

Radio offers jazz, classics

By Susan Hopkins

Battalion Staff

KAMU-FM, Texas A&M University's 3-year-old radio station, has not been around long enough for Aggies to consider it a tradition, but it has established a listening audience and catalog of music and drama programs that suggests years of development, loyalty and backbone.

With five full-time staff members and several part-time student disc jockeys, the novice radio station airs nine local programs and a gamut of music shows off an automation system.

Melissa Cotropia, KAMU-FM program director, said the radio station is a minor teaching tool for broadcast students as well as a service to the public. "We're (KAMU-FM) a real live radio station," she said, "but our programs are a hybrid between regular radio and TV." She said classical music can be heard on 90.9 of the FM dial during the day, with jazz music on Friday. Radio drama, public affairs, live concerts and the locally-produced shows add a TV touch to the radio at various times during the week, she said.

Students and volunteers from the community have come up with the nine popular weekly programs: *Poetry Southwest*, with Texas A&M English professor Dr. Paul Christensen, reflects ideas, through interviews, of poets who write about the Southwest area of Texas; *Radio Active*, hosted by Carol Parzen, presents local and special events and personality interviews on the 30-minute talk show; *Prime Cuts*, a jazz music program hosted solely by volunteers who lend records to the station for broadcast. Special *Prime Cuts* themes include a two-part series on the evolution of jazz, the black history of jazz giants and famous female jazz vocalists; *Thank Jazz it's Friday*, a popular Friday afternoon jazz program produced by Cotropia; *Enerjazz*, a jazz request line hosted by Debbie Monroe Friday mornings; *Collector's Choice*, a selection of rare classical music, presented by a Texas A&M physics professor; *Brazos Blue Grass*, especially for blue grass music lovers; *Best of Broadway and Hollywood*, with Lee Schink playing the sounds of famous Broadway musicals — from *Rose Marie to Hair*; *Classics for the Common Man*, a program for those with a mild taste for popular classical tunes; and *15 Minutes*, produced by Texas A&M broadcast students.

KAMU-FM is a National Public Radio station. With this satellite affiliation, Cotropia says, an "incredible amount" of programs are offered for the station's use. She said all the major-city operas and orchestras, news magazines similar to "60 Minutes" and a variety of British Broadcasting Corporation programs are available for radio. Two new programs to be aired in March, "The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy" and a radio adaptation of "Star Wars," will bring back a part of broadcasting — radio drama — that died out

due to the emergence of TV.

All the programs broadcast by the station are essentially the choice of the "well-educated, intelligent, discerning people" who listen to KAMU-FM, Cotropia says. Most listeners are Texas A&M professors or others from the community, she says, although students also make up part of the audience.

"Our aim is to provide an alternative to what else goes on on radio stations in the area," she says. "Listeners know they

can't get the programs we offer any other place, and we are very responsive to the people — they are like partners to us."

To raise annual funds of \$29,500, she said, listeners are asked to support the station with contributions. "They (contributors) tell us what kind of music they want to hear, and we take that into consideration when planning our format," Cotropia said.

Another form of support from the community is underwriting,

where businesses in Bryan College Station pay for the station to get certain programs. Cotropia said the station hopes to eventually have all programs underwritten.

When student announcers take over after 5 p.m. each day, they play music off tapes or direct from satellite, and are required to play from the station's format. Although they must report the weather and news, Cotropia said, the DJs "do not have to be great personalities," since

most of the programming comes directly from the automation system. Cotropia said there are no radio production classes at Texas A&M, so the DJs, who are paid for their work, are either students from non-journalism fields of study or are in a communications special topics course that gives school credit for work.

KANM, the Texas A&M student government radio station, is the only other University-supported radio station.

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KAMU-TV: teaching plus entertainment

By Kate McElroy

Battalion Staff

Somewhere on your cable TV dial between Channel 11 and Channel 13 is where KAMU-TV broadcasts. But The Texas A&M University station isn't on Channel 12. It's Channel 15.

Confused?

Simply stated, the station officially exists in ultra high frequency, the strange area between channel 2 and channel 13 labelled "U." But since most set owners in the Bryan-College Station area subscribe to cable television, the station is usually found on Channel 12 because that's where local cable companies have placed it.

Now that you know where KAMU-TV is on the dial, it's time to find out what the station actually is and does.

The forerunner of KAMU-TV was a University closed circuit system which operated from the old Bagley Hall, which was on the site of the Harrington Educational Tower. Mel Chastain, now station general manager, came to Texas A&M in 1965 to serve as program manager for the system. The system was connected to several campus classrooms and presented academic programs like features on writing 500-word essays and working difficult calculus problems.

But Chastain said that when he came here, the University had plans to expand the station to include full broadcast facilities. University President Earl Rudder then gave permission for the station to apply for a Federal Communication Commission license.

By 1970, KAMU-TV station started broadcasting. In 1972, KAMU-TV moved in its current facility, located near the University varsity tennis courts by Jersey Street. The building, named for Joe Hiram Moore, houses two production studios and the radio station, KAMU-FM.

The television station is affiliated with the Public Broadcasting System, so it does broadcast its share of national educational programs like "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." And of course, it seems like KAMU-TV airs "billions and billions" of cultural programs like Carl Sagan's "Cosmos."

Actually, the station's strength lies in its local programming. KAMU-TV is one of the few PBS-affiliated stations that produces a local news show. "15 News" runs at 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Some of the station's productions include a weekly community feature, "Open House," a University feature "Update: A&M," and during football season, the head football coach's feature (this year, "The Tom Wilson Show"); it also runs delayed broadcasts of Texas A&M football games.

And for the first time, KAMU-TV is producing nationally broadcast show, "The Plant Kingdom." The 30-minute horticulture program airs weekly.

Even though the station is active in local production, it's still participating in one of its basic functions — to educate Texas A&M communications students. Students in the beginning television production class produce a 14-minute live program actually aired on public airwaves. The shows, which run for two days near the end of every semester, are reminiscent of the early days of television when everything was live and bloopers were commonplace. In the second production class, students produce segments for the weekly series "etc." And in a class called "The Television Newscast," student assignments are run on the nightly news show.

This is one of the few schools, Chastain said, that uses student work extensively for actual broadcasts. University of Houston's KUHT and University of Texas' KLRN do not. All the anchormen for the KAMU newscasts are students.

The station still produces closed-circuit programs for the University and offers graduate courses in technology for the College of Education.

To help with all this production, the television and radio stations hire 27 student employees who gain on-the-job experience, the absolute minimum requirement needed to find a job in journalism.

To afford all these productions the station, like other PBS stations, holds an auction, which this year runs April 5-9. Last year the auction, which consists of good donated by community residents and businesses, raised \$15,000 for the University station. KAMU television and radio, which rely on community support for about 13 percent of their budget, receive a total of \$360,000 from the University for both salaries. Community support, about \$110,000 to \$140,000 each year, pays for other expenses like production and advertising costs.

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