



Making it in a local band

By **ROBIN BLACK**
Senior Staff Writer

The house lights dim. A buzz of excitement fills the club as stale cigarette smoke hangs in the air. Individual faces meld into an indiscernible blob known as The Audience. You are about to go onstage and wow the crowd with rock 'n' roll or country or jazz or punk rock or whatever type of music you play.

This awe-inspiring vision occasionally fogs the mind of the serious musician from time to time, supplementing the desire to perfect his talent. But the musician must beware: letting that dream of success overpower the dream of perfection can be hazardous to his future.

David Lee Roth, the flamboyant lead singer for Van Halen says:

"If you get into this for the money you'll have an ulcer in no time. You won't have a hit just when you need it and you'll break up with your girl and even your dog won't recognize you. The idea at heart is — how much do you like to play?"

Jesse Sublett, lead singer for Austin band Secret Six says, "A lot of people have the mistaken idea that this is a glamorous business. In fact, it's really not very glamorous at all. It's a lot of work, and it's not always nice and it's often disappointing."

Part of what makes the struggle for fame worthwhile is the audience.

"It's a real charge when people are packed around you and the tables, dancing and having a good time," local musician Dru Wilson says. "There were times the floor got so crowded that there wasn't two feet between me and the crowd. I could barely move around and it was all I could do to play my guitar. It's a feeling I just can't describe."

There are other satisfactions, too, he says.

"You get a helluva lotta satisfaction in polishing a song," Wilson says, "but it's nothing like the feedback you get from the crowd. That's what makes it all worthwhile."

Wilson balances his load in a

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde fashion — The Bryan native is a psychology major at Texas A&M some of the time and lead guitarist and vocalist for rockabilly group Four Hams On Rye the rest of the time.

"Two of us in the group go to school," Wilson says. "Scott Oldner, the other guitarist for the group, is a double E major (electrical engineering), and I'm a psychology major — self-help, I guess."

Wilson explains the genesis of Four Hams:

"We formed a few months ago after I met Scott at a party his sister threw. We got together and started jamming and pretty soon we formed Four Hams."

This musician's world—a kind of fraternity — has its own dialect. Performers talk of jamming (very informal rehearsing), getting gigs (booking themselves to play somewhere) and payin' dues (knocking yourself out to "make it").

Willie Bennett, manager of the College Station nightclub, Dr. G's, says, "Every band's

gotta do it. They call it payin' dues. It's the price you pay if you wanna be famous. It means a lot of work, but most of the guys love it."

Four Hams has been luckier than most new bands, Wilson says, because they had been together only about a month when they got their first gig:

"KANM was having a benefit at Dr. G's to raise money to buy some new equipment and they had local bands play there. We knew this was a real goodn chance to see how things were going to work out, so we worked real hard to get into the show. We then had about a month after we found out about it to completely polish an hour's worth of music."

That hour's worth of music they worked so hard on is called a set.

Wilson says, "The hardest part of starting the band is learning the first set. That's when you find out whether or not you can all work together."

Wilson should know. He's a