

Reel depiction of college not so real

■ Films portray college life as anything but typical

By Lisa R. Griffing
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Is it possible to impulsively take a road trip for a few days, skip class and still do relatively well in college? Is it possible for students to earn passing grades without attending class and attending party after party?

According to the entertainment industry, it is. In the motion picture "Road Trip," E.L. (Seann William Scott) has a chance to take an 1,800-mile road trip with four of his friends, and sardonically asks, "What am I going to do, stay here and learn?"

During the road trip, a car explodes, they party at a fraternity house, steal a bus from the blind and make it back to college a bit late for Josh (Breckin Meyer) to take his philosophy test. However, his love interest, Beth (Amy Smart), calls in a bomb threat to delay the test. Everyone gets away with everything, and the students live happily ever after.

It's just college, right? A place without stress and loaded with fun.

"This shit just does not happen," said Tommy Spencer, a University film student. "College is

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What about the movie "PCU"? Is that one any more realistic? Nobody ever studies in that film, and everyone is concerned only about having fun.

"I think that the writers for these movies look back at college and remember the good times," University senior Nick Armour said. "They romanticize it so only those parts are in the films. 'PCU' is just about the parties in college, ya know?"

A different view on college life appears in the 1995 film "Higher Learning." This flick portrays a negative perspective on college.

In the movie, neo-nazis conspire to kill an African-American stu-

dent, a girl gets raped, homosexuality is momentarily addressed, and a complicated assignment is given by the political science professor, which sends students into freak mode.

Of course, there are issues in college, but it's difficult to call the dramatic overtones in this movie realistic. However, this movie was a hit. It won awards and even caused a bit of controversy. If it is not realistic, then what is the attraction to these dark or funny movies?

"To make a strong impression on the viewer, these films tend to be bigger than life," said Richard Trombley, a University professor of film. "I guess that normal people simply aren't all that interesting. People don't want to see two grandmothers having homemade bread and jam and sharing pictures of their grandchildren. They want to see a mother who murders her husband when she learns that he has sexually abused their daughter."

If this is true, then why do avid movie watchers or movie critics criticize films for being unrealistic? It may be a catch-22. The desire for a realistic film lingers, yet boredom may send viewers into somnolence.

Then they awake to the music accompanying the movie credits scrolling down the screen.

"In order to attract audiences, films will usually deal with the dark side of college life: drugs, drinking, sex," Trombley said. "My guess is that the realistic college life — i.e., our normal nine to five — isn't all that interesting to film makers."

"For example, I went to see 'Hannibal,' and the first two shows were sold out. This is a very, very dark film, and the audience loved it. Again, it is about situations and people who are darker and bigger than life," he said.

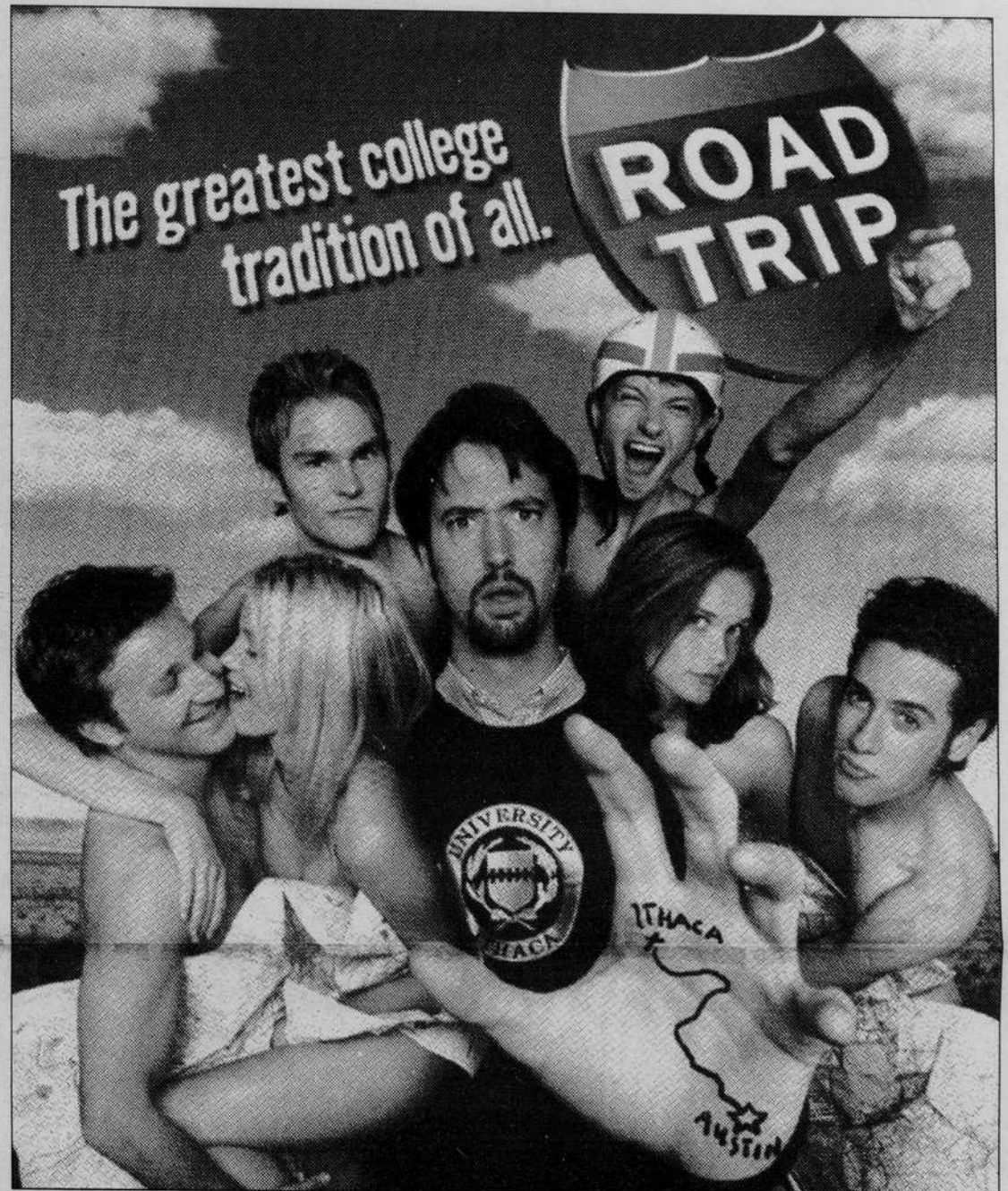
On the other hand, "a lot of truth is stranger than fiction," Armour said. "There are a lot of issues that come up in college life. Consider the things not reported."

