

The country mouse tells all



CHRIS MARTIN
Columnist

You probably heard a rumor if you went to Fish Camp, along with the terribly popular rumor that the guy who played Zach Morris on Saved by the Bell went to school here for a semester but freaked out on acid.

No, seriously, the word on the street is a few of A&M's finer students actually come from Houston and Dallas. It seems halfway believable, like most urban legends, but those Fish Camp counselors are like lascivious terriers when it comes to pulling legs.

As an employee of The Battalion and its parent company, Nabisco, I am legally barred from publishing half-truths. Just in case there is any dribbling of verity to the vicious rumor of big city students, I will endeavor to educate the metropolitan minority in the agony and the ecstasy of small town life (and for the ultimate experience, please feel free to listen to Dire Straits' "Walk of Life" or any song by John Mellencamp as you read.)

I came from a small town — Flippin, Ark., to be exact. It could have been worse — the town used to be called Goatsville.

The best way to get to Flippin from here is to drive north until you see a Stuckey's every quarter mile, instead of historical plaques marking every spot where Sam Houston stopped to take a piss. Continue north through

Arkansas, past Toad Suck and Pickle's Gap, until you see the first exit for the end of the earth. Take the exit and hang a right at the fourth trailer with old lawn mowers and swing sets out front. Ah, reminds me of prom.

How I got there in the first place was my father, a Baptist preacher, was asked to pastor the First (and only) Baptist Church in Flippin when I was nine years old. I had visions of Lil' Abner, complete with barefooted oafs and tobacco-spittin' grannies. Good old Flippin didn't let me down.

Flippin is one of those places you go where someone tells you their name is Tater or Biscuit, and you laugh, and then realize you just befriended five generations of Taters and Biscuits.

Of greater Flippin's 1,032 residents, approximately 999 labor the days away in the local boat factory. This includes yours truly when he's home begging for money.

Actually, I had a nice cushy job in the air-conditioned office of the advertising and photography department. This position helped me escape the pleasure of having finely ground fiberglass embedded into my epidermis on a daily basis. This position also helped me earn the endearing nickname of "photo fag" from said plant workers.

Although Flippin is basically the size of a footprint, it's like an Isthmus of Panama footprint full of stagnant water and mosquito eggs, providing fertile grounds for ignorance, insanity and bad taste in evening wear.

Flippin has the unique privilege of being built on the nexus of a busy intergalactic conduit. This is the only way I can explain the existence of locals such as Marty, who

carried on daily conversations with his mailbox.

As I heard it, one particularly deranged acquaintance of Marty called him up in the middle of the night to tell him about the space-ships he saw landing in a nearby field to steal cows.

Marty, the calm voice of reason, quickly saw the hyperbole of such a statement.

"Spaceships?" Marty said. "That's impossible. Everybody knows that field is too rocky for the spaceships to land in."

Flippin High School, which really should just be called Flippin School, since all grades from walking in Pampers to walking with diplommas meet on one campus. Flippin High readily provided me with all the education I would need to fill out government disability forms.

One quarter of my graduating class — 44 strong — had procreated before graduation. I attribute the high teen pregnancy rate, not to the lack of morals or sex education, but to boredom. If you think there is nothing to do in College Station, try moving to a town that considers the combination of Coke and peanuts a delicacy.

Before the angry mob mobilizes, I must say that, despite a few quirks, Flippin is not all that bad. It is quaint, quiet and occasionally beautiful. I hear that a few people really do enjoy the Flippin life. Just ask the leader of the free world. He happens to own a few acres of prime Flippin real estate some people call White Water. Welcome to paradise, Bill. Watch out for them UFOs.

