

State of the art

Arts Council, College Station mayor unveil plan for new fine arts center

AMY ROSELLINI
The Battalion

College Station no longer needs to depend on Texas A&M to see the performing and visual arts. The Arts Council of the Brazos Valley, in a press conference on June 27, announced its intentions to provide the community with state-of-the-art facilities superior to any other in the community.

"I think it will be about two years, and then we will see a fine arts facility that will really make a positive statement about our community," said David Romei, the executive director of the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley. The council will decide on a site for the center after December 2000, and planning for the arts center will continue until 2002, when construction can begin.

Romei said, the Arts Council authorized a company

in Dallas, PMK, to survey artists and patrons and determine the need for a new center. The response rate to the survey was 23.6 percent, with two-thirds of the respondents affirming the need to accommodate musical and dramatic productions in a new facility. Fifty-three percent expressed a willingness to attend a professionally sponsored event rather than ones presented by a school or university.

The PMK study's surveys showed similar support and requests from the artists, and many included recommendations on the design of the center. Theater groups who might use the facilities want an affordable, flexible, "non-elitist" facility. Musical theater groups desire a venue that can seat 600-750 people. Visual arts groups are looking for classroom and studio space.

"Anybody who supports the arts in our community

knows how badly we need this facility," said Diane Stropp, chair of the Arts Council feasibility committee. The additional conclusions from the study, she said, showed the Bryan-College Station area has limited art facilities and limited parking for these facilities. Also, administrative support facilities and two acoustically responsive venues for the arts are needed.

"The Arts Council is celebrating three decades in the community by offering more to its 39 affiliates," said Jerry Blackwelder, a member of the Arts Council. "The council promises the community a site it has never seen before with both architectural and artistic merit."

Romei said the new facility will provide both the artists and citizens an opportunity to grow. "Without a venue, the Brazos Valley's artists go unappreciated," Romei said. "The new arts center will give them a chance to enhance their talents within the community."

"A phone poll showed 84 percent support for the performing arts center in the community," Romei said. "The council is confident that the expressed support shows a real need for more outlets of artistic expression in the Brazos Valley."

"People should not have to go outside the community to show their God-given talents," said Lynn McIlhane, mayor of College Station. "The new art center will give local artists the chance to practice and perfect their abilities."

"I believe we have moved into the next phase of life for our community," McIlhane said. "The council hopes to build a stronger partnership between the arts, business, and general communities."



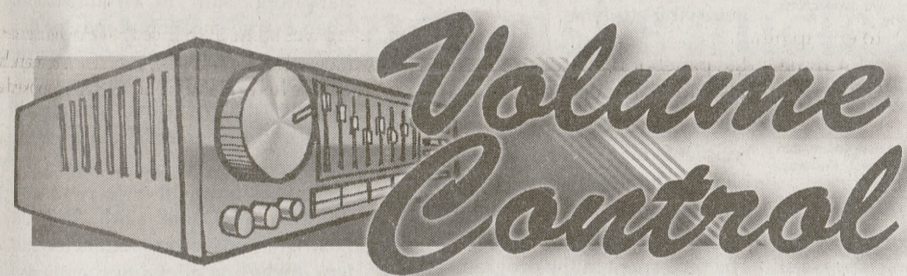
College Station mayor Lynn McIlhane explains the proposal for the new fine arts center Tuesday.

Blackwelder says the city has grown to a size where it can now accommodate a cultural arts performing center. Surveys even suggested an outdoor sculpture garden, as a unique addition to the community.

The Arts Council of Brazos Valley has embarked on a difficult task. The new facility could cost anywhere from \$6.5 million to \$20 million. Once built, the center may include dining, shopping and relaxation before and after each event.



Art enthusiasts listen to a presentation on the planned fine arts center. The project could cost from 6 to 20 million dollars.



Matchbox Twenty
Mad Season by Matchbox Twenty
CD courtesy of Atlantic Records

When its album *Yourself or Someone Like You* debuted, Matchbox Twenty had been playing together as a band for less than a year. Buried in the anticipation of the group's sophomore effort was a curiosity to find out what it really sounded like. On *Mad Season* by Matchbox Twenty, the band reveals that it sounds just like everyone else.

The band infuses heavy string and brass sections into a number of the songs on *Mad Season* and lead singer Rob Thomas' vocals have never been so warbly, but the net result is an album that neither quietly draws the listener in nor blows him or her away. *Mad Season*

lacks what great records are filled with, and what *Yourself* had a few of: meaningful songs with compelling lyrics and moving instrumentation.

