

Barney, kids' favorite dinosaur

Local parents, children enjoy a Texas teacher's purple creation

By MARGARET CLAUGHTON
The Battalion

Watch out Big Bird, there's a new character on the rise. He's round and purple and kids adore him. Barney the dinosaur is the younger viewing public's latest craze.

Thousands of preschoolers are wild about this friendly Tyrannosaurus rex and his television series "Barney & Friends," which airs on KAMU-TV.

The Barney show uses popular children's melodies and incorporate dance to help kids learn positive concepts such as self-esteem, good health, appreciation for friends, and protecting the environment.

Four-year-old Katie Nevels, patron of the Aerofit nursery in Bryan, says her favorite part is the singing.

"My brother likes Barney too," Nevels said of her younger sibling.

Younger children seem to respond to

Barney better than other shows. Jonelle Wilkins, mother and Aerofit nursery attendant, says her daughter Rachel, although only eighteen months old, really enjoys Barney.

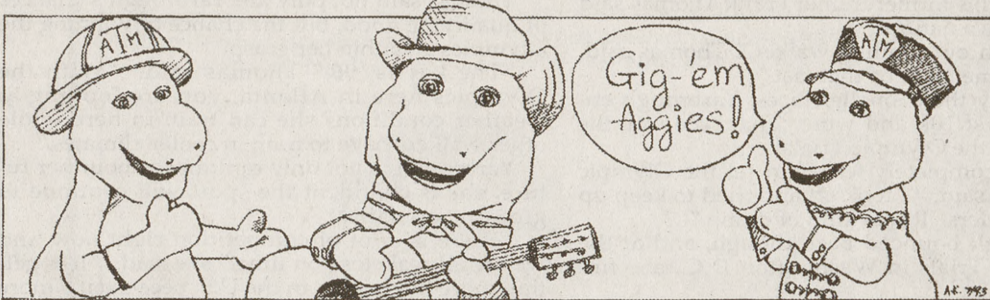
"She will sit there and watch the whole tape," Wilkins said. "I can go cook dinner while it keeps her busy."

Kids enjoy the interaction of Barney tapes, which urge viewer participation.

"Rachel will sing along, dance, and even do the hand motions," Wilkins said.

Although children adore the purple dinosaur and his melodies, parents sometimes find him slightly irritating.

"Sesame Street" has some adult humor



ANGEL KAN/The Battalion

in it," Wilkins said. "It is a little easier to tolerate. But Rachel likes Barney, so he's not so bad."

The "Barney & Friends" show has definitely appealed to its targeted audience. Many children have committed the 30 original episodes to memory.

Since its April 6, 1992 debut, the "Barney & Friends" series has become increasingly popular. It has been nominated for

two Daytime Emmy Awards (1993) and won the California Children's Video Award and the Parents' Choice Award. The Barney fan club has more than 600,000 members and attains 18,000 to 20,000 new members

his television production facilities.

With the help of Kathy Parker, also a toddler mom, and video producer Dennis DeShazer, Leach developed a Barney video series called "Barney & The Backyard Gang." The series debuted in 1988 and became a best-seller by 1991.

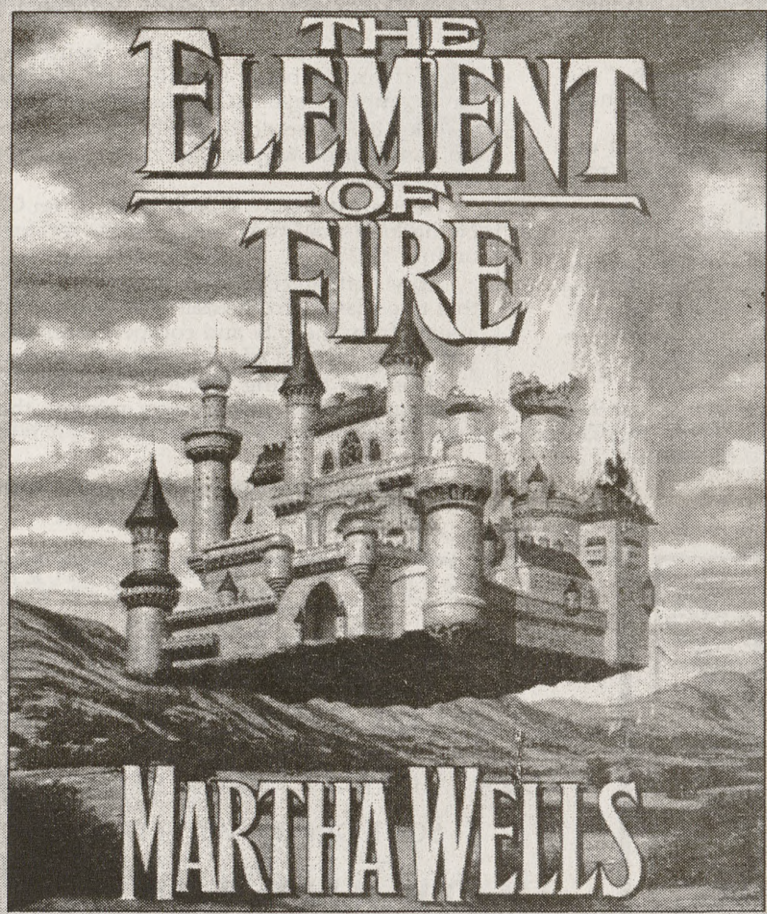
Larry Rifkin, Executive Vice President of Programming for Connecticut Public Television, rented one of Barney's tapes for his 4-year-old daughter and was amazed by her response. Rifkin contacted Leach and informed her that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were searching for new, quality children's programming.

