

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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The Battalion

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PRIME TIME POSSE

Group addresses student concerns with skits, role playing



By TRACIA NEWBOULD
Asst. Night News Editor of THE BATTALION

Imagine getting up in front of your class and giving an unprepared speech. Now imagine that instead of your class it is a group of high-strung, impatient junior high students. It is your job to both entertain and discuss serious issues like staying in school and setting goals.

Prime Time Posse (PTP) faces this type of situation every time they perform. PTP is a volunteer group of over 20 Texas A&M students who perform improvisational skits in the B/CS area. The group uses humor and role playing to address issues facing students from elementary to college age.

The group said it has two primary goals: to provide positive role models for different youth groups and to educate minority students about opportunities available to them.

Formed in 1991 by the Department of Multicultural Services Special Projects Coordinator Lorinda Beekmann, PTP has made numerous appearances including performances at Fish Camp and the Youth Opportunities Unlimited program. Y.O.U. is a state-wide program designed to help ninth and tenth grade students at high risk for dropping out of school.

Amy Forzono, a junior Agricultural Economics major, said



Students in Prime Time Posse volunteer time to help area youths.

performing at the Y.O.U. program was the group's greatest achievement and the most challenging.

"They kept their guards up at the beginning," Forzono said. "Their remarks were cocky. I could tell they had a stereotype about me. To them I was the little rich white girl who didn't have to work for anything."

"It wasn't until the end when we had question and answer time that they started coming around. I explained that I too had problems and had to use student loans to make my way through college."

Frank Guerra, a senior political

science major, said the group did not want to be seen as a theatrical organization. He said PTP uses the skits only as a way to bridge the distance between the group and the audience.

"We're not a performing group," Guerra said. "We are a group of students, not out to get any Emmys, but just trying to show the kids that we are not that much different from them. If we can make it, then so can they."

Lathalia Trammel, a junior elementary education major, said role playing helps students relate to her.

"It makes it a lot easier for them to ask me questions about

my culture [African-American]," Trammel said. "Up on the stage you are less intimidating. It makes them feel I am more open minded and easier to talk to."

The group requires extensive student participation in order to make the skits work. The students are asked to hold props and respond to questions. This interaction gives the group a chance to get to know its audience better.

Reginald Broadus, a junior history major, said many minority students think the idea of attending a major university like A&M is unattainable.

"I realized during a skit at Bryan High School for a group of El Paso students that many of them had never thought about going to college," Broadus said.

"Even though it [A&M] was right down the road-to them, it was out of their grasp."

"It's one of our goals to provide information on options open to them by not just talking about 4-year schools, but 2-year colleges, technical schools and any other form of higher education."

The Prime Time Posse will perform Oct. 17 at Festfall '92 in downtown Bryan. Festfall is a two-day festival displaying various forms of art work from the Brazos Valley. The group plans to hold a cultural fashion show in which the members present themselves as famous minority figures.

Hoffman shines as an unlikely 'Hero'

By LANE LOWREY
Special to THE BATTALION

"Hero"
Starring Dustin Hoffman,
Geena Davis, Andy Garcia
Directed and written by
Stephen Frears
Rated R
Playing at Post Oak III



Dustin Hoffman's character stumbles into heroism in "Hero."

"Hero" is the type of movie which makes you think, whether it be about lies, ethics or even the nature of man. The intelligence and insight which it conveys are well worth the price of admission.

Bernard Laplante (Dustin Hoffman) is, for lack of a better term, a parasite who leeches off the vulnerabilities of those around him.

At first glance Laplante has no redeeming qualities. It is hard to look up to a man who steals eighty dollars from his lawyer as she pleads for a lighter sentencing in his theft case. But this is just a first impression.

John Bubber (Andy Garcia) is a bum, living in his car, who is going nowhere fast. He seems to be the most unlikely candidate for America's next hero.

Gale Gayley (Geena Davis) has it all. She is a respected journalist who gets her way in almost everything. Gayley's boss, portrayed by a hype-avoiding Chevy Chase, gives her free rein only if he can make a buck at it.

The plot of this movie has many twists and turns and the outcome is probably not exactly what you'd expect.

The lives of three completely different characters cross over because of a plane crash on an interstate. Laplante saves several crash victims, but due to a chance encounter Bubber receives credit for the deed and gets a million-dollar reward.

The irony is that Bubber makes a better hero than Laplante would.

Hoffman does an outstanding job of giving the audience insight

into Laplante. He creates a character which the audience can hate and love simultaneously. Moreover, you just feel sorry for the poor bastard. This portrayal is what allows the movie to succeed. Not to slight Davis or Garcia, who both give excellent performances, but Hoffman steals the show.

Garcia creates a character who is relatively wholesome, and this role is used as a foil to the character of Laplante.

In this role, Garcia proves that he can play a good guy just as well as a bad one. Garcia's role provides the canvas for Hoffman to sketch his character upon.

Davis also does a superb job of representing a career woman who has fought hard to get where she is, but is not afraid to make judgement calls when the time comes, no matter what the consequences are.

The movie is darkly funny, especially where the media are concerned. Most of the journalistic lambasting is a thinly veiled but much-deserved stab at the coverage of the Gulf War.

This movie calls into question the ethics of television newscasting and causes you to wonder if what is portrayed as truth on the five o'clock news was really true at four.

The interplay between the characters is brilliantly written by Stephen Frears. It operates on several levels at once and as you leave the theater you begin to think, "What if..."

And if you don't want to think, you don't have to, because on the surface the movie is just as entertaining.

Band brings ethnic dance music to Bryan-College Station

By SUSAN OWEN

Asst. Arts & Entertainment Editor of THE BATTALION

Brave Combo will rumba, schottische, polka, cha-cha and rock the Stafford Opera House tonight.

The Denton-based quintet has carved out a niche for itself playing an eccentric mix of ethnic dance music from all over the world.

The band's hallmarks are high-level musicianship and a strongly developed sense of humor that leads the members into some strange medleys and unique covers. If you've never heard Ozzy Osborne's "Iron Man" done as a cumbia, prepare to have your horizons broadened.

Another Brave Combo trademark is changing the minds of people who never thought they'd polka.

"If Brave Combo can do one thing, we'd like to destroy people's misconceptions about what's cool to like in music," said lead singer Carl Finch.

Finch's boredom with mid-70s pop led him into exploring different dance rhythms. He started Brave Combo in 1979 and the band lists among its influences zydeco, salsa, conjunto, reggae and blues, for starters.

This is infectious dance music that will not let you sit still. Normally sane individuals find themselves waltzing, tangoing and doing everything from the "Hava Nagila Twist" to a

version of the Hokey Pokey they don't teach in elementary school.

A night with Brave Combo brings to mind — all at once — a Brazilian street dance, a scaled-down Mardi Gras, and a German family wedding without the bratwurst and sauerkraut. If this sounds confusing, you're on the right track.

You'll hear rhythms you may not recognize and languages you probably don't understand. Horn player Jeffrey Barnes will haul out some instruments never seen before by humankind.

Brave Combo's two newest releases are an album of Japanese pop music from the 1940s and a Christmas album that will reach the stores in a few weeks.

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