

Texas A&M programs help international students make cultural adjustments

By TRAVIS IRBY
Staff writer

A Texas A&M student has a test at 8 a.m. covering over 400 pages of material — not uncommon for most students. Now add the fact the student is in an unfamiliar place, a couple of thousand miles from home and inexperienced with the language.

This might not be as common to many A&M students, but a sizable number of international students go through this adjustment every year.

International students, representing a variety of nationalities, cultures and religions, help give credence to the University's phrase "world-class."

Suzanne Droleskey, director of International Student Services, said students who come from abroad know there is a big adjustment to be made.

"Most international students do very well," Droleskey said. "They know they're coming to another country. They're risk-takers, and they do very well."

Droleskey said there is a broad base of reactions to A&M by international students.

"I think there are some surprises — many pleasant and some not so pleasant," Droleskey said.

A&M tries to make those surprises positive by offering programs and organizations to help ease international students into campus life.

One such program offered is International Camp, or I-Camp. It is held before school starts and helps introduce international students to A&M traditions and other academic émigrés.

Nandan Dharwadker, an I-Camp director and an electrical engineering graduate student, said I-Camp is an important first step for many international students to take at A&M.

"I-Camp is important because it is the first and maybe last time you have to meet friends," Dharwadker said. "The students are away from parents and home, so it is important to establish some links here."

Dharwadker said students from abroad are fascinated with Texas A&M and its traditions.

"We have yell leaders, a football team and campus leaders come out and talk to the new students," Dharwadker said. "They all get a crash course in A&M and what it is about."

Dharwadker said the most important thing attendees get out of I-Camp is meeting students from other countries.

"People have a tendency to associate with those from their home country," Dharwadker said. "I am from India, and there are many Indians here, so I could have just hung around with them, but I made it a point to meet different people."

Norberto Chaclin, a junior chemical engineering major from the Netherlands Antilles, said introducing one's self to other students is necessary.

"I come from a small country; there was no one here from my home," Chaclin said. "So I had to meet new people."

Chaclin said one of the best things an international student can do is to live on campus.

"I would recommend it [living on campus]; I lived in Moore Hall, and I met lots of people, including my current roommate," Chaclin said.

Kae Takenobu, a senior journalism major from Japan, lived on campus when she first arrived at A&M.

"At first it was hard because I just wasn't used to America yet, but my roommate and the people at my dorm were very nice," Takenobu said.

Meeting new people is not the only challenge international students must face — mastering a new language and learning a new culture can also be difficult.

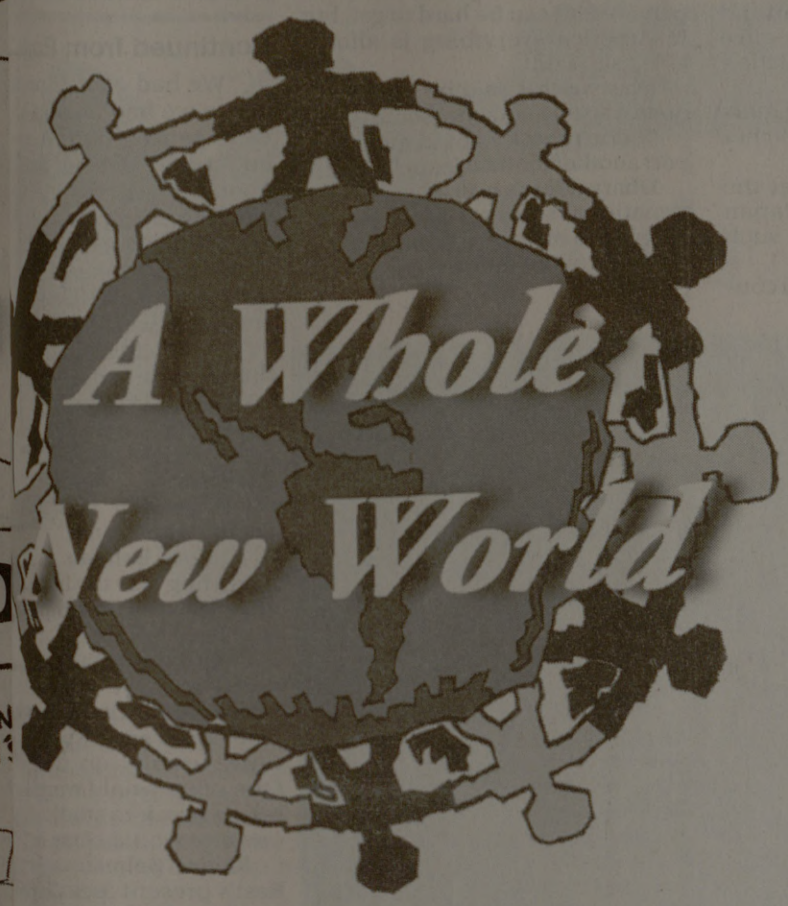
Chaclin said there are problems which can arise from language differences.

