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Astronomy Authority Joins Faculty

Astronomy courses offered at A&M will be taught by a new faculty member, a professional astronomer who obtained the first "absolutely conclusive proof" of water vapor on Mars.

The new A&M assistant professor plans more high dispersion spectroscopy of Mars and Venus, at McDonald Observatory in West Texas.

Schorn and a University of Texas astronomer put together the right conditions and timing in spectrographic analysis of Mars to locate an elusive dark absorption line that indicated the presence of Martian water vapor.

The research was described in a 1969 issue of Time magazine.

The 38-year-old scientist teaches Physics 306 and 314, two three-hour survey courses in astronomy. He also is planning with area amateur astronomers a public-invited "star party" near perihelion of Comet Kohoutek. It promises to be one of the brightest of the century.

"We'll work it so everyone can have a good look," Schorn said.

Comet Kohoutek is presently on the far side of the sun from the earth. It will edge into the morning sky in October and is expected to become visible to the naked eye by mid to late November. In December the object will rise from an hour and a half or less before the sun.

After its closest approach to the sun Dec. 28, the comet will quickly become favorably placed in the evening sky for mid-northern observers.

Schorn believes natural interest in astronomical phenomena should be developed and structures the physics courses to satisfy curiosity. Physics 306 has no prerequisites, while 314 requires Math 102 and 103. The former is recommended for non-science major students.

"Astronomy is the oldest science and has the longest history," he observed.

"Since the time of Athens," he said, "it has been considered the most liberalizing of the sciences, the one best suited to give a student an overall view of the universe and man's place in it. While man's conception of the universe has changed greatly in almost three millennia, the question still retains its importance."

He said that since the entire universe can't be discussed in one semester, selection must be made

that is done, in part, by his students.

"Most of them express interest in life on other planets, the expansion and evolution of the solar system, the expanding universe and other phenomena such as 'black holes,' neutron stars or exploding galaxies."

Recent discoveries and theories in astronomy are woven into Schorn's lectures so the student will be informed on what is happening now. Some nightly observing sessions are scheduled to introduce the student to the work of astronomers.

A senior scientist in the Space Sciences Division of the Jet Propulsion Lab from 1962 until he came to A&M last summer, Schorn was chief of planetary astronomy at NASA in 1963.

He was a 1956 honors graduate of Chicago's Loyola University. Schorn's M.S. in physics and Ph.D. in astronomy were awarded at the University of Illinois in 1958 and 1963. He also studied at the University of Chicago.

His dissertation was written on celestial mechanics, but his interests include radio as well as optical astronomy. Schorn is particularly interested in determining the presence and abundances of carbon dioxide and water, atmospheric temperatures and pressures of Mars and Venus.

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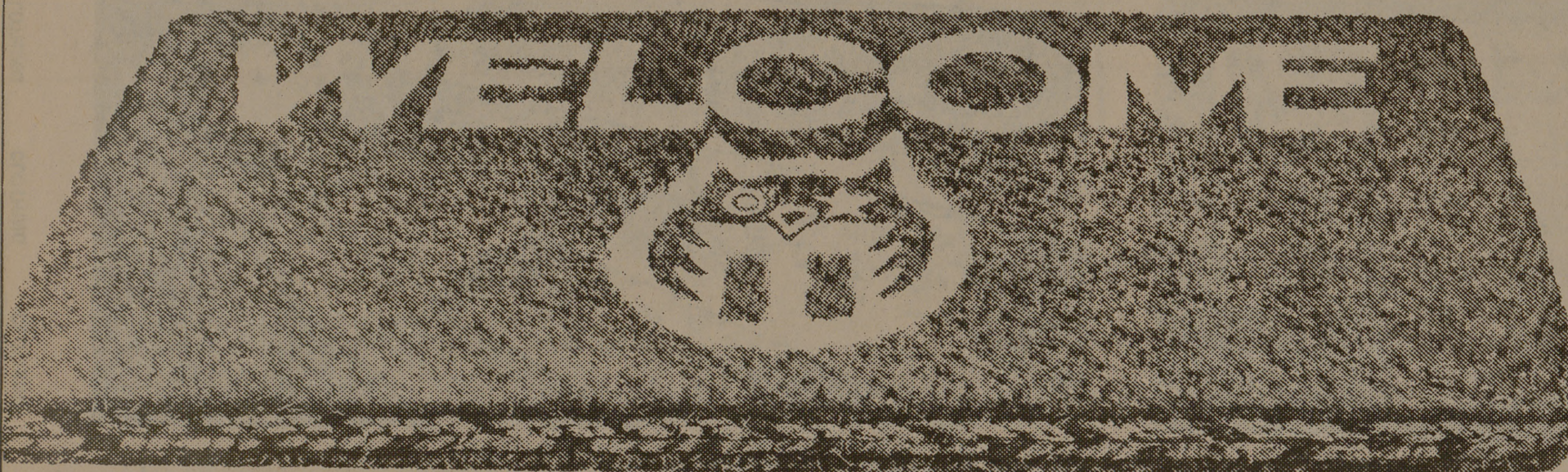
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Merrie Melodies and Looney Tunes

