

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Play that funky music

By Kendra Kingsley
THE BATTALION

With his dark good looks and throaty vocals, Bob Schneider may appear every bit the part of a quintessential rockstar. But there's more to the singer and songwriter than meets the eye.

"I try to be the exact opposite of whatever someone expects me to be, which has gotten me into trouble," he admits.

By all appearances, that rebel attitude hasn't cost him much. In 1999, Schneider sold 15,000 copies of his independently-released album, "Lonelyland," at an Austin, Texas music store. One year later, he was sweeping Austin's South by Southwest music conference with nine awards. These achievements, coupled with a loyal fan base, caught the attention of Universal Records. Soon, Schneider signed with the company, releasing "Lonelyland" nationwide.

Tonight, Schneider can add to those experiences when he performs at Concept Nightclub.

While it may seem that Schneider hit the music scene overnight, his past is firmly rooted in an artistic upbringing.

At age 2, Michigan-born Schneider moved to Germany when his father decided to pursue a career in opera. Bob Schneider, Sr., who led the choir of oompah loopahs in the 1971 film "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," continues to be one of his son's biggest influences.

"My dad was a musician all of his life, and he was teaching me how to play the guitar and sing as soon as I learned to walk," he said. "You could put him and his guitar in a room with a whole bunch of people, and he'd rock the house."

As a child, Schneider was often awoken in the middle of the night to perform for his parents' friends. This experience, he says, has contributed to his relaxed stage presence.

"When I'm on stage, I feel like I can do or say whatever I want," he said. "In real life, I have to watch my p's and q's."

His road to the stage was not without detours. Schneider's family returned to the United States during his elementary school years, but later returned to Germany so that Schneider could attend high school abroad. After high school graduation, Schneider attended a German branch of the University of Maryland's art school. After two years, he returned to the States to attend the University of Texas at El Paso, working on a degree in graphic arts. While Schneider never completed his degree, he has no regrets.

"I only wish I would have left (college) earlier," he said. "I don't spend any time thinking about the past. The magic about doing music, or any other kind of art, is about teaching yourself and being creative. Those are the things you don't learn in school."

Schneider, who writes all of his songs, said he draws inspiration from the process of creating music.

"I record and write all the time, and I'm always most excited about whatever my latest project is," he said. "For me, all the joy of music happens when you're creating it. That's what I live for."

While Schneider's passion for music runs deep, his initial motives were less complex.

"Initially, I got into music to meet women," he said. "If you play in a band, girls are more willing to give you a chance."

Once romantically linked to actress Sandra Bullock, Schneider is not at a loss for dates. But, for good measure, he said he tries to surround himself with members of the opposite sex.

"If anything involves a whole lot of men at one setting, you can count me out," he said. "I'd rather watch women's gymnastics than a men's basketball game. Anything that improves the female-to-male ratio is a good thing."

One place Schneider does not mind the high male ratio is on stage. Along with Bruce Hughes (bass), Michael Langoria (drums) and Billy Harvey (guitar), he spends his days and nights practicing and performing. Yet the commitment required by his unconventional job doesn't bother Schneider.

"I don't know how people can do the nine-to-five thing," he said. "I guess there's some sort of security with a stable job, but I

think it's horrifying."

Schneider said he works more than a typical work schedule of 40 hours a week, but enjoys every minute of it.

"I think I have the coolest job in the world," he said. "Other jobs just play some weird game of making money, but what have they done to make the world better? If all I did was spend my life making money, I would feel like a total, utter failure."

While his job allows him to escape a conventional office job, it is not without certain hardships.

"When you're in a band, people think you have it made," he said. "They don't see the driving you do to get to the club, the four hours you spend setting up and doing sound check or the effort that goes into lugging all of your equipment on stage. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears that go into every performance that the audience never sees."

The pain is worth the pleasure, however.

"Playing that show at the end of the day and sharing something magical with the audience... that moment in time is worth everything else," he said.

That attitude, as well as his memorable stage presence, has earned Schneider plenty of fans.

Jay Board, a senior political science major, discovered Schneider when he saw him on "Austin City Limits," a television series that features up-and-coming artists. Board said he prefers to listen to Schneider's music rather than mainstream radio because of the singer's unique style.

"I like the fact that (Schneider) is not on the Billboard Top 40 charts," he said. "He definitely has his own style."

Board said that after hearing Schneider on television, he had to see him perform in person.

"He sounds great live because the music on his CD is not over-produced," said Board, who saw Schneider perform twice in Austin and once in Dallas. "He's just got so much energy and can put on a great show."

Cheryl Kempe, a senior journalism major, said Schneider's sound will be a welcome break from the typical music genres that circulate College Station.

"His sound is really original and has a laid-back, funky beat," she said. "Most people around here are used to country or straight-up alternative rock. His music will be a nice change from what we're used to hearing."

Schneider, however, is approaching tonight's performance with only one goal in mind.

"I just want people to have a good time," he said. "Maybe they'll wake up in jail or somewhere equally bizarre. No matter what, I hope they remember the show at least for a day or two."

Bob Schneider and solo artist Drew Nix (opening act) will perform tonight at Concept. Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$10 at conceptnightclub.com, Journey's in Post Oak Mall or at the door for \$12. Doors open at 8 p.m.

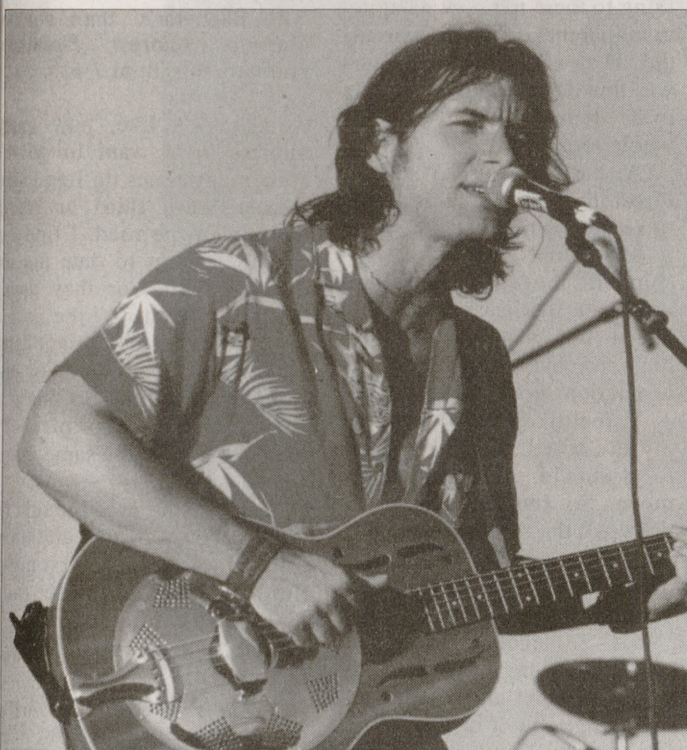


PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL RECORDS

Singer and songwriter Bob Schneider will perform at Concept at 8 p.m.

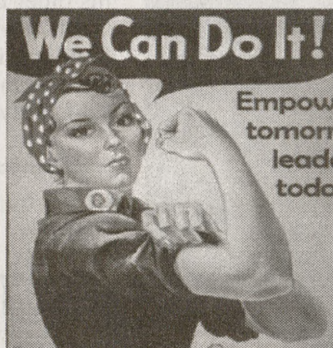
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