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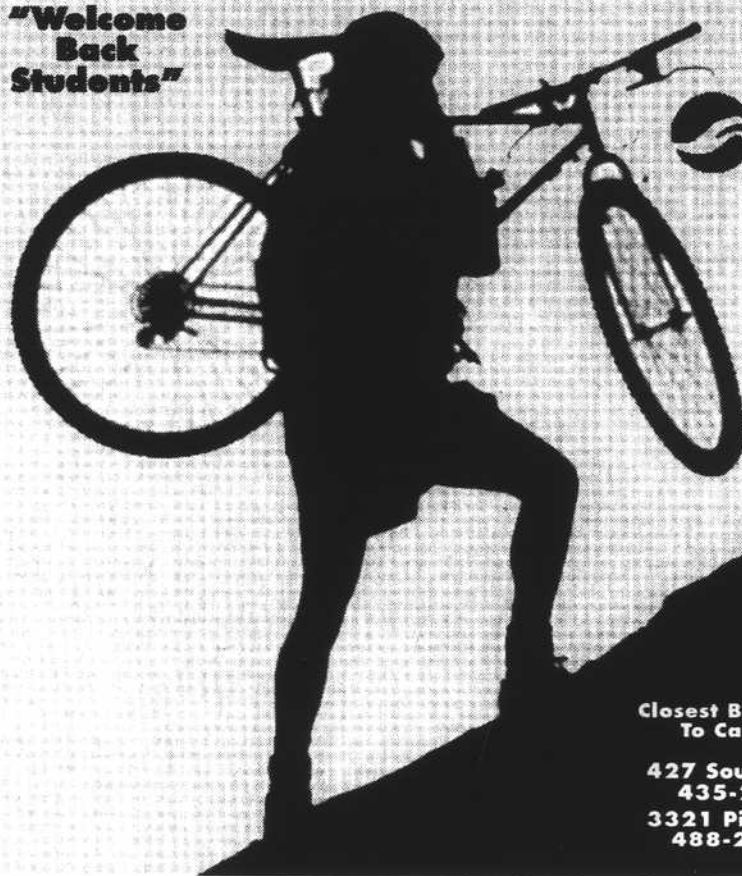
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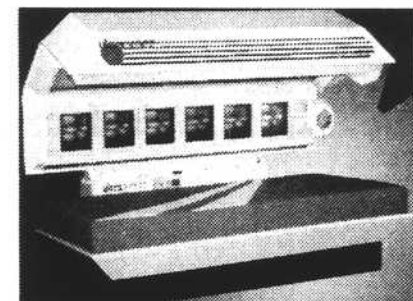
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Mental nothingness awaits at the movies

BY GERRY BELTZ
 Film Critic

Another summer has passed us by, along with more than enough blockbusters ("Face/Off," "My Best Friend's Wedding") and bona fide boners ("Batman and Robin"). Although the summer is drawing to a close, several late-opening films ("Air Force One," "Conspiracy Theory") are keeping the popcorn flowing steadily.

Still, as our weekends come upon us, we need to fill the time between study sessions with some type of distraction. It may as well be the movies. Besides, if you aren't of legal drinking age, that's about all there is to do in this city on the weekends.

Not to worry, though. The movie screens look to keep the empty mind occupied this semester with plenty of drama, action and familiar names and faces to add to the latest round of "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon."

(Remember, there are more films coming than just these, so if a few are missing, don't despair. Also, as this past summer has taught us, release dates are always subject to change.)

August

"Money Talks" (Opened Wednesday) - Chris Tucker ("The Fifth Element") plays a fast-talking con man on the run, and only a small-time reporter (Charlie Sheen) can help him beat the bad guys. The plot may sound contrived, but Tucker has proven himself able time and again to come through with the comedic goods.

"G.I. Jane" (Friday) - An initial lack of cooperation from Demi Moore for advance publicity pushed the opening date of this film back a week. Moore plays O'Neil, the first female candidate for the Navy SEAL team ... if she can make it through training. Naturally, she isn't just facing some of the most difficult training in the world, but the political and chauvinistic machines are working against her, as well. Viggo Mortensen and Anne Bancroft co-star.

"Mimic" (Friday) - Mira Sorvino saves the dying children of New York by creating a killer cockroach that mutates into something even more terrible. (No, I'm not making this up.) Supporting cast members include F. Murray Abraham and Charles S. Dutton, and, from the previews, "Mimic" looks to grab at the same audience that made "Scream" such a big hit last year.

