

'Norbit' unfunny waste of Murphy talent

By Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

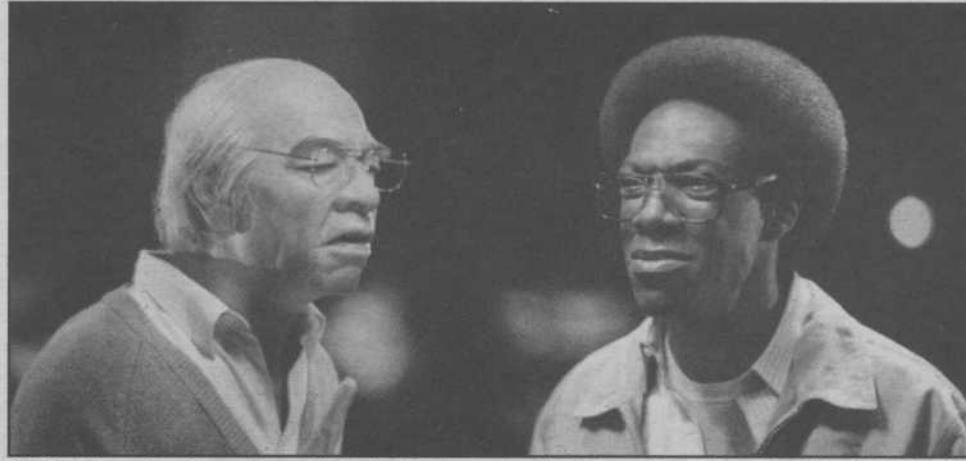
Playing more than one more person in a film is nothing new to Eddie Murphy. He handled two roles rather brilliantly in "Bowfinger," and met with as much success cast as eight in "Nutty Professor" I and II. Because in the past he's appeared to be quite comfortable cross-dressing and wearing a fat-suit for the camera, it is rather surprising that "Norbit" would turn out to be such an unmitigated disaster.

Eddie portrays three of the leads in this relentlessly-coarse makeup movie. Of course, he's the sympathetic title character, "Norbit", a bespectacled naive, nerd. He's also Mr. Wong, the

trash-talking, Asian-American owner of the Golden Wonton Chinese Restaurant and Orphanage. And finally, he's Rasputia, a sassy, over-sexed, super-sized sister.

The story opens with a babe in swaddling clothes being abandoned by parents who toss him out of a car on their way home from the hospital. Norbit is rescued and raised by Mr. Wong who refers to the tyke in pidgin English with lines like "You very ugly baby... Ugly black one... You be here long time..." thereby setting the table for the crude romantic comedy's prevailing tone which makes characters with darker skin the butt of virtually every joke.

Norbit's early childhood



Eddie Murphy plays a handful of characters in the hit-and-mostly-miss film "Norbit."

is nearly idyllic because he and another orphan, thin and light-skinned Kate (Thandie Newton), are inseparable playmates, at least until she is adopted and whisked away forever by her new family. Her presence is replaced by

fat and ugly Rasputia whose saving grace is that she protects him from playground bullies.

With the help of her beefy big brothers (Terry Crews, Clifton Powell and Lester Speight), Rasputia pressures a reluctant Norbit into marriage when he'd prefer to hold on to the faint hope of a reunion with Kate. So, it's not hard to figure out how this fairly predictable fairy tale will turn out by the end of the third act, when Rasputia gets just what's coming to her while Kate and Norbit waltz off into the sunset.

Of far more interest is the

nature of the humor here, which seizes on every opportunity to demonize and denigrate our overweight antagonist. For example, when Norbit introduces his bride, he is greeted with "You married a gorilla!" On another occasion, when he asks his expecting wife about the pregnancy, she simply farts loudly, and then says, "There's your child."

But most of the laughs are generated by sight gags, like when Rasputia is stopped from entering a theme park because her rolls of fat are covering her bikini bottom, making it appear that she is naked from the waist down.

Eddie can't complain about the demeaning script, since he co-wrote it with his brother, Charlie.

The screenplay includes offensive dialogue between two gaudily dressed pimps, named Lord Have Mercy (Katt Williams) and Pope Sweet Jesus (Eddie Griffin) with a license plate that reads "SELLNHOS" and a whorehouse called Beds, Bitches and Beyond, get it? Consider this exchange between the pair when a young White girl falls out of the sky from nowhere.

