

Guitarist, DJ play own styles

Alternative music isn't only on the sidewalks any more

Across the street from Ghiradelli Square in San Francisco, a street musician performs for the small crowd that has gathered in front of him. Seated on a portable stool, he plays a red electric guitar powered by a portable generator. He taps out the beat with a foot-pedaled drum. His singing is interrupted only when his mouth turns to the harmonica hanging from his neck.

**MELISSA
MEGLIOLA**
Columnist



He wears a black T-shirt, an old ball cap and pants that look like a worn blanket, patched every few inches. He informs his audience that he is, "Dan the One Man Band," 'cause he can't get along with nobody." Then he smiles a toothy grin and starts singing again. Socially skilled or not, Dan belts out blues that rival those of B.B. King. Like any good blues singer, his voice is deep, gruff and throaty. His eyes are excited but worn. He obviously plays here often.

The crowd gets larger and larger. Parents hold their children, who seem unable to control their interest. They want to touch him; to find out how so much music can come from one person. Video cameras roll from each side, recording memories of the wonderful street performer, witnessed between the trip to Alcatraz and the ride down Lombard Street.

A little red wagon with a bumper sticker claiming "Blues Power" is parked in front of the drum. In it, donations are collected. The money can't amount to much. The crowd is grateful for the concert, but stingy with dollars. With each donation, Dan nods. Maybe the money will be used for groceries or maybe for rent at a monthly hotel for the indigent.

Despite his wealth of talent, Dan is not rich. The street is his personal packed concert hall. His platinum albums are low-quality recordings he tapes while playing on the street. Here, Dan is king.

No doubt music is his passion, his lifeblood. It is impossible to envision him anywhere else. Or to imagine music more powerful.

In a back room of the John J. Koldus Building, every Wednesday at 10 a.m., Jeff Jenkins, a wildlife and fisheries major, expresses his own passion for music. As a disc jockey for KANM, our campus radio station, Jeff spends two hours each week sharing his love of music with listeners.

About 75 percent of the music he plays comes from his own personal collection. His show features "alternative" music dating from 1985 to 1991, a pivotal year in the music industry when punk became big business. Actually, according to Jeff, the term alternative is a misnomer now, as much of it is played on top-40 stations.

"So really, it's not alternative to anything," Jeff jokes. Jeff first found out about KANM through an ad in The Battalion, but became interested in college radio as a high school student in Lubbock, where he listened to the Texas Tech station. After being selected as a DJ, Jeff was given virtually total control over his time slot, restricted only by a short list of profane, unacceptable words.

The freedom to develop his own show is what Jeff likes best about KANM.

"As a DJ, you have the power to say what you want to a lot of people. It's the next best thing to being a musician. I send out a message of music and use others as my medium," Jeff explains. Jeff does perform music himself. He plays the guitar and the drums and is teaching himself to play the piano. In Lubbock, he played in a band and would like to do so again.

Jeff's passion for music motivates him to spend time each Tuesday night preparing for his show, even when he should be studying for a test or finishing homework.

He doesn't get paid to be on the air. Instead, he pays \$15 a semester for the opportunity. Unaware of how many people listen to him each week, he doesn't do it for fame on campus.

"I have only one confirmed listener," Jeff admits. "She called in once with a request."

Jeff is only one of 66 DJ's at KANM. Each DJ is different, as is each show. Hopefully, a schedule will be finished soon so students can listen to shows that interest them.

Because KANM is on cable radio, it's necessary to buy an adapter to get the programs. But it's definitely worth it.

KANM offers a glimpse of the passion for music that can only be found in a few special places.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major

It's worth it to buy the cable adapter to get the programs on KANM, which offers a glimpse of the passion for music that can only be found in a few special places.



THE BATTALION Editorial Board

Belinda Blancarte, Editor in chief
Mark Evans, Managing editor
Jay Robbins, Opinion editor
Jenny Magee, Assistant opinion editor

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.
Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.
Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

EDITORIAL

PROGRESSING POVERTY

U.S. should study increase in problem

A census bureau report released last week indicates that the war on poverty is far from being won. The fact that the United States is experiencing its highest poverty rate since 1961 should motivate the people and government to study this situation seriously.

The nation should analyze this problem and the ways in which it can be rectified. Poverty wasn't created overnight — it's nothing new in American society. There has always been at least one section of people who have fewer economic resources than the rest. Racial and ethnic minorities constitute a large part of this group.

But anyone, whether white, black, male, female, high school dropout or Texas A&M graduate, also can suffer poverty.

Compared to other industrialized nations, the United States has the most unequal distribution of income — a disturbing fact when one considers the astounding magnitude of the gross national product.

The unfortunate reality is that income inequality is becoming more defined — the poor are becoming poorer as the rich are becoming richer.

