

AggieLife

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Page 3

Planet Northgate

Bands unite Friday and Saturday for international music festival

By THOMAS PHILLIPS
THE BATTALION

Planet Northgate returns after its year-long revolution around the cultural cosmos. Five professional bands, plus a slew of local talents and amateur acts, will perform at the International Student Association's (ISA) annual free festival celebrating the music from cultures across the globe.

Friday and Saturday from 6:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., featured bands will entertain audiences with reggae, salsa and middle-eastern sounds behind Northgate.

"In the past, it's been this huge international music festival, and it's cool and fun," said Smita Rewari, director for Planet Northgate and a senior biology major. "But in light of what's happened recently, I think what I'm hoping for is a new twist to it. It's almost an international music festival going hand in hand with a unity festival."

Unity through music is the focus of this year's Planet Northgate, that differs in format from previous years. In the past, organizers brought in vendors and planned activities to involve the crowd, but this year, musical performances will headline. Also, the time frame has been changed from an all-day event to two consecutive evenings.

"This time, we've cut down to our most successful part," Rewari said. "We've found that that has been the evening spot with the bands coming in a playing their music."

Featured performers include Mango Punch, a Latin and salsa-flavored ensemble; reggae band Drum; the Gypsies, a band of middle-eastern musical influence; dance troupe

Guaguaco and Mauj with Indian and Pakistani musical variations. Student performers will entertain between featured sets.

Organizers had the choice of holding the event in the parking lot behind Northgate or on

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event organizer

the top level of College Station's new Northgate Parking Garage — an increasingly popular venue.

"We had the option of having it on top of that roof, and it sounds spectacular and everything," Rewari said. "Then I was like, the whole point of having it the way we've had it was because it's right behind that whole Northgate evening [where people can] stroll in, stroll out."

Arati Bhattacharya, a junior finance and

marketing major, plans to attend Planet Northgate and will give up one night of her weekend to work as a volunteer.

"I'd probably be out somewhere hanging out with friends on a Friday night, but I figure that it only comes around once a year and I can hang out with my friends at a cultural carnival," Bhattacharya said.

There are many reasons students look forward to attending the annual music festival. Bhattacharya said she wants to go to experience the different cultures that will be represented.

"I think it's important to learn more about many other cultures and things that they hold valuable and so dear to them," Bhattacharya said. "It's a big multicultural [festival], so many different cultures are going to be there to represent things that are fun."

Holding Planet Northgate in the A&M community serves to educate and enlighten the students and community members.

"It just makes more sense to have Planet Northgate here versus somewhere at a more diverse campus like t.u.," Bhattacharya said. "We have to look at it as a chance to let other cultures speak out and teach us so much from their culture."

Rewari said that in light of the recent terrorist attacks, the ISA and other Planet Northgate organizers are not out to sound political alarms, only to entertain the public and spread unity.

"I do want to get across the idea that it's going to be cool, not that we're trying to make a serious political statement," she said. "We just want to say, 'Hey, we love all kinds of stuff, we want to learn about all kinds of stuff, and it's actually fun doing that.'"



Tim Reynolds

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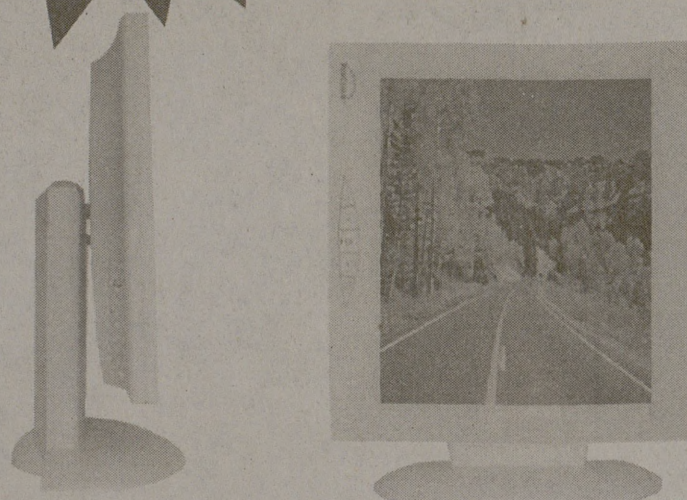
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