

A lesson in unity

S.I.S.T.A.S. helps African-American women breakdown barriers

By Rachel Barry
THE BATTALION

A support group for African-American women on campus and in the community was kicked off this weekend with the program, "Striving In Society To Achieve Sisterhood."

S.I.S.T.A.S. was the brain child of junior political science major Octevia Evangelista and junior speech communications major Rabiyyah Badruddin.

The two students were roommates this summer when Evangelista said they had a vision of a support group for African-American women in Bryan-College Station.

Badruddin said she had already had ideas for a program like S.I.S.T.A.S. when she and Evangelista began brainstorming this summer.

"It was exciting because we were so ready to be involved," she said.

The group hosted its first program this weekend, and Evangelista said the group focused on building self-esteem and giving support to other African American women in the community.

The program featured guest speakers and self-evaluation projects that focused on the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of African-American women.

"If you love yourself, then you're going to take care of yourself," she said. "If you feel good about yourself, you'll feel good, and you will work to be a better person."

Evangelista said there are factors on campus that divide African-American women every day.

"There are so many things that divide black women on campus," she said. "With this we combine everything together and try to break down those barriers."

Evangelista said S.I.S.T.A.S. offers a chance for African-American women to unite and discuss the issues that face them without having to be in a specific organization.

"We have a bond that doesn't stem from being an organization," she said. "It stems from loving each other and accepting each other regardless of what organizations we are in."

Tina Harrison, a senior finance major and chairwoman of the Black Awareness Committee, was one of the speakers at this weekend's program. She discussed developing spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally.

"I discussed the images a lot of us portray in society and the images we let society portray of us," she said. She said her discussion touched on living with confidence. "You need to have faith in whatever you do," she said. "You can't succeed with fear and doubt. How you think about yourself is as you are."

She said when people change the way they think, they change their lives.

"When you think positive things, you draw positive things to you," she said.

Evangelista said having Harrison speak offered the participants a good perspective.

"It was the perspective of a student that they can relate to and respect," she said.

Harrison said she connected with the audience.

"They could connect with me and identify with me, and that helps get the point across," she said.

The S.I.S.T.A.S. group is needed because small groups need to stick together.

"There are so few African-American women on campus that this teaches us how to love one another and accept one another and build each other up," she said.

Harrison said S.I.S.T.A.S. is open to anyone in the community.

She said the program helps African-American women build networks so there will not be a future need for a support group like S.I.S.T.A.S.

Harrison said she hopes the women who attend the workshops will be able to use what they learn and teach the people who were not there.

Although it was a positive experience for the participants, the only problem that seemed to plague the group was the tearing down of the group's flyers around campus. Evangelista said this did not create a real problem for them.

"We just put more up and went right on with the program," she said.

S.I.S.T.A.S. will host more programs this year, and said she hopes S.I.S.T.A.S. will be able to host retreats in the future.

"Everyday we'll be working toward sisterhood," she said. "It doesn't stop there."



Shane Elkins, THE BATTALION

Tina Harrison, a senior finance major, leads the discussion group at the S.I.S.T.A.S. meeting Saturday. Harrison is chairwoman of the Black Awareness Committee.



Shane Elkins, THE BATTALION

Octevia Evangelista, a junior political science major, speaks in an open discussion at the S.I.S.T.A.S. meeting Saturday.

EXIT THE DRAGON

Repetition lessens impact of Urge Overkill's newest

By Amy Uptmor
THE BATTALION

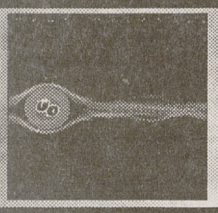
As we move farther into the '90s, it seems that more and more bands are popping up that sound like they never quite left the '70s.

Think about it — Lenny Kravitz and Matthew Sweet could both be described as sounding retro to the point of a time warp. And it's not a bad thing.

Now, Urge Overkill's latest album, *Exit the Dragon*, is carrying on the tradition. And like its predecessors, it's not a bad thing at all.

ALBUM REVIEW

Urge Overkill
Exit the Dragon
Geffen Records
★★★ (out of five)



Urge Overkill's last album, *Saturation*, had the guitar-oriented rock sound that's characteristic of the birth decade of Generation X. *Exit the Dragon* is a continuation of the band's sound, so fans will have nothing to be disappointed about.

But at the same time, fans have nothing to be terribly excited about. *Exit* is by no means a bad album, but a lot of the songs sound the same.

The band has a great style, but the same guitar lines are repeated ad nauseum to where many of the songs begin to sound like one big never-

ending collaboration.

Urge also has the bad habit — as anyone who heard the song "Sister Havana" can attest to — of having annoyingly repetitive choruses. Both "Need Some Air" and "Somebody Else's Body" repeat their titles about five times per chorus.

