

'Wild' transfers to screen



Photos provided by wherethewildthingsare.warnerbros.com

"Where the Wild Things Are"



BY ANDY MOORE
Reviewer

Maurice Sendak's book "Where the Wild Things Are" finally has been adapted to film by Warner Brothers after more than 40 years of being published. Most of you probably are surprised that a mere 10-page children's book turned into a 90-minute movie, and so am I. It already leads the box office with \$32.5 million, according to CNN.

Despite my initial expectations, "Where

the Wild Things Are" is a worthy update of the story we all know and love.

This film began its planning stage in the 1980s and was intended to be an animated movie. The project evolved into a live action film written and directed by Spike Jonze and with CGI technology and animatronics from Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

You probably know the story of the little boy named Max, who was sent to bed without supper and found himself in a fantasy world where the wild things declared him king. The film immediately tries for a more in-depth characterization of the imaginative Max, a child most parents would just shut up with Ritalin. He comes from a normal suburban home with a bratty older sister and stressed single mother. He runs away after an argument with his mother and boards a sailboat that takes him to the fantasy world that we are all familiar with.

As you can imagine, the plot gets pretty weird. The "wild things" in this movie look the

same as the ones illustrated in the book, but they all have names like Carol, Ira, Douglas, Judith and the unforgettable duo of Bob and Terry. They all bicker like little kids, and the dialogue in these scenes made me a bit uneasy. If you decide to watch the film, you will see what sort of social issues might arise within the wild kingdom, and trust me, it's not nearly as bad as "Animal Farm." A child's fantasy world might not be more ideal than the real world.

Jonze shows how diverse his talents are, as he is also the director of "Being John Malkovich," producer of both "Jackass" movies and he even directed music videos for artists like Weezer, Kanye West and R.E.M. The cast consists of underrated talents such as James Gandolfini, Forrest Whitaker, Catherine O'Hara and Paul Dano, all of whom tend to star in award-winning films and television series, so prepare yourself.

Gandolfini's role was extremely unexpected, considering he recently concluded his role as

Tony Soprano in HBO's "The Sopranos." In this children's movie, however, he is not allowed to womanize, do drugs or scream curse words and racial epithets, but he still is a ticking time-bomb of rage and clinical depression that looks like a larger version of the Cheshire Cat. Whitaker's portrayal of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in "The Last King of Scotland" will forever haunt me, but in "Where the Wild Things Are" he is the voice of a big, furry troll. Lastly, the 12-year-old rookie actor Max Records is Max, and to put it briefly, he reminds me of me when I was a hyperactive little boy.

"Where the Wild Things Are" tries to add more characterization to Maurice Sendak's book, and even pushes a few limits where most children's movies are very careful. The film is even scary in a few scenes, although I don't recall any of the kids in the theater shrieking. Hearing James Gandolfini say, "I'm going to eat you up," is even scarier when you've seen him make more explicit threats in "The Sopranos."

Noir music impresses

Pick of the Week

Brian Setzer



Michael Bublé



BY COREY BOMMEL
Reviewer

Styles of the past always are relevant in today's culture, be it in our fashion, decoration or music. Two artists showcased this week put a modern spin on styles popular in the mid-20th century.

The Brian Setzer Orchestra's popularity comes from the Swing Revival of the mid to late 90s. Front-man Brian Setzer of the rockabilly Stray Cats formed the group as an orchestrated big band with a lead rock guitar. The result is a unique blend of rockabilly, swing, blues and jazz, giving the band staying power as the popularity of other Swing Revivalists has waned.

The latest album from the Brian Setzer Orchestra, "Songs From Lonely Avenue," comes straight out of the mid-1900s. Setzer set forth to compose an album that could be the soundtrack for a '40s or '50s film noir flick. What resulted was a self-contained movie, complete with mobsters, double-crosses and dames with gams that just don't quit.

For the orchestral compositions, Setzer enlisted Frank Comstock, a seasoned composer who has worked with greats such as Doris Day and Rosemary Clooney. Comstock's influence is immense, adding an authentic '50s vibe to the album. From the first blaring guitar riff,

you are transported to grimy black and white fog-filled alleyways, courtesy of the "Trouble Train." Driving bass, snapping drums and unmistakably unique rockabilly licks take you on this ride for the long run. The story takes off in "Dead Men Incorporated," in which a man is on the run from the mob for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Guitar and bass bounce off each other, like bullets exchanged in a heated chase as the horns blare ominously in the background. The next two songs focus on the dame in the picture, first demanding passion in the jazzy "Kiss Me Deadly," then bantering back and forth in "Gimme Some Rhythm Baby." Setzer's wife Julie Reiten joins in on the latter song, meshing superbly with Setzer's vocals.

