

### BLAHA

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Blaha said hearing his voice on KORA was an experience he will never forget. "You know that movie *That Thing You Do?*" he said. "You're literally jumping parking meters. That was so cool. I was on the phone with Lane in Austin, and he listened to it over the phone with me."

The album, also titled *Learning from the Past*, was recorded in Nashville in January with top-notch studio musicians who have worked with the likes of Diamond Rio and Steve Warriner.

Although Blaha has been exposed to the work of established, top-40 musicians, he said his biggest influence is his father.

"He was kind of in my shoes, a local favorite," he said. "I grew up singing Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb and Willie Nelson. I love old country, but we fit more of a mainstream than outlaw style."

"Learning from the Past" is an upbeat, boot-scooting tune that also includes a powerful message about turning one's life around. Another of Blaha's soul-searching songs is "Lori's Laying Low," which is about domestic violence, a girl who is trapped in an abusive relationship. Blaha said the song is along the lines of Garth Brooks' "The Thunder Rolls."

"Everything's been said in country music," he said. "It's just a matter of being able to say it differently. That's the creative and challenging part."

Writing songs has been a hobby of



Lane Lostak (left), a University of Texas chemical engineering major, works with Brent Blaha (right) in songwriting.

Blaha's since just after high school. He said some songs take 20 minutes to write, others take half a year or longer.

"The last song I wrote, I was sitting around late at night," he said. "I'm thinking, 'yeah, I'll remember that in the morning.' Four hours later, I'm done with the song."

"Everyone has something that drives them. For me, it's creating music. I'm painting a picture with words and hopefully coming out with something that makes sense."

Blaha understands the risk involved in becoming a professional musician, but said he is willing to take the chance.

"Yeah, people may not like it," he said. "That would be sad, but that's not going to keep me from doing what I love to do. This is a lesson for me to not give up on something I believe in."

Often, college students with any degree of talent are told, "It's not the grades you make; it's the hands you shake," and although Blaha believes that, he spends more time studying engineering than studying music.

"There's a lot of talent that never gets recognized," he said. "I hope I have a little bit. Unfortunately, in the entertainment business, it's who you know. We're learning from the past as we go."

### SPECIES II

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Eve is joined by Dr. Laura Baker (Marg Helgenberger) and government assassin Press Lennox (Michael Madsen) from the original *Species*. Mykelti Williamson plays Gamble, an astronaut who served with Ross.

He joins the fearless alien hunters, more as comic relief than anything else. Gamble's main concern throughout the entire film is his lack of "action" for the past year.

The rest of the film follows with gory deaths of young women as Ross continues his own fertility experiments, while the pursuers track him.

The film's greatest sin is the horribly incomprehensible plot. The first film at least tried to give audiences a somewhat plausible premise.

The second film has no such intentions, which is fine as long as it doesn't take itself seriously. Unfortunately, *Species II* does. Watching straight-faced actors deliver lines that sound like they were lifted from the

latest issue of *Fantastic Four* is painful.

If one must go see this movie, do not go with anyone with a background in science. It will only increase the misery.

The plot also covers its numerous potholes with gratuitous nudity. Every time the moviegoer becomes confused with the film, a pair of all-too-perfect breasts will appear on the screen. This plan may work on the males in the audience, but it won't fly with the ladies.

The acting on the screen consists mainly of throw-away lines like



Eve (Natasha Henstridge) breaks out of the lab with her alien mate in *Species II*.

### WHOOOP

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The performing groups range from students to professional dance troupes. Participating groups include the African Drum and Dance group of Houston, the Aggie Wranglers, a performance by local band Evil Skaneevil, a demonstration from the Tae Kwon Do club, dance groups from the Indian Students Association and the Native American Students Association and an exhibition by the Jump Rope Club.

With the diverse sources of entertainment available, every student should find something they enjoy at the festival.

"Three hundred to 500 people come every time," Wright said. "Some people hear about it through their friends and come, some people just walk by and come in to see what's happening, and others hear about it and are interested enough to come and stay."

"We want everybody to come. We would like to get people out here and expose them to what other cultures have to offer. We love to see people come who normally wouldn't come; it's a really relaxed atmosphere. You can watch the show while you lay out on the grass or play with your pets."

Whoopstock attracts all kinds of people. Dima Mousselli,

Whoopstock committee chair, said everyone gets involved.

"We always have a real diverse crowd," Mousselli said. "There are old people, young people, students, even small children. We're trying to get the whole community involved."

For those students who prefer to be more active participants, Whoopstock includes a number of activities to get involved with. Part of the festivities include a trivia show, a dunking booth, sidewalk art, water gun wars, volleyball, a hula-hoop contest and even a jalapeño eating contest.

Mousselli said people can come and be active or just come and watch the show.

"There's going to be a lot of interaction, a lot of stuff that people can get involved with. If we don't have something you want to do, then bring a pet or a kite to fly."

This year's festival comes with an added bonus. Since Earth Day is being celebrated on the same day, the two committees joined the events. While Whoopstock is taking place, the field where Puryear and Law used to stand will have Earth Day booths and exhibits for the weary Whoopstocker who wants a change of pace.

Despite the success of past Whoopstocks, there always can be a snag in the plan when the time comes to put everything together.

"There's an ultimate frisbee tournament scheduled for the same day, and because they are an athletic event or for whatever reason,

they have the side of the drill field with the electricity," Wright said. "So, we had to haggle with them a little bit. Things have gone pretty smoothly though."

Part of learning about other cultures is sampling their food. At that end, Whoopstock provides a number of concession stands featuring cuisine from many different cultures. Any taste can be satisfied, from (non-alcoholic) margaritas to cooked insects of the Entomology Club.

"Bring money for food," Mousselli said. "It's worth it. We're going to have a whole lot of concessions, face painting and other types of things students may want to do. Of course, we're also selling Whoopstock T-shirts, but to get in it is not too costly to participate in."

Students should walk away from the festival with an appreciation for other cultures and a sense of satisfaction coming from a day of fun.

"We just want people to have a better understanding of the world in general," Wright said. "They can do things they wouldn't normally do and have a lot of fun doing them."

Whoopstock is being held on April 25 at the O.R. Simps field from noon to 6 p.m.

Girls are OK I guess,  
but it's a free country  
and nobody should be  
forced to like them.  
— mark, age 8

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