

Country Music Assoc.

Winners of the 27th annual CMA Awards

- Entertainer of the year: **Vince Gill**
- Single of the year: **"Chattahoochee," Alan Jackson**
- Album of the year: **"I Still Believe in You," Vince Gill**
- Song of the year: **"I Still Believe in You," Vince Gill & John Jarvis**
- Female vocalist of the year: **Mary-Chapin Carpenter**
- Male vocalist of the year: **Vince Gill**
- Vocal duo of the year: **Brooks & Dunn**
- Vocal group of the year: **Diamond Rio**
- Musician of the year: **Mark O'Connor (fiddle)**
- Vocal event of the year: **"I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair," George Jones, Vince Gill, Mark Chesnutt, Garth Brooks, Travis Tritt, Joe Diffie, Alan Jackson, Pam Tillis, T. Graham Brown, Patty Loveless and Clint Black**
- Music video of the year: **"Chattahoochee," Alan Jackson**
- Horizon Award: **Mark Chesnutt**

From Harlem to Aggieland. . . Fraternity to host A&M 'Apollo Night'

By Joe Leih

THE BATTALION

The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity will showcase a diverse ensemble of local talent Saturday with their first annual variety show in Rudder Theater.

Starting at 7 p.m., the show dubbed "Apollo Night with the Ques" will have the same format as the legendary "Amateur Night at the Apollo" in Harlem, N.Y.

Derrick Thompson, a primary organizer of the event, said the principal similarity will be that the audience members will vocally judge the performers.

"The crowd will start to yell and boo if they don't like the act," Thompson said.

After that, a DJ will play a recording adamantly urging the performer to leave the stage, and a "Sand Man" will escort him or her away, Thompson said. And, he said, at the end of the show a young lady, like the Apollo's Ki Ki Sheppard, will hold her hand above each of the performers allowing the audience to cheer for the best act.

The winner will receive a cash prize of \$200.

Harold Mitchell, another primary organizer of the event, said this energetic Apollo theme should be a popular one.

"It gives the crowd a chance to be involved," Mitchell said, "and it keeps them excited and awake during the show."

The show's lineup will vary from dance to rap; including groups like Phunky Position, Fade



Erica Bell (front center) and other members of Fade to Black practice for their performance in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's "Apollo Night" talent show. Fade to Black is a student managed dance ensemble at A&M.

Vannell Hopkins/THE BATTALION

to Black and Pretty Girl Gangsters.

Mitchell and Thompson will also perform at the show with fellow fraternity member Tony R. Taft. Named Q-ROTTIC, the trio will sing popular R&B, gospel and soul.

Mitchell said that being a singer, he knew the show would accommodate the large need to showcase people's talent. Plus, he said, it gives some of the local youth the opportunity to do something more

constructive with their time.

"It's much better for these kids to be displaying their talent on stage and feeling the positive vibes from the audience. . . rather than being on the street at late hours selling crack or whatever," Mitchell said.

Both Mitchell and Thompson hope that the event will grow so large that members of the entertainment industry will eventually scout the show for local talent.

"The road to success," Mitchell said, "it comes from someone just happening to hear you. . . expose you and take you farther on the path of success."

But this year, the goal of the show is to raise money for Omega Psi Phi's annual Ronald McNair Scholarship, named for a fraternity member and astronaut who died in the 1986 space shuttle Challenger crash. The scholarship includes two \$250 awards given to two

Bryan-College Station black male seniors planning to attend college.

Thompson said that although the show will appeal to a mostly African-American audience, he believes "Apollo Night" should interest all ethnic groups.

"It can provide unity," Thompson said, "an event where all people can come together and have a good time."

Tickets will be available at Rudder Box Office.

SPICE 1: PORTRAIT OF A 'GANGSTA'

By Rob Clark

THE BATTALION

"187 (murder) he wrote/Now it's a walk-by in the hood/I blow the gat in his face because it's all good/And now the boys in blue - what up?/Come after the East Bay gangsta murder master. . . My chrome gat shines like a sword/Now you got another sent off to the morgue." (From "Dumpin' Em in Ditches.")