Armour said that he thinks a realistic depiction of college life would be tremendously exciting but hard to create.

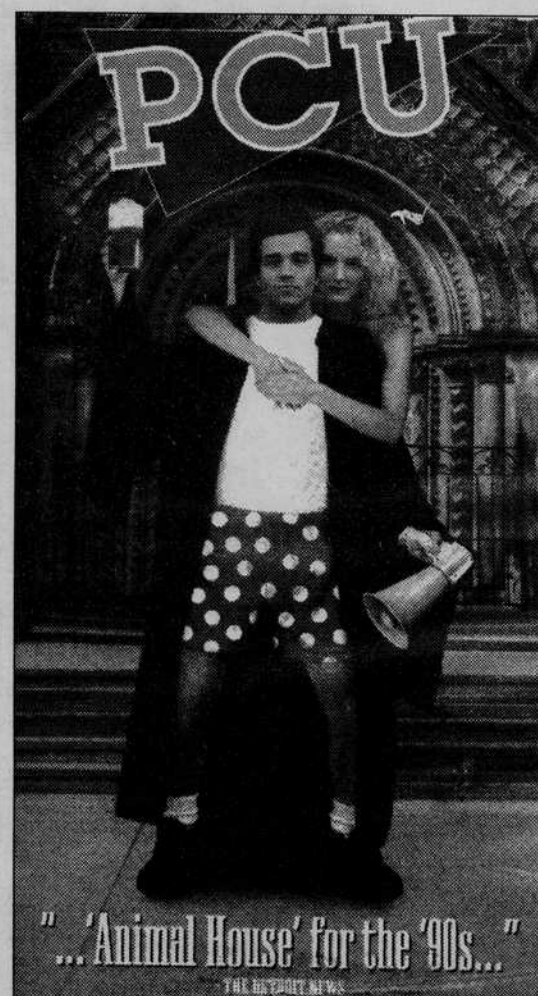
Movies that portray college in an unrealistic fashion seem to appeal to people of all ages. But Trombley said he doesn't think films about college life are necessarily directed toward students.

"Films, especially films in America, are made for the general public and strive to make money; that is the name of the game," he said.

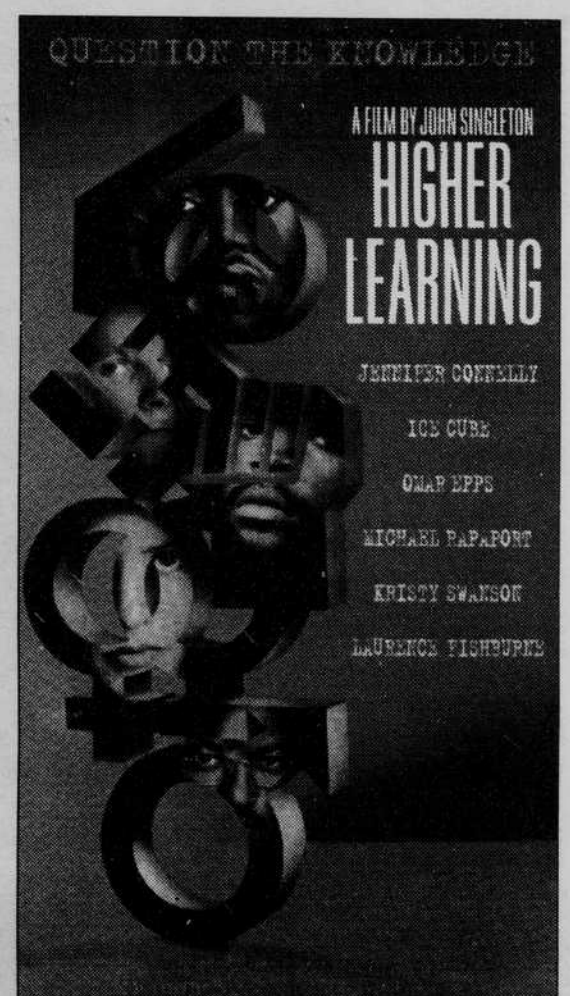
"They want to entertain, and usually they aren't much interested in anything else. This is true with commercial film, which is the vast majority of films made in



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