

AGGIELIFE

Audience mayhem powers punk rock trio Fastball

BY JOHN LEBAS
THE BATTALION

There will be no "hump it" at Vertigo tonight, but Fastball guitarist and vocalist Miles Zuniga still wants the crowd to make plenty of College Station-style noise. Fans here, Zuniga said, get wilder than people in the power-pop band's hometown of Austin — and Fastball thrives on that energy.

"I like people who are vocal and loud, and usually in College Station the group that comes to see us is pretty boisterous," Zuniga said. "I love Austin, but the people here listen to you and just kind of clap politely. In College Station, at least, the people have been drinking tequila."

It takes a little audience mayhem to ring out the best in Fastball, Zuniga said. "Sometimes, we're tired and don't really feel like playing," he said. "We always try to go the extra mile, but a good audience makes a lot of difference."

Fastball began in 1994 as Magneto USA, which played in Austin for about a year and a half. But there was already another band called Magneto, Zuniga said, so the trio had to change its name to Fastball.

That didn't make it any easier to part with their original, well-loved name, he said.

"It's hard to rename a band because you get used to the name and nothing else seems as good," he said. "It's like taking a kid who's been named 'Jack' for the first five years of his life and then saying, 'Oh,

there's a kid next door named 'Jack,' too, so we have to give you a new name."

The band members were not enthusiastic about the name change, and unfortunately, some fans lost track of Magneto USA when it became Fastball, Zuniga said.

Zuniga does not want Fastball's whereabouts to be a mystery again. Forget about becoming a "one-hit wonder" and fading from memory after a few weeks of success, he said — Fastball's in the game for "the long haul."

"We live in a microwave age, where bands come up real fast and then disappear — bands like Jesus Jones and EME," Zuniga said. "It's not like we want to be this overnight sensation. We want to have a whole series of albums where each one is better than the last."

Fastball's debut album, *Make Your Mama Proud*, was released earlier this year on Hollywood Records. According to a press release, Fastball delivers "terse, edgy bursts of power punk/pop blending equal parts sweetness and savagery" on the 14-song effort. But publicity rhetoric aside, Zuniga simply described Fastball's music as rock 'n' roll.

"We're a rock 'n' roll band along the lines of a little Squeeze, a little KISS, and The Who, maybe," Zuniga said. "It's all kind of mixed in."

Being on a major record label has not changed the music, Zuniga said, but does limit the band's control over what it does.

"Any time you're talking about a major

record label, there's a certain amount of control taken from you, just because of the number of people involved," he said. "But I don't like to think about things like that because I just like to play music. As far as the music goes, we haven't compromised."

But Zuniga said a record contract makes it easier to concentrate on the music — the company arranges interviews for articles, handles publicity and sets up tour dates. And it's a good thing Hollywood handles the incidentals, Zuniga said, because Fastball is usually too busy touring to have time to do much else.

"Touring's pretty fun, but you don't have time to do anything," he said. "It isn't like you get to go to all these places and see the sights. We spend most of our time driving to the town, setting up our stuff, playing, and driving to the next town again. There's no time to write music, either."

Zuniga said touring gets old after a couple of months, but playing in a band is a great job.

"You get to sleep late, you get free drinks most of the time, and you don't have a boss," he said.

Unless, of course, the fans qualify as a collective boss. After all, Zuniga said, his job as a performer is to make the crowd a part of the show — and to try to get people as rowdy as possible.

"If I just play a show and don't interact with the crowd, I haven't done a good job," he said.



Fastball

Mastercard contest seeks best vocal act in Aggieland

BY AARON MEIER
THE BATTALION

It is not every day that a college student has a chance to win \$15,000, but 10 Texas A&M student acts will compete tonight for a chance to take the grand prize and make valuable contacts.

MSC Variety Show sponsors the Mastercard American Collegiate Talent Search (ACTS), a contest which aims to find the best student performers in the country. The competition, which will be held tonight at 7 p.m. in the Rudder Auditorium, has attracted singers and stand-up comedians.

Tonight's competition stands as a first step towards the grand prize. Whoever wins the local competition will advance to the regional competition at Southern Methodist University. Two acts will be selected to represent the region at the national competition in Philadelphia.

