

## Local band premieres album, headlines for Willie Nelson

HEATHER BRONDY  
The Battalion

The local music scene has proven to be smoking this fall, and Last Free Exit is burning brightly as the one of the fore-running fireballs.

With a newly released CD, a much-coveted opening act slot for Willie Nelson and a steady stream of shows booked in a plethora of local bars, it seems the two-year-old band is busy making itself well-seen and heard in every nook and cranny around town.

This Thursday, Last Free Exit will celebrate its busy schedule with a CD release party for its newest album, *A Day Waiting*.

Starting out as the acoustic duo of Parker Bradley and J.T. Stewart, Last Free Exit did not fully evolve until the fall of 1997.

The band currently is manned by J.T. Stewart on acoustic guitar and lead vocals, Parker Bradley on electric guitar and vocals, Kyle Clayton on bass and Brian Beadle on drums.

Shortly after the band's expansion, Bradley said, the name Last Free Exit came to the members while driving outside of Dallas.

"We needed to have a band name by the next day," Bradley said. "We happened to see it on a sign on the side of the road in Dallas at the 635 tollway [sic]. There were no other signs around but that one, big and green, and I was like, 'That works.'"

All four members currently are attending Texas A&M. Stewart and Bradley are senior biomedical science majors, Beadle is a senior landscaping major and Clayton is an aerospace engineering graduate student.

Stewart said he has a hard time comparing Last Free Exit's music to the music of other popular bands, although he definitely has a whole slew of favorite artists.

"When you compare yourself to another band — well, I wouldn't want to flatter myself by comparing us to bands I like, you know," Stewart said. "I guess as far as influences go, when I go home I listen to Ben Harper a lot and Jeff Buckley a lot. I'm quite excited about the new Chris Cornell album, and I like Sonny Day Real Estate, Ani di Franco, Marvin Gaye [and] Willie Nelson."

During shows, Stewart said he feels playing the music is only part of the experience — the rest is up to the listeners.

"You know how they say a good poem's only

half written? Well, that's how I feel about music and song," Stewart said. "I feel like we offer a sketch, and it's up to our listeners to fill in the color."

"It's up to the listeners to get what they want to get out of the music."

Joey Newgart, a junior political science and history major, said the band had a profound effect on him when he first heard them play at the Cow Hop in 1997.

"I found Last Free Exit playing on Northgate on a Thursday night my freshman year," Newgart said. "The music was so contagious that me and my friend moved the tables and started dancing."

"J.T. said, 'Everyone's equal at the Cowhop,' and he was right. We were all there to let go, dance and really hear the music. I met some beautiful people that night who changed my outlook at A&M, and I've been a fan ever since."

Jenna Snow, a senior industrial distribution major, said she never knows what to expect at a Last Free Exit show.

"I remember at one show, this guy jumped on stage and dropped his pants, underwear and all, and grabbed a microphone and started singing," Snow said. "And J.T. and them just laughed and kept playing. Nude loins or no nude loins, they play on."

Curious music lovers can check out a Last Free Exit show this Thursday night at Shadow Canyon during its CD release party. Willie Nelson fans also have a chance to whet their musical appetites with an opening act by the College Station band.

Stewart said it is hard to believe Last Free Exit has been given such an opportunity.

"I've learned to be very pessimistic about what people tell you in music," he said. "You never



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAST FREE EXIT  
The members of local band Last Free Exit will host a CD release party for their newest effort, *A Day Waiting*, Thursday at Shadow Canyon.

# LAST FREE EXIT

**Last Free Exit**  
*A Day Waiting*  
CD courtesy of  
Soundarts Recordings

The most active band in College Station just did all true music lovers a favor with the creation of their first hi-fi recorded CD, *A Day Waiting*.

After months of local anticipation, Last Free Exit has accomplished a remarkable feat, taking favorite songs and recording them as they have never been heard before.

Listeners can expect to hear the unexpected, including additional guitars, a cello and the vocals of all four members.

The result of Last Free Exit's eclectic sweat-and-blood effort is a full-length CD with eight original tracks any Dave Matthews or Phish fan can heartily enjoy.

For the critical ear, tracks like "The Ballad of Grady Niblo" and "Tie-Dyed" really showcase the band's lyrical stars and leave listeners doubtless: this is a band that is going places.

Music lovers should pick up *A Day Waiting* from a local vendor and hear what Last Free Exit has proven — the wait is truly worth the while. (Grade A-).

— Heather Brondy

**Last Free Exit**  
Playing Thursday 11 p.m.  
at Shadow Canyon

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—Los Angeles Times

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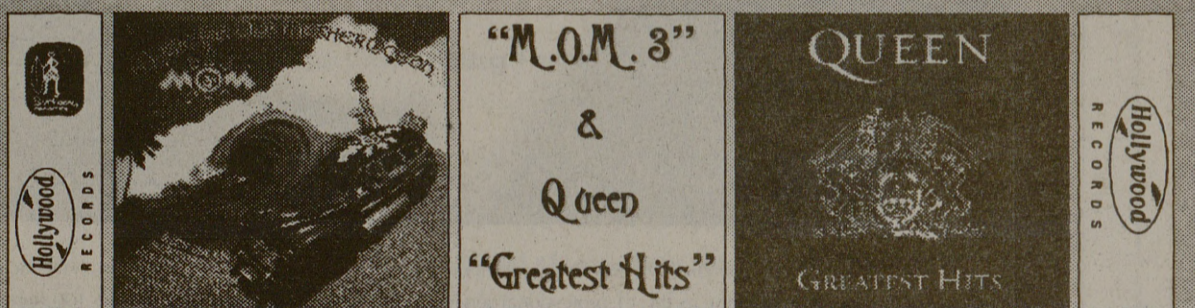


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