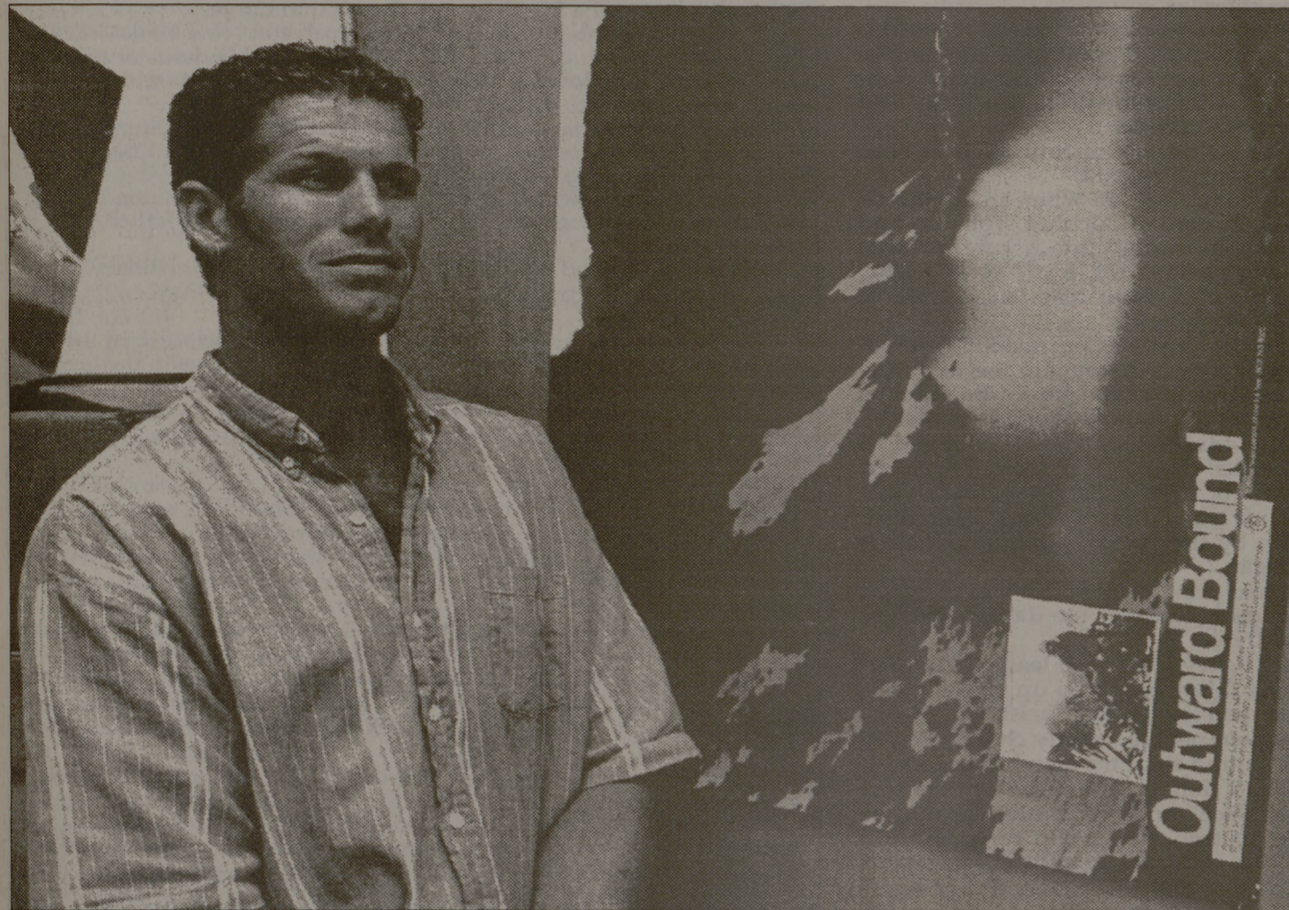


Inward journeys, Outward Bound



BILLY MORAN/The Battalion

John Pommier spends his summers camping and hiking with youths from detention centers, teaching them survival techniques, in the Outward Bound program.

