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.GGIELIFE Page 4 • Thursday, October 28, 1999 Nine Dutch roommates compete for a

ALMERE, Netherlands (AP) -Ruud absent-mindedly sweeps the kitchen floor. A few minutes later, he takes out the trash. Bored, he lights a cigarette and sits down to strum his guitar.

And a million Dutch viewers, roughly one in 15 people, watch every tedious move.

This is "Big Brother," a new television and Internet show that is enjoying unprecedented popularity and controversy with its unique approach to reality TV: nine strangers confined for 100 days in a house packed with surveillance gadgetry, all for a shot at fame and a \$120,000 prize.

This type of show appeals to a certain sense of voyeurism in all of us, like listening in on a nearby conversation or walking past a house and glancing in the window,"executive producer of "Big Brother' Paul Romer said. "There is something magical about being able to listen to and watch other people.'

Drawing its name from George Orwell's classic novel 1984, the show takes the idea of an omnipresent Big Brother to the brink of the new millennium by isolating and continuously monitoring the participants from mid-September to New Year's Eve. There are nightly updates on TV and live Webcasts via an Internet site that has been swamped with more than 11 million hits since the show began.

With 24 cameras and 59 microphones placed throughout the house, even the bathroom is utterly devoid of privacy

There is a twist to this carefully constructed Orwellian world: Every few weeks, the participants nominate one or more of their fellow housemates to leave the Almere homestead, about 20 miles east of Amsterdam. The show's viewers have the final say on who and TV appearances.

gets the boot and on Dec. 31 will select a winner from among the fisaid. "It's very strange, like being in a wholene nal three survivors.

While admitting the setup is "a little cruel," Romer said psycholo-Endemol, a Dutch ent company, and airs on gists regularly were consulted duroriented Veronica net ing the show's three-year development, and the participants' last that it has snagged 40 names have been withheld to proviewers in the 20-34 a tect their identities. other stations are scram in on the action.

Despite the show's competitive nature, Romer stressed the participants were instructed to "just be themselves.

"They also know that in the end there can be only one winner."

> - Paul Romer Executive director of "Big Brother"

"It is very much a mix of group ted suicide a month aftere psychology versus the individual," he said. "As a group, they must ing home. new. MTV's "The Real W work together to survive and get things done. But they also know that in the end there can be only peeking into not-so-priv eight seasons. The p one winner. You can feel and see these two ideas competing with has been lampooned by in The Truman Show an each other.

Martin, 32, was the first to feel though. The Netherlan the wrath of these contradicting forces. After a failed attempt to thwart a budding romance between Bart, 23, and Sabine, 25, Martin's popularity took a nosedive, and he was voted out after less than two weeks on the show

Even for a loser, there are perks. Martin entered the house an anonymous citizen and left a celebrity sought after for interviews

of Psychologists brande "irresponsible and while others called it at tal torture. Now, most ply call it dull.

'Big Brother' is a emptiness - and every millions of people, there cape," Joost Zwagerman a recent commentary newspaper De Volkskrun

GRADES

Continued from Page 3

"I just cannot comprehend science," Shaffer said. "I was getting depressed because my grade was going down, and I couldn't do anything tostop it. I'm glad I only had to take one class in science, so the damage done wasn't so bad.

When worry over grades gets in the way of extracurricular experiences, problems arise. Dr. Jay Malon Southerland, vice president for student affairs, said A&M students generally handle the strain of both sides of the student-life coin well.

We really have done both academics and leadership experience in tandem," Southerland said. 'Hindsight says we have done really well on both counts, but being a student — and being in school is of primary importance.

A major litmus test for academic expectations are the achievements of the freshman classes which re recruited every vea

Wehrly said. "For example, when you reaked here, your average for the course is deterin the averages from every time you've a course before, not just the best grade youg grade you got last time you took the class Serrano said some unique symptoms p the high-grade junkie.

