

News

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Kirsten Dietz, assistant city editor, says, "Work on the newspaper doesn't have set hours. It's tough to balance a personal relationship. It takes someone really special to be able to understand it and put up with it."

One question bothers most student-reporters.

"You always wonder how many actually read the paper," Dietz says.

The Battalion has a 23,000 circulation, ranking it in the top 10 for collegiate newspapers in the nation.

Don Johnson, student publications coordinator, says The Battalion has a budget just under \$1 million a year.

"It (the money) all comes from advertising," Johnson says, adding that only 5 percent of the newspaper's budget is supplied by student service fees.

With so much money invested in The Battalion, the businesses of Bryan-College Station expect to be in the news occasionally, Johnson says.

If The Battalion prints a feature story on a worker in a pizza restaurant, "every pizza place will complain because that guy got free publicity," Johnson adds.

He says advertisers consider The Battalion a more credible newspaper because it is technically not a free publication. It has a circulation charge of \$1 per student — or about \$35,000 to \$37,000 per year — taken from student service fees each year.

To qualify for this portion of student service fees, The Battalion must win the stamp of approval from the Finance Committee of Student Government. Johnson says a dollar a year per student amounts to less than a penny per paper.

David Alders, former student body president, says:

"In an organization so concerned with a student institution (Student Government) being held accountable to their constituency, it seems to me (the newspaper's criticism of Student Government) is pretty hypocritical. Maybe (The Battalion writers) ought to hold a magnifying glass up to themselves."

Kevin Brannon, Political Forum chairman, says:

"I think The Batt recently has gotten into almost a personal vendetta against Student Government."

Alders says more attentive advising is needed by members of the communications department to solve the problems of irresponsibility.

But Johnson, who is also an associate professor of journalism, says First Amendment constitutional rights state that student publications cannot be touched by administrators. He added that some A&M officials have had to be reminded of the First Amendment over the years.

The courts, however, have not forgotten and have enforced the First Amendment in several cases.

The 1972 decision by the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals of Fujishima vs. the Board of Education ruled that prior review of a public institution's student newspaper was unconstitutional.

In Bazaar vs. Fortune in 1973, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court ruled that speech, which might provoke antagonistic responses from a majority of people, could not be hindered in any way.

In defense of The Battalion, the paper's informal adviser, Bob Rogers, told staff writers:

"Fact of the matter is, you guys probably get more advice and take more advice than people who have quote: 'advisers.'"

Rogers praised Jerry Oslin, the reporter who covered Student Government this semester.

"Oslin, I think you deserve a medal on this series on Student Government," he says. "The criticisms that I've heard about what you did are without merit."

The only student newspaper in Texas that leads The Battalion in circulation, The Daily Texan at the University of Texas, also has been through some rough times with student government, Editor David Woodruff says.

To improve student relations at A&M, some students have suggested holding a campus-wide election for the editor of The Battalion as UT does. But Woodruff says UT students have lost interest in the election.

Candidates for editor of The Battalion are interviewed by the Student Publications Board, composed of three A&M students, three members of the faculty and one administrator. Professors on this year's board were from the philosophy department, the English department, and the College of Geosciences. The administrator was Dr. Carolyn Adair, director of the Department of Student Activities.

In 1975, The Battalion was placed under the umbrella of the Department of Communications. Rogers says the newspaper was a part of the University News Service before the merger.

"A very small clique of people" wrote for The Battalion at that time, Rogers says. When he was asked to be chairman of the Student Publications Board, Rogers says, he stipulated that the newspaper be utilized by the communications department.

Now, any student, regardless of his major, has the opportunity to work on The Battalion. The staff is chosen each semester by the editor.

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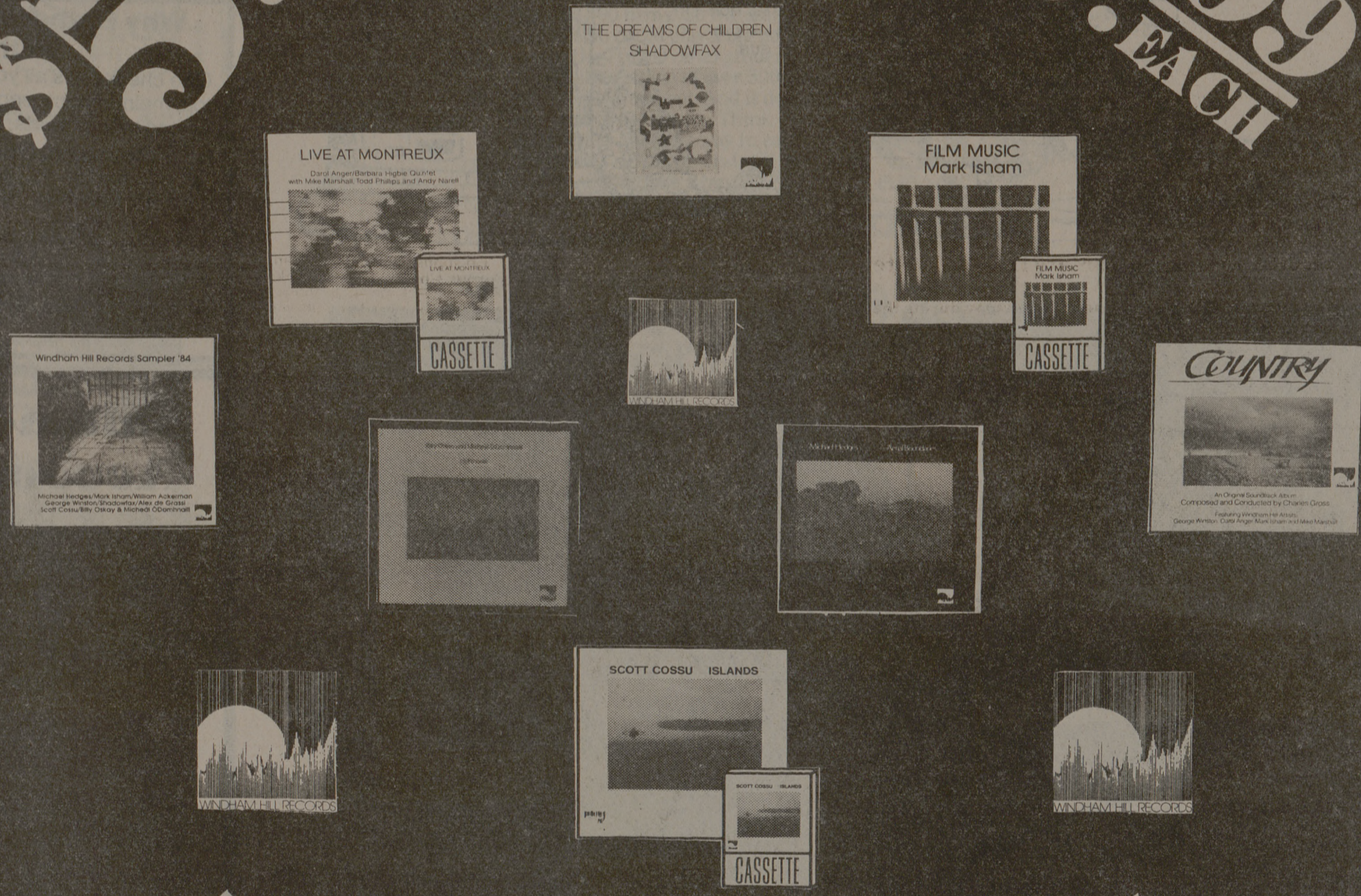
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