



SONDRA N. ROBBINS

Bassist Keith Grimwood of Trout Fishing in America entertains a young audience at the group's children's show Saturday afternoon.

## Child's Play

By Cindy McMillian

A three-foot tall Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle twirls wildly to music. The floor of the Front Porch Cafe, weekend home of college students and adults looking for live music, is filled with sitting cross-legged. Entire families quack occasionally.

The description may seem entirely incredible, but as the duo on stage will tell you, *Truth is Stranger than Fishin'*.

The two musicians who comprise Trout Fishing in America lured about 40 kids and 25 adults to a Saturday afternoon show which included sing-alongs, comedy, juggling stunts and even (sorry, kids) a little education.

Guitarist Ezra Idlet and bassist Keith Grimwood could easily have entertained the audience even without instruments. They look a comical pair (Idlet is 6-feet-9, Grimwood is 5-feet-5) to begin with, and play off the height difference in the song "Dueling Morons."

Juggling bean bags, bowling balls and "knives" — with help from some young volunteers — the musicians captivated an audience whose average attention span can't be longer than a typical Roadrunner episode.

Audience participation is integral to Trout Fishing's appeal. Many of the songs are sing-alongs, or have portions where the kids get to make noise. In the song "Five Little Ducks," Grimwood creates a quacking competition between children and adults — oddly, the adults were almost enthusiastic enough to win.

Actually, almost all the songs performed at the children's show were familiar to me because I've heard them — yes, and sang and clapped and

quacked with them — at the adult shows. The simple, sometimes silly tunes written to appeal to children are big hits with the big kids, too.

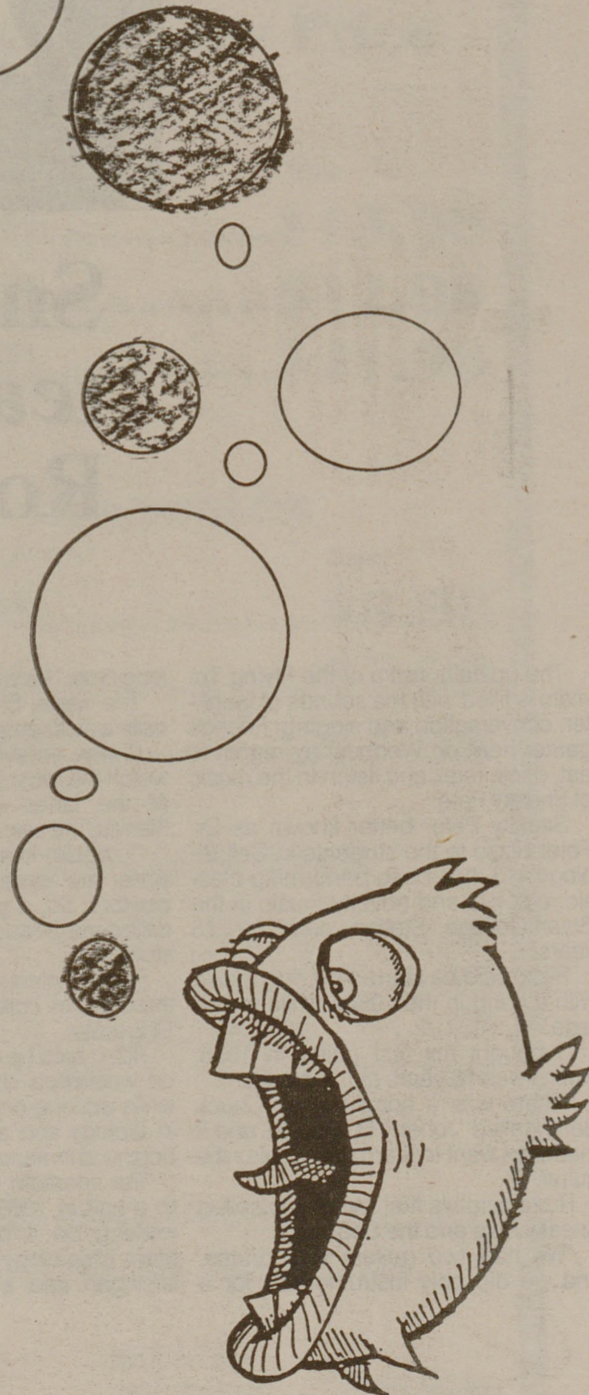
Seeing the same performance through a child's eyes was a refreshing change of pace, and the kids really had a blast. They sang, yelled, laughed and danced (Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" brought out the boogie in several of them).