Leach's company, The Lyons Group, formed a proposal to produce "Barney & Friends" with Connecticut Public Television. The series became a coproduction of The Lyons Group/RCL Enterprises Inc. and Connecticut Public Television.

Produced in Allen, Texas, "Barney & Friends" is planning to debut 18 new episodes for the fall.

Reviews

Book



TOR publishes A&M employee's first novel

Wells creates lively fantasy

By JOHN BAYLESS
The Battalion

"The Element of Fire"
By Martha Wells
TOR
Price: \$23.95, 413 pages

With a clash of mortal iron against Fayre [Fairie] bronze, Martha Wells, a Texas A&M employee and former student, has entered the field of fantasy writing.

She spins a gripping tale of court intrigue, sorcery and the forces of Fayre in her debut novel, "The Element of Fire."

Ile-Rein is a kingdom with problems — big problems. Foreign sorcerer Urbain Grandier plots to unleash the Fayre horde upon Ile-Rein, and at the same time palace intrigues are building toward a violent head.

Weak King Roland sits uneasy on the throne, while his mother Ravenna, the Dowager Queen, is the backbone of the realm.

Standing against the threats to the kingdom are the dashing Sir Thomas Boniface, captain of the Ravenna's Queen's Guard, and the sorceress Kade

Carrion, bastard half-sister to King Roland. Together they must find a way to thwart the schemers, evict the Fayre horde from Ile-Rein and protect the king from his own court.

The fictional kingdom of Ile-Rein is an exceptionally well crafted and detailed setting, which combines some elements of 17th century aristocracy with the type of swords and sorcery found in many other fantasy novels.

"The Element of Fire" is a swash-buckling, courtly fantasy rather than one in which huge warriors hack each other to pieces with battle axes. In Ile-Rein disputes are settled by rapier and flintlock.

Wells has a master's touch with characterization. All of her characters have extraordinary depth of personality, and their intelligent, often witty dialogue makes this novel well worth a second and even a third reading.

"The Element of Fire" is one of the best first novels by any author that I've read.

Wells combines the two elements of history and fantasy with a consummate skill that leaves me wanting to visit her world again. I only wish her second novel would arrive earlier than its scheduled release date in 1994.

Facts behind Wells' 'Fayre' tale kingdom

Martha Wells, an employee at the Ocean Drilling Program at Texas A&M, has released her first novel, a fantasy work entitled "The Element of Fire."

"This is the first fiction I've ever sold," Wells said.

The kingdom of Ile-Rein in the novel is loosely based on 17th century France.

"I was influenced by several authors, mostly by Barbara Hambly, Judith Tarr and Ellen Kushner," she said.

She worked on "The Element of Fire" for 18 months.

Wells said she has already sold her next novel to Tor. It will be published sometime in 1994.

"It's more of an 'Arabian Nights' setting," she said.

Wells is an A&M graduate, with a B.A. in anthropology.



Wells

Lazer Karaoke

Local businesses cater to all ages

Sing like a Karaoke fool

By JACQUELINE AYOTTE
The Battalion

No, it isn't "Star Search" and it isn't the "Gong Show" either. It's the new fad, Lazer Karaoke, where you can either make a fool out of yourself by singing stupid songs, or show off your naturally talented voice and still sing stupid songs.

