

# AGGIELIFE

## His pen bleeds maroon



Tommy Huynh, THE BATTALION

Benjamin Knox autographs a print of one of his drawings at his gallery in College Station.

By Amy Uptmor  
THE BATTALION

Benjamin Knox's successful art career in College Station is almost a miracle. Then again, so is the fact that he is still alive.

Knox, class of '90, was living in Crested Butte, Co. when half of his condominium was crushed by an avalanche last February.

"I left the back room to answer a phone call from my nephew who was calling to see if I was alive since I hadn't written in so long," he said. "Fifteen seconds later, the room collapsed from snow."

Knox said the near-death disaster prompted him and his fiancée, Claire Ochoa, to make College Station the base for his growing art business.

"We decided College Station would be a good home base since it's where my work took off," he said.

Knox's art career began in 1988 as a sophomore in the Corps when he began designing T-shirts and logos for his Corps outfit. He expanded his work to include A&M traditions and made Reveille and the Corps two of his first subjects.

Since then, Knox has painted scenes for

cities such as San Antonio and Crested Butte.

Knox's latest project involving A&M is a series of paintings that traces the complete history of the University.

The paintings will be arranged into seven series, each depicting a different stage in A&M's history. Starting this fall, Knox will display a different series each semester in his College Station gallery. A book of the entire collection will be released in 1997.

"My goal with the collection is to provide a tie to A&M's history so people can appreciate what A&M was, is and is to become," he said. "Everyone has a role in what A&M is to become, but they must first understand the past."

Knox has donated several prints of his work to Fish Camp to raise scholarship money, a topic he holds very close to his heart.

"I donate a tremendous amount of my profit to scholarship funds because I wouldn't have made it through college without the scholarships I received," he said.

Other current projects include many commissioned paintings, such as an Aggie Moms painting, a frequently requested depiction of "The Last Corps Trip," and a painting of the A&M football team, "hopefully saying 'National Champs,'" he said.

Knox said his greatest contribution to A&M lies in his future plans to build an art center in College Station.

"There's a lot of energy around here in artists and people who want art to have a presence in College Station," he said. "I want to channel that energy into an art center."

Knox said the center will bring together the work of local and national artists and that he hopes construction will begin in late 1997. The center will also offer art classes, which Knox hopes will eventually receive University credit.

Knox said he hopes to put his environmental design degree to use and become an architect, which he sees as yet another stepping stone in his evolving career.

"I don't ever want to stop growing," he said. "Art, like any other career, is something you constantly build and work on. It doesn't just happen."

But one thing is on the top of Knox's list of future plans - marriage. Knox said his life wouldn't run nearly as smoothly without help from Ochoa, who is also the executive director of his art gallery.

"Claire and I just click," he said. "I'm the pilot and she's the navigator. She makes sure everything works out."

## Lollapalooza

### Jesus Lizard gains exposure

By Michael Landauer  
THE BATTALION

For David Yow, lead singer of the Jesus Lizard, the most memorable part of this year's Lollapalooza tour has been getting arrested for indecent exposure after he got off stage in Ohio.

"We were trying to expose ourselves to a new audience," he said.

And this year's traveling festival is doing just that for the band. Alternative music fans in Texas will be exposed to the Jesus Lizard along with the rest of the Lollapalooza acts and festivities Thursday in Austin and Friday in Dallas.

Although nudity draws the attention of the media and the police, Yow said his favorite stage antic was when he set his pants on fire in a show last year.

"That was good because it was a slow, sorta pretty song, and when it finished, I was still smoking," he said.

For Yow, Thursday's show in Austin will be a homecoming of sorts. Yow, the son of an Air Force officer, played in the

band Scratch Acid in Austin for six years before moving to Chicago in 1988.

"That's where I was when I got into punk rock, and punk rock changed my life," he said.

Having the festival at South Park Meadows will suit the band's style, Yow said.

"Too many of the shows have reserved seating, and that's kind of a drag for us," he said. "It's difficult to bridge the gap - we like the personal interaction with the crowd."

The Jesus Lizard brings its aggressive sound to a lineup that already includes Sonic Youth, Hole and Cypress Hill. A press release quotes a 50-year-old mother of two as saying the band is "not so bad" but might be better if Yow "didn't scream all the time."

