibility. For me, who has a geo-whiz attitude toward the Internet and very limited knowledge, "Hackers" can be an

entertaining trip into the computer culture.

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REVIEW

HACKERS

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