

AGGIE life

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MU330 brings long history, diverse style to B-CS

By John LeBas
THE BATTALION

It's not often that bands formed in high school last for years.

But MU330 (pronounced m-u-three-thirty) has relied on good music, energetic performances and old friendships to achieve a level of success that most such bands only dream of.

The St. Louis ska band was formed by a group of high school friends eight years ago and was named for a music class some of the members were in. MU330 is playing its second College Station show tonight on Northgate.

With guitar, bass, drums and a three-piece horn section, MU330 churns out a high-powered mix of ska and rock, Dan Potthast, the band's guitarist and vocalist, said. Ska, akin to reggae, is characterized by guitar upbeats and horn melodies.

"One thing I always tell people is that we started out playing rock and later on got into ska," Potthast said. "We never lost the rock, but there's still lots of ska."

Jason Nelson, MU330's lead vocalist, said the band's music "rocks," but also focuses on melodies. "That's what we're all about — having something that's melodic and that the crowd can sing along to," Nelson said. "We're really into structured songs, too."

Nelson said fans are often surprised at how MU330 speeds up some of the slower tunes from the debut album, *Press*, while performing live.

"But that's all about getting hyper," he said. "And getting hyper is exactly what MU330 likes to do during live shows, he said.

"The crazier, the better," Nelson said. "We're al-

ways running into each other and breaking stuff (on stage)."

Nelson said performing also helps the band learn new material.

"We're always doing the new stuff live because that's how we, as a band, work it out," he said.

Performing has also helped propel the "old stuff" to success — *Press* has sold well since its 1994 release.

Potthast attributes this to the band's rigorous touring. MU330 has been playing throughout the country over 200 days a year for the past two and a half years. This busy schedule is well illustrated by Nelson's first three days in the band.

"I auditioned on a Tuesday, rehearsed with them on a Wednesday and went on the road on Thursday," he said.

But no complaints there, Nelson said — MU330 loves staying busy and playing as much as possible.

"We're not into staying at home and playing every once in a while," he said.

And this won't change soon, drummer Ted Moll said, as MU330 is preparing to release its next CD.

"Our new CD comes out in April," he said. "It's called *Chumps on Parade* and will be released on Dill Records, home to other popular ska bands like Skankin' Pickle and the Tantra Monsters."

Nelson said the new material, most of which MU330 has been playing live for over a year, has evolved into more of a rock style, but is not devoid of ska.

"We've been writing a lot more guitar-influenced stuff, focusing on a rock sound," he said. "But the horns are still kicking, even more so than on *Press*."

A possible tour with Skankin' Pickle should follow the release.



MU330

"We're going to try to hit it really hard for about four months," Moll said. "And our goal is to be able to play arenas."

Potthast said he hopes to implement pyrotechnics and car chases on stage at that point.

Whether or not that materializes, the band is content to continue touring and having a good time.

"It's everybody's dream to get in a band with their best friends and go places you never thought you could," Potthast said.

No distance too far to bring Ground Turkey members together to play

By Libe Goad
THE BATTALION

In *Style* magazine, the daughter of *People Weekly* magazine, occasionally carries a special section titled, "What's in your purse?" Last month, actress Delta Burke unzipped her purse so the public could take a peek inside.

It spilled over with, among other things, lipstick, a wallet, cigarettes and mints, letting the public in on how the rich and famous live. Right.

Steve Rice, a freshman archaeology major and a tenor saxophone player for the funk band Ground Turkey, opened up his wallet and told a few stories about the 11-member band that will play tonight on Northgate.

Rice, Jason Fuller, a freshman construction science major, and Robby Knight, a freshman mechanical engineering major, make up the College Station arm of the band, its members being spread across the country.

With a band member in Ohio and others at different schools in Texas, the two vocalists and guitar, drum, bass, trombone, trumpet, tenor saxophone and baritone saxophone players man-

age to build their musical repertoire and keep a performance schedule.

"Let's just say we often practice without some people," Rice said.

With the diversity of residences comes equally diverse musical influences.

Ground Turkey's lyrics carry a hip-hop flow and a Weird Al Yankovic mentality, painting humorous portraits about anything from a bowling alley worker to a crack-selling congressman who dies at the hands of a roving mariachi band.

"The lyrics can be about anything as long as they are not serious," Rice said.

The most serious aspect of Ground Turkey is its desire to stay away from the mainstream music scene. Rice said Ground Turkey wants to avoid the category of overrated musicians who play to simply please the audience.

"We don't appreciate what other people think is funny," he said. "I guess that's a little selfish."

Coincidentally, audience approval helped the band get on the ground and running in 1993 during a battle of the bands at a Woodlands teen center outside of Houston.

The competition drew the original

members of Ground Turkey together for an impromptu appearance at the center.

"They threw it together in a day," Rice said. "It was more of a joke than anything."

Chance smiled on the band. Much to its surprise, the audience liked its style, and it won the contest.

From there, it decided to take playing music to a different level.

After a few member changes, Ground Turkey set out into the Houston music scene, playing for a year at a club that sets fledgling bands into the public eye.

The group slowly gathered a following and took its music into the studio to record an eight-song demo tape. Last December, Ground Turkey recorded again, and since then has moved into a larger forum for its music.

In September, the band played at the annual Westheimer Arts Festival in Houston and caught the attention of The Houston Press, which awarded the band with the Best Horn Line and Best Rap/Hip-Hop Act.

Rice said the band hopes to gain recognition in other cities like it did in its hometown.

"Ground Turkey became a house-

hold name in Houston," Rice said. "I don't know whether people liked us, but they knew us."

Chance smiled again on the band and gave them a name.

After sitting around and failing to think of a name for the newly-formed band, bassist Mike Wallace returned from the grocery store with a sticker stuck to his leg. The sticker said, "Ground Turkey."

The rest of the story goes from there. Ground Turkey keeps the spirit of chance alive in the wackiness of its stage performances.

At every show, the band makes a point of dressing in the craziest garb possible. Band members sport Afros and Halloween masks.

In the past, the band has dazzled audiences with homemade pyrotechnics, using a makeshift combustion chamber to rain glitter over the audience.

Rice said Ground Turkey made a habit of bribing people to see the band's shows with freebies.

The band has given away toast, Twinkies and old appliances.

"We're not out to be rock stars," Rice said. "We love to put on a show."



Ground Turkey

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Candidates must be 18 years or older and registered as a full- or part-time student at a Big 12 university. Clear copies of identification—one verifying enrollment in school and a photo ID that shows date of birth—must be brought to the interview. All photos become property of *Playboy* and cannot be returned.

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