

Altered States for altered audiences

By Scot K. Meyer

Battalion Staff

"Altered States" is a movie that will be most enjoyed by those members of the audience who are somewhat altered themselves. The film is what used to be called a real trip; one that just begs for you to fall into it, chanting "oh wow."

The special effects are quite impressive though, even without chemical participation on the part of the audience. There is one sequence that is particularly striking, and reminiscent of the star-rider sequence in the film "2001."

Like the star-rider sequence, it portrays a type of metaphysical journey. But this journey is not directed outward and into the future, but instead inward, and into the past.

"Altered States" is the story of a scientist who wants to explore man's past. And instead of using the conventional tools of archaeology, like picks, shovels and carbon-14 dating, our scientist wants to use his mind.

The theory goes like this: the genetic material in a person's cells contains not only everything that a person is, but also everything his or her ancestors were in the past. So even though a person (say a male scientist played by William Hurt) may look like a modern example of homo sapiens, he has a repressed genetic memory of all his ancestors, all the way back to strings of nucleotides swimming around in primeval ooze.

But how can a person tap that genetic memory? Would you believe by taking magic mushrooms and hopping into a sensory deprivation tank?

Of course you would.

Director Ken "Don't Call Me Subtle" Russell does an impressive job of duplicating the effect of psychedelic drugs, and if you've always wanted to try such drugs, but have been afraid to, this is a great movie.

Otherwise it's not so great.

Because underneath the bio-genetic jargon and the flashy effects, the movie is not particularly original. It's basic premise is the same as that of a legion of monster movies, from "Frankenstein" to "The Fly."

Ready?

It goes like this: There are some areas that science should not mess with, and nasty things will happen to any scientist who is imprudent enough to mess with those areas.

Dr. Frankenstein messed with the boundary between life and death, and he quite literally created a monster. Other imprudent scientists were responsible for such things as: teenage werewolves, gigantic day-glow blobs, radioactive tarantulas the size of trucks, nuclear meltdowns, and (on several occasions) the end of civilization as we know it.

Now we have a scientist who is messing with mysticism and his body's genetic structure. And boy is he ever sorry.

One could argue that even though the message is old and stale, it has not been listened to in the past. Hence by dragging it back out and jazzing it up again, the film makers are doing society a great service. If they see to it that the message is listened to this time, they may be instrumental in saving the world from monsters, blobs and all.

Well, maybe. But I think any scientist who watches the film will say "oh wow" along with everyone else, and then go back to cloning cells and splitting atoms. Because although the film's oh wow-quotient is high, its intelligence-quotient really isn't.

Students learn dance; develop bodies, talent

By Kate McElroy

Battalion Staff

Some Texas A&M University students are keeping on their toes this semester with dance classes instead of No-Doz.

The Dance Arts Society holds classes Monday through Thursday nights for its 250 members. It includes students and Bryan-College Station residents.

For \$20 a University semester, students can study modern dance, jazz, tap, ballet or aerobic dance — specializing in just one form or participating in all five.

If enough students belong in each range, the classes are divided into three levels — beginning, intermediate and advanced. In most of the classes, the first 30 minutes are dedicated to warm-up and exercise (in ballet, the barre), and the remaining

time is spent on the dances themselves, with the beginning class starting each session.

Dove Lyons, Dance Arts Society president, said that although some of the instructors are students, all are qualified to teach.

"Many of our teachers are professionals," she said. One instructor, a student, has danced for 15 years and has performed with the Houston Ballet.

"Before they're accepted as instructors, we audition them first," said Adriana Meza, society treasurer. "We just don't take their word for it (that they're experienced dancers)." The society checks, she continued, to make sure all instructors are not only excellent dancers, but also good teachers.

The culmination of the classes is the society's annual spring performance, which is open to the public. Last year the program featured student-choreographed jazz and modern dances, and a 30-minute presentation of "Graduation Ball," a standard ballet piece.

Some students join the society to perform publicly; others just like the workout.

"Many go into the classes for exercise," Lyons said. "We try to get people interested in helping their bodies."

The advantage of holding a class in aerobic dance, exercise set to music, Meza said, is that people interested in exercise can concentrate on that form.

Meza stressed that newcomers are welcome to watch or participate in a class before deciding to join. Those interested in auditing a session should wear clothes appropriate to the particular dance.

For people not familiar with some of the dances, Meza explained their concepts.