Thomas has gone on the record saying he does not want to push any boundaries musically, but instead happily ride the middle of the road. For better or worse, *Mad Season* captures the Orlando-based quintet in all its blandness. The album hits a few high points with "Rest Stop" and the first single, "Bent," but songs like "The Burn" and the title track "Mad Season" are so forgettable that they overwhelm the rest of the record with yawns.

With *Yourself or Someone Like You*, the band muscled in enough radio-friendly pop-rock tracks to compensate for disasters like "Shame" and "Argue." Now the tables are turned, and the catchy singles are few and far between. If a listener was never tempted to hit the skip button while listening to *Yourself*, then he or she will probably thoroughly enjoy *Mad Season*. The rest of the world will have to wait for something a bit more meaningful. Matchbox Twenty's motto is "Cool bands don't sell records." Their first effort sold 10 million copies and *Mad Season* is likely to be one of the bigger hits of the summer. It seems the boys are proving their own theory. (Grade: C)

-Eric Dickens

Various Artists
The Best of Hard Rock Live
CD courtesy of London Sire Records, Inc.



Hard Rock Live's recently released compilation features first-rate artists with second-rate songs. Artists as well known as Soul Asylum play only mediocre music, considering their talent. People who expect a "Best of..." CD to feature every group or singer's best songs will be surprised to find no such thing in Hard Rock's version.

However, the album is not

without a few spurts of talent by artists like Blues Traveler and Ani DiFranco. Blues Traveler takes the old classic "Low Rider" and turns it into an instrumental masterpiece. The electric guitar takes over where a singer normally would, and the harmonica common to Blues Traveler songs is truly unique in this new version. In "Little Plastic Castle," Ani DiFranco begins with her vocals accompanied by only a guitar. After the first verse, instruments explode through the rest of the song. This live version of the song features an accordion where the original release featured horns. Not to be outdone, Hootie and the Blowfish try to put a new spark in their previous hit, "Hold My Hand." Though the band played a live acoustic version, it still sounds like the same old song.

The remainder of the Hard Rock's female artists sing the music fans know them for. They sound little more than fine and attempt nothing new in these live versions. Natalie Merchant

records "Kind and Generous" exactly as it was heard on the radio when it was at the top of the charts, with the exception of the applause scattered throughout. "I Don't Want to Wait," by Paula Cole, and "I Do," by Lisa Loeb, produce the same effect. The Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde gives the best female performance with "Middle of the Road." The long instrumental breaks offer necessary variety from other songs on the album. This song is followed by another great band, Barenaked Ladies, that sings "Brian Wilson" in its usual style. The remainder of songs include Fastball's "Sooner or Later," Lou Reed's "Busload of Faith," Wilco's "Outta Sight, Outta Mind," Soul Asylum's "I Will Still Be Laughing" and Ben Folds Five's "Song for the Dumped." These songs show nothing new and lack the creativity of other live albums. *The Best of Hard Rock Live* may be worth buying for its two or three hits, but only if fans can excuse its 10 misses. (Grade: C-)

-Amy Rosellini

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

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Local Rail Economic Feasibility and Location Study

Wed., June 28	Thurs., June 29
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 305 Wellborn Road	Bryan Public Library 201 East 26 th Street

Meeting Schedules are the same at all locations:
6:30 - 7:00 p.m. - Open House
7:00 - 7:30 p.m. - Presentation
7:30 - 8:30 p.m. - Public Comments

You are encouraged to attend and show your support of the relocation of the railroad that separates the Main Campus and the West Campus.

Conducted by the Bryan/College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization in cooperation with the Cities of Bryan and College Station, Brazos County, Texas A&M University and Union Pacific Railroad.

Call 979.260.5298 for more information



NOW ACCEPTING BUS DRIVER APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING 2000

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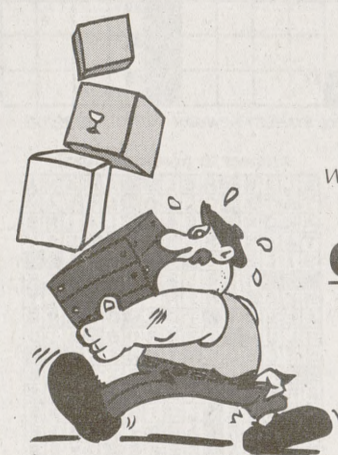
Summer hours:

CarePlus Medical:
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Mon. - Sat.
1:00 - 7:00 p.m. Sunday

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