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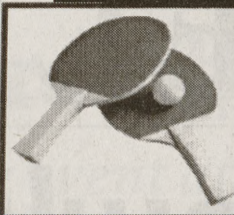
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Blackbirds to release new CD

BY EMILY HARRELL
The Battalion

The Blackbirds will be singing in the dead of night tonight—to celebrate the release of their new CD, *Highlands Street*.

The group of Texas A&M students formed the band about a year ago and cite Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty and The Black Crowes as the major influences on the band.

The Blackbirds consist of singer/songwriter/guitarist Travis Hopper, drummer Tim Ross, pianist and organist Chris O'Neill, lead guitarist Ralph Ibarra and bassist Charlie Duke.

This concert and CD release party are the culmination of a year's worth of appearances at Bryan-College Station venues.

Hopper said that Thursday's concert will include mostly original material, filled out with a couple of cover songs.

O'Neill said that while the release of *Highlands Street* is exciting, nothing compares to the feeling of performing on stage.

"[We are] definitely a performance band. We definitely consider ourselves a live band," he said. "It's almost like a high looking out across a few hundred people there to see what you have to do."

Hopper said the band's aim when performing is to connect with the audience on a personal level.

"[Our philosophy is that if you] write great music [then] people will come," he said.

He said the Blackbirds also try to emphasize meaningful lyrics.

"We want to be a band where lyrics are the primary objective. We try to connect with the crowd on a personal level. If there are one or two people out in the crowd who say, 'yeah, that's how I feel,' then we've done that," Hopper said.

The Blackbirds' CD includes five original songs, all written by Hopper. O'Neill describes the CD as a "southern, Bruce Springsteen sound."

The 3rd Floor Cantina in downtown Bryan is hosting the Blackbirds in concert and throwing their CD release party at 9 p.m. at the 3rd Floor Cantina in downtown Bryan. Tickets are \$5.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BLACKBIRDS

(L to R): Blackbird members include Travis Hopper, Ralph Ibarra, Charlie Duke, Tim Ross, and Chris O'Neill.



The Blackbirds



Highlands Street

The Blackbirds
Highlands Street
Boss Records

The Blackbirds are a pretty typical band. They have a decent, folksy

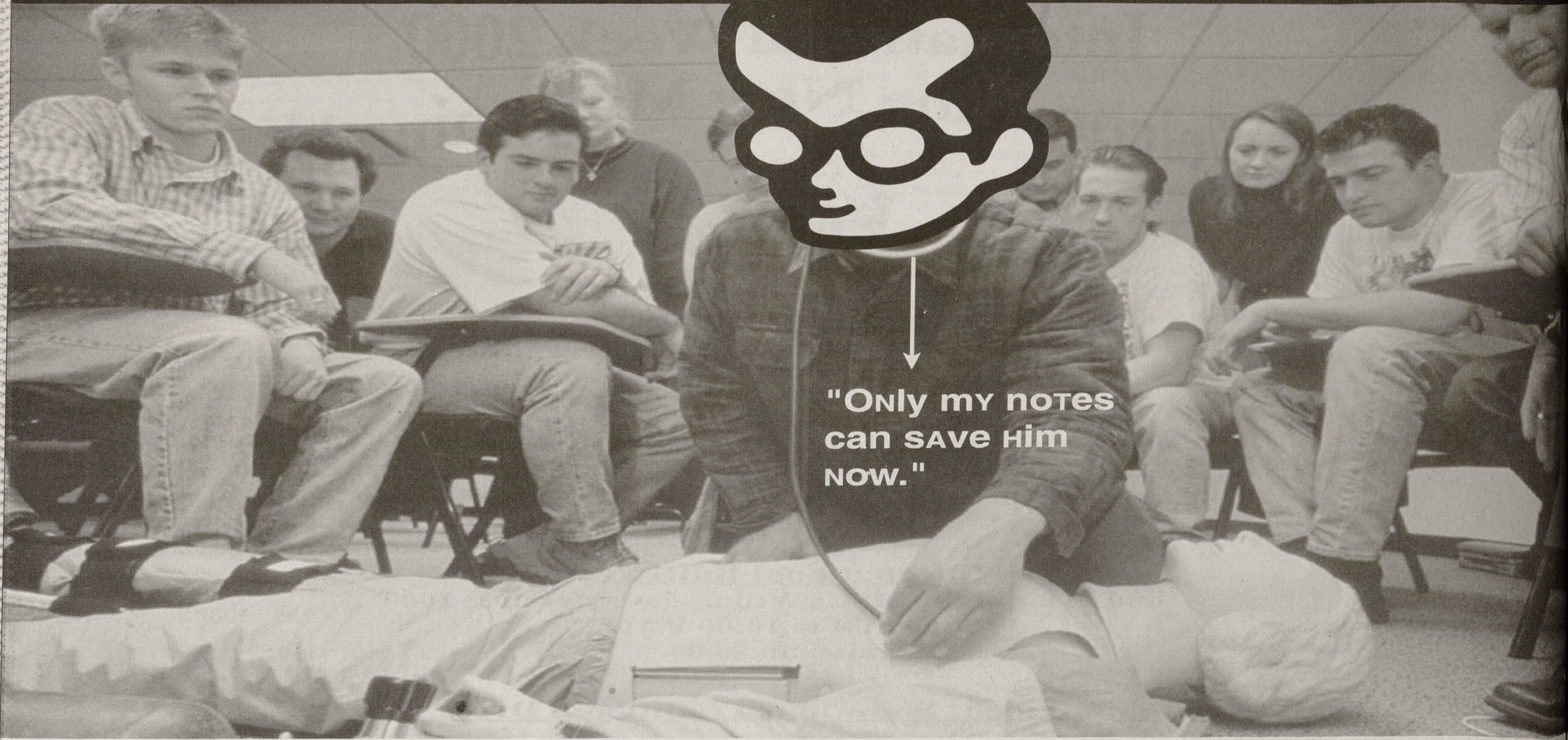
sound and are not half bad as musicians, as demonstrated by the tracks on their album. Of course they're not more than half good, either. Their musical rhythm, which also shows talent is diminished by the fact that the album is very repetitious.

While the music is good, the vocals are not. The five tracks on this album have a sound that is very similar to the Black Crowes, but without the talented vocal lead of that band.

Out of all the bands that come through College Station, there are better ones than The Blackbirds. But then again there are a lot worse, too. (Grade: C)

—Kylie Whitaker

A = instant classic B = a cut above C = average
D = don't buy it F = burn in effigy



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