More disturbing is the fact that the current increase in poverty does not

correlate with past economic trends.

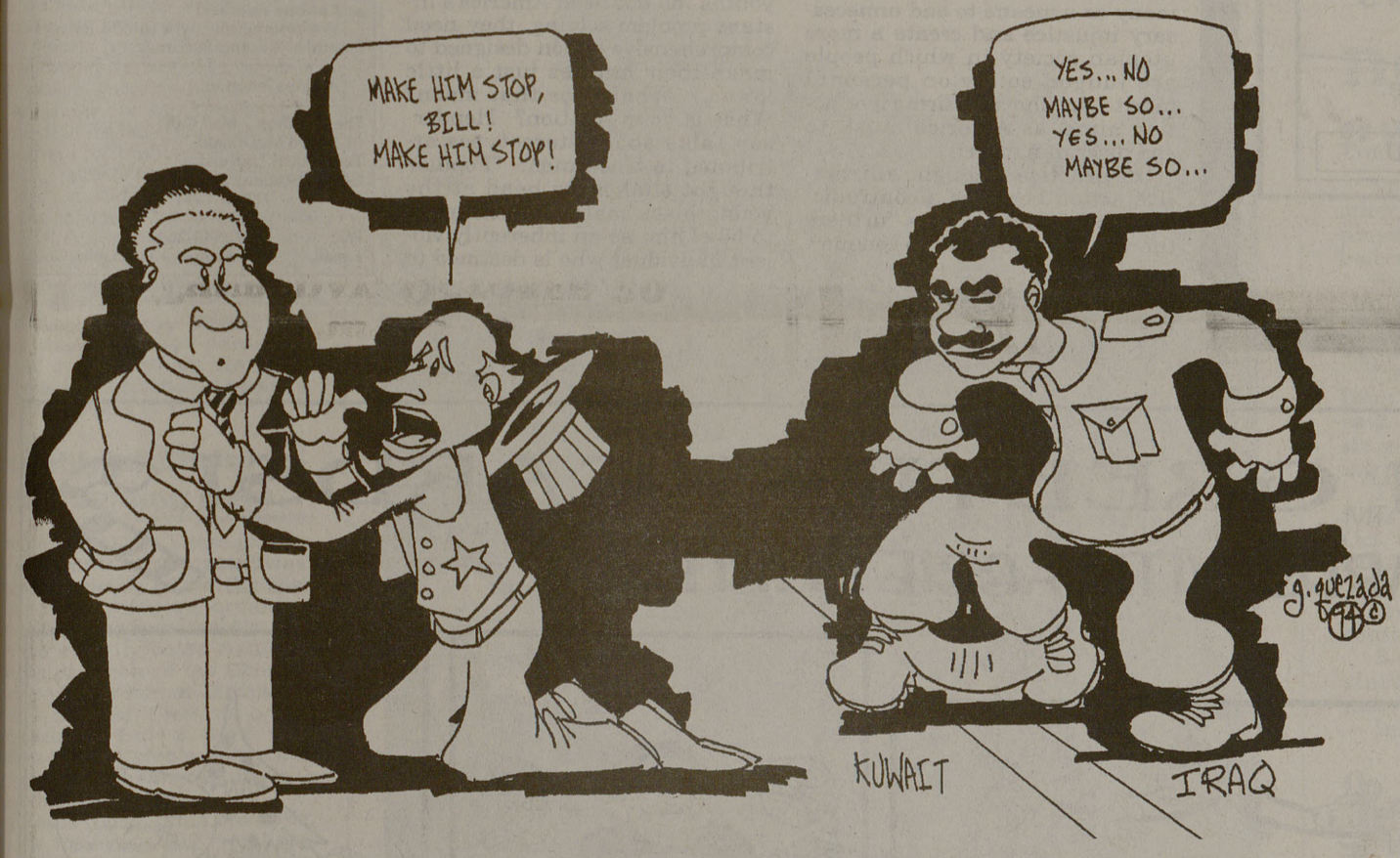
Usually, at the end of a recession, poverty levels peak, but begin to decrease by the beginning of the next year. The recent poverty levels indicate that perhaps these predictions are misleading.

Poverty affects all members of society, but has severe impacts on women and children. On average, women earn less than two thirds what men make in any given year, and children make up 40 percent of the poor. Many children live in single-parent homes where a woman is the primary provider.

These numbers indicate that poverty is a severe problem in the United States. It isn't abstract some far away nation — it exists in America right now.

Individual efforts can't be expected to make a difference in decreasing the poverty rate, but an overall awareness of the problem can perhaps mobilize Congress and other government agencies to take action.

In a land of "plenty," it is ironic that there are plenty out there who have nothing. A universal understanding of the problem is vital, if one day we are to find a way to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.



