

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

By MIKEL PARENT  
The Battalion

Last week, directors, screenwriters, producers and actors flew in from all over the country for the 2001 Texas Film Festival. But film enthusiasts need not look as far as New York or Los Angeles to find talented aspiring filmmakers.

Students who pay close attention to the listings in the campus course scheduling guides will notice that, last year, FILM was added to the course catalogue. This prefix denotes the newly formed film studies program headed by Dr. Terence Hoagwood. Students serious about film at Texas A&M may now study it as an art form. The film courses offered each semester are good starting points for aspiring filmmakers who want to get a grasp on the art of film.

Despite all the classes now offered, there are no classes in hands-on film production. Some students are content to view a film, but to a significant number of students want to make films of their own.

Few organizations and clubs on campus allow students an opportunity to engage in filmmaking. One organization that does is the MSC Film Society.

The Film Society hosts a variety of activities on campus. It sponsors public showings of contemporary and classic films, organizes and holds the Texas Film Festival on campus each year, and has a subcommittee that specializes in film production. The major projects completed by the production committee this year are three commercials for the Texas Film Festival. The production committee plans to devote the rest of the semester to planning and shoot-

ing short videos on its newly acquired digital video camera.

Another group that dabbles in filmmaking is the Screen Writing Acting Movie Production club (SWAMP). The major difference between the Film Society and SWAMP is that, while the Film Society concentrates its efforts on a wide range of activities, SWAMP devotes itself specifically to movie production.

Matt Sully, president and founder of SWAMP and a senior journalism major, said, "We have around 40 members, and we work on our personal projects and we also work on collaborative stuff."

Sully said the club was founded to concentrate on production and to perfect the skills of writers, directors, actors, photography directors and sound engineers.

"I was really interested in creating a place that would allow people to concentrate on their films," Sully said. "Filmmaking is a really complicated and time-consuming process. You can't afford to divide out your time between too many things at once and still expect to get a good project completed."

SWAMP has been busy lately with its work on several shorts and a music video for an up-and-coming country music artist from Houston. On a more serious note, SWAMP produced a commercial for Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

"I'm really satisfied with what we have accomplished in such a short period of time. We don't have a lot of money and resources, but there are a lot resourceful people," Sully said.

Independent filmmaking in College Station, Sully said, does not exist.

"There really isn't one," he said. "There are a few people operating around here, but most are students and don't have a lot of resources."

Sully added, "Anyone that is serious about filmmaking, or learning about filmmaking, should definitely consider joining SWAMP."

A few independent filmmakers on campus operate primarily on their own.

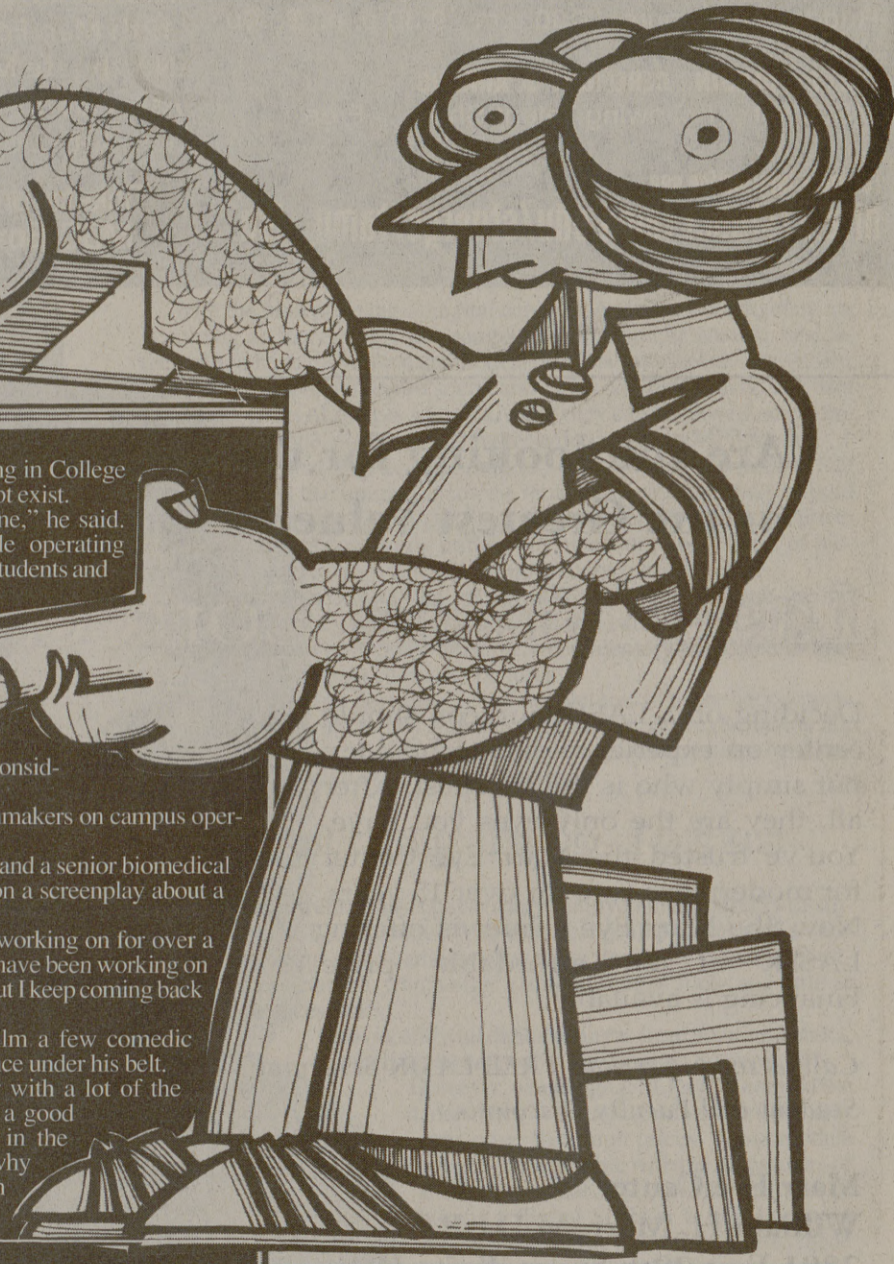
Eric Brentz, filmmaker and a senior biomedical science major, is at work on a screenplay about a blues musician.

