

'The Chase' runs on cheap plot and empty dialogue

By Paul Neale

THE BATTALION

"The Chase"
Starring Charlie Sheen, Kristy Swanson, Henry Rollins and Josh Mostel
Directed by Adam Rifkin
Rated PG-13
Playing at Schulman VI

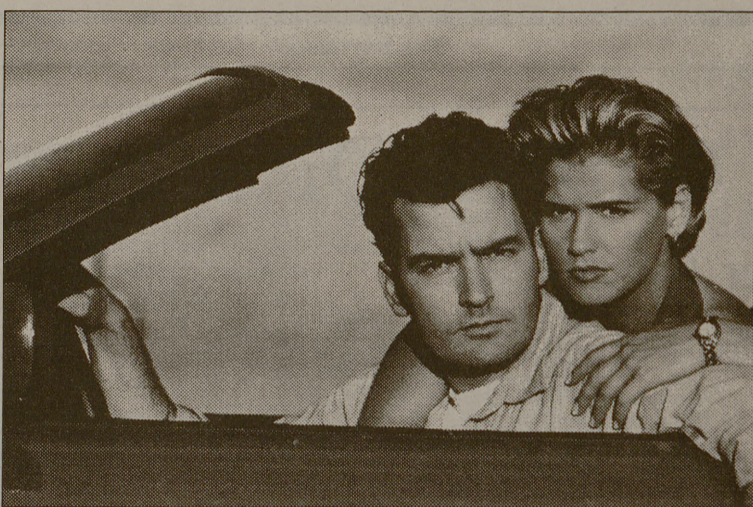
Ingredients for "The Chase": combine healthy portions of "The Fugitive" with "Smokey and The Bandit," add a dash of "BJ and the Bear" and "CHiPs," and cook very slowly for 90 minutes.

Jack Hammond (Charlie Sheen) is a falsely accused bank robber who jumps bail and steals a car to make a run for the border. While Hammond is at a convenience store buying cigarettes and gassing up, two officers inside the store hear the bulletin about the car he has

stolen. Knowing that he will be caught before he makes a beeline for Tijuana, Mexico, Hammond takes Natalie Voss (Kristy Swanson) hostage and flees in her BMW.

Coincidentally, Voss is the daughter of billionaire Dalton Voss, played by Ray Wise. Deemed as the "Donald Trump of California," Mr. Voss's lack of concern for his daughter's safety enrages Hammond, her captor. When Hammond takes up for neglected daughter Natalie, she begins to see him in a different light. At that point, Jack and Natalie's relationship goes from 0 to 60 in less than an hour.

Officers Dobbs (Henry Rollins) and Figus (Josh Mostel) lead the chase. Dobbs' "let's go get us a bad guy" attitude offsets Figus' sensitivity. However, comedic actor Mostel doesn't fit his unfunny, family-man role. And as ex-vocalist for Black Flag and current frontman



Charlie Sheen and Kristy Swanson star as Jack Hammond and Natalie Voss in the romantic action-comedy "The Chase."

of the Rollins Band, Rollins' role as the monotoned, Dirty Harry officer doesn't quite jive with his hard-core musician's role. With backup from Officer Figus, the

discourse in the patrol car falls asleep at the wheel.

Throughout the chase scenes, two Hard Copy-types capture the action-packed footage from

the back seat of the squad car.

"The Chase" satirizes media coverage of high-speed pursuits with up-to-the-minute reports. The media promotes Hammond from kidnapper to terrorist as newsanchors dramatize the couple's race to freedom. The spoofs of media viewers' insatiable appetite for real-life dramas and news stations' competition for coverage of "entertaining" news redeems some of "The Chase's" stalled dialogue.

As the film drones on, the media, and consequently the public's, perception of Natalie's welfare takes a turn for the worse. Inside the red BMW, Jack and Natalie's relationship blossoms as "The Chase" becomes "The Cheese."

Dry and lagging dialogue slows the high-speed chase to a Sunday afternoon drive at some points. Officers Dobbs and Figus, in particular, put the brakes on some of the scenes obviously

intended to be poignant.

Cameo appearances by Red Hot Chili Peppers' Anthony Kiedis and Flea verify why the guys are musicians, not actors. Kiedis and Flea play the part of two monster-truckin' rednecks whose foiled attempt to help officers in pursuit lands them in the back seat of a patrol car.

Unfortunately, the best moments with the credits. Susan Bad Religion and the Rollins Band provide a welcome change from some of the Chase's sounding pursuit music.

Although "The Chase" is on the highways of Southern California, it was filmed in Houston during the summer of 1993.

Even though several moments and an almost surprising ending try to salvage "The Chase", they don't make up for the long trip.

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