Graduate student leads at-risk youth to self-discovery on wilderness trips

By DENA DIZDAR
The Battalion

Texas A&M graduate student John Pommier will soon spend his sixth summer canoeing, hiking and developing teamwork with youth at risk.

Pommier, who is working on his Ph.D. in recreation resource development, works with the non-profit organization Outward Bound to help young people in detention centers get back on track.

For 28 days, Pommier and his group camp near a river and learn basic survival techniques that will help the campers to reevaluate themselves and the paths they have taken in their lives.

Outward Bound was started in 1941 by Kurt Hahn, a Jewish schoolteacher exiled from Germany, as a survival school for boys in Great Britain.

Adapted in Colorado in 1962, the United States division of the program consists of tailor-made wilderness trips designed to cultivate teamwork and self-esteem.

Corporations, cancer recovery groups and numerous others have contacted Outward Bound to help them learn to work together and identify strong leaders.

The groups Pommier works closest with are juveniles jailed for a variety of crimes.

For the past two years, Pommier has worked in Florida where judges have seen the benefits of the program first-hand.

"Judges go see the program," Pommier said, "and some decide that probation will be dropped if they graduate."

Some students of the program can get high school credit, and some can even get their criminal records cleared.

This is a way for the kids to get back into society sooner and start rebuilding their lives, Pommier said. Since most of the kids Pommier works with are not in school when they start the program, they have a tough road ahead of them.

"I have not met a student (of Outward Bound) yet that was in school," Pommier said, "but once they leave the program, it's 99 percent sure they'll go back."

What makes Outward Bound work, Pommier said, is that it is a psychological wilderness program, not just an adventure hike.

In the Voyageur Outward Bound School catalog, one student, named John, said "I knew it would be a great wilderness adventure, but I didn't realize how much fun it would be; and

how much I would learn about the wild, myself and others."

"It's not seeing how many miles we can paddle on the river," he said. "It's what you do with every kid and how you can apply it to the home."

Pommier said the instructors lead the trip for about the first five days, and then gradually give privileges to the students. Choosing where to sleep and what to eat are beginning privileges, and eventually the students are allowed to take the lead.

Pommier remembered one student, Robert, who had poor family relations, a drug problem and had quit school. Robert was in a detention center at the time for a drug-related incident, but turned his life around after the Outward Bound trip.

"When I met Robert," Pommier said, "he didn't remember the last day he wasn't stoned. Now he has graduated from college, is off drugs and is helping his mom out."

From Outward Bound's British beginnings, the program has expanded to include 36 countries, with over 275,000 U.S. graduates.

"Adventure education works for these kids," Pommier said. "If it is done right, everyone benefits."

'THE ARTIFICIAL JUNGLE'

Comic play has timing, snap

By JENNY MAGEE
The Battalion

"The Artificial Jungle"
Starring Christina Vela,
Jack Bathke and Sam
Levassar
Directed by Robert Wenck
Playing at Rudder Forum

The Aggie Players' impressive production "The Artificial Jungle" is a rip-roaring comedy that swings from one punch line to the next.

This play works because of one main element - comic timing. "The Artificial Jungle" is replete with tactics that came straight out of "The Actor's Guide: 101 Comic Rules To Act By."

Fortunately for us, the Aggie Players read the introduction of this imaginary book, which tells the actor if you are going to fill your production with stylized comic maneuvers, you'd better be crisp and clean.

"Crisp and clean" is the foundation of

Christina Vela's hilarious portrayal of Roxanne Nurdiger. Vela easily shimmies right into the exaggerated lust that controls her character and, in fact, the entire plot.

Roxanne is the anything-but-loving wife of Chester Nurdiger (Jack Bathke), the owner of the pet shop called The Artificial Jungle.

Endless days of nothing but slimy little reptiles, mute parrots, and piranhas have driven Roxanne to contemplate ways of turning that plaid-wearing husband of hers into a big fat life insurance claim.

The opportunity to make this plan a reality walks through the door in the form of Zachary Slade (Sam Levassar). Driven by the rather explicit hot and heavy passion he has for Roxanne, Zach's job to "help with the disgusting stuff" in the operation of the pet shop takes on a whole new meaning - knocking off Chester.

The interaction between Zach and Roxanne is an example of fine-tuned comic skill. With each facial expression and sexual innuendo one character conveniently sets the other up to take a prat-fall that

buys the laughter of the audience with ease.

