

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## Come on, ride the train

Country band Rivertrain will bring their sound to College Station

By Dallas Shipp  
THE BATTALION

If someone had mentioned Rivertrain to Texas music fans a little more than two years ago, they probably would have thought it was a group of people who hooked their inner tubes together floating down the tube chute of the Comal River in New Braunfels.

Today, Rivertrain is considered a steam engine in the progressive country world by fans

and critics alike, climbing the charts and racking up nominations, including *gruenewithenvy.com's* Band of the Year.

Other nominees for the award include College Station favorites Cross Canadian Ragweed and Reckless