

AGGIE life

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Fire Away

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and distribution rights. Meinecke said now the industry is growing and his own business is faring well. "Business is



Pat James, THE BATTALION

Cory Mancuso, of Bryan, aims as he sneaks up on an opponent.

great," he said. "I didn't know what to expect with the students not being in a regular school session."

Business is one thing, but Meinecke said people can expect it to have a good time playing the game.

"It's fun and you can't really describe it," he said. "You can shoot people and when you get shot, it doesn't hurt."

A change in the game began in England about three years ago and now new arenas are popping up all over the United States.

With better technology than in years past, laser tag is more versatile than ever — and not just for kids anymore.

Kathryn Whaley, manager at TJ's Laser Tag and a senior recreation and parks major, said the wave of the game has hit places such as Six Flags and Discovery Zone.

Whaley said people come to play for clean, positive fun.

"It's indoors and it's cool," she said, "something families and friends can do in the summer."

With summertime in full swing, laser tag is especially popular for high school kids who believe there is nothing to do.

Whaley said laser tag action for customers is ten minutes of constant hide-and-seek gaming in an effort to win.

"You're divided into two teams, red and green," she said.

"You wear a lightweight, computerized vest that slips over your head with your laser gun attached."

Once an individual suits up, the next step is the gaming room —

where the competition begins.

"You play in a darkened arena that has an obstacle course lit with black light and there's a fog machine," Whaley said.

Mixing black light with a fog machine allows players to see the red laser beam when it is shot from their gun.

Yet another facet of the game aids individuals during play.

"Your vest talks to you," Whaley said. "It (the vest) tells you when you've been hit and when you can shoot."

The vest communicates to players when they can shoot because of a five-second layover time occurring after being hit.

During this time, the players cannot fire at others, nor can they be hit.

"At the end of the game, you download your gun and it sends your scores to the computer," Whaley said.

A player learns how many people he or she has hit, and vice versa, in a computer score determining the winner(s).

Laser tag is only a game, but some worry that shooting lasers at people is too vivid for players to separate from reality.

"I don't think our establishment puts it into that light," Whaley said. "Most are just interested in the fact you can see the laser."

Whaley said from time to time she has seen a parent or two come in to check out the game, but usually they end up playing with their children.

With the technological advancement of laser tag, some may wonder if the sport will see another decline because of the creation of computer-enhanced games.

"We looked at the virtual reality," Whaley said. "But I don't think it will take over the physical part — people enjoy the human interaction."

Marc Cellucci, a senior marketing major, is just one person who would not give up the physical aspects of the game for a visual experience.

"I guess the part I enjoy the most is the action," he said.

"It's not like paint ball. That's expensive and you get big welts."

Cellucci said he has other motives and reasons for the entertainment value of laser tag.

"It's just exciting to go out and shoot your friends," he said.

"It's cathartic to blast your friends away, and you get bragging rights with the stats the machine keeps."

Cellucci said there are a few ways to be successful during the game.

"You have to be sneaky, efficient — trying to help out the team and watch out for the enemy," he said.

Players anxiously await score reports after a round to see whether they have been vindicated.

"It depends on how my stats come out," Cellucci said. "You compare with your friends, but it's a fun way to let out the stress of the day."



Pat James, THE BATTALION

Scott Watson, a junior accounting major, lurks behind a corner.

Gals Panic

The do-it-itself Austin band has played with other punk rock bands Green Day, Rancid and Tripping Daisy



GALS PANIC

By April Towery
THE BATTALION

Austin punk band Gals Panic is influenced not by the great bands of yesterday and today, but by Mexican food and cute skater girls.

"Our style is so vague and ambiguous — just loud rock'n'roll," guitarist and vocalist Jeremy Pollett said.

Pollett, who moved to Austin from New York in 1990, said he met lead vocalist Lance Sever in a video arcade.

"It's kind of ironic that Lance and I met in an arcade because Gals Panic is the name of a cheap Japanese video game," Pollett said. "I think they tried to translate it into English and it didn't translate too well. We liked the ambiguity of the name."

The band, which recently released an album on the Goopy Pyramid label, has been together for about three and a half years.

Even more interesting is the name of their new album, *I Think We Need Helicopters*.

One of Pollett's high school buddies is Broadway playwright Tim Levitch. He sent Pollett a copy of one of his latest plays around the time that Gals Panic recorded their first album.

"The play was really funny," Pollett said. "This guy wakes up one morning to find that his penis is missing. He files a missing person's

complaint, so the police begin to search for it. It grows to be six feet tall, and steals the guy's job and his girlfriend, and basically becomes a better man than the protagonist."

"There's a scene in a doughnut shop where two cops are talking about what they're going to do about the runaway penis. One cop looks at the other and says, 'I think we need helicopters.'"

Pollett said that the Gals Panic album turned out to be a bit symbolic of his friend's play.

"The album is really a masculine album," Pollett said. "There's 19 songs out there autonomously. It's very sexy — horribly out of control. I hope we do need helicopters."

Gals Panic has had some interesting experiences playing live shows.

"The difference between recording and playing live is like the difference between a photograph and a movie," Pollett said.

Before Gals Panic picked up bassist Cardinal Connor and drummer Dave Keel, it played with a drum machine and a keyboard player.

"We played at this place called the Cavity Club in Austin three and a half years ago and just brought our entire living room onstage," Pollett said. "We had a potted plant, a desk, a chair, and a TV set. It was total improvisation."

Besides the Cavity Club, Gals

Panic has played in a variety of places with well-known bands such as Green Day, Rancid and Tripping Daisy, along with playing in bowling alleys, residential basements, and Sudy's Malone's Laundromat in Cincinnati.

"Playing at the laundromat was cool," said Pollett. "People are totally spinning their laundry and it's a battle to hear the band over the damn change machines."

"It's funny because the people who actually came to see us were these dirty punks who looked like they hadn't done laundry in like three months, so it was a good way to get people to the laundromat."

Gals Panic consider themselves a self-sufficient band. They book, promote and publicize their own shows, and sell the albums themselves.

At a show in Austin, Pollett said he wished he had a bodyguard.

"A drunk girl close to the stage was blasting one of those horns you blow at basketball games and no one would stop her," Pollett said. "I went up to her and told her I was going to take her horn until the end of the show. After the show she could play it as loud and as often as she wanted."

"Well, in the middle of our next song I guess I was really rocking out because it totally took me by surprise when she tackled me onstage and punched me in the mouth. She broke

my front tooth, but it was kind of a cool rock and roll experience."

Gals Panic is known for their onstage theatrics as well.

"I'm somewhat of an exhibitionist," said Pollett. "I love being onstage and performing live. It's important to me to have that kind of communication with myself."

Gals Panic made their motion picture debut recently in the crime film *The Underneath*. Steve Soderbergh, director of *sex, lies, and videotape*, asked them to play music for a bar scene.

Pollett taught himself to play guitar, which he believes has helped him develop his own style.

"I don't know or care much about theory, so I make up chords myself," Pollett said. "My older sister's boyfriends used to show me a chord every now and then, but I always liked doing it on my own."

Pollett said Gals Panic is all about originality.

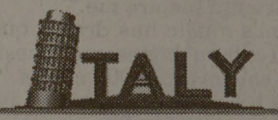
"My theory is to always be yourself," Pollett said. "No one can plagiarize. Everything is original if it's intense and sincere."

Gals Panic will be playing Monday, July 15, at Vertigo with MU330, whom Pollett said is a band worth seeing.

"They are just the epitome of cool," Pollett said. "They have so much energy."

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