

Aggies meet their match Matchbox Twenty show brings rock music to a country-dominated town

BY STUART HUTSON

The Battalion

Who ever would have thought that there would be crowd surfing in Texas A&M's Reed Arena?

But crowd surfing there was.

Although Matchbox Twenty's stop on campus Thursday probably did not draw the largest or most enthusiastic crowd of its second nationwide tour, the appearance was, in a way, a ground-breaking.

Country music has long held a dominant grip on the concert-going crowd at A&M, where Pat Green, Robert Earl Keen, Garth Brooks and Shania Twain are often challenged only by the occasional appearance of WCW wrestlers or the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

The lack of rock and alternative performances at A&M's musical venues may be enough to make one believe the old tale often recited by Old Ags of Corps members attempting to assault Elvis Presley after he spat gum on the floor of G. Rollie White Coliseum.

But Matchbox Twenty may have brought with it the winds of change when it blew into town Thursday.

Mary Helen Bowers, the deputy director of the special events center, said Thursday's concert was the largest rock performance to shake, rattle and roll at A&M since REM played G. Rollie White in the late '80s.

"Students kept coming and asking us when we are going to play a rock concert now that we have this great place to play them," Bowers said. "So, we brought them a rock concert. We're glad to do it, and we are going to bring them more."

While the performance did not match the nearly 12,500 person full-capacity crowd almost reached by Garth Brooks' show last November, it did bring in a respectable 6,000.

This number may not have filled the arena, but the crowd present was more than willing to show its appreciation for the change in musical genres.

When Rob Thomas began the group's most popular song, "3 a.m.," the entire arena became standing-room only as those in attendance collectively did their impression of an A&M home game.



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Patricia Lara, a junior business administration major, said the performance was a long-needed change.

"We have a lot of different people here, and 40,000 of them are college students ready to have a good time," Lara said. "A rock concert is what a lot of us want to have that good time."

While the vision of lead singer Thomas rocking out in front of an Aggie crowd might be unthinkable to some minds who still picture the stereotypical Aggie in overalls as opposed to phat pants, the group's mellow tone (mellow for rock music, at least) may have helped the masses of College Station assimilate the music.

"This place may be mostly country, but this music will do pretty well because it is not quite as harsh as other groups, but it is still fun for everyone," said Paul Hawrylak, a member of the Class of '93 who now lives in Bryan. "I mean, it's not Marilyn Manson."

Not all those in attendance Thursday were from Bryan or College Station. Nikki Loewe drove to College Station from Needsville, Texas, a city approximately 30 miles south of Houston.

"Matchbox Twenty is great and I'm glad they are showing them here," Loewe said. "Everybody in Needsville is country, but everybody loves Matchbox Twenty at the same time. The two go together because the group's laid-back rock is the same thing country is going toward anyway."

To make sure that the country fans would be happy, Thomas included a cover of Willie Nelson's "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys."

Rock music was not the only change concert-goers may have witnessed at Thursday's performance. Security guards were posted at every entrance to check patrons for guns and cameras.

"Matchbox Twenty requested more security than our country performers ask for," Bowers said. "They paid for the extra security, so we provided it."

B-Hippie

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J. GOLDFLUTE

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BATTALION

Beth Miller Editor in Chief

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