But Yow has no plans to change his style, even if it means having some people dislike the band's music.

"I guess it would be really nice if people walked away liking us," he said. "I would prefer that they like it, but I can't expect people to like it. I don't see how any musician can expect people to like their music."



## Hum shoots for the stars on 2nd stage

By Michael Landauer  
THE BATTALION

Matt Talbott is not looking forward to the drive between Dallas and Phoenix, AZ. but he said landing a spot on the Lollapalooza tour is worth the effort.

Hum, whose members are from Champaign, Ill., will perform on the second stage for a few of Lollapalooza's shows starting in Austin on Thursday.

Talbott has yet to embrace a rock star persona. He carries five or six books in his briefcase when he is on the road, and he bought his first CD player when he signed with RCA Records last year.

Since signing with RCA Records, Hum has gained a national audience with its song, "Stars."

But the label has the band on a tight schedule, and Talbott said it is making the increased exposure come at a high cost.

"It's driving us crazy," he

said. "Lots of political bulls—t goes on that, in the long run, doesn't have anything to do with what we're trying to do."

What they have done with the label is sell more albums each week than they sold in one year on 12-inch Records, the band's independent label, Talbott said.

"I can't complain," he said. "You take the good with the bad."

Talbott isn't complaining about the band's first album, *You'd Prefer An Astronaut*. He said RCA helped them create the kind of album people can listen to all the way through. Talbott said that not taking a song-by-song approach in creating the music makes listening to the album a more personal experience.

"I like to just sit there and listen to the whole thing," he said. "Since that's my favorite way to listen to records, that's the way I make records."

## Balloon: Festival floats despite setbacks

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at the largest event in the Brazos Valley.

April West, a festival volunteer and former tourism science student at A&M, said she didn't think the festival would draw the 50,000 people organizers expected.

"I wish more people were here, but it's so hot," she said.

Weather has been such a problem for the festival that the event was moved from June to August this year to avoid spring weather.

Balloon Classic Chairman Terry Boike said the weekend proved to be unpredictable with the onset of Hurricane Erin on the Florida coast Friday.

"We moved the event to avoid bad weather, and now we have a hurricane," he said.

The hurricane threat passed as the weekend arrived but the Texas summer weather remained as unpredictable as the weather in spring.

Jim Crump, a senior industrial engineering major and vendor, said the 95-degree heat

and the lack of a swimming area kept college students from coming to the festival.

"I think more would come if we could get into the water," he said. "All we can do right now is look at the lake and sweat."

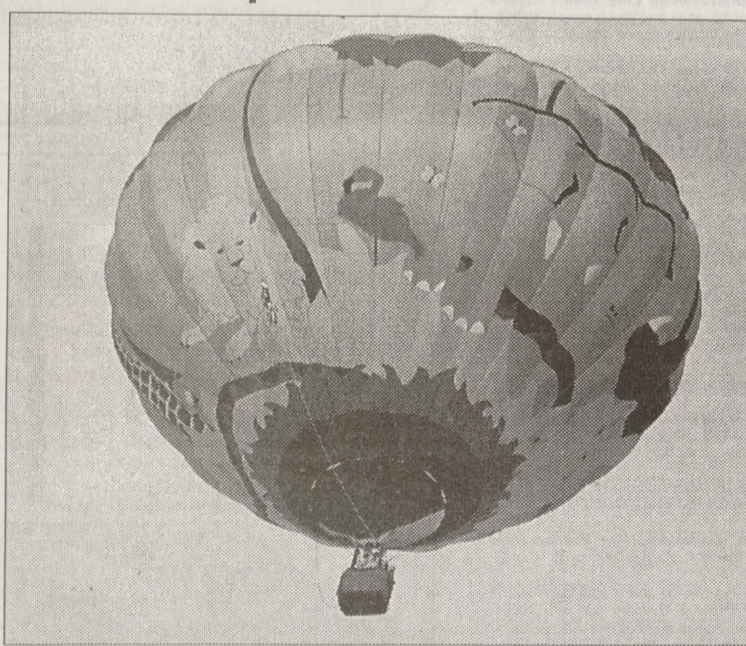
The Balloon Glows and music drew larger crowds, but a short rainstorm and wind caused problems for the balloon pilots.

