

STATE AND LOCAL

A&M considered tertiary market

Town Hall having difficulties

By RODNEY RATHER
Reporter

Texas A&M may be considered a world-class institution in the eyes of educators, but it is considered a third world market by the entertainment industry.

Programs Director Jim Hurd said that A&M, along with many other universities, has fallen from the secondary market to the tertiary market, which means that it is the last place performers choose to hold a show, Memorial Student Center.

Entertainers look at factors such as facilities, population, location and record sales when deciding where to perform, Hurd said.

"Most institutions used to be secondary markets because they had facilities and money," he said.

But now they are considered tertiary markets because they are usually located in areas that are not densely populated and that do not have high record sales; whereas primary markets such as Houston and Dallas have large populations and substantially larger record sales.

Because the MSC Town Hall, which is in charge of entertainment,

has problems attracting performers, A&M may follow the lead of other universities and hire professional promoters to do the job, Hurd said. That means MSC Town Hall will have less control over ticket prices and over which shows are brought to the campus.

Besides lacking a prime location, population and facilities, A&M faces

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another problem: money.

Last year's Town Hall chairman, Julie Plessala, said Town Hall has been restricted in the amount of money it can spend to attract entertainment,

"For a professional fee, which is the amount paid to the group itself, Town Hall doesn't spend over \$25,000 to \$30,000," Plessala said.

"On top of that, there are sound and lighting costs, which can run from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and public relations costs and crew costs," she said.

One show may cost \$60,000 to \$70,000, she said.

Last year, Town Hall had about \$932,000 to pay for the shows, Hurd said, but only about \$32,000 was hard cash, which was taken from student service fees. The bulk of the budget was self-generated through ticket and T-shirt sales.

Another problem that has burdened Town Hall is persuading students to attend the shows.

Surveys have been conducted to discover what the students would like to see, but they have not been effective, Plessala said.

"We found that, for instance, Toto was second on the survey, under Madonna," she said. "And considering how hot Madonna is, that's pretty good."

Town Hall Vice Chairman of

Concerts for 1984-85 Susan Polarolo said although all the available media — including television, radio, newspapers and posters — were used in promotions, but only 3,600 tickets were sold for the Toto concert, falling about 4,200 tickets short of selling out G. Rollie White Coliseum.

To get a more accurate estimate of what students want to see, a new survey may be used next year, Plessala said. It would ask students to list the types of music they listen to and their favorite musical artists instead of having them rank a list of 10 to 15 groups already provided on a survey, which was the method used last year.

Although Town Hall has had to deal with such problems as student attendance, money and the classification as a tertiary market, Plessala said most performers have enjoyed A&M once they come here.

"They know A&M is different and they treat it that way," she said. "That's what makes it fun for them."

For example, Plessala said the musical group Alabama liked A&M so much they returned for three consecutive years.

Escapee, 39, turns himself in to warden

Associated Press

PALESTINE — After five weeks of hiding in the day and coming out at night "like a damn vampire," Harry Eugene "Oilcan" Harrison said he's relieved the running is over.

Harrison, 39, escaped from the Dallas County Courthouse five weeks ago after a jury found him guilty of car theft and recessed before deciding punishment. His flight and several narrow escapes from law enforcement officers took him from Dallas to Amarillo to Palestine.

Harrison claimed he was innocent of the auto theft conviction reached by the jury July 10, so he said he bolted from the courtroom through a fire door.

During his absence, he was sentenced to 50 years and still faces other charges.

Harrison surrendered in Palestine to Jack Garner, warden of the Texas Department of Corrections' Coffield Unit. He knew Garner from a previous stint in state prison and trusted him, he said.

Concert promoter to stage sixth Texas Jam Saturday

Associated Press

DALLAS — PACE Concerts president Louis Messina needed to sell more than 50,000 tickets just to break even on the 1984 Texas Jam concert. Rock fans had bought only 30,000 tickets in advance.

"Louis went into the day losing a half million dollars," recalled radio station KTXQ-FM program director Andy Lockridge.

But 20,000 people walked up to purchase tickets the day of the show, saving the concert promoter from a financial disaster yet bringing no reward for the work of putting on a large-scale show.

Afterward, Messina vowed to "never do another Texas Jam."

But this year Messina is back, and he's put up \$1 million to stage the 1985 Texas Jam this Saturday at the Cotton Bowl.

Promoters like Messina are willing to gamble big money and endure the organizational headaches because a sellout can yield hundreds of thousands of dollars in profit.

The key to a successful stadium concert is securing the talent that can sell the show, Messina said. But since "Bruce Springsteen is the only

person who can fill a stadium," a promoter must book a combination of acts to draw a crowd and keep it entertained.

Saturday's lineup includes Deep Purple, the Scorpions, Night Ranger, Ted Nugent, Bon Jovi, Grim Reaper and Victory. Together, the groups will command a salary of \$450,000 plus a percentage of the gate.

And although PACE's gate revenue will amount to \$1.1 million if it sells 60,000 tickets to this year's Jam, entertainment expenses are only half the bills PACE will have to pay before taking its share.

Rental for the Cotton Bowl is roughly \$100,000 based on a share of the gate.

Sound, lights and production will cost an estimated \$71,000, and rental of the five-story stage another \$60,000.

The backstage crew, which begins small to set up the backstage facilities and fence in advance, will swell to 200 the day of the concert and cost \$50,000.

Stadium workers — the folks who man the gates, medical stations, security posts and clean up — will cost \$150,000.

Advertising, insurance and support services all siphon off a share, too, Messina said. The cost of about \$1 million must be recouped in tickets which sell for \$20 apiece.

To make a 10 percent profit, PACE needs to sell 60,000 tickets.

"The overhead is the same whether 40,000 people show up or 80,000 people show up," Messina said, explaining why a big show is so risky.

To even the odds, Stroh Brewery Co. is the corporate sponsor this year. In return for promotion, they help with costs. The brewery uses the concert to get its message to young consumers, despite the fact that beer is not sold inside the Cotton Bowl during the event.

Sales of T-shirts, posters and other "rock paraphernalia" could bring more than \$500,000, estimated Ed Campbell, concessionaire. Each person in attendance should spend an average of \$9, he said.

Early this week, tickets were selling at a rate of 1,200 a day, with 52,705 tickets sold as of Sunday.

"I predict that we will sell between 70,000 and 80,000 tickets to the Texas Jam," Messina said.

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