The costume designs, by Vela and Ernesto Maldonado, intensified the success with which the over-dramatized characters fulfilled their stereotypes because they were as eccentric and exaggerated as the characters.

Chris Rogers as Chester's sweet nerdy little Mother Nurdiger personified the outrageous nature of this production.

Having a man play a nice old woman is an example of the bizarre tight-rope walk that the Aggie Players took with their stylized interpretation of this play. It could have easily failed, but the meticulous regard for comic timing preserved the success of every slap-stick aspect of "The Artificial Jungle."

"The Artificial Jungle" is full of steamy lust and murderous intentions. But most of all this off-the-wall, hilariously risqué farce is a wonderful diversion from the real jungle of life.

"The Artificial Jungle" is playing in the Rudder Forum April 21-23 At 8:00 P.M. and April 24 at 2:00 P.M. All tickets are \$5.



BILLY MORAN/The Battalion

Chris Rogers plays Mother Nurdiger and Jack Bathke plays doomed pet shop owner Chester Nurdiger in 'The Artificial Jungle.'

Keen to sing at Muster barbecue



Former student and country singer Robert Earl Keen will perform at the Muster Barbecue in front of the Academic Building on Wednesday.

The barbecue, sponsored by the Aggie Muster Committee and the Texas A&M Department of Food Services, will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The Commons, Sbsa and Duncan dining halls will close for the barbecue but will be open until 10:15 a.m. to sell tickets for \$5 in Aggie Bucks. Only meal plans, tickets and cash will be accepted at the barbecue.

Keen, Class of '78, will perform at 1 p.m. Former Miss Texas A&M Jill McClure, barbershop quartet the Aggienizers, country act Exception to the Rule and Keith Chapman will also perform.

Dallas fans, bland bands drag down Earth Concert

By MIKE McMAHAN
The Battalion

The Earth Concert brought nine bands to Dallas' Starplex Amphitheater on Sunday in what was supposed to be an "alternative" festival. In fact, it was anything but "alternative."

The diverse lineup of performers (Gumball, Dinosaur Jr, Pop Poppins, Tragically Hip, Gene Loves Jezebel, Belly, Jellyfish, dada and 808 State) held some promise, but the day was filled with clichéd behavior from both the bands and the fans.

Gene Loves Jezebel's music, which is laden with sexual innuendo, is nothing more than hair metal. They try to compensate for this by using words like "metaphysical," but they fail. Their set was also marred by the traditional Starplex cup fight, in which much of the audience throws their plastic drink cups in the air for about twenty minutes.

Jellyfish was a close second for most unoriginal performers of the day. Their bland and annoying pop music sounded similar to former arena rock mainstays Queen, only without the sense of experimentation. Their happy harmonies were humorously offset by the threatening tone they took with audience members who pelted them (and other performers) with cups.

It's likely that part of the reason the cup fights occurred was that fans grew bored during the lengthy set changes.

Perhaps fans were spoiled by fes-

tivals like Lollapalooza, which feature longer sets and much, much shorter set changes.

Believe it or not, there were two shining lights in the midst of this disaster: Dinosaur Jr and Belly.

Dinosaur Jr's brief set highlighted songs from their newest release "Where You Been."

Guitarist/vocalist J Mascis did a good job of keeping the songs sounding full, even though he couldn't possibly play all of the guitar parts from songs like "Out There" and "Get Me" himself.

His high-volume playing more than compensated for any missing pieces of the recorded arrangements but buried his vocals under the sheer weight of the sound.

Belly's singer/guitarist Tanya Donnelly showed that she is truly what many of the other performers wanted to be: an artist. She used the recorded versions of her songs as a framework, rendering each a different piece live.

The title track from the band's debut album, "Star," was transformed from its soft, slow recorded version into a tune as powerful as their faster songs like "Angel" or "Dusted."

Bassist Gail Greenwood, who joined the band after the recording of their album, was but a blur on stage, adding intensity to the band.

Belly will be back in Texas this weekend, with a performance at Austin's Liberty Lunch on Friday, April 23.

Dinosaur Jr will not be back until late this summer when they come back through the state as part of the traveling festival Lollapalooza III.