They didn't even mind too much when Grimwood paused for the educational (though humorous) portion of the show. The classically trained bass player explained bowing techniques (*arco* and *pizzicato*), and the self-taught Idlet explained guitar techniques ("playing with my fingers" and "playing with a pick"). Idlet also explained the term *a capella*: "It's a small town in Northern Italy where no one plays any instruments."

The men had an easy rapport with their audience. The children had no trouble approaching the stage after the show to ask questions, request songs or get an autograph on a T-shirt or tape. Grimwood showed off some of the stage props — which include a teddy bear and a pair of dinosaur hand-puppets — to two kids, and later talked with a parent about favorite children's musicians.

Trout Fishing has a tape for children, *Big Trouble*, and a kids' video called "Go Fish," which won a gold medal at the 1990 Houston International Film Festival.

Don't hesitate to check out the releases just because they're "for kids" — the beautiful song "Lullaby," written for the musicians' own children, is available only on the kids' tape.



## Aggie Players 'strike a pose'

By John Mabry

"Strike a pose." With those words as her battle cry, Madonna made Vogueing the newest dance fad of the '90s.

Although she'd probably like to take credit as the inventor of the debonair dance, the art of Vogueing is as old as, would you believe, the 17th century.

"They had style, they had grace." It was during this time period that the first "Vogueers" — European aristocrats — began to display their adeptness at grace and poise. The overly conscious control of the body, the mystery of the fan, the alluring, décolleté garments and the distant attitude were all part of the craft.

Several Aggie Players have been Vogueing, 17th-century style, for the past three weeks in preparation for the upcoming production of William Wycherly's Restoration masterpiece, "The Country Wife."

As part of their experience, eight cast members traveled to the 1991 Texas Educational Theatre Association Convention in Fort Worth to present a workshop on period-style posing to Texas high school students. The workshop was led by director Michael Greenwald, associate professor of theater arts at Texas A&M.

"The teachers get to see what other people are doing and have a chance to pick up new techniques from actors and directors who have had more training," he said. "Some of these teachers have not been highly trained in theater, and this gives them a chance to learn new techniques."



PHILCAN M. EBENJACK

Susie Shaw and John Flores vogue 17th century style in the Blocker building Tuesday evening.

After Greenwald presented a brief overview of the history, costuming and mannerisms of 1675, each actor presented a brief monologue as an example of the different social types of the period — the dashing gallant, the vain fop, the crusty cuckold and the naive country girl.

Then, volunteers from the audience were chosen to try their hand at emulating the acting style of the

age. Senior theater arts major Mary Ellen Brennan, one of the participants in the workshop, said programs like these are essential to a true understanding of Restoration acting style.

"Today's high school students have grown up in an age when nothing surprises them anymore," she said. "There's nothing they've seen that can be offensive. So when you

revert back to the Restoration, it's hard to relate to the decorum of the age, when showing a woman's leg was considered risqué."

Brennan said another difficulty is the fact that many modern playwrights have chosen to ignore the beauty of language.

"Today, with playwrights such as David Mamet, a grunt is considered a sentence," she said.

## Struggle to succeed links videos

By Julia Spencer

British statesman and author Benjamin Disraeli once said, "Circumstances are beyond the control of man, but his conduct is in his own power."

Nothing could more aptly describe the common thread which links the three films I viewed on video this past weekend. In all three, the characters struggle to succeed despite the limits gender, education or socio-economic status have placed on them.