"In some areas of study like math and science, it can be difficult to translate it into English," Chaclin said. "In classes like history, it is not much of a problem."

Chaclin said most international students understand English perfectly.

"It can be a hard language to speak; most students understand it and learn it in school, but there are so many nuances and dialects to pick up," Chaclin said.

PLEASE SEE INTERNATIONAL ON PAGE 4.



Three-man band looks to revitalize local music scene

By CHRIS MARTIN
Staff writer

Most songs on the radio today are the polished products of work-for-hire session musicians and high-profile music producers and dollar-a-day studios. That kind of money and pressure is involved, it leaves much room for artistic experimentation. Chad Belteau, a senior environmental design major, knows a little about music production.

Belteau's band, Autumn Rest, released its first album *From the Fire*, which was produced and recorded by the band.

Belteau said producing their music allows the band to keep it fresh. "At this time, radio has made it a cool thing," he said.

"There are bands out there playing with three strings on their guitars."

Autumn Rest is a three-man project consisting of Chad Belteau, his brother Kevin Belteau, a junior biological engineering student, and former student Joey Landry.

Chad Belteau said the band was formed with the intent of playing as a five-piece live band.

"Initially we wanted to play live," he said. "We worked with several drummers and singers, but we never found anyone who wanted to do what we wanted to do musically. Since I'd been around Joey and Kevin so long, we all had the same influences and ideas."

The band's failure to organize a live show resulted in a devotion to exploring and experimenting with their sound through home recording. The result was an eclectic blend of progressive rock, industrial, gothic and ambient music.

The diverse nature of the music came from the various tastes of the band members.

"I always looked up to the 'guitar gods' like Joe Satriani, Yngwie Malmsteen and George Lynch [of Dokken]," Chad Belteau said. "As time went on, we started listening to more industrial-type music, like Stabbing Westward and Skinny Puppy; they influenced us as well. Even people like Enya and ambient bands — We're pretty open-minded."

Chad Belteau said the songs changed as the band's priorities shifted from playing live to recording.

"The first songs we wrote were more in a band style, with live drums and more guitar," Chad Belteau said. "Joey started doing some of the drum programming, and it ended up being more keyboard-oriented than we initially thought it would be."

Kevin Belteau said working with

out a live drummer was ultimately beneficial to their musical direction.

"It would have been a lot harder to record a drummer with the way we recorded all of our own music," Kevin Belteau said. "We didn't actually go into a studio to record. We recorded the CD at our house through a computer."

Chad Belteau said the band decided to record at home after figuring out the cost of going into a studio.

"There's a lot of pressures in a studio," Chad Belteau said. "If you can't get something right, you're costing everyone money. When I have that much pressure, it's probably going to make me play worse. At home, there's no pressure."

After experimenting with several recording methods, including the traditional cassette tape four-track, the band decided to utilize the flexibility of computer-based digital recording.

PLEASE SEE AUTUMN ON PAGE 4.



The members of Autumn Rest, a local band, describe their music as an eclectic blend of progressive rock, industrial, gothic and ambient styles.

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