

by Mary Nelson
Staff reporter

Roll out those lazy, crazy, hazy days of summer. But once those hot summer days turn into warm summer nights, then what?

The votes are in and the quintessential summer experience is: Drive-In movies, what else? It just so happens that right in Ball State's own back yard, the Sky-Hi Drive-In is showing weekend movies and has been since 1951.

Billed as "Movies Under the Stars," the Ski-Hi Drive-In, located at the intersection of state roads 3 and 28, shows movies every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night at dusk until the weekend after Labor Day.

At 7 p.m. the gate opens for admission. It is the families who arrive first. They come early so the kids can play pinball and video games in the cheery blue and white concession area and eat from the Ski-Hi's concession stand. Maybe a hot dog, or a pizza perhaps, washed down with a soda and a box of popcorn during the movie. Jim McClary, the current owner of the Sky-Hi

says he's offering a special this summer: one refill on a medium or large soft drink and popcorn.

Burkart, purchased the drive-in from Y and W Theatres in 1989.

"Business has been good," McClary said. So good, in fact, next season a second screen is being added directly across from the existing one.

The drive-in's first feature is usually geared to a younger audience. A second and third feature are geared to teenage and older viewers.

The movies that come to the Sky-Hi are somewhere between first-run and dollar cinema movies.

"Once a first-run movie leaves the theater, the dollar cinemas have to wait six weeks to get a hold of it," McClary said. "We get them in just a couple of weeks." McClary expects to be showing "Indecent Proposal" within the next couple of weeks.



Brock, April and Troy Davis amuse themselves as they wait for the sun to set and the movies to begin Saturday night.

Three times during the season there are dusk-to-dawn showings: Memorial Day weekend, Fourth of July weekend and Labor Day week-

end. It seems doubtful that the speakers, decrepit and some with vital parts missing, could produce any sound. But this is the 90's and the old fashioned speakers are really almost extraneous since the viewer can bring the sound into the car by turning on the car radio.

McClary cautions the viewer to start the car up during intermissions if the radio, not the speaker, is being used during the movie marathons, or else bring jumper cables.

The price of a movie is \$3.50 for adults and \$1 for children, except on the last weekend of the season. McClary

charges a "car-load price" to get as many people into the theater as possible.

By charging a low price for the movie at the end of the season, people tend to spend more on concessions. This helps to use up what is left of the refreshments since they are perishable and can't be kept over the winter.

Just how much longer can the drive-in theater, this icon of summer entertainment, hold out?

"As long as Indiana doesn't go on



Reflected in his rear view mirror, John Disher, long time Ski-Hi patron, watches "Sliver" on the big screen.

daylight savings time, I think we'll be all right," McClary said. "It is daylight savings time that has killed the drive-in around the country."

According to McClary, if Indiana went to daylight savings time, the first movie couldn't be shown until 10 p.m. He said that not many families are willing to wait that late to see a movie with their children.

The drive-in movie industry in Indiana is still safe since daylight-savings was voted down. McClary, however, is not taking any chances and plans to rent some of the "outlots," as he calls unused space on theater property, to businesses just in case.

But the drive-in still exists for summertime delight. The movies aren't straight from the studio and by the time they get to the drive-in they aren't always in top condition. But seeing a movie at a drive-in rather than a conventional theater is a whole new experience. Catch it while you can.