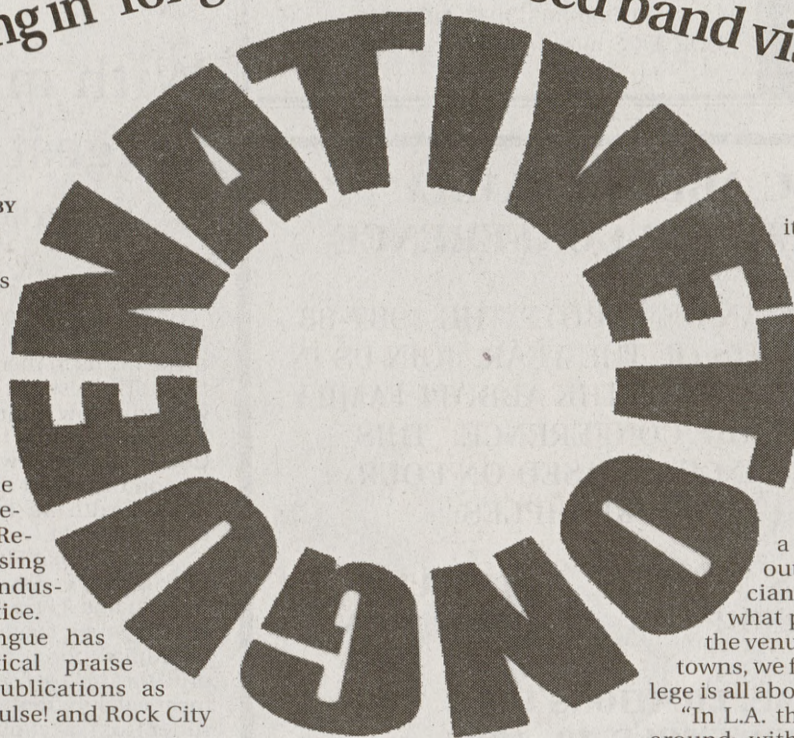
Chris Martin is a senior journalism major

Speaking in 'Tongue': L.A.-based band visits B-CS

By TRAVIS IRBY
Staff Writer

The Los Angeles based Native Tongue is set to open for Vallejo Wednesday night at Dixie Theater. Its debut album, Release, is causing many in the industry to take notice.

Native Tongue has received critical praise from such publications as L.A. Weekly, Pulse! and Rock City News.



The band considers its live performances the best part of the Native Tongue package. They all agreed the live performance is what hooks new listeners.

Cruciani said there is strategy to reaching the audience.

"When we come to a town we try and find out what it is like," Cruciani said. "We find out what people like and what the venues are like. In college towns, we find out what the college is all about."

"In L.A. the crowd just stands around with its arms folded," Shrader said. "They are always trying to analyze the music, not enjoy it."

"In L.A. ninety-percent of your audience is your competition," Cruciani said.

The band members said they look forward to playing at the Dixie Theater.

"We really like it when we can feel the crowd and their energy," Shrader said.

Even though Native Tongue has played with some big name acts, the members do not spend much time socializing with other bands.

"We really like to get out and meet the fans afterward," Dirty said. "We'll sign CDs, hand out shirts, whatever."

Native Tongue prides itself on its ability to market the music. After all, the members proclaim their hobbies to be getting good reviews, heavy rotation and shameless promotion.

The band started with three guys from Louisiana — guitarist Dirty, vocalist John Flatt and drummer Joel Tassin. They headed to Los Angeles where they met bassist Paul Shrader and guitarist Glenn Cruciani.

Shrader said the core of the band has been together for five years, but the present incarnation is only two years old.

He also said the band is guitar driven.

"The CD doesn't do our sound justice," Shrader said. "We really pump it up live."

Dirty said the band's sounds draw from a number of influences, but southern rock is very prominent in the music.

"I like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Skynyrd and a lot of blues artists," Dirty said.

Shrader said the band also has other influences.

"I'm originally from Oakland and growing up, one of my favorite bands was Metallica, and I enjoyed a lot of punk," Shrader said. "Glenn is originally from New York, so he also has his own set of influences."

The band has been touring the South since August in support of Release. Last week, Native Tongue has been in Houston opening for Sammy Hagar, Nixons and Tonic.

Shrader said there is reason for the band's sampling of southern hospitality.

"The record company knew some of the guys were from the South," Shrader said. "So they figured our sound would do well here, and so far it has."

The Louisiana members of the band have found their perceptions of home have changed.

"After living in L.A. for a while, no matter where you come from, you become a native," Dirty said.

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