'It's not that I think I'm not learning the ial," Serrano said. "I spend a lot of time classes. At the time of the test, I get real After the test, I'm relaxed and thinking o answers I couldn't think of inside the te You think, 'I have to make a good grade; I make it,' and it distracts you.

Wehrly said students who succeed usu those who take professors' advice and stri derstand the required material instead of material good grade their goal.

'I'd rather the students learn both what they think they need to know," he said. learn what I'd like them to learn, they will m not wedded to a grade distribu

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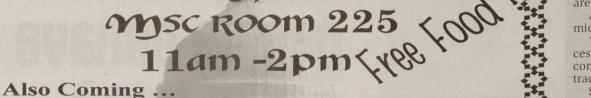
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The idea of a real-life sug

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A&M recruits above-average students, so academic competition follows.

"What you have here is success breeding success," Southerland said. "As the institution becomes more well-known, more students are attracted to the University.

So many students were attracted to A&M last spring that 3,000 applicants who met the minimum requirements for admission were turned down.

Forty-seven percent of incoming freshmen were from the top 10 percent of their graduating classes, with an average SAT score of 1180 and an average ACT composite score of 25.2.

Wehrly said, this, combined with A&M's approach to determining one's overall grade-point ratio, can create intense academic pressure.

'A&M has policies that make receiving a good grade a little tougher than at other institutions,"

Even the Faculty Senate concerns itself with dents' grades.

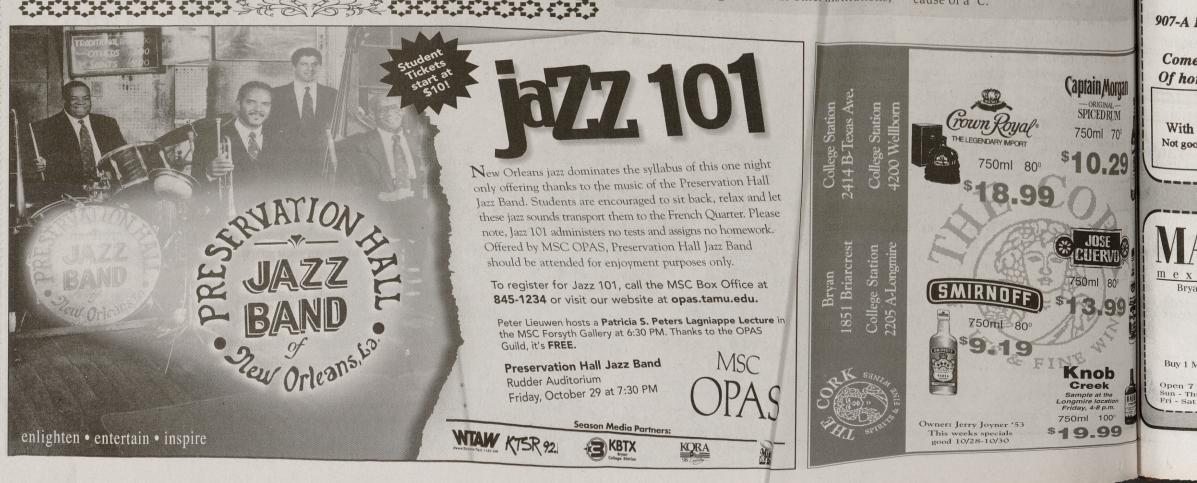
"We ask ourselves, 'Should we have the system we use now, or add a plus and mi use numerical grades?" Wehrly said. "Some ty would rather go pass/fail.

There is hope for the grade-obsessed stud Two weeks ago, I changed my mind,"

said. "I was not going out, not going to paranything. Now. I'm trying to relax a little slowing down.

Shaffer said his outlook on college life chi when he decided grades were not everythi

"Look around you before you get out of he said. "If you get caught up in believing are everything, you miss everything that yo ly shouldn't be missing. The world won'te cause of a 'C.'"



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