Sound violent? That's the idea. But for gangster rapper Spice 1, the object of his lyrics is not violence, just to be violent. It's all about reality, survival and the G (gangster) style.



Spice 1

Spice 1 is one of the prominent hard-core rappers that have captured the attention of the music industry.

Born in Bryan, Spice, whose real name is Robert Green, moved to the Bay-City area in California at a young age. He started rapping when he was 13.

After a few small record deals, Spice scored with his single, "187 Proof," which caught the attention of Jive Records, a major rap distributor. After signing with Jive, Spice released his self-titled debut album. His new album, "187, He Wrote," has just been released.

Success hasn't changed him though. "I don't really feel that (success) completely," Spice said. "But I feel that I'm getting to where I want to be. It feels good to have a little success in your life and accomplish something besides running the streets."

The streets, it seems, are what inspire Spice's lyrics. The rough area where he grew up gives him his style and shows the reality of ghetto life. But his music provided his escape, and he tries to encourage others to do the same.

He said, "There's a lot of kids trying to get out of the streets. A lot of my friends go through dope sellin' and gang-bangin',

and I've seen them grow up. The only thing right now we've got to get out of the streets is this music. I always respect another person trying to get something, make something out of his life; not just kicking back, hangin' and going to jail and doing all that because I've been through that, and it ain't cool. It's not cool at all."

MC Serch once said rappers are a "product of the environment," and usually the environment's problems are reflected in their songs. On the streets where Spice grew up, drug dealing was common.

"Everybody sold drugs," Spice said. "Everybody and their mamas sold dope. Their grandmamas sold dope. I ain't never really hurt nobody. I just tried to get mine like everybody else was. But when the rap thing came along, it pulled me out of the streets completely."

Rap is quickly criticized for its lyrical content, and Spice is no exception.

"People say I glorify gangsterism on my tapes," he said. "I don't glorify it, I just talk about it. I'm not saying 'You go do it.' I'm just saying that's what I've done - this is what it's all about around here."

While rap's audience is becoming increasingly white, Spice's lyrics don't seem to impress too many white adults.

"They might like Jazzy Jeff and maybe the little cute songs," he said. "But if they go off deep into the ghetto, they hear about killin' and bang-bang, shoot-em-up."

Despite the violence depicted in rap, Spice said there is a good reason for it.

He said, "There's always a message in all my lyrics. If I say I shot a motherf---er in my rap, (then) I went to jail after that or I died after that in the rap. Because real gangsters don't live long. And that's true."

The use of the words "bitch" and "nigger" in rap is often criticized. But Spice said those songs aren't his thing.

He said, "There are only a few (rappers) that don't have too many bitch songs on their albums. I don't got no bitch songs on my album. I like the girls. I never had no problem with them."

To Spice, "nigga" has a different meaning than the racist word "nigger." Fellow rapper 2Pac talked about the meaning of the word "nigga" on his "2Pacalypse Now" album.

Spice agrees with 2Pac and said, "The word (nigga) to me means 'Never Ignorant - Getting Goals Accomplished.' There's a real difference."

Another controversial aspect of hard-core rap is the anti-police sentiments expressed (anyone remember a little ditty called "Cop Killer?"). Spice said this is a result of police brutality.

He said, "One thing I liked that KRS - ONE said - 'The police were put here to protect us, but who protects us from them?' And that's real."

One of Spice's songs, "Piggy in a Blanket," which depicted such hostility, was removed from his album. But that hasn't silenced Spice.

"If the police ever beat you down, then talk about it. Because they ain't supposed to do that, and that's wrong," he said.