"It's a story I've been working on for over a year now," Brentz said. "I have been working on other projects in between, but I keep coming back to it."

Brentz also plans to film a few comedic shorts to get some experience under his belt.

"I'm fairly unfamiliar with a lot of the things necessary to make a good film," he said. "I'm still in the learning process, which is why I've enrolled in as many film courses as possible to get

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CHAD MALLAM/THE BATTALION

## In the eye of the beholder

### Aggie Players perform *Art*, a play about how perceptions of art can represent one's personality

By BROOKE CORSO  
The Battalion

Texas A&M theater went post-modern with the Aggie Players' performance of the award-winning play *Art* in Rudder Forum last weekend and will do so again in future performances this weekend.

The Aggie Players are a production wing of the theater arts program in the Department of Performance Studies at A&M. The Players practice plays learned in the classroom as well as their own productions throughout the year.

"There are about four mainstage performances in Rudder Forum each year, directed by a professor or faculty member," said professor Michael Greenwald, director of *Art*. "There are also smaller productions in the Fallout Theatre, located in Blocker, that are directed by students."

Published by French playwright Yasmin Reza in 1994, *Art* took the international theater world by storm, eventually winning major theater awards such as the Moliere in Paris, the Olivier in London and the Tony in New York.

Keith Neagle, a sophomore English major, plays Serge, a wealthy dermatologist eager to impress his art-friends by purchasing a painting for 200,000 francs. The painting, called "The Antrios," is faint white lines on a white canvas, and Serge, despite his admiration of the painting, can't really seem to understand it.

"Serge is a sophisticated man, but he is insecure and wants the acceptance of friends, which is why he claims to be an art connoisseur," Neagle said.

Michael Santos, a senior speech communication and theater arts major, plays Serge's best friend, Marc, who despises the painting and scolds Serge for wasting his money.

"My character, Marc, is egotistical, opinionated, and very classical in his taste in art, so he finds this painting too new-age and frivolous," Santos said.

Randy Symank, a sophomore theater arts major, plays another friend, Yvan. Yvan is the moderator and desperately tries to keep the friends together. Serge and Marc often gang up on him.

"Yvan is an everyday guy that people can identify with, whereas the other two are more upper-class and sophisticated," Symank said.

The play centers around these three characters and leaves the meat of the play in the dialogue and chemistry among the roles. The set design echoes the minimalist theme with a coffee table, three chairs and a painting as props. As the characters "travel" to and from each others' houses, the paintings on the mantel change, each reflecting the men's personalities and backgrounds.

"Marc has a very classical taste, so he has a colorful landscape in his house; Serge has the white painting, and Yvan, who is working-class, has a painting done by his father," Symank said.

The Aggie Players have been practicing their parts since the semester started, but have been studying for the play since December, when auditions were held.

Greenwald gave the actors their parts to memorize during winter break and gave them topics in modern art to research.

Symank studied Dadaism and the works of Andy Warhol, and Neagle focused on minimalism and Pablo Picasso.

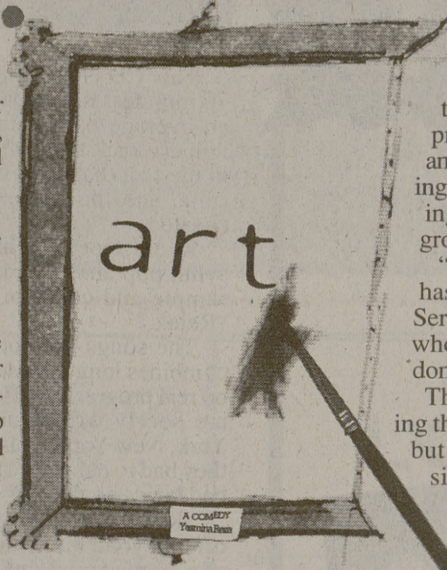
"By researching the different realms of modern art, I was able to portray my character, who is supposedly an art connoisseur, more truthfully," Neagle said.

These actors have the training and experience to adapt to their characters well. Santos has been performing in campus plays since Spring 2000 and acted in *The Rimers of Eldritch*, *The Good Doctor* and *The Physicists*. Symank appeared in *Devour the Snow*, *The Rimers of Eldritch* and *Wasp*. Neagle acted in *The Bald Soprano*, *Andromache* and the recent *Shakespeare Pastiche*. Neagle even acted in a student-directed performance of *Art* in high school. He also played Serge.

"I thought Serge would be a challenging role to take on because his personality is so different from mine and I would have to look at things through his eyes," Neagle said. "But that's what acting is all about."

In this two-act play, the white painting evokes the true colors of each friend as they hash out opinions and arguments on art, women, friendship and life, creating sometimes bittersweet and often hilarious situations. Often two

See ART on Page 6A.



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