

Throwin' down the blues

Local band prepares for upcoming shows, CD recording

By APRIL TOWERY
Staff writer

Often musicians find it hard to describe their own music. Throwaway People, however, has no problem summing it up. "It's like a big funk peanut butter and jelly sandwich," drummer Sam Pulley, a senior mechanical engineering major, said. The band is a six-piece blues-rock group influenced by every musician from Beethoven to Duran Duran to their own Stevie Ray Vaughan. The driving force behind Throwaway People is lead singer and guitarist Craig Hanna, who graduated last summer with a degree in geography. "Playing guitar is kind of its own religion for me," Hanna said. "I've taken everything we've ever written to another level." The band formed as a trio two years ago with Hanna, bass player Lara Abrams and a drummer. "Then we met Sam, and we thought he was cute," Hanna said. The trio met trumpet player Mark Oakland at a Tex-

aco station, and he introduced them to saxophone player Jason Whiteman. Then the group met keyboardist Steve Savitski at a blues jam, and thus the Throwaway People we know today was born. Abrams, a senior environmental design major, said she is honored to play with such talented musicians. "As for being a woman in the band, I guess the best thing is that there are always five sexy guys around to wait on my every whim ... just kidding," she said. "But really, I hardly ever have to carry any equipment because these guys are total gentlemen." Abrams has had to deal with the stereotype of being one of the few local female musicians who is serious about what she's doing. "Unfortunately there are stereotypes of all kinds out there, which could be the problem," Abrams said. "But, thank goodness what I do is about the love for the music, and not whether I wear a bra or not." Whiteman, a senior computer engineering major, said his sax music is influenced by such greats as Frank Morgan and Charlie Parker. Whiteman said the local music scene has grown since he's been at A&M, but Throwaway People transcends the category.

"It's gotten harder to be a musician," he said. Abrams credits Whiteman and Oakland, a graduate student in electrical engineering, as the "powerhouse" of the band. "They make you want to get crazy on the bar," she said. And music fans will have plenty of opportunities to get crazy at Throwaway People shows this month and next. The band has lined up several shows on Northgate. "We're playing at Double Dave's, at Gumbys — next thing you know we'll be playing at E-Z Mart." As for other future plans, the band will head to Jumping Dog Studios in Austin to record in May. "For now, I think our biggest goal is just to make beer money," Pulley said. In the meantime, Hanna said he has been taking guitar lessons from one of the greats, Chris Duarte, who has rocked his world, so to speak. "I really thought I knew what I was doing on guitar," Hanna said. "It's been a big door-opener. He's helped us out a lot."

Savitski, a graduate student in physics, said he has learned it's really no big deal to play live music. "The glamour of being in front of a crowd really doesn't exist," he said. Although these musicians may not experience stage fright, they have no problem incorporating the audience into their shows. "We feed off one another, give and take," Pulley said. "We have a good time. It will touch your soul and light a fire in your britches at the same time." The band members learned a lesson about toning things down a little when they played at a wedding. "We changed some of the questionable lyrics, did a lot of lounge that night and expanded every song into about 15 minutes," Hanna said. One thing that is obvious from Throwaway People's shows is their obvious passion for music and quest to just have a good time. It is evident that each member loves expressing themselves through their music, and they are able to incorporate a variety of feelings into their live show.

Hanna said anyone who is remotely interested in high-energy blues-rock will definitely enjoy their show. "We want to be remembered as an honest band with great-feeling music," Hanna said. Pulley, always eager to entertain, said he has another idea for how he wants the band to be remembered when they leave College Station. "Didn't we see them in church?" he said with a smile. When the band members are not joking with one another, they do get serious. Abrams said the entire band contributes their own to each song, but Hanna is the creator and inspiration.



SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION
Mark Oakland, Jason Whiteman and Craig Hanna jam with Chris Duarte.



SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION
Steve Savitski, Lara Abrams, Craig Hanna, Mark Oakland, Jason Whiteman and Sam Pulley are Throwaway People.

Hanna writes the band's songs on a variety of topics. His songs deal with broken hearts, love gone bad, dealing with everyday life, death, happiness and everything in between that does not have words. "Basically, the songs aren't necessarily about those things, but about the feelings brought about by them," he said. The instrumental tune "Left Too Soon" is about how Hanna felt musically when his cousin died. Oakland, influenced by Junior Medlow and Miles Davis, said the songs have different colors. "Even inside the same songs, we can tour different territory," Oakland said. As for a description of the music that is never played the same way twice, Savitski said he heard a description he'll never forget. "A friend of mine brought his new girlfriend to one of our shows," he said. "After the show, she came up to me and said, 'Your music really turns me on.' That's the best compliment I've ever had. It always stuck with me."

Upcoming Shows:

- Fri. April 17 Gumbys's Pizza at 9:30 p.m.
- Sat. April 18 The Grove at 3 p.m.
- Sat. April 18 Cow Hop at 10:30 p.m.
- Sat. April 25 Cow Hop at 10:30 p.m.
- Sun. April 26 3rd Floor Cantina at 9:30 p.m.
- Fri. May 1 Cow Hop at 10:30 p.m.
- Sat. May 9 Crooked Path at 10:30 p.m.
- Wed. May 13 Dixie Theatre at 9:30 p.m.
- Thur. May 21 Palace Theatre at noon

Check out Throwaway People's Web site at

<http://PersonalWebs.myriad.net/marko/throwaway.htm>

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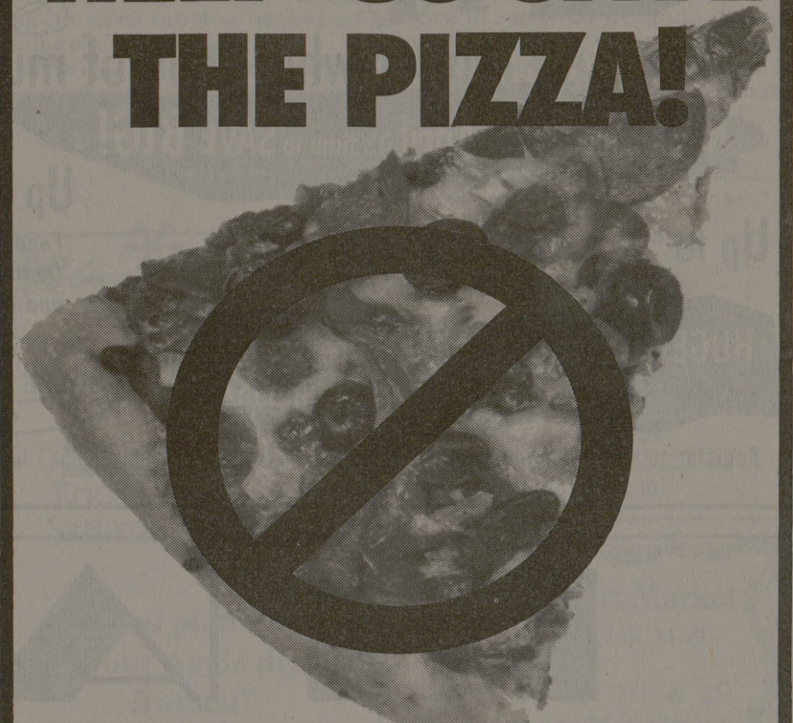
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