Despite all of rap's problems, it has become highly successful. With such success, there are undoubtedly going to be imitations. Ice Cube once rapped, "Be true to the game." Spice believes this as well, and he said, "You've got to be a G to do this. If you ain't a gangster, you can't do it. I just

MUSIC REVIEWS

Strait's 'Easy Come, Easy Go:' A guaranteed chartbuster

By Lesa Ann King

THE BATTALION

"Easy Come, Easy Go"
George Strait
Country
MCA Records

"Easy Come, Easy Go" marks George Strait's eighteenth album release and proves this two-time Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year remains first and foremost, a classic country singer.

Strait's smooth, clear voice makes singing country music sound pure, simple and easy. "Easy Come, Easy Go" blends a steady mixture of slow country ballads and a few upbeat honky-tonk two-steppers

that brings out the best in Strait's vocal abilities.

"Easy Come, Easy Go" brings together the lyrical and musical talents of Nashville's best songwriters and Strait's distinct country style into a smooth collection of new country favorites.

The title cut, "Easy Come, Easy Go," takes a positive approach to ending a relationship. Two names familiar to most Strait fans, Dean Dillon and Aaron Barker, wrote the title track. Dillon's contribution to Strait's legacy of hits include, "The Chair," "Nobody in His Right Mind," "If I Know Me," "Marina Del Rey" and many others. Barker's previous successful Strait hits include "Love Without End, Amen" and "Baby Blue."

Other cuts on this album from these writers include Barker's regretful and melancholy ballad, "I'd Like to Have That One Back," and Dillon's sad good-bye song, "Without Me Around."

Many of the other songs come from writers who contributed to the successful "Pure Country" soundtrack. Steve Dorff, writer of "Cross My Heart" and "Heartland," co-writes one of the most romantic and touching ballads on this album, "The Man In Love With You." A sincere and loving song, Strait's vocal song gives this beautiful song life.

The slow and romantic "We Must Be Loving Right" departs from Strait's usual sound. Co-written by Clay Blaker and Roger Brown, this song combines a soft mixture of piano and steel guitar with an irresistible slow two-step country sound.

New country may come, and new country may go, but the king of country music stays the same. And "Easy Come, Easy Go" is sure to place Gentleman George Strait at the top of the charts once again.



Strait

Yes she does: Etheridge meets challenge of creating powerful live music in her new album 'Yes I Am'

By Jacqueline Ayotte

THE BATTALION

"Yes I Am"
Melissa Etheridge
Rock
Island Records

She's like a modern day Janis Joplin. Her sexy, raspy voice could survive alone and still give off a pure, electrifying sound.

Her name is Melissa Etheridge, and yes, she's back with her fourth album, "Yes I Am."

This is Etheridge's most challenging album vo-

cally, but on a much different level than her past three albums.

Etheridge said, "From the moment I started thinking about this record, I knew that I wanted songs that would be really strong live, because that's where I spend most of my time - what I do most is sing these songs over and over."

The single, "I'm the Only One," sets the smooth rock tone for the rest of the album. There is a subtle change in the intense rock sound Etheridge has captivated in albums of the past. But her deep voice remains strong. Unbelievably, her voice has improved



Etheridge

since past rock hits like "Ain't It Heavy" and "Somebody Bring Me Some Water."

New tracks like "Come To My Window" and "I Will Never Be the Same" are very soft, untempered rock songs. They each have a delicate fire within them which draws the listener in, enabling one to discover a soft, vulnerable side Etheridge has never revealed before.

"All American Girl" is a very down to earth rocker that seems to communicate Etheridge's own political interpretation of women in the 90s. But, Etheridge promises, "It's only an observation.

I'm not trying to say anybody's right or wrong."

The title song, "Yes I Am," is surprisingly softer than expected. It's not exactly the best song on the album, but the love lyrics do capture Etheridge's own poetic touch. The soft strokes of the guitar flow along to her determined words, creating a very pleasant, relaxed mood.

Every song on Etheridge's new album may not capture the same fast-paced sound found in past tracks, but there is one quality they do share. They are all real songs. Too real to be ignored.

Etheridge said she wanted "Yes I Am" to have the sound quality of "Real music slapping against tape."

It seems her prayer has been answered.