Pope Sweet Jesus: "It's raining little White women."

Lord Have Mercy: "My prayers have been answered!"

Pope Sweet Jesus: "My prayers are for a Cadillac."

This, and nearly every other joke falls flat, squandering the services of Oscar-winner Cuba Gooding Jr., Marlon Wayans, and more in the process, leaving one to wonder how such an ill-fated adventure ever got off the drawing board.

Poor (1/2 star). Rated PG-13 for nudity, sexuality, profanity, and crude humor.

'Grammy Moment' winner is 'Idol' reject

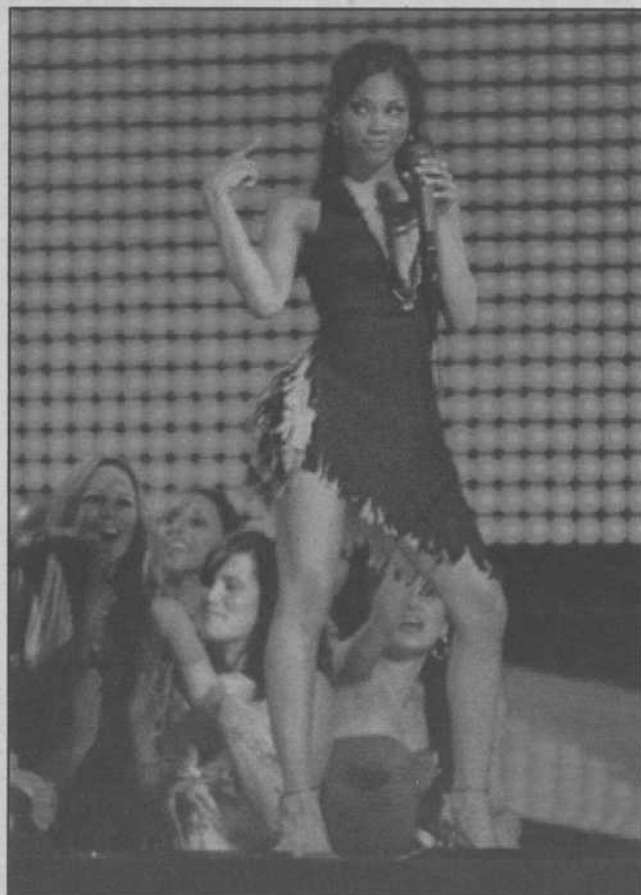
LOS ANGELES (AP) - Robyn Troup went from Grammy Awards star to "American Idol" reject in three TV days.

On Sunday, Troup, 19, of Houston sang with Justin Timberlake and rapper T.I. after winning the "My Grammy Moment" reality TV-style contest.

But on Tuesday's "American Idol," Troup was seen being rejected by the Fox talent contest's judges in an episode that was taped before the Grammys.

There was a touch of irony in Troup's dual appearances: the "Grammy Moment" contest smacked of "American Idol" and came a year after the Fox show pummeled the Grammys in the ratings when they aired opposite each other.

Moving the show away from "American Idol" paid off: More than 20 million people watched Sunday, up 18 percent from last year.



Robyn Troup, winner of the 'My Grammy Moment' competition, performs at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, in Los Angeles.

Brown

(Continued from Page 3)

cial administrator," said Hynie's attorney Robert Rosen. "There is so much at stake in this case."

The singer's embalmed body remains at an undisclosed location, in the same sealed, gold casket seen at his funeral, awaiting a decision on where to bury it, officials at the funeral home that handled Brown's funeral confirmed Friday.

The judge told the children, Hynie and the trustees not to discuss burial plans with the media and to try to resolve that issue among themselves.

Camera

(Continued from Page 7)

host of CNN's "American Morning." Students will be given general topics to discuss, including family, their neighborhoods and crime.

"We picked kids who represented a lot of different parts of the city," she said. "We really wanted to get a good cross-section."

Lee's role is to inspire the students, she said.

"I wanted him to explain to them, 'This is how you tell your life, and this is what you think about.'"

O'Brien said. "We'll be telling their story, while they're telling their story."

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