

Cepheid Variable works to combat sci-fi stereotype through 27th Aggiecon

By Rachel Barry
THE BATTALION

When the phrase "science fiction fan" is mentioned, images of people with an awkward mix of clothing, an obsession with the weird world of aliens and the glow of a computer screen reflected in their glasses can be a recurring stereotype.

Randy Paterno, co-director of Cepheid Variable and a senior genetics and psychology major, said he hopes the 27th annual AggieCon will debunk those stereotypes and provide an opportunity for A&M students and other people to experience a side of sci-fi that doesn't make the mainstream television schedule.

"Hopefully, people will explore possibilities and find out if sci-fi fans are two-dimensional stereotypes or three-dimensional people," Paterno said.

Adam Richards, vice chair of Cepheid Variable and a senior wildlife ecology and natural resources conservation major, said the old image of somebody sitting in a room staring at a computer screen no longer has any real support.

"Through our actions and the way we do this," he said, "we show that the stereotype, while it may have been true in the past, is no longer the case."

The action Cepheid Variable will be taking to put to rest these myths is an art show with works of artists from all over the country. These artists, Paterno said, often earn their living creating illustrations for comic books and by drawing cards for games.

"This is a chance for fans of the sci-fi-fantasy-horror genre to get together and have the chance to meet professionals in the field," he said. "It gives them the chance to see how other people broke into the field."

Students who are not looking to make their way in the sci-fi

field but just want to have a good time can partake in the showing of the cult-classic film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Grove this weekend.

Richards said the movie, which combines audience participation and off-the-wall show tunes, is rarely shown in College Station.

"People can count on it being shown twice a year," he said.

These two times, once in the fall and again at each AggieCon, are both sponsored by Cepheid Variable. Watching the show on the big screen, Paterno said, offers another dimension to the experience of the film.

"It just comes alive," he said. "It has to be experienced to be understood."

For fans wanting to hear first-hand about life in the sci-fi entertainment industry, actor Richard Biggs of *Babylon 5* will be speaking.

Richards said one of the highlights of the conference is a special *Star Wars* presentation tomorrow at 7 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m. in 201 MSC, created by Howard Roffman and Stephen Sansweet of Lucasfilms. The presentation will include scenes from the upcoming re-release of the original trilogy of films, as well as some material that has never been taken off the Skywalker Ranch.

"It's tremendously interesting to people who have any interest in *Star Wars*," Richards said.

"This is stuff you can't see elsewhere. Most people can't see it until 1997."

Richards said AggieCon gives students the chance to experience areas of a genre they might not realize they are interested in until they come to the conference.

He said most people do not make the connection between some of their favorite types of entertainment and being classified as a sci-fi fan.

"A lot of people don't realize they are sci-fi fans," Richards said.

But with *Star Trek's* popularity spanning almost three generations in Asia and with more than 30 million people tuning in for the third season premiere of the *X-Files*, it is hard to ignore the phenomena of sci-fi.

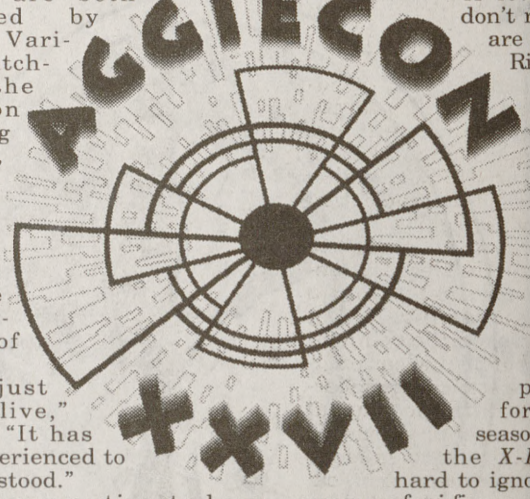
For those who still haven't dabbled in the sci-fi genre, though, AggieCon can be an eye-opening experience, Richards said.

"It will expose people to things they have never seen or done before," he said. "It gives me the forum to introduce people to new things. Without AggieCon, a lot of people don't have that forum."

Paterno said he hopes people will come to the conference and experience the variety of personalities the conference attracts.

"All we are is just a sub-population of humanity, and humanity just runs the gamut," he said.

"We cover the spectrum of personalities, from the weird to the wonderful."



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Weekend Preview

Thursday

Electric Gypsies, a rock band from Austin, is playing at The Tap.

Little Sister, a rock band from Austin, is playing at the Dixie Theatre. **Ruthie Foster**, a rhythm and blues performer from Gause, is opening.

Ty and the Semiautomatics, a rock band, is playing at Fitzwilly's.

Jerry Jeff Walker, a country and western performer, is playing at the Texas Hall of Fame.

Friday

Crystal Sea, a jazz band, is playing at Sweet Eugene's House of Java.

Ruthie Foster, a rhythm and blues performer from Gause, is playing at the 3rd Floor Cantina.

The Killer Bees, a reggae band from Austin, is playing at the Dixie Theatre.

Brad Thompson, a rock performer from Dallas, is playing at The Tap. **Ty and the Semiautomatics** is opening.

Saturday

Arrival, a rock band from Houston, is playing at The Tap.

Mike Cancellare, an acoustic performer, is playing at Sweet Eugene's House of Java.

Sneaky Pete is performing at Fitzwilly's.

The Texas Twisters, a classic rock band, is playing at the 3rd Floor Cantina.

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