By AARON MEIER THE BATTALION

the near future, Texas A&M nay have its own successful nusician. Michael Armstrong, enior English major, is currentne of the nation's most sought er talents in Christian music.

A friend encouraged Armstrong enter the Gospel Music ociation Awards (GMA), a comition for aspiring performers and gwriters. The day the application due, Armstrong hesitantly sent and was selected to compete in egional competition in Dallas. "I didn't want to enter it, but I

It I should," Armstrong said. rs Crooked At the regional competition, mstrong swept the awards by ming the songwriter category nd the spotlight category for his riginal song, "Second First Time." The songwriter award criteria strictly based on the content of k lemanade he song. Judges consider an ed in the publist's melody, harmony and re than most rics. The spotlight award is a erformance award where vocal h and play a bility, stage presence and overall but no compresentation are emphasized.

Amy Nobles, a senior education ajor and close friend of Armstrong, s drawn of attended the Dallas competition.

"His winning both categories nk people was shocking and unheard of," Nobles said. ne in andmi

Armstrong is the first person win both categories at the gional competition. nainstrear- In late April, Armstrong com-

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z said. peted in a nation-wide competi-cal bands of ton that catapulted his career in Christian music. Armstrong nay let someceived first place in the songon Anz said writer category and placed in the the alternation five in the spotlight category. Jars of Clay, whose debut single e Eccell Flood" became a Top 40 hit this rating a balpast summer, was once a winner a restaurant in the spotlight category.

verything for Armstrong's recognition by the an just getti GMA won him immediate attenon by the music industry.

"In three days, I got over 50

business cards from potential heavy metal sound of Stryper to more than in previous semesters. 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 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," Nobels 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

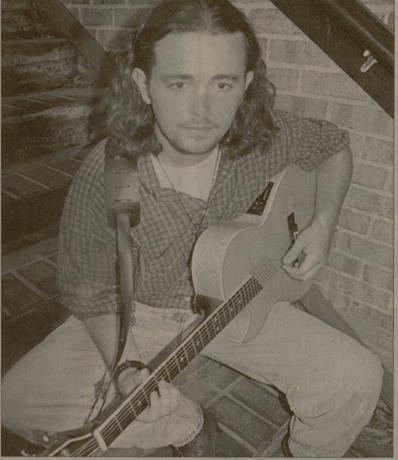
the mainstream contemporary Christian music of Steven Curtis Chapman. These different styles help break the stereotype of the usual Christian-music listener.

"Some of my friends would never go to a Steven Curtis Chapman concert, but they would all go a DC Talk concert,"Armstrong said.

This semester, Armstrong plans to take it easy and relax

He will get his senior ring Sept. 12, and plans on dunking it, but not in the traditional pitcher

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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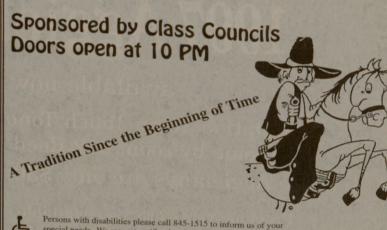
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