

Coming this November to a theater near you

By IAN WILLIAMS

The Daily Tar Heel, U. of North Carolina

After an incredibly disappointing summer of lobotomized movie-making, what are we to say for ourselves? Unfortunately, even really bad movies make a lot of money in the summertime, which convinces Hollywood that they are on the right track. But what it really means is that Americans will do anything to get out of the house.

That, however, does not give movie-makers the right to do what it did to us this summer — fill our gullets with wimpy and idiotic treatises on human life ("Regarding Henry"), hypnotize us with silly, mediocre coming-of-some-sort-of-age stories ("Backdraft," "City Slickers") or blow off enough kneecaps to make coasters for everyone at the next Shriner's convention ("Terminator 2"). With that in mind, Hollywood may get a chance to redeem itself this fall, with several new movies that threaten to almost make us think:

Prospero's Books — Speaking of Shakespeare, this is Peter Greenaway's latest film (based on Prospero of *The Tempest*) and what makes this film from the director of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* even more titillating, is the presence of Sir John Gielgud, who plays the film's main role. After seeing *The Cook, the*

Thief," it may be hard to imagine the brilliantly stodgy stage actor fitting into Greenaway's lurid plans, but *Prospero's Books* was a huge hit at the Cannes Film Festival and looks fascinating.

My Own Private Idaho — This one has a pair of estrogen-inspiring co-stars, namely Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix. The press release even dares to call this one "poignant," which in my book is a synonym for "sucks," but remember that this one is directed by Gus Van San. No dummy himself, Gus gave us the haunting "Drug-store Cowboy," so I have high hopes for this story about a rebel-lious

Portland teenager and his narcoleptic pal looking for a missing mother. It's loosely based on Shakespeare's "Henry IV," too, so he's in good literary company.

The Butcher's Wife — Obviously this one will belong to the love-it-or-hate-it-club. Starring professional crier Demi Moore and everyman-esque Jeff Daniels, it's the story of a butcher who brings home a clairvoyant

wife from a fishing trip, and she creates havoc around town. I expect the worst.

Love Field — I'm just going to quote the press release to you verbatim, and leave you to your wildest imaginations. "Michele Pfeiffer and two others on a journey to self-discovery experience a collision of prejudice, a test of friendship and an awakening of emotions against all odds in the turbulent days following the JFK assassination." Yeah, sure.

The People Under the Stairs — This looks like it's going to be a fairly intelligent horror film about a teenage burglar who gets trapped inside a house he intended to rob. Wes Craven wrote and directed this (he also brought us the original "Nightmare on Elm Street" and "The Serpent and the Rainbow") so you can probably count on it being better than "Halloween XVIII."

The Addams Family — Starring Angelica Houston, Raul Julia and Christopher Lloyd in the long-revered roles of Morticia, Gomez and Uncle Fester, this looks to be the most fun of the bunch. Brought to you by some of the creative talents behind "Beetlejuice," "Misery," "The Exorcist," "Raising



Reeves and Phoenix, estrogen-inspiring rebels.



Da da da dum, snap, snap. Da da da dum...

Arizona," and the American Ballet Theatre, "The Addams Family" has got a lot of whimsy going on behind the camera.

Blue Movie Blue — I have a personal problem with director Zalman King, who proffered "9 1/2 Weeks" and "Wild Orchid" to the movie-going public. I find his movies boring, mind-bendingly pretentious and ludicrously uninspired — so I may be the wrong person to be talking here. However, I see no reason to think that "Blue Movie Blue" will be any different. That won't stop movie publicists from calling it "chillingly erotic," though, so I guess I'll have to relax.

Slacker: Rebels without a job

By MATT SELMAN

The Daily Pennsylvanian, U. of Pennsylvania

Zany and grainy, director Richard Linklater's stream-of-consciousness cinema verité masterpiece "Slacker" presents America's newest generation of dissatisfied youth. But these rebels for the '90s protest through procrastination, not productivity.

As the Butthole Surfers blast in the background, "Slacker" paints a hip, funny, and ultimately ironic portrait of the ideology and lifestyle of the slackers themselves: students who got trapped in the college lifestyle, and never managed to break free into the, gasp, real world.

Linklater's ever-present steadycam follows these slackers around the college town of Austin, Texas. They eat junk food, sleep, wander around, go to movies, browse bookstores, hang around, check out friends' hands, and babble among themselves — anything but work or study.

Linklater shifts effortlessly from person to person in a faux-documentary style, breathing new life into several dozen eclectic characters through abundant life-like dialogue. Using mostly real slackers as actors, he simultaneously parodies and empowers his subjects, giving a sardonic sympathy to their rejection of the real world. The slackers are victims of over-education — hyper-culturally literate and articulate, but unable to deal with the knowledge or to truly communicate with each other. So they "reject the values of the generation before them," and spend their time yapping in coffeehouses about philosophy.

"Slacker" hits home for any college student. It brings back all those late, late night conversations about conspiracies, politics and the meaning of life that you thought were really deep at the time, but seem insipid upon objective analysis.

Yet these wacked-out monologues are the heart of the film, from leftist interpretations of the Smurfs to theories of infinite alternate realities. Dressed mostly in jeans, T-shirts, and no flower child garb, the slackers represent a liberal art education gone amuck, too smart for their own good.

By the end of the film, however, Linklater cannot redeem these over-read, individualistic, love-handled James Deans.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ORION CLASSICS

Slackers doin' what they do — leftist Smurf interpretation, psychobabble, walkin' around and a whole lotta nothin'.

He tries, though, with the final scene of several friends frolicking with video cameras, not taking life seriously, but having a great time. But because we've all experienced the deadening impotency of slackerdom at one level or another, Linklater cannot win us over to their side.

While perhaps most college students are slackers at heart, *Slacker* pokes fun at the lifestyle and fails to generate genuine belief in the slackers themselves.

In the end, slacking is a cop-out, not a cause.

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depressing that without the medication, you could really become much worse."

"The Fisher King," he says, works because it revolves around the importance of bringing people happiness in life love and understanding. "For me, I guess the

bottom line is that the most precious thing we have is human connection, and that's basically what the movie's about. It's about true compassion without a sense of recompense or atonement — that you do something totally selflessly. Then you've achieved the spirit of Christ and the Grail and all of that. If you think it's something you must prove, than you'll never find it. But the moment you actually see somebody in need and truly help them without the thought of anything else, it's there, you've got it."

Williams' words could very well apply to his own quest for the Oscar — a mission he's come very close to completing twice in his life. Although he says now that he feels the Academy Awards bring him more pain than pleasure. ("It's the expectation that really fucks you up," he remarks.) Having just completed the filming of Steven Spielberg's "Hook," in which he plays an older adult version of Peter Pan, Williams has time now to relax and savor the fact that as an actor, he has better things to worry about than winning awards.

"The most important thing for me now is to work with people that I really want to work with...and luckily I'm in the position where I can do that now."



Williams hooks up with Hoffman next month.