

THE OUTER LIMITS

Cult shows find fan base in Texas A&M students

BY STEPHEN WELLS
The Battalion

Popular culture carries with it the burden of a thousand small vices. Those who care to reflect in horror at past trends easily recall their participation in the Macarena, a multi-platinum Spice Girls album and the return of the boy bands.

Dotting the history of the life of today's Aggie are countless guilty pleasures one allows himself despite popular disdain.

Today, stuck in the crannies between runaway hit shows like "Friends" and "ER" are a succession of TV series with a smaller and more specialized audience.

The fans of these shows often discover a higher level of involvement between themselves and their favorite show and continue to watch, despite overwhelming popular ambivalence.

Television shows that have a cult following are not a recent phenomenon.

Wayne Hallwell, a freshman business major, said television shows with a more limited audience have been around for years.

"Not every show on TV is a popular show," Hallwell said. "More often than not, shows all start with just a few people watching them and grow by word of mouth or reviews in magazines. Even 'Seinfeld' started out as just another show. 'The Simpsons' wasn't even a full half hour when it started. 'Star Trek' and 'The X-Files' started out small but ended up as popular shows."

Shows without a widespread audience share similar traits with their sitcom and prime-time drama counterparts.

"All of the backstabbing and jealous people get to talking about on 'Melrose Place' is in an average episode of 'Xena,'" Hallwell said. "The only difference is in the setting and the fact that when two women get into a cat fight on 'Xena,' a sword is usually involved. When they start getting into knife fights on '20/20,' I might start watching that too."

The scenery surrounding a given set of events often limits the show to a devoted following. Thomas Malone, a College Station resident, said some television shows are made great by the setting.

"Life every day is just boring," Malone

said. "That's why we watch TV. We want to be taken away to another place where things are happening all around us that excite us. Why do you think westerns were so popular? I would rather watch the same story 10,000 years in the future in a world that I'm convinced can exist than watch the same thing happen in a world I'm too familiar with."

Sometimes watchers become too familiar with the world the show is set in and begin to actually question the environment of the show, leading to the "trekkie" mentality that curses some programs.

"It can go too far," Malone said. "It's kind of funny the lengths some people will go to become immersed in the world of their favorite show. Who cares if something presented on a show won't work in the real world or whether or not Star Fleet breaks the Prime Directive? Take each episode at face value and accept what is given to you."

"More than 20 years ago, spaceships were moving faster than the speed of light, but nobody cared as long as Captain Kirk solved the disaster. More often than not, the technology wasn't the thing that solved the problem, but human reasoning."

Those who watch "cult" programming leave themselves open to a little ribbing from their friends.

Quincy Wess, a sophomore biochemistry major, said he has been the butt of a few jokes because of his "Star Trek" viewing habits.

"You would not believe the things I had to go through when that woman got kicked off a jury for wearing a Star Trek uniform," Wess said. "When one person is a little out there with their support for a show, the other viewers might have to suffer a little. I remember the 'Saturday Night Live' skit when William Shatner told all of the hard-core fans to get a life. And of course it's no use telling my friends that watching 'Deep Space Nine' is completely different. That just invites more jokes."



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

However, the show need not be set in the future to cause comment.

"My friends make fun when I switch on 'Walker, Texas Ranger,'" Malone said. "The acting isn't the best in the world, but I still enjoy the kind of B-movie quality of the entire show. Back when they first started the show, it seemed like all the corny stuff was things Chuck Norris wanted to be when he was a kid dreaming about being a cowboy. It wasn't the most well-developed set of characters, but the action was actually better than any other TV show — especially considering the small budget they probably started with."

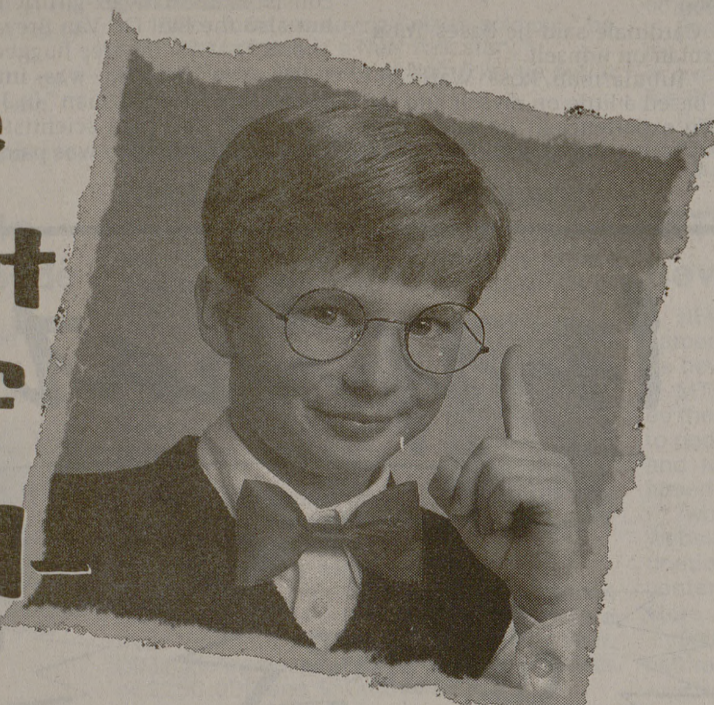
Malone said specialized television shows are here to stay.

