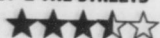


MOVIESHORTS

STEP UP 2 THE STREETS



Despite the misleading title, "Step Up 2 the Streets" doesn't contain any stepping, but it showcases ridiculously showy and acrobatic breakdancing routines.

The visceral beat of feet stomping and hands clapping is traded for the less-visceral beats of top-40 hip-hop songs, but that doesn't make the dancing any less effective.

The real show here is the dancing, and, luckily, the incredible feats of dance are only sporadically interrupted by short spurts of dialogue.

Unsurprisingly, the story is a little too simple, but if you're going to the sequel of a movie meant to capitalize on a trend for the story or acting, then you deserve to feel like you got cheated out of your ticket money.

There are no lofty themes of redemption or overcoming adversity, just an hour and a half of exhilaratingly intricate dance routines, which is all it really aims for anyway.

"Step Up 2" is like Paris Hilton: aiming for style over substance, and hitting the mark brilliantly.

-Rachael Oehring

THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES



"The Spiderwick Chronicles" is a fantasy flick aimed at the teenage audience — there's no question about that. But somehow this film finds an exciting thread and carries it out to a satisfying conclusion.

Director Mark Waters has a knack for this — taking what should be a

mediocre family film and somehow elevating it. He did it with "Mean Girls" and "Freaky Friday," and it seems he's done it again.

Young Jared Grace (Freddie Highmore) finds a strange book in his new house's attic. Opening it opens a world of wonderful creatures and powerful magic.

He and his family must defend the book, however, from the evil Mulgarath (Nick Nolte) or the world will be destroyed.

It's pretty standard fare, but a surprising cast of characters and talented animation give the story life.

Mary Louise-Parker does a great job as Jared's mom, while David Strathairn adds talent and class to the role of the book's author.

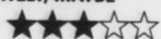
The world is full of quirky and interesting little characters — Seth Rogen as Hogsqueal, and Martin Short as the little guardian of the book, Thimbletack.

Sure, the attempted depth of the story — Jared dealing with his divorced dad's new relationship — feels a bit tacked on. And plenty of the script is mediocre.

But the movie is exciting, imaginative and a blast to watch. What else could kids — or really anyone — ask for?

-David Bergart

DEFINITELY, MAYBE



Cuteness abounds — in more of an endearing than annoying manner — in "Definitely, Maybe."

It fulfills its expectations of being both predictable and unrealistic,

but it also provides enough humor and historical context to push it out of the realm of the unoriginal.

Newly divorced father Will Hayes (Ryan Reynolds) picks up his daughter Maya (Abigail Breslin) from school amid the panic of an unannounced sex-ed lesson. She decides it's time to hear about where she came from, and Will launches into an extended bedtime story about his love life.

The primary story is told in flashback, not surprisingly including details that a father in Will's position probably would omit.

There are many other things about the story that are not surprising, but the film is overall solid, thanks in large part to consistent performances by Will's three very different girlfriends, played by Elizabeth Banks, Isla Fisher and Rachel Weisz.

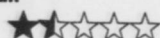
A couple of real surprises come in the form of an eccentric political academic, played by Kevin Kline, and in the featured role of the 1992 Clinton campaign, particularly pivotal here in the middle of primary season.

The story set up by Will and his daughter adds humor and depth to the rest of the film's action, but the family dynamic plays a less central role than the trailers might suggest.

It is doubtful viewers of "Definitely, Maybe" will walk away at all transformed, but those in the mood for a decent romance will find it a good use of a date night or an afternoon matinee.

-Cat Williams

JUMPER



Audiences might be better off browsing the Internet for images of exotic locations than sitting through the deteriorating mess of a sci-fi action flick that is "Jumper."

While the film's trailer promises fast-paced action sequences atop pyramids in Egypt and in the streets of Tokyo, that's all director Doug Liman succeeds at delivering.

Although the idea of a continent-hopping young hero battling against an age-old religious order might pique interests, "Jumper" is plagued with some of the most awkward performances in recent years.

Hayden Christensen and Rachel Bilson, cast to play childhood friends who eventually fulfill the film's romance criteria, seem never to have left the middle school dance floor. Propelled by stifled dialogue and numerous plot-holes, the couple's interactions are painful to see.

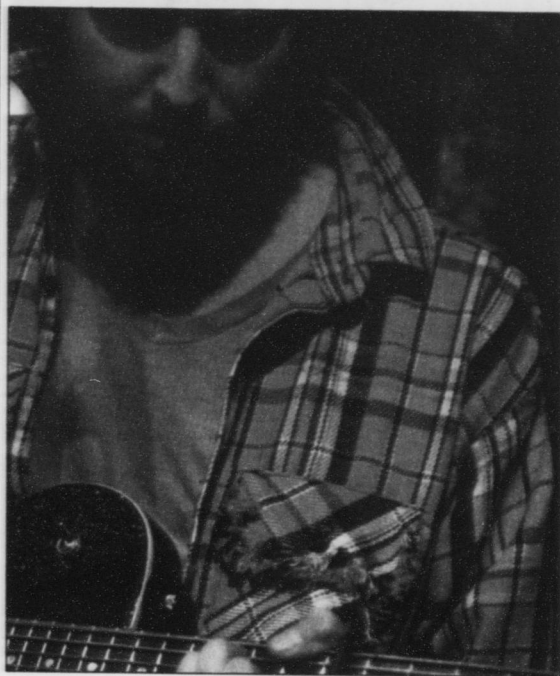
Luckily, Jamie Bell, who plays British jumper Griffin, breaks through the stumbling narrative with a vibrant and entertaining performance.

But it doesn't last for long, as Liman unfortunately gives the film's dramatics the reigns.

And when left to Christensen and Bilson, "Jumper" s dazzing visuals and unusual special effects are granted mere backdrop status to the couple's floundering relationship.

-Alexandria Shealy

GOOD WINTER



DTH/BRYAN REED

Playing a brand of folk that gives in more to ambience than lyrical introspection, Bon Iver commanded the stage at Local 506 on Monday night, holding the near capacity crowd at rapt attention throughout the set. Visit <http://dive.dailytarheel.com> for a full review of the show.

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