

AggieLife

After Cool Hand Luke's performance, students will be ...

In the palm of their hands

By Bethany Brown
THE BATTALION

Two years ago, the Tennessee band Cool Hand Luke wowed Aggies during a performance at Double Dave's. The three-man band finally made its way back to College Station for a show at Diggeridoo's tonight.

In 1998, Jason Hamill, Brandon Morgan and Mark Nicks found each other at a local restaurant.

"I was at Ruby Tuesday with some friends, and Brandon and Jason were [there] as well," said drummer and lead singer Mark Nicks. "A mutual friend introduced us and the first words that each of them said simultaneously were, 'Do you play drums?'"

As luck would have it, Brandon and Jason had been praying for a drummer, and Mark had been praying for guys interested in starting a band. Not long after this encounter, Cool Hand Luke was born.

The band is different from most bands in that its lead singer is also the drummer. Only a few bands, such as Genesis and the Platters, have had drummers that sang, but Cool Hand Luke also will investigate it.

"When we first started, Brandon was the singer," Nicks said. "I gradually started doing harmonies ... and singing sometimes before we knew it, I was pretty much singing most of the time."

Hamill said while most people think it is unusual to have a drummer as the lead singer, it did not strike him as odd.

"I guess people probably think it's pretty strange," Hamill said. "Since it happened gradually, I've never really thought much about it."

Cool Hand Luke has a powerful, unique sound and style. The members gather a great deal of their influence from their faith in God and use it to write songs that are intense, emotional and worshipful.

"Being Christian influences everything we do, from our music to our lyrics to our shows," Nicks said. "Jesus is the reason we play music."

Despite several offers, Cool Hand Luke has chosen to remain an independent or "indie" band. The members' main concern is furthering their ministry, and Cool Hand Luke is still looking for the right label to help them do that.

"God hasn't shown us an open door that he wants us to go through yet," said guitarist Jason Hamill. "We want to further God's kingdom, and if we find a label that we think will help us in that purpose, we will sign."

Even without a record label, Cool Hand Luke has released

albums such as *So Far ...* and *I Fought Against Myself*. The band sold more than 2,000 copies of *I Fought Against Myself* independently in less than one year.

Cool Hand Luke was recently voted as the top indie band by HM Magazine. The band was surprised and excited by the news.

"It made us feel really good that people liked us enough to take the time to vote for us," Nicks said.

Hamill said the news was a true blessing.

"Last year we were voted number two, and weren't expecting it at all," Hamill said.

Aside from Diggeridoo's, Cool Hand Luke has other shows coming up at festivals around the country. The biggest of these is MACRock, a three-day festival for independent music.

"There will be a lot of good bands there," Nicks said. "Fugazi

Q and Not U are playing, and I'm especially excited about that."

The band will also play at the Cornerstone Festival in Illinois, Furnace Fest in Alabama, and Purple Door in Pennsylvania.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges the members of Cool Hand Luke face is balancing school and a band. The members all attend Middle Tennessee State University and sometimes must work hard to keep everything balanced.

"I love playing in the band, but sometimes I really want a break from school and not having to go out of town on the weekends," Hamill said. "It kind of wears me out."

Nicks said their members' faith in God plays an important role in keeping the band going.

"We never get any rest and have to pull a lot of all-nighters to get all of our work done," Nicks said. "It's totally worth it, though ... God has really blessed us through it all."

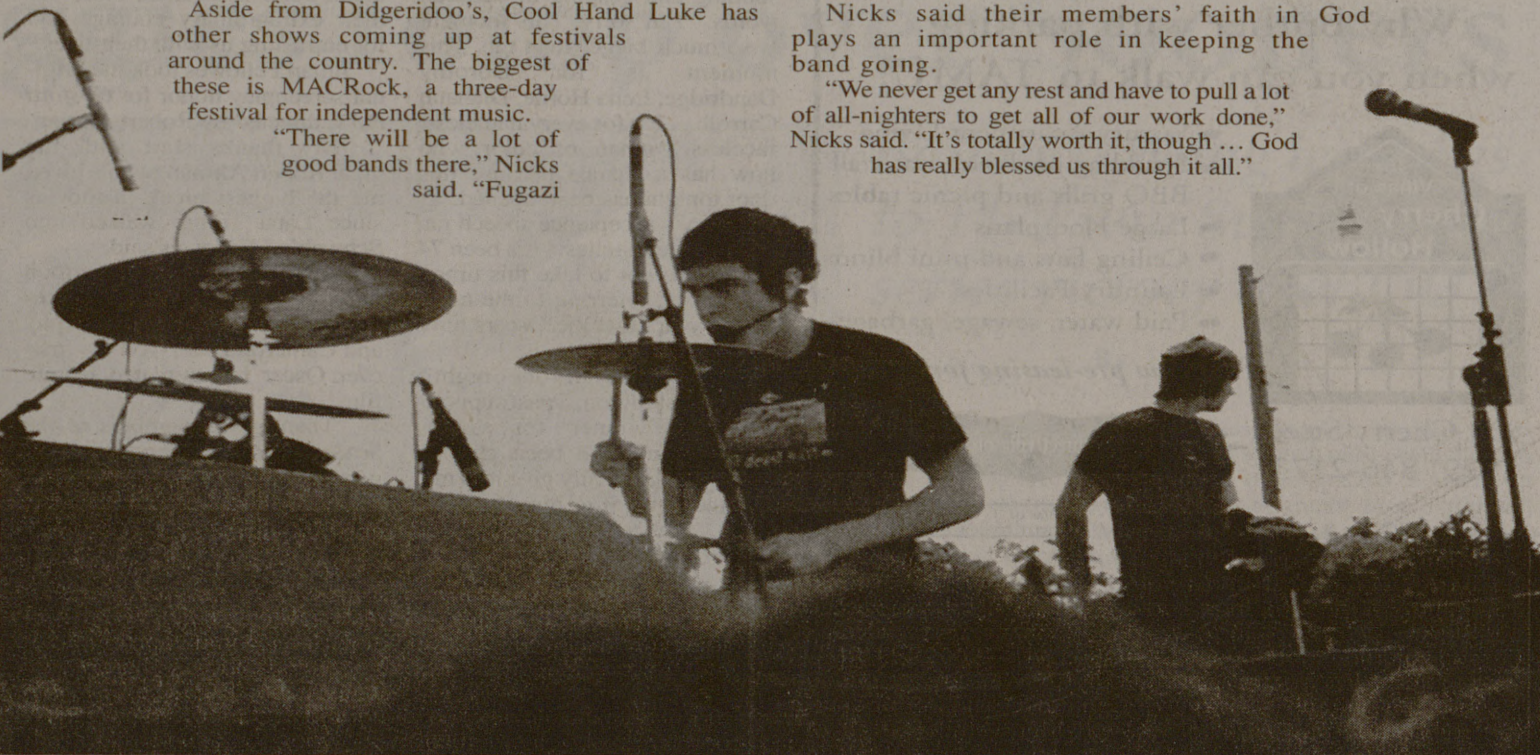


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Drummer and lead singer Mark Nicks performs with Cool Hand Luke at the 2001 Uproar Music Fest in Kissimmee, Florida.

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Late Nite Rock Show	Night of Event	March 26
Kayak Roll Clinic	Now-April 1	April 2
Rock Climb Wknd. Trip	Now-April 2	April 5-7
Kayak Open Practice	Now-April 8	April 9

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Program	Registration	Cost
CoRec Softball Trnmt.	Now-April 2	\$20/Team
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Golf	Now-April 2	Greens Charge

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