By TED BORISKIE

With the thousands of record albums that are released each year, it should be evident that not all are destined to be big sellers.

Some that sell big are certainly not deserving (everyone knows that), while others which are more than deserving of success sell a few copies and then float off into obscurity. These records are generally called something like "a neglected masterpiece."

Perhaps one of the most neglected was a record produced by Peter Townsend (of the Who) which featured an incredibly unlikely group called Thunderclap Newman.

The album was so different that it became both legendary and unavailable within a couple of months. It was called "Hollywood Dream."

The group consisted of an adolescent guitarist named Jimmy McCullough and Andy Newman, a utility instrumentalist who, bearded and thirtyish, looked like he would have been better suited as a postman. The real star of the group was the writer-drummer-singer, Speedy Keen. Keen was born to be a rock star; he even had the rock star's nose (Ringo, Townsend, etc.).

The music was strange; some called it "bizzaro-rock." There was nothing strange about McCullough's guitar but Keen's high, lilting voice predated Neil Young's massive success and Newman tinkered away on practically everything under the sun. In the course of the album he plays piano, soprano sax, oboe, tin whistle, glockenspiel, bass sax, kazoo, cor anglais, Bengali flutes, organ, tenor sax, Japanese battle cymbals, hand bells, Indian finger cymbals, Chinese temple block and sleigh bells. Wow!

With all that, it would seem that the music would be so confusing it could never work. Keen's

drums kept pushing everything along and with McCulloch's guitar and an unnamed bass (probably Townsend), the group surprisingly managed enough stability to enable Newman to go on his various jaunts.

Side two can compare with one side around (even the Beatles' "Abbey Road"). Starting off with a fine song about leaving the city and going to the "Wild Country" "When I Think" is a lovely ballad while "The Old Corn Mill" runs along with some neo-Dylan lyrics. "I Don't Know" is about an interracial love affair and the album tells it all. There is no pretense. "Why won't society leave me alone" treatment like you find in most songs on the subject but instead focuses on the uneasiness that exists between the two principals. Closing the side is a single (It wasn't a hit, either, "Something in the Air." The song is about revolution and one who's ever been in a situation where a crowd is about to turn into a mob will undoubtedly know of the tension that fills the air.)

With so much going for it, it was only natural that the album bombed. Heaps and heaps of critical praise could not make it sell. It was doomed to be all but forgotten.

A year and a half ago I stumbled across the album in the basement of Woolworth's and managed to pick it up for \$1.49. It became the envy of many in my peer group. One friend had been looking for it for three years.

Last month, the album was repackaged and re-released. The decision to issue it again was probably based on Keen's second album, "Previous Convictions," released this summer. "Convictions" isn't selling big so "Hollywood Dream" probably won't either. For a limited time you can again pick up a real classic.

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