

# AGGIE life

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## Fighting stereotypes

James Jolivet strives to accomplish goals through positive leadership, attitude

By Rachel Barry  
THE BATTALION

When the emcee announced the winner of the Mr. Black Positive Pageant last Saturday, James Jolivet was ready to clap for someone else, until he realized he was the winner.

Jolivet, a sophomore biomedical science major, said he entered the pageant as a favor to some of his friends in the Zeta Phi Beta sorority that was hosting it.

"I had told them if they needed me for anything, I would assist them in any way I could," he said. "They gave me a call and said they needed another contestant, and I said, 'Fine, I'll do it.'"

Irma Jones, a member of Zeta Phi Beta and a junior speech communications major, said the pageant was started at A&M in an effort to support and recognize African-American men on campus.

"We feel that the African-American male has taken a lot of heat from African-American women on campus," she said. "We wanted to show that there are some positive African-American men here at Texas A&M."

While the men showed off their talents and competed in a formal and might wear competition, Jones said Mr. Black Positive was unlike other pageants designed for women.

"We believe that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover," she said. "That's why it isn't a beauty pageant. It's what's on the inside that counts."

Tallying up Jolivet's philosophies on life and his plans for the future reveal his desire to help people around him.

"A positive black man is one who knows what his goals are and has a plan to achieve those goals," he said. "A positive black man also realizes that with him moving on and succeeding, he is opening doors for somebody to come along behind him."

Jolivet said that going back to the community from which he came, helping out children and giving back to the community the strength and support it lent him is part of what being a positive black man is all about.

"He's a positive role model for kids, a mentor and a friend," he said. "He's there when you need him."

He also said a positive man has to care about what he is doing and how it will benefit his community. He said he wants to go further in life and succeed, but he also wants to bring other people from his community with him.

"Since you were fortunate enough to go to a university and better yourself, it is only fitting to go back and bring somebody else up with you," he said. "Not only because you want to do it, but because it's your duty as a black male.

You have to care to do this."

Jolivet said his positive attitude comes from the support of family and friends throughout his life. These are the people, he said, that pick him up when he is down and make him go on and who he can turn to when something goes wrong. He said their support is ever-present in his life.

"The people who are traveling with me may not be going the same place I am," he said, "but they are all coming with me."

He said moving ahead in his life may be difficult, though, when he is forced to fight the negative images and stereotypes of black men created and perpetuated by the disproportionate coverage of the media.

"Sometimes, some people get caught up in what they see in the news, and there's not a lot of representation of positive black men in the news," he said. "What they see on the news mostly has negative connotations."

This, he said, causes African-American men to suffer because of a few.

"Things that get highlighted are the bad things that African-American males do, and they really overshadow all the good things that we do as well," he said. "But that just comes with the territory."

By participating in the Mr. Black Positive pageant, Jolivet said he hopes people will take from the event not only more respect for African-American males, but also the desire to seek out and get to know individuals and not judge them based on stereotypes.

"I hope the pageant will let people know there are African-American men who don't fit the mold of the bad things they think all black males do," he said. "There's not just one Mr. Black Positive; there are many Mr. Black Positives."

He said that sometimes, finding them is hard.

"(People) have to seek them out," he said. "They're not always in the limelight or trying to be seen. Men who are positive don't seek rewards. They know what they are doing is for the good of the community. They do it because they want to, not because they have to or want recognition. They do it because they know it is important."

He said positive males are satisfied as long as they feel their work is being appreciated and are helping to change somebody's life.

"(Positive males) are the guys who are always working to better their community and to better themselves," he said. "They don't talk about their accomplishments."

With the work he has done and the recognition he has received, Jolivet says his best reward still comes in the form of simple acknowledgement.

"I don't need a plaque, or money or a trophy," he said. "All I need is for somebody to say, 'Thank you.'"



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Jolivet is congratulated after he wins the Mr. Black Positive pageant.



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Jolivet, a sophomore biomedical science major, speaks at the Mr. Black Positive pageant.

## Vigilantes of Love bring Southern roots, music to B-CS



Vigilantes of Love

By John LeBas  
THE BATTALION

Bill Mallonee, guitarist, vocalist and chief songwriter for the Vigilantes of Love, knows roots.

Roots rock forms the background of VOL's sound, and Mallonee knows the importance of staying in touch with his performance roots, as well.

"We like to play at smaller places, like coffee houses — that's how we got started," Mallonee said.

Saturday afternoon, Mallonee will plant his Athens, Ga., roots in the College Station Hastings for a short all-acoustic set before VOL's Dixie Theatre show later that night.

Mallonee started VOL in 1990 in the Athens folk scene. As a "second-wave Athens band" pursuing a "grass-roots pioneer spirit," VOL has transcended a variety of line-ups and musical styles in Mallonee's effort to express himself. The band is now touring in support of its fifth release, *Blister Soul*, on which Mallonee incorporated guitars, Hammond organ, mandolins, accordions, pedal steel and sitars.

"The band started out more acoustic," Mallonee said, "but I've always liked the more punk overtones, so it's been on both sides with folk and faster music."

The resulting sound is reminiscent of some other Southern rock, Mallonee said.

"It's Southern in a roots sense," he said. "We're a thinking person's roots rock band, with emphasis on lyrics and delivery."

The lyrics tend to focus on themes of human hurt, sin and redemption, Mallonee said.

"I'm forever drawn to the question of where human nature comes to the ultimate test and what that looks like from the inside out, from a highly personal and private point of view," he said.

**"We're a thinking person's roots rock band, with emphasis on lyrics and delivery."**

— BILL MALLONEE  
guitarist/vocalist of Vigilantes of Love

Mallonee said *Blister Soul* reveals hints of Neil Young, the Beatles and Bob Dylan.

"I wanted to achieve the sort of sound Dylan got early in his career," Mallonee said. "His first albums were so spontaneous — like a set of emotional snapshots. And that's the approach we took here — to just throw down a bunch of songs in the studio with as little rehearsal as possible to preserve the loose, live feel of the music."

Mallonee also compared VOL's music to his Athens brethren, R.E.M.

"There's some of the early kind of R.E.M. records and derivatives of bands like the Byrds and Velvet Under-

ground," Mallonee said. "I've always been a Velvet Underground and a Byrds fan; I like that kind of jangly sound."

An R.E.M. fan, Mallonee said the college rock legends were instrumental in helping set a standard for bands like VOL.

"They were more of a motivator," he said. "R.E.M. wrote books for most of the bands who are doing the college rock thing. But these alternative bands are now Top 40, and now there's more of a gentrifi-

cation of rock again — more bands are doing the 'out of their garage' thing."

VOL, while signed to the Capricorn label, still feels the heat of the competitive music business and is trying to cement itself in the increasingly popular "triple A" radio format.

"We've had four songs in the triple A top 10," Mallonee said. "But it takes a lot of money and push to break. We're trying to break in triple A and then move into modern rock."

Since its 1995 release, *Blister Soul* has enjoyed good success, Mallonee said. He is in