

## The roads not traveled

BY JUAN LOYA  
The Battalion

Programs come and go on the Texas A&M campus. As each year passes, so does another Robert Earl Keen concert, or another OPAS event that many intended to see but didn't. Sometimes, however, it is worthy to take note of what programs didn't come and go — the events that never came to A&M, but maybe should have.

The Seventh Annual Texas Film Festival, the largest student-run film festival in the world held annually at A&M, began accepting entries for the 2000 festival last fall. Among the first to be received was Cass Paley's *WADD: The Life and Time of John C. Holmes*.

Paley's film chronicles the life of the once famous, but now deceased, porn star. The film, which won the Best Documentary award at the 1999 (South by Southwest) SXSW Film Festival in Austin, has been shown in festivals and on college campuses across the country.

From the very beginning, it was understood that the film would cause controversy. "I was intrigued when we received *WADD*," said Ryan Whitworth, chair of the MSC Film Society and a senior biomedical sciences major. "I saw all of the articles about the success of the film, and it seemed like a film that would be good to show at our festival."

Several scenes in the movie are excerpts from his pornographic work, edited for content, interlaced with commentary from people who knew Holmes and worked with him. The film portrays graphic situations and uses blunt language to tell the story, and even the thickest-skinned individual would be challenged not to blush at the candidness of the film and its subject matter.

The movie goes on and tells of his life before and after Holmes joined the porn industry, but the bulk of the film is about Holmes' infamous career. Raj Sethuraju, MSC Film Society adviser, first took his position in October 1999. About a month afterward, he was told of the movie *WADD* and the possible debate it could produce.

"People said it was a great movie, but sort of a risqué subject," Sethuraju said. "Among the general commit-

tee members of the Film Society, it was considered to be one of the better films submitted to the festival. Screenings were provided and like all of the entries, it was available to be checked out and viewed."

"It was a hard one to check out," Whitworth said. "It was a hot commodity."

But the chances of the film being protested were known to be substantial, and several solutions were considered to keep the public outcry over the film to a minimum.

"From the very beginning we knew that there might be some problems," Whitworth said. "But initially we decided to back it. It was a good enough movie that we took

the position to support its inclusion into our festival."

The idea was proposed to make the screening of the film an after-hours, midnight show at the festival. It was also recommended that the festival adopt several guidelines for entries into the festival, to make known to the public that controversial material would not be shown if it did not offer any artistic merit.

— Dr. Terrence Hoagwood  
English professor

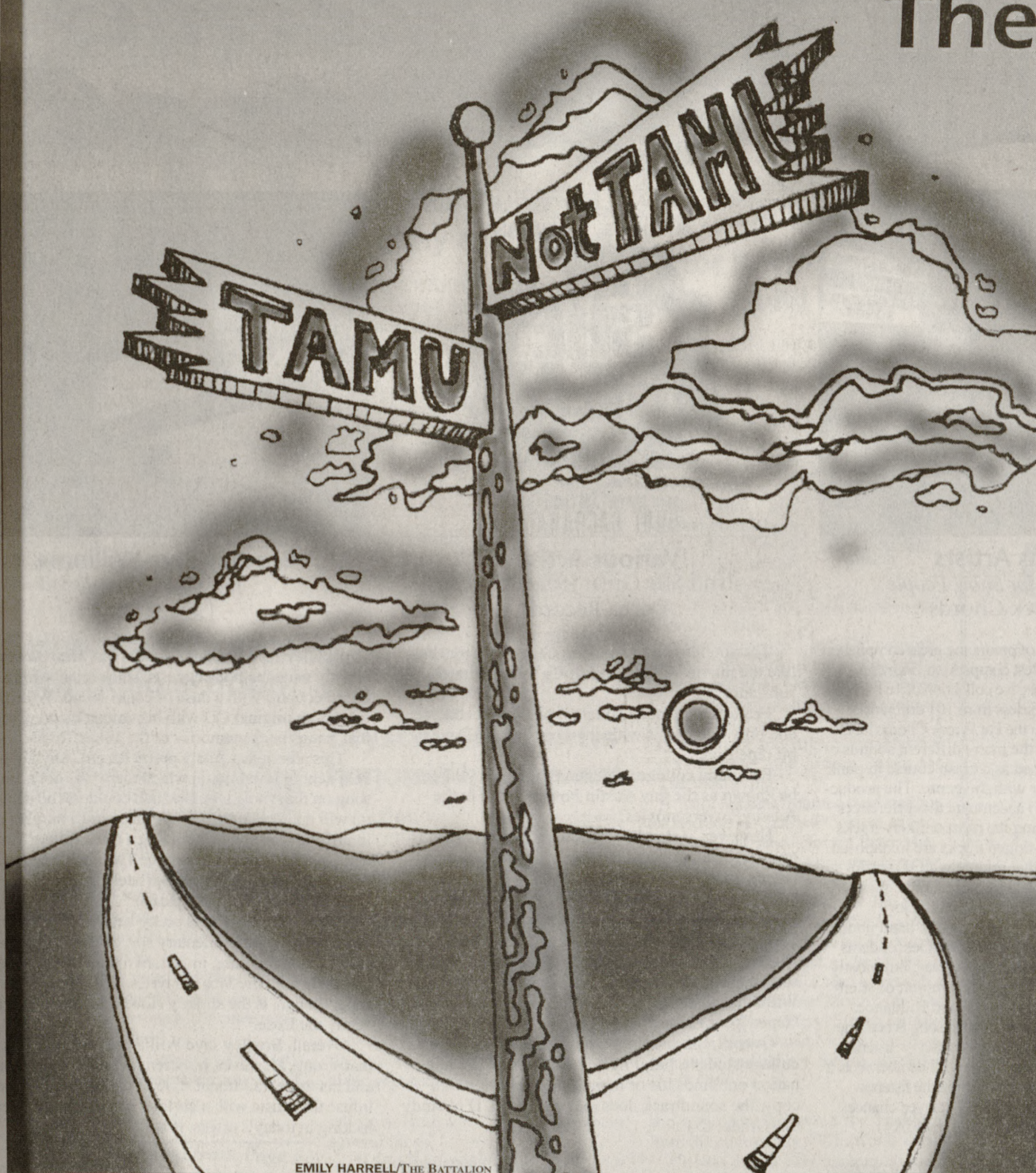
But the question still loomed as to whether or not the public would negatively receive the movie. The organizers then decided to consult an outsider, someone who could offer another view of the situation. Sethuraju, Whitworth and Casey Starr, the director of the Texas Film Festival, sought the advice of Dr. Terrence Hoagwood, an English professor and the adviser to the new film minor program at A&M.