"Lonely Avenue" sets Setzer into crooner mode, a dreary tune you could call Sinatra-esque. Royal Crown Review's Eddie Nichols plays the part of the hired muscle in "King of the Whole Damn World," making this song another important set piece in the cinematic mystique surrounding the album. A duo of instrumentals, "Mr. Jazzer Goes Surfin'" and "Mr. Surfer goes Jazzin'," showcase Setzer's nimble fingers, alternating between smooth jazz cuts and jagged surf-abilly riffs.

The next few songs, although true to the thematic element of the album, contain lyrics that are pure pulp, exactly what you would expect but nothing inspiring. The music continues to stay strong from the "My Baby Don't Love Me Blues" ballad to the rockabilly inspired "Love Partner in Crime" and "Passion of the Night." The story wraps itself up with "Dimes in the Jar," fueled by a driving blues-rock guitar, and ends the relationship with the manipulative woman the main character has been on the run with. The album closes with the Setzer-only instrumental, "Elena," a Latin guitar piece demonstrating Setzer's mastery of his craft.

Canadian neo-crooner Michael Bublé released his latest album, "Crazy Love." The album was named after the Van Morrison song of the same name, and the concept as Bublé describes it is "the inevitable roller coaster ride of relationships." The songs picked by Bublé stay true to the concept of sad love songs, laments for soured relationships and sweet ballads for his beloved. Two songs are even original works which, in my opinion, is something



Photo provided by briansetzer.com

Bublé needs to do more often. If there is one thing Bublé brings to his albums, it is a passion for singing and crooning at a substantial level rivaling the greats of the '40s and '50s. Standout tracks include the first, "Cry Me a River," which sounds like the title song for a James Bond movie, and the title cover track "Crazy Love."

This is a great album if you are a fan, but Bublé needs to release an album that contains more original material.



Mika brings new dance moves

Pick of the Week

Mika



BY NICK FRUMSON
Reviewer

Mika. Yes, the artist who invented the wonderfulness that is "Grace Kelly" is back. His new album has finally debuted after a two-year waiting period.

This new album, called "The Boy Who Knew Too Much," is exactly what one would expect from Mika — sheer genius, with a little bit of the bizarre mixed in. His music is fun and spunky with simple chord progressions. On top of these simple progressions he layers catchy but pretty melodies. Mika's music includes elements like complicated arrangements

and use of sound. Mika's use of sound and complicated arrangements make his music better than most artists. As a sort of ode to Phil Spector, Mika manages to emulate that "wall of sound" effect that the legendary Spector had used when he was producing songs in the '60s and '70s. Mika uses piano, fantastic vocal harmony and intercut percussion — not just a standard drum set — throughout this album, providing the listener with entertaining, original and yet accessible music.

This album's possible "Grace Kelly" follow-up could be "Blame It On the Girls." It's a fun fast-paced song with a catchy chorus. The lyrics talk about a man who is rich but ugly, a woman who is hit on by boys too much and another man who is an alcoholic. Despite the glum subject matter, it still is an upbeat song featuring strong down beats followed by quickly repeated hand claps. After the first two choruses there

is a piano improvisation section, a very refreshing take on the classic "bridge" of most pop songs. This song is definitely a dancing and driving song. The grape vine, double clap, shimmy, the robot, the monkey and mosh pit jumping are pre-approved dance moves

"His music is fun and spunky with simple chord progressions."

for "Blame It On the Girls." "Rain" is another dance oriented song. In this song, Mika uses a synthesizer for the bass line, which sounds in octaves throughout the song. A prominent violin part sound accompanies the vocals

in the chorus, which really adds a unique flavor. Because Mika is so cool, he uses drum effects and other synthesizer sounds to mimic the sound of rain, instead of just playing a recording of actual rain. The song is generally about rain and how much he dislikes it. It repeats, "When it rains, it rains ... I hate days like ..." The end of the chorus is incomplete, meaning it requires a verse to follow, otherwise it sounds like it was cut off. This way it does leave

something to be desired. By the end of the song, the intended artsy aspect sets in, the "aha" moment.

"Good Gone Girl" is similar to "Blame It On the Girls" in that it is super fun and spunky. It's otherwise a different song entirely. This song has more standard rhythms with a piano as the primary accompaniment. The chorus and verses are festooned with 4:3 suspensions, which are very pretty and interesting but can be predictable. If you are a good listener, you'll hear an accordion playing throughout: not so predictable. The song is about a girl who is no longer being shy or timid and living her life. The title is a play on words referring to the phrase "good gone bad." Clever, but if one doesn't know all the lyrics it can be slightly confusing. This song is one of the two songs that fade away as the chorus repeats at the end.

"The Boy Who Knew Too Much" is a great album. It is a very nice follow up to "Life in Cartoon Motion," Mika's first album. An overall charming alternative to the current music that is out there.

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