"Hoodlum" (8/29) - The 1940s. It's a time of gangsters. A time where law was supported by bullets and power. A time of ... nice suits. Tim Roth, Laurence Fishburne and Andy Garcia (how many gangster flicks has Garcia been in?) star in this drama of style and greed.

"Kull The Conqueror" (8/29) - Oh goody. Kevin Sorbo (TV's "Hercules") plays Kull, a poor man's "Conan" with one-liners who is slightly smarter than Conan (which ain't saying much). It turns out Kull's latest bride-to-be is a 3,000-year-old sorceress (Tia Carrere) who plans to kill him on their wedding night. Kull must go on an almost-impossible adventure to find the one weapon that can defeat such evil. One hint: Leave the brain at home, folks.

September

"A Thousand Acres" (9/12) - An all-star cast makes this drama look to be a real heart-tugger. Three sisters (Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Jessica Lange) come together with their husbands and other family members to take care of some land. (Someone on the Internet jokingly referred to the movie as "King Lear in Iowa.") This one is anyone's guess.

"In and Out" (9/19) - Eeps. A controversial comedy. These are always fun. Here, a small-town drama teacher (Kevin Kline) finds his every move and nuance being watched and reinterpreted when one of his former students wrongly refers to him as a homosexu-

al. The "macho-training" lessons looked absolutely hilarious, but remember to take the humor with 5 mg of sodium chloride. (Don't get it? Ask a chem major ...)

"The Assignment" (9/26) - Aidan Quinn plays a military officer, who, in an attempt to catch a terrorist, must assume the identity of the terrorist. However, the price may be his humanity. Donald Sutherland and Ben Kingsley co-star in this thriller.

"The Peacemaker" (9/26) - George Clooney tries to show box office bankability after the lackluster reviews of "Batman and Robin" with this thriller involving espionage, nuclear weapons and Nicole Kidman.

October

"Kiss The Girls" (10/3) - No, this isn't an attempt to cash in on "Seven" or anything like that. Morgan Freeman stars as Dr. Alex Cross, who is hunting after a man who collects the women he abducts instead of killing them. Ashley Judd co-stars.

"Seven Years In Tibet" (10/8) - Brad Pitt stars as a man who planned on scaling a mountain but ends up meeting the Dalai Lama and finds himself changing afterwards.

"Bean" (10/17) - The bumbler has his own film, at last! Rowan Atkinson, whose comedic talents have dazzled us in films such as "The Lion King" and "Four Weddings and a Funeral," comes to us now as his classic character, Mr. Bean. This time, Mr. Bean must watch over priceless works of art.

"Devil's Advocate" (10/17) - Keanu Reeves plays a lawyer (snicker) who joins a very prestigious New York firm, but finds his boss has odd ... talents. Also stars Al Pacino.

November

"Starship Troopers" (11/7) - Neil Patrick Harris and Michael Ironside star in this computer effects-filled blowout based (loosely) on the Robert Heinlein novel. The aliens themselves look like first draft rip-offs from other sci-fi flicks, but the special effects look very cool.

"The Jackal" (11/14) - Loosely based on the classic film "The Day of the Jackal," this flick has Richard Gere matching wits with an international terrorist in a globetrotting game of cat-and-mouse. But, is that the only game being played? Doubtful, knowing our government.

"The Truman Show" (11/14) - Jim Carrey tries to put "The Cable Guy" into his past with this one. Here, Truman (Carrey) realizes his entire life is a television show and plots an escape to the "real world."

"Anastasia" (11/21) - The first animated film to come out of the Dreamworks studios, this classic tale features the voice talents of Meg Ryan, John Cusack and Christopher Lloyd.

"Mortal Kombat 2: Annihilation" (11/21) - Although late for its slated early-August release, this sequel was inevitable given the success of the original "Mortal Kombat." This time, though, Christopher Lambert isn't around. Robin Shou ("Beverly Hills Ninja") returns as the heroic Liu Kang, and you can bet on little plot with loads of action and funky special effects.

"Alien: Resurrection" (11/26) - Nope, it never ends. Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) isn't dead; she was cloned in an attempt to save the alien inside of her. Meanwhile, she and another group of military types find themselves as the prey instead of the predators.

"Flubber" (11/26) - "The Nutty Professor" was remade by Eddie Murphy and it became a smash. Why not try remaking "The Absent-Minded Professor" with Robin Williams in the lead? This one should be a scream.

Come December, with finals and snow flurries galore, the silver screen will boast such films as "Scream Again," "Tomorrow Never Dies" (the latest James Bond film) and "Jackie Brown," the latest concoction of Quentin Tarantino.