Sethuraju said Dr. Hoagwood helped the group to see the film from both perspectives.

"There's a difference between a film's content being controversial and the film's topic being controversial," Hoagwood said. "*Natural Born Killers* is a good example. Some people will argue that the film is a 'commentary' on violent films, and others will say that it is an 'example' of violent films. It is difficult to determine which is right."

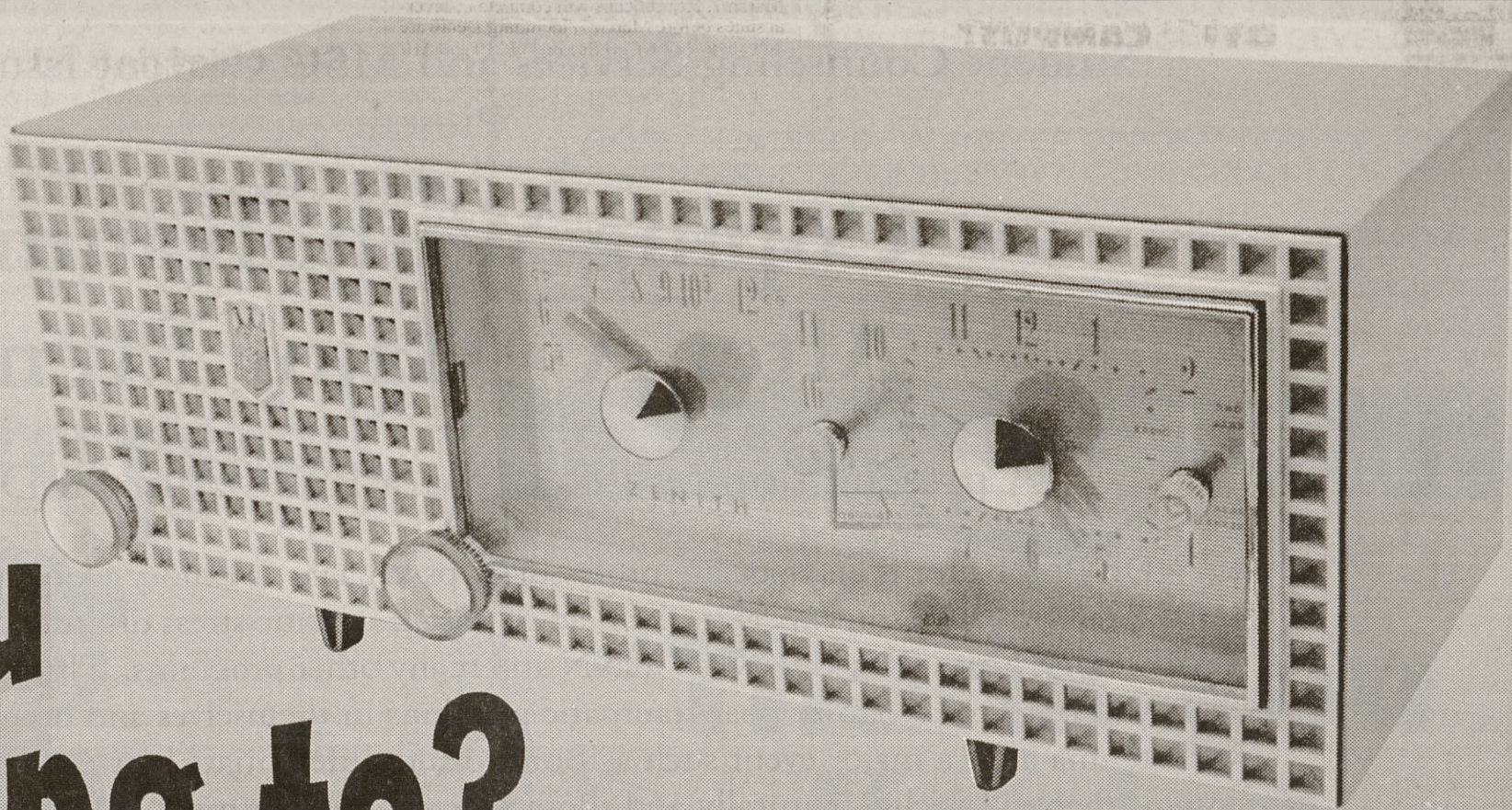
It was this problem that kept the decision of whether or not to show the film a central topic. Most everyone involved believed the movie's main detractors would be people who had not seen the film.

See ROAD on Page 5.



EMILY HARRELL/THE BATTALION

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