College Station's "Bombay Bicycle Club" featured about three people singing a variety of songs Saturday night. It wasn't very crowded, but it was obvious that the people who did come were definite regulars. They were rowdy and the room was smoky. It was a cross between "The Love Boat" and a local cheesy imitation of "Star Search," without cash prizes.

Don't get me wrong now. This place is cool if you go on week nights with your buddies. But on Saturday nights, this place is crawling with 40-year-olds who have chosen Karaoke as an escape from their week day stresses.

Some of the performers really have good voices, but they are usually the only ones who repeatedly get up to sing songs.

Saturday night, only two people gave the best performances. One guy

with a wonderfully deep voice sang "Turn Your Love Around," and made everyone smile.

One girl sang Annie Lenox's "Missionary Man" with so much energy, people started clapping. Unfortunately, she started to think she really was Annie Lenox after a while.

The performers' friends just laughed along and drank their beers. Deep down they may have been toasting to the fact that they weren't up there on the stage looking like fools. But then again, some may have secretly wanted to steal a moment to sing on stage.

Yet, younger people like to make idiots of themselves just as much as 40-year-olds do.

A perfect Karaoke place for people within the ages of 19 and 24 is "Bullwinkles" in College Station.

I checked out "Bullwinkles" Sunday night, the slower night for Karaoke. Wednesday night is the best time to go if you're looking for the prime Karaoke partying time. Sunday nights look more like a Class of '96 convention or a "90210" sing along fest.

There were only a few people with good talent who performed numerous times. Yet, you have to give all the

See Karaoke/Page 5



Music

'No Time To Kill...'

Black's new album is pure poetry

By JACQUELINE AYOTTE
The Battalion

"No Time To Kill"
Clint Black
Country
BMG Music

As if Clint Black's poetry could talk, "No Time To Kill" will pull you in and beg you to take in the country flow of words.

Black says in the song "State of Mind," "... ain't it funny how a melody brings back memories" and yes, these words sum up the whole feel of the album.

Black's strong, crisp, smooth country voice and creatively written songs make this album profoundly different from his others.

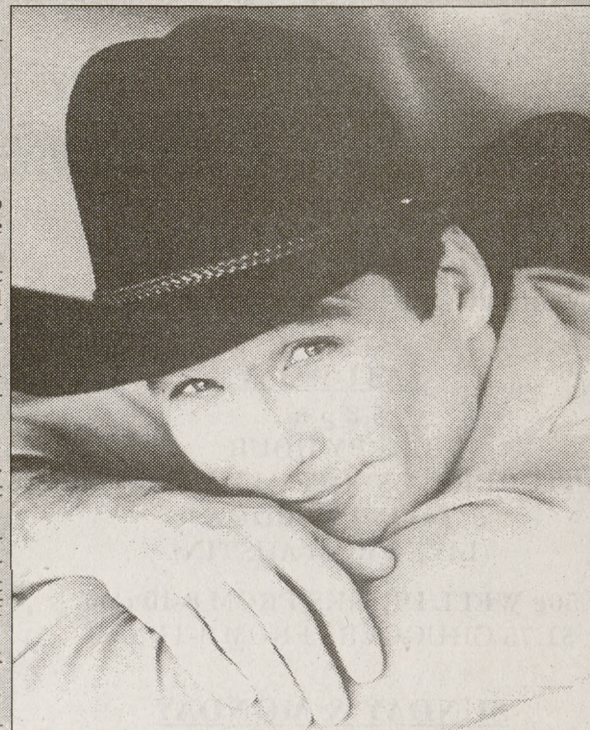
Every song is not the same old dry tune. Whether it's in the writing or in the performance, Black has changed the game this time. He wasn't killing time when he wrote this one either.

A little surprise, Black wrote the song "Happiness Alone" with the help of good ole' Jimmy Buffett. Buffett does not contribute to the singing, but you can definitely sense his spirit in the easy flow of the lyrics.

Like a traveler's journal, this song will sing back the memories from the first listening experience.

Another surprise is the song "Bad Goodbye." Black originally wrote this song for himself, but when you hear Wynonna Judd's voice singing with him, you'll know why Black chose the duet for the

See Clint/Page 5



Clint Black has changed the game this time. With his new album, "No Time To Kill," Black shows his ability to be one of the best country music poets around.