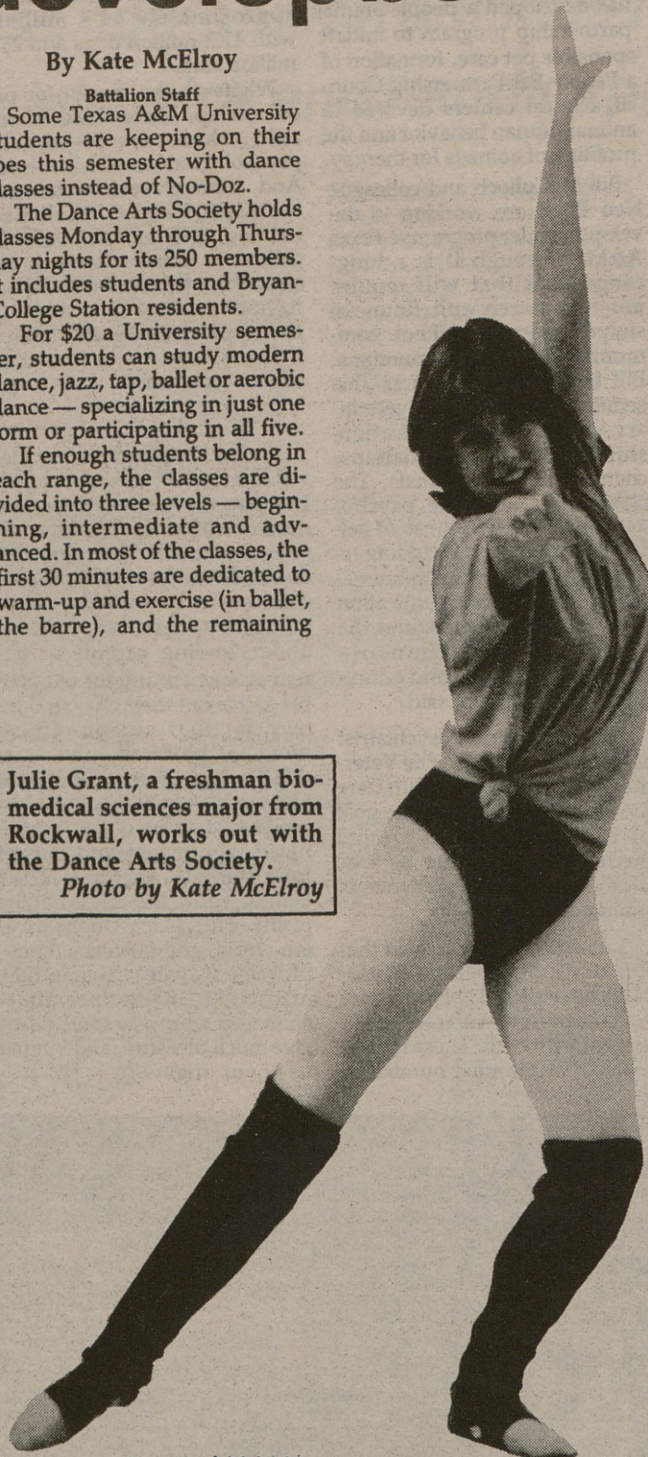
"Modern dance is self-expression, unusual movements" she said. "It's lots of fun." Jazz differs from modern dance, she continued, because the jazz movement is more dynamic and structured.

Lyons said the society is interested in having more men join the classes. Right now, 10 men are Dance Arts Society members.

The four-year organization holds its classes in the University dance studio, 216 G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Julie Grant, a freshman bio-medical sciences major from Rockwall, works out with the Dance Arts Society.

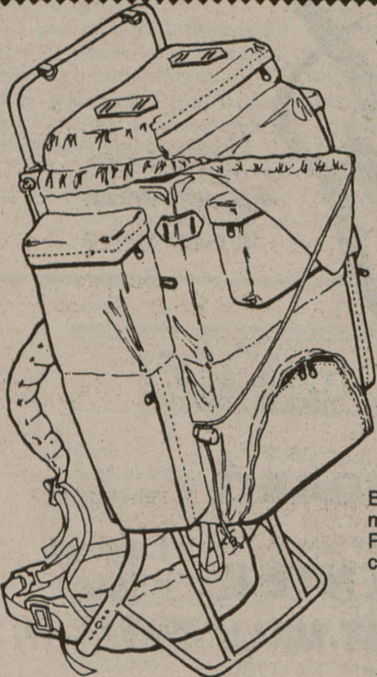
Photo by Kate McElroy



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