Camille Claudel is about the tragic life of the extraordinarily gifted sculptress who became Auguste Rodin's assistant and lover, to the detriment of her own career and *oeuvre*. It was Camille's unfortunate predicament to be a talented and highly imaginative female in the male-dominated art world of the late 19th century.

Exceedingly passionate and headstrong, and bitterly opposed by her patrician mother who thought the work of a sculptor filthy and unladylike, Camille turns to the men in her life for solace and support. In her eagerness to be recognized by Rodin, she abandons her own projects to help him, and soon becomes his lover and greatest source of inspiration.

Rodin, sensitively portrayed by the prolific Gerard Depardieu, is torn between Camille (Isabelle Adjani, ravishing even in rags) and another woman. Tormented by his indecision, she leaves him to recommence her own work, but without his love and

without the gentle guidance of her father or her brother, she begins a self-destructive descent into madness.

Her paranoid, irrational conduct scares away potential patrons and only plunges her deeper into a mental, emotional and financial morass. Having destroyed all her works in plaster before being committed to an institution in 1913, only a very few pieces survive to bear witness to her highly psychological, "interior" style of art.

This film makes me wonder how Claudel might have fared if she had been born in this century. Perhaps a wider acceptance of female creative endeavors might have given her the strength to succeed on her own without the smothering, jealous influence of a Rodin. Nevertheless, their doomed love story is immortalized here, composed and lighted like a beautiful sculpture, which loses none of its delicacy, only its scope on the small screen. Perhaps with this sensual, three-dimensional character study, beautifully rendered by Adjani, Camille Claudel's perceptive and tender work will finally receive the recognition it deserves. This film is in French with English subtitles.

Stanley (Robert De Niro), of Stanley & Iris, has a different sort of predicament in this sincere, old-fashioned film. He, like one in five Americans, can't read or write. Iris (Jane Fonda), who works at the same bakery as

Stanley, is recently widowed and has to care for an extended family threatened to over-extend itself.

The movie follows the pair as they slowly, tentatively become friends, learn each other's secrets and teach each other to regain the missing pieces of their lives. As Iris teaches Stanley to read and he shows her how to love again, no easy solutions or miracle cures are offered — only the traditional American values of persistence and hard work.

This, being a Hollywood film, was the most uplifting of the three by far. De Niro fans who wish to see him in a masterful change-of-pace performance — much like his recent work in "Awakenings" — will enjoy this film as well.

Last Exit to Brooklyn proves that the '50s weren't all innocence and Eisenhower. Based on Hubert Selby's controversial novel, it is full of characters who were born into rotten circumstances (no offense, Brooklynites) and have little hope or means for getting out. Some of the men and women who populate this film have renewed prospects at the end, but they all carry the heavy burden of ignorance, poverty and violence.

The film, which is presented as a series of vignettes, is loosely held together by the story of an ongoing strike by the local labor union. The protagonists are outcasts, living by their

wits at the edge of society: hoods, con artists, prostitutes, homosexuals, transvestites, drug addicts, all trying to come to terms with themselves and their situations.

Jennifer Jason Leigh, who played a misguided teenager in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* turns in a heartbreaking performance as a peroxidized tramp who hustles G.I.s for a living. She is so inured to the indifference and violence of the streets that she sacrifices herself to it and cannot even recognize true affection when it comes her way.

Another victim of this degenerate society is a married man whose newfound homosexual tendencies cause him to pursue a frivolous, mercenary man, and failing that, a young local boy. In the process, he loses his job, his family, his morals and all his dignity and self-respect. In a strangely Christ-like image, we see him crucified by the neighborhood gang for his sins against society and public opinion.

There are many striking images and memorable characters here, but don't rent this one if you just want a cheap, teen sexploitation flick. There's plenty of exploitation, but it's gritty, sordid stuff, not soft-focus, beach-blanket titillation. If you want a disturbing look at the depths of human depravity in the underbelly of urban society, in a film reminiscent of *Sid and Nancy*, then this is the video for you.