"If these shows weren't popular, why would there be a sci-fi channel?" he said. "Obviously a lot of people are watching these kinds of shows. I'll stop flipping channels if a neat looking sci-fi show comes on, at least to watch it for a few minutes. There's always new shows coming out, too. If you're not into reality shows or the standard sitcom stuff is getting boring, try out an entirely new universe."



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

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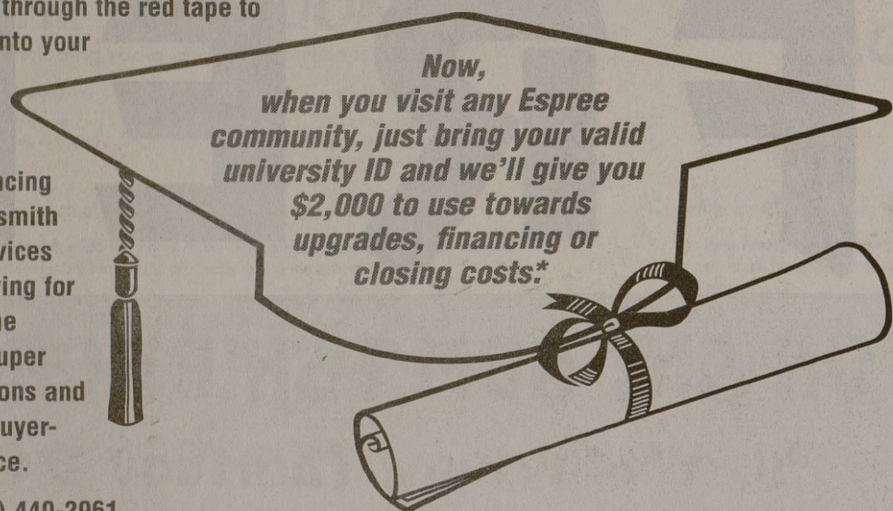
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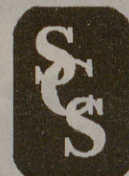


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CAREER COUNSELING & TESTING CENTER SPRING 1999



STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICE

Career Counseling & Testing Center

...a Department in the Division of Student Affairs
www.scs.tamu.edu

WORKSHOPS

FINDING YOUR FUTURE

This interactive workshop is designed to teach participants how to make career decisions. Participants will learn how to generate and explore career opportunities based on their strengths and values. Pre-registration is required.

April 8 Thurs. 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

CAREER SAFARI

This workshop will provide you with the tools to track elusive occupational information and capture a career that fits your interests and skills. Requires counselor referral and completion of interest inventory five working days prior to the workshop.

April 5 Mon. 4:15 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.
April 13 Tues. 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
April 26 Mon. 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

CHOOSING A MAJOR

This workshop will demonstrate how to match interests with appropriate academic majors and occupations. A take-home workbook which includes interest inventory results is provided. Requires counselor referral and completion of interest inventory five working days prior to the workshop.

April 6 Tues. 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
April 19 Mon. 4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.
April 27 Tues. 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

DO WHAT YOU ARE

This workshop is based on the best-selling book and teaches participants how to incorporate their unique personalities in career planning. Profiles will be provided that include a brief personality description, strengths and weaknesses, criteria for a satisfying career choice, careers to consider, and recommendations for the job search. Requires counselor referral and completion of personality measure five working days prior to the workshop.

April 12 Mon. 4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.
April 20 Tues. 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

COUNSELING & SELF-HELP

INDIVIDUAL CAREER COUNSELING

Students may schedule an appointment with a career counselor to discuss concerns regarding their choice of major and choice of career. Other issues for exploration may include career planning, decision making, and dealing with family pressure.

CAREER PLANNING SUPPORT GROUP

This group offers support to students who are experiencing difficulty in making career decisions. Potential group topics include exploring work values, conflict with parents over choice of major, finding alternative career options. Referral by career counselor is required.

Co-Leaders: Marcella Stark & Kelleen Stine-Cheyne
Wednesdays, March 31 - May 5, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

ACE (ACADEMIC & CAREER EDUCATOR) STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

ACE student volunteers assist students in the Career Counseling & Testing Center by helping them explore various academic majors, career options, and career information. No appointment is necessary to speak with an ACE volunteer.

DISCOVER

DISCOVER is a multimedia career exploration tool in which you will have a chance to take three inventories to learn more about your interests, work-related abilities and values and develop a personalized list of occupations and majors. DISCOVER computer time must be scheduled in advance.

CAREER SELF-HELP RESOURCES

The Career Counseling & Testing Center Library contains a variety of books, handouts, and computer programs on career choice and occupational information that students may use at their own pace. The resources are available for use during regular business hours. No appointment is required to use these materials.

Workshop registration will close two working days before each workshop.

Texas A&M University has a strong institutional commitment to the principle of diversity in all areas. In that spirit, admission to Texas A&M University and any of its sponsored programs is open to all qualified individuals without regard to subgroup, class or stereotype.

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING ■ DISCOVER ■ WORKSHOPS ■ CAREER LIBRARY
For more information contact the Student Counseling Service, Texas A&M University
Rm. 114 Henderson Hall, 845-4427 ext. 108