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Over The Hedge
Wanda Sykes,
Bruce Willis,
Gary Shandling,
Steve Carell
and William Shatner
Tim Johnson, director
Dreamworks
Home Video

☆☆☆☆

Cartoon movies with big-name casts are the thing right now and Dreamworks' "Over The Hedge" is one of the freshest in a long time.

It's not so much the story or even idea, but the way the film is put together. You can't miss with animals and kids and this has both, with the emphasis on animals.

The story is fairly simple. An overly ambitious raccoon named R.J.'s (Bruce Willis) plot to steal a winter's worth of food from a grumpy bear (Nick Nolte) is foiled by an 18-wheeler. To keep said bear from eating him, R.J. tries to dupe an unsuspecting group of hibernating animals to help replenish the bear's empty cave.

Bad puns, off-color sexual references, swipes at man's consumption of fast food and unnecessarily large houses are packed into this 83-minute film with great care. There's a lesson at the end - a sappy one at that - but the fun's getting there.

The actors' voices fit the characters perfectly. Willis hasn't been this funny since his "Moonlighting" days. Nolte's gravel-coated voice certainly sounds bear-like.

But it's Wanda Sykes, Steve Carell and William Shatner who steal the show. Shatner hams it up as an opossum with a penchant for overact-

Please see OVER/2D

Ratings

Classic,	☆☆☆☆
Excellent,	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Why?	☆
No stars - A mess	



PHOTOS/CHERIS F. HODGES

Teen sensation Corbin Bleu is on of the stars of Disney's "High School Musical" and he makes the girls scream.

'Musical' something to shout about



Briana Dease screams as Corbin Bleu sings.

By Cheris F. Hodges
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High School Musical. Score the screaming kids.

When the concert of this Disney movie arrived at Bobcats Arena, I'd never seen so many people there. Not even for a Bobcats game.

I took my 13-year-old niece because she has been talking about "High School Musical" for so long. As soon as the lights went down and the cast hit the stage, she became one of the screaming masses.

But this show is a wholesome mix of Disney promotion, because it seems as if every cast member has an album that's in stores now or will be, and a rip-roaring good time.

"High School Musical" is the "Grease" of the new millennium. It's the story of a cool kid falling for a nerdy girl. In true Disney fashion, every thing works out in the end and the music is actually pretty good. In a world of cursing hip hop stars and sexually explicit R&B, it's nice to see music and stars that kids can look at and not grow up too fast.

The cast's standout is Corbin Bleu. Some people say he's like a young Michael Jackson. He plays Chad and has an album coming out next year titled "Another Side."

Bleu will also star in the new Disney film "Jump In," which is about double dutch rope-jumping.

Bleu and "Dancing with the Stars" alum

Please see HIGH/2D

Bearden highlights 'Survey'



Romare Bearden's "Cueing In" (above) and "Strip of Yellow-Green" are on exhibit at Jerald Melberg Gallery.

By Sandy Seawright
THE CHARLOTTE POST

"Survey of Gallery Artists"
Jerald Melberg Gallery
625 South Sharon Amity Road

Following the rush of Christmas shopping and returns, relax your eye and treat your spirit to artistic beauty in this diverse show of gallery artists.

A major reason to go is to see the large one-of-a-kind monoprint, "Cueing In" by the Charlotte native, the legendary Romare Bearden.

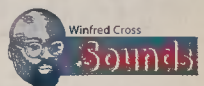
Here Bearden's process looks something like fingerpainting as he gives viewers an abundance of jazz musicians.

Another contemporary master here is Elizabeth Murray, who in the last year had a retrospective exhibit at The Museum of Modern Art. Like Bearden with his musicians, Murray is inspired by a realistic image, a clock, to create a beige deconstructed timepiece. The gallery shows the late abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell. It is good that in addition to many talented regional artists, the gallery is showing major active New York art stars like Murray.

The show is strong on realism. Charlotte's Richard Mayberry in "Rudbeckia on the Appalachian Trail" created in graphite on paper gives us such microscopic detail of wildflowers and dense foliage that it is almost like we're given God's view. Charles Basham's landscape more abstracted than Mayberry's work features a delightful green and yellow strip marking the earth at the bottom of the picture.

Few people we would imagine would dislike Robert Peterson's "Read & Green Apples with Glass" which succeeds with its sharp, crisp line and probably serves as Art Appreciation 101 for those who wander in and say, "I don't know a thing about art." And Melberg takes some risks for Charlotte with abstraction. The late Rick Horton's "Untitled" oil in amber and cobalt blue shows the unending beauty of circles.

Please see SURVEY/2D



Brian McKnight
Ten
Various producers
Warner Bros.

☆☆☆☆

Brian McKnight is one of the few '80s crooners to age gracefully. His voice is still in top form and his writing skills have improved.

That's what life will do for you. McKnight has always sung from his heart, now he's got life experiences to draw from. He's older, wiser and just plain better.

That says a lot considering his phenomenal body of work. "Ten" seems to be a culmination of that work - a statement that says "I'm here to stay."

"Ten" would be a lesser work in the hands of a lesser singer, but McKnight isn't. His mellow tenor could make a phonebook sound sensual.

Fortunately, these songs are much more. "I Do" is the kind of love song that has made McKnight such a ladies favorite. It's insightful and sexy in a romantic way.

Even when McKnight does a breakup song it's heartfelt. "A Little Too Late" makes one feel sorry for the girl who neglected him. That's the McKnight way. The same is true when he's in the same position. "Shoulda Been Lovin' You" finds him on the outs because of neglect. McKnight continues his fascination with Marvin Gaye on this song. Voices weave in and out with Gaye's mechanical precision and McKnight's fluid harmonies.

McKnight is at his best when he's declaring his love. "The Rest of My Life" has him in full "I love you" mode. "If you think this is as good as it gets/I swear you haven't seen nothing yet," is what he tells his intended. It's classic McKnight in composition and delivery. Heck, the whole CD can be summed up in those words.



Plenty to do to ring in the New Year

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Kiss the year goodbye in your jammies.

The New Year's Eve Pajama Jammy Jam in NoDa will take place at the Hart Witzan Gallery. Its going down on New Year's Eve starting at 9 p.m.

This isn't your same old run of the mill party, promises organizer Darren Vincent.

He came up with the idea for the party after hanging out in Uptown Charlotte last year.

"I went out to some clubs the week before New Year's and it was about \$5 to \$10 to get in," he said.

The next week, however, the price of admission had more than tripled and the party was just the same.

His solution? A party that would shake things up for the new year and give people a chance to welcome in 2007 comfortably in their PJs.

"I wanted to offer something different, a different outlook so

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