Thomas Atwell, a balloon pilot for Pretty Balloons Unlimited in Houston, said weather conditions are vital to balloon flying. Conditions this year were better than last year, when high winds kept balloons on the ground.

"We weren't sure if we were going to go up again this weekend," he said after the Saturday rain. "We just had to sit and wait."

Patience with the weather was not the only price crowds had to pay.

Julie Slider, a vendor from Dallas, said she wasn't surprised that people didn't show up for the event because of the \$5 admission fee. Although free parking was



Sterling Hayman, THE BATTALION

Austin Young flies his balloon, "Zoependous," in the 5th annual Balloon Classic Sunday morning.

available, some people also spent \$10 to park in the parking lot nearest to the festival.

"The parking should be cheaper," she said. "I've seen people pull up, find out the costs and then leave."

Crump said the cost also deterred college students and families from coming to the event.

"I wouldn't come here if I wasn't working," he said. "This was advertised as a family event, and they have to pay \$30 before they buy anything else."

Volunteer Robert Schlechte said that moving the date to August may also explain the small turnout.

"There are a lot of people on vacation this time of year," he said.

Despite the problems, participants in the festival said they enjoyed the events and

## Blind Melon drowns with Soup

### The buzz is gone

By Rob Clark  
THE BATTALION

The sophomore slump strikes again.

Blind Melon exploded onto the music scene in 1993, becoming MTV's poster children for the alternative-Buzz Bin generation. The cause of this was, of course, "No Rain," '93's sunny summer feel-good song complete with the now-infamous "Bee Girl" video.

The band's self-titled debut album shot to the top of the charts, but due to massive exposure, the world quickly tired of the familiar "No Rain" refrain and the Bee Girl's incessantly annoying dance.

Now back with *Soup*, Blind Melon seems to be trying way too hard to avoid the massive exposure and attention by making a wildly uneven and unsatisfying album.

*Soup* fails where the band's debut album succeeded - by misusing the strengths of lead singer Shannon Hoon's vocals and the guitar melodies of Christopher Thorn and Rogers Stevens.

Hoon's vocals are as high and piercing as always, but it's gotten to the point of extreme annoyance.

A bizarre twist is "Skinned," sounding much more like Primus than Blind Melon. Backed by a back porch harmonica sound, Hoon sings

ALBUM REVIEW  
**Blind Melon**  
*Soup*  
Capitol Records  
★★ (out of five)

of realizing "this skin I'm in isn't mine" and making rib cages into coffee tables. Hoon's attempt at humor fails wildly, as Les Claypool could teach him a few tricks on bizarre, yet funny music.

Hoon's lyrics do provide some intrigue, especially on "Car Seat (God's Presents)," a response of sorts to the Susan Smith murders. "My brother sits by me," Hoon sings, as the haunting music reminds of the tragic drowning of Smith's sons.

A bright spot is "Galaxie," the album's first single. The chorus is a welcome throwback to the band's debut, with a melodic chorus soothing the frantic verses. "Galaxie" seems to respond to the massive exposure the band received after "No Rain." Hoon sings "Is this the place where I want to be? Will I keep on the cutting edge?"

Sadly, no. The cutting edge is reserved for up-and-coming bands with something new to say and a new way to say it. It's an obvious attempt at shunning commercial success, something only Pearl Jam has managed to do successfully.

What makes *Soup* so disappointing is that it fails to reach any of the potential of Blind Melon's last album. Irresistible tunes like "Tones of Home" and "Sleepyhouse" are replaced by *Soup* snoozers like "Mouthful of Cavities" and "Lemonade."

Being the alternative to alternative is an unrealistic goal for a band like Blind Melon in 1995. Records won't sell without MTV, as the Bee Girl has proven.

It's been a few years, but if *Soup* fails, the band might be scurrying to find her phone number once again for a comeback attempt.



Blind Melon



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Amateur jet skiers round a corner to the front straightaway in a race on Lake Bryan at the Balloon Classic and Hydro-fest