SHOULD CANDIDATES' RELIGIONS MATTER TO VOTERS?

Yes — Does anyone want religion to determine the fate of an election?

Of course not. Leaders are elected and paid to lead, not to pray.

Does anyone want religion to guide the government of a nation?

Of course not. Lions have been fed with many enemies of Rome, fires have purified us from too many witches and the inquisition has "saved" too many souls.

This glorious past suggested to modern democrats that church and state be separated and that the religious beliefs of a candidate running for public office should not matter. But in the real world, they do. And they should.

Religion is too important a part of life to be completely set aside; if one closes the door on it, it will find a crack to pass through. Communism tried to detoxify the masses from the subversive religious opiate, but while Marx and Lenin are long gone, God is still very much around.

As humans, we try to live in harmony with our own selves. We abide by moral values. These values are defined dogmatically by religion, or the lack thereof. We evaluate situations based on a combination of subjectivity and objectivity. We take decisions in everyday life and make judgment calls based not only on scientific thinking but also on deep rooted beliefs. Often, religious beliefs.

As a society, we try to live in harmony with one another. We abide by civil laws. Our civil laws are voted on (usually) by elected representatives, and define the way our society works (or doesn't). This community of individuals makes decisions based on the needs of society, and judges rule according to established laws. Constitutional laws.

GEORGE NASR

Columnist



Conflicts sometimes arise when the exclusive, dogmatic religious beliefs of an individual clash with the pluralistic republican principles of a free society. Since our representatives, leaders and judges are all too human, the risk for any society to be overtaken by any form of fanaticism, religious or not, is all too real.

It is therefore important to know not only the nature of the religious beliefs of a candidate for public office, but also the extent and depth of these beliefs.

The nature of the religious beliefs, or the lack of them, is important because of the existence of sectarian ideologies that are incompatible with true pluralism. Prophets of doom or apostles of racial purity are way overqualified in responsibility positions, no matter what book they read or how they read it.

The extent and depth of a person's true involvement in their own religion draws the line between compassion, humility and honesty on one hand, and bigotry, arrogance and hypocrisy on the other.

Only by being informed of person's true belonging and values would voters weed out the true statesmen from the demagogues, bigots and hypocrites.

Only by being informed of person's true belonging and values would voters weed out the true statesmen from the demagogues, bigots and hypocrites. Only then would effective, devoted public servants be elected.

That doesn't mean voting for just who you know, but rather knowing for whom you are voting.

George Nasr is a civil engineering graduate student

No — It is amazing that on the brink of the 21st century, fanatical groups of people still demand that the rest of the world listen to their ranting on religious issues like Creationism, abortion and the like.

Most of us are too busy to worry about religious fanaticism and usually close the door on evangelical Bible-beaters — our only prayer is that they'll go away forever. Yet they continue to show up — at school meetings, at athletic events, in classrooms ...

One would think that these supposedly "religious" zealots would want nothing to do with the dirty job of politics. Unfortunately, these people ignore the very strong directive by our founding fathers against the mixing of church and state.

They have decided to make religion, or the lack of one, as an issue in political races.

So-called "family values" — largely based on white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestantism — has reared its ugly face in politics since the very first elections. I doubt whether anyone cares about the essential question surrounding this idiocy: why should someone's religious beliefs affect the voting population's decisions?

In truth, it shouldn't. Like many other non-issues, a person's religious values and beliefs cannot be measured or balanced against anyone else's. Even if religion should be considered, how can someone possibly measure another person's belief in a deity or how their prayers are received by that deity?

For instance, what religion will get the most points for a possible candidate? Will it be the majority's religious views? And what other criteria will be used? How many times a person goes to church, how much money they give to their church, do they pray on their knees or fall to the ground in convulsions when a deity is mentioned?

JOSEF A. ELCHANAN

Columnist



More importantly, when trusting the future of our country to a representative, do we want that person to be competent or to be busy running to church all the time, trying to prove that they are so religious that they deserve your votes?

Personally, I would rather have my representative busting his butt for the country on Sunday morning, and keeping his religion separate and personal.

The real problem is ignorance. Too many Americans have been brought-up to not analyze their surroundings or the belief systems of other people. Too many young children are shown one way of thinking about life and grow-up believing that no one else's way has any validity.

These same individuals, constantly quoting scripture, forget to listen to the world around them. In other countries, only certain people with certain religious backgrounds are allowed to hold office. Is this what people want? Do we want to have only people like the majority to control us all? What happens if in the future, the majority changes? Will this still be acceptable?

Hopefully, religious fanaticism will give way to tolerance, acceptance and respect for all people, in recognition that our differences are our strengths and homogeneity is the death of democracy.

Josef A. Elchanan is a senior business management major