

A&M senior English major sweeps Gospel Music Association Awards

By AARON MEIER
 THE BATTALION

In the near future, Texas A&M may have its own successful musician. Michael Armstrong, a senior English major, is currently one of the nation's most sought after talents in Christian music. A friend encouraged Armstrong to enter the Gospel Music Association Awards (GMA), a competition for aspiring performers and songwriters. The day the application was due, Armstrong hesitantly sent it in, and was selected to compete in the regional competition in Dallas. "I didn't want to enter it, but I felt I should," Armstrong said. At the regional competition, Armstrong swept the awards by winning the songwriter category and the spotlight category for his original song, "Second First Time." The songwriter award criteria is strictly based on the content of the song. Judges consider an artist's melody, harmony and performance award where vocal ability, stage presence and overall presentation are emphasized. Amy Nobles, a senior education major and close friend of Armstrong's, drew on the Dallas competition. "His winning both categories was shocking and unheard of," she said. Armstrong is the first person to win both categories at the regional competition. In late April, Armstrong competed in a nation-wide competition that catapulted his career in Christian music. Armstrong received first place in the songwriter category and placed in the top five in the spotlight category. "I was shocked," Armstrong said. "I was once a winner in the spotlight category." Armstrong's recognition by the GMA won him immediate attention by the music industry. "In three days, I got over 50

business cards from potential publishers," he said. In two weeks, he will fly to Nashville to sign a contract with a music publisher. Armstrong said he will be signed as a songwriter, and, after proving his writing ability, he hopes to sing and record his own music. Nobles said she has found Armstrong's success as a Christian singer exciting and a tribute to his musical talent. "Michael went from not knowing a thing about Christian music, to being famous across the country in just four years," Nobles said. Armstrong's music experience started in high school, where he learned the George Strait song "Amarillo by Morning." As a high school senior, Michael's two older sisters, Kathryn and Kelly, returned from A&M as born-again Christians. Their dedication to Jesus led him to "sell out to the Lord." Armstrong first became involved in Christian music as a freshman attending Central Baptist Church. He then became involved in Breakaway, a large Bible study, where he is now a worship leader. Armstrong has watched other artists to see how they approach music production. Armstrong said the proliferation of soul searching in main stream music, such as Joan Osborne's "St. Teresa" and "One of Us" and Dishwalla's "Counting Blue Cars," is a sign that artists have been looking for a spiritual awakening. Armstrong also said some Christian musicians have not been successful at spreading the message they advertise. "Neither their music, nor the things they say at live performances, demonstrate they are Christians," Armstrong said. Armstrong said the wide spectrum of Christian artists helps attract more listeners. The Christian spectrum reaches from the rap style of DC Talk and the

heavy metal sound of Stryper to the mainstream contemporary Christian music of Steven Curtis Chapman. These different styles help break the stereotype of the usual Christian-music listener. "Some of my friends would never go to a Steven Curtis Chapman concert, but they would all go to a DC Talk concert," Armstrong said. This semester, Armstrong plans to take it easy and relax

more than in previous semesters. He will get his senior ring Sept. 12, and plans on dunking it, but not in the traditional pitcher of beer. Armstrong plans on going to Swensen's where he will dunk his ring in a mammoth ice cream sundae known as an Earthquake. He hopes to avoid brain freeze by having a couple of friends help him finish the eight scoops of ice cream in 9.6 minutes, not 96 seconds.



Michael Armstrong, who had to be persuaded by friends to enter the GMA Awards, will fly to Nashville in two weeks to sign a contract with a music publisher as a songwriter.

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Workshop 1	Thurs., Sept. 19	6-9:30pm
Class 2	Sun., Sept. 22	6-9:30pm
Test 2	Sat., Sept. 28	9-1pm
Class 3	Sun., Sept. 29	6-9:30pm
Workshop 3	Thurs., Oct. 3	6-9:30pm
Test 3	Sat., Oct. 5	9-1pm
Class 4	Sun., Oct. 6	6-9:30pm
Workshop 4	Thurs., Oct. 10	6-9:30pm
Test 4	Sat., Oct. 12	9-1pm
Class 5	Sun., Oct. 13	6-9:30pm
Workshop 5	Thurs., Oct. 17	6-9:30pm

GRE
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Workshop 1	Wed., Oct. 30	6-9:30pm
Class 2	Sun., Nov. 3	2-5:30pm
Workshop 2	Wed., Nov. 6	6-9:30pm
Test 2	Sat., Nov. 9	9-1pm
Class 3	Sun., Nov. 10	2-5:30pm
Workshop 3	Wed., Nov. 13	6-9:30pm
Class 4	Sun., Nov. 17	2-5:30pm
Workshop 4	Wed., Nov. 20	6-9:30pm
Test 3	Sat., Nov. 23	9-1pm
Class 5	Sun., Nov. 24	2-5:30pm
Workshop 5	Wed., Dec. 4	6-9:30pm
Test 4	Sat., Dec. 7	9-1pm
Class 6	Sun., Dec. 8	2-5:30pm
Workshop 6	Wed., Dec. 11	6-9:30pm

LSAT
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Test	Sat., Oct. 12	9-12:30pm
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Test 1	Sat., Oct. 19	9-12:30pm
Class 1	Sun., Oct. 20	6-9:30pm
Class 2	Thurs., Oct. 24	6-9:30pm
Class 3	Sun., Oct. 27	6-9:30pm
Class 4	Thurs., Oct. 31	6-9:30pm
Test 2	Sat., Nov. 2	6-9:30pm
Class 5	Sun., Nov. 3	6-9:30pm
Class 6	Thurs., Nov. 7	6-9:30pm
Class 7	Sun., Nov. 10	6-9:30pm
Class 8	Thurs., Nov. 14	6-9:30pm
Test 3	Sat., Nov. 16	9-12:30pm
Class 9	Sun., Nov. 17	6-9:30pm
Class 10	Thurs., Nov. 21	6-9:30pm
Test 4	Sat., Nov. 23	9-12:30pm
Class 11	Sun., Nov. 24	6-9:30pm
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