However, the good lyrics squeezed in between such choruses save many of the songs. "Need some air," is a brilliant dialogue about feeling suffocated by causes and rebellions. The final verse ends with "The revolution is dead/I need some air or I might pass out/I'm choking on your signs" before kicking into its "broken record" chorus mode.

Equally impressive lyrics are heard on the desperate "the break," with lyrics such as "I need a break and I need one clean/ Because things aren't what they seem" and "I'm falling down again/ And I'm calling out for you."

Unstable listeners should take note that such dark themes are omnipresent on *Exit the Dragon*. The album's first song, "Jaywalkin'," begins with the lyrics "Only evil is in this world/ Only evil is you."

And then there's "This is no place," which competes with "the break" as far as sounding desperate goes with lines like "I can't remember coming home/ And she don't know my name/ She woke up early and went home/ Here we go again."

Despite the gloom and repetition, most of the songs on *Exit* are, nevertheless, good songs.

There are a few throw-aways, such as "Honesty flies," which has the pointless chorus of "Honesty won't break my heart/ Honesty won't break it/ Honesty won't break your heart/ Honest it won't." Chalk that one up in the profound category.

This album gets a little slow and monotonous after the first seven or eight songs but as a whole, it has a good sound. Urge Overkill should look to its fellow guitar-driven retro gods — Lenny and Matthew will do — for a little help in remembering the "feel-good" aspect of the music of the '70s. These guys need some cheering up.

Alternative shows Pet Shop Boys' definition of dance

By Amy Uptmor
THE BATTALION

It's ironic that the Pet Shop Boys have managed to put out an album after a decade of dance music for the past 10 years without changing its sound or style and are still considered one of the more progressive bands of the last decade.

But even though its sound has remained consistent, in the members' own words, "We were never being boring."

Maybe the band members' influence can be attributed to what their music has done. Their music, along with closely related bands such as Erasure and New Order, helped to resuscitate a dance culture (and the dance music genre in general) in the United States and Europe, a culture that had almost died with disco and Abba.

In the process, their music helped to bring the underground culture into the mainstream.

Of course, there was music that was thrown to the waste side over the last 10 years. So the Pet Shop Boys, in keeping with the tradition of other successful bands, have released *Alternative*, a double-disc collection of 30 b-sides from the last decade. But this collection, just like the Pet Shop Boys, isn't quite like other bands' b-side collections.

For starters, most b-side collections are known to sound nothing like the rest of the band's music. Not here. These 30 songs are, for the most part, vintage Pet Shop Boys. How these songs didn't make it onto the band's original albums is a mystery, for even though they are b-sides, they are far from second-rate.

The full range of the Pet Shop Boys' spectrum is represented on this album. There's the random ("I want a dog" and "Your funny uncle"), and there's the profound ("You know where you went wrong" and "What keeps mankind alive"). Despite their content, all the songs are characterized by the Pet Shop Boys' witty, thoughtful lyrics.

"Your funny uncle" is particularly unique. Imagine a smoke-filled bar in a World War II setting, complete with a solo clarinet and a young man crooning about friends in the war and the approval of an uncle — except the music is marked with a

ALBUM REVIEW

Pet Shop Boys
Alternative
EMI Records
★★★★ (out of five)



synthesized rhythm in the background. Believe it or not, it works.

What is most unique about this collection is the other spectrum that it represents. Dance music is more than a sound — it is a form of technology. And like any other form of technology, it is an ever-evolving field.

The songs on *Alternative* are organized chronologically, so listeners have the unusual opportunity to hear the progression of the technological advances this band has utilized over the last 10 years.

Die-hard fans have a lot more than the songs to be excited about with this collection for two main reasons.

First and foremost is the debut (a few years late, mind you) of Chris Lowe's vocals on three different songs. It would seem that the Pet Shop Boys would lose something without Neil Tennant's trademark voice, but that's not the case at all. Lowe's voice adds a new dimension to the band's sound rather than taking anything away.

This is especially evident on "One of the Crowd," a characteristic club song complete with a thumping base laced with intricate keyboards. Lowe's voice is synthesized, and Tennant's high-pitched harmony can be heard faintly in the background.

Second, Tennant and Lowe chose to provide listeners with a step-by-step interview rather than song lyrics to fill the album jacket. The interview contains Tennant and Lowe reminiscing over the last decade, song by song. It's yet another thing that sets this collection — and this band — apart from all the rest.

In a day and age that is characterized by an ever-shrinking economy, bands have to have something special in mind to get away with actually selling a double-album set. *Alternative* is definitely just that — it's both the same old thing and something completely new at the same time. And yes, it's something special.



Pet Shop Boys