Dave Salmon, adviser to MSC Variety Show, said the winner of the College Station competition has a good chance of going to Philadelphia.

"We will have some of the most talented student performers at the show," Salmon said. "The winner has an excellent chance of advancing to nationals."

Debbie Lucas, a country singer and sophomore animal science major, said she has high hopes for tonight's competition and the national competition.

"I want to go all the way," Lucas

said. "I want to win this thing."

Lucas will perform a song from an album she recently completed.

Lucas said winning \$15,000 could open many doors for her music career.

"If I won, I might get a cover done for my



album, maybe even put it toward a music video," Lucas said. "I could always pay back my parents."

Performers see the local contest as a chance to gain visibility in the Bryan-College Station music scene.

Craig Hanna, guitarist and singer of Texas blues band Throw Away People and a senior geography major, said he does not expect to be making the trip to Philadelphia.

"We're not going there to win," Hanna said. "We just hope to play, have fun, and deliver some soul food to hungry people."

Hanna said the Bryan-College Station music scene is a frustrating one to break into, with a limited number of venues and an ample supply of bands willing to fill them.

He said MasterCard ACTS lets the contestants showcase their various talents to the community at one of the largest venues in the area.

With a wide spectrum of performers scheduled to appear, the show seems to have something for everyone.

Salmon said alternative rock bands, country and western singers, a capella group, a stand-up comedian and someone who is going to perform a song from the Broadway musical *Phantom of the Opera* will perform tonight.

Katie Groff, chair of MSC Variety Show and a junior elementary education major, said the variety of musical performers at the MasterCard ACTS proves what a diverse campus A&M possesses.

"We've recruited a diverse group of students with a wide variety of acts that will entertain everyone," Groff

said. "I am impressed with all the acts."

Lucas said the MasterCard ACTS offers more than a group of bands playing the same type of music to win the contest.

"There are so many different people competing here," Lucas said. "Every act will be memorable, as opposed to just the last person being the most memorable simply because they were last."

Groff said the advantage to this talent show, as opposed to the one put on by MSC Variety Show during Parent's Weekend, is that the performers have a chance to advance to a national competition where they may meet agents or people with record labels.

Gina Miori, director of advertising for MSC Variety Show and a sophomore speech communications major, said this is the third year MasterCard has sponsored the nationwide talent search, but this is the first time A&M has hosted the event.

"MasterCard was really interested in having a local contest here," Miori said. "A&M has such a large student base, with a diverse campus to pull the various acts from. It was easy to see why they wanted to come here."

Lucas said whoever wins the competition will have earned the honor.

"This is not a competition to see who is good and who isn't," Lucas said. "This is a competition to see who is the best."

"We're not going there to win. We just hope to play, have fun, and deliver some soul food to hungry people."

-Craig Hanna
guitarist and singer of
Throw Away
People

SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE

LIMITED TIME OFFER

CONTACT LENSES

AND
QUALITY CARE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

\$118⁰⁰ TOTAL COST

FOR

- FOUR PAIR DW/EW STD. SOFT CONTACT LENSES
- EXAM AND FOLLOW-UPS
- FREE CARE KIT
- SAME DAY DELIVERY ON MOST LENSES

Call **846-0377** for appointment
Monday thru Saturday
Now accepting most insurance plans

CHARLES C. SCHROEPPPEL, O.D., P.C.
DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY

505 University Dr. East,
Suite 101
College Station, TX 77840

On University Drive
between Randall's & Black Eyed Pea

SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE • SALE

Wild Woolly Wednesday

6-11pm

All the pizza, Peproni Rolls™ Breadstyxz you can eat and the first draft beer is included.

Men \$6/Women \$5/Couple \$10
Each additional draft 75c

211 University 268-DAVE	Carter Creek Center 846-DAVE
919 Harvey Rd. 764-DAVE	326 Geo. Bush Dr. 696-DAVE

DOUBLE DAVE'S PIZZAWORKS
We're Always Rolling!

PROFITABLE NUMBER! **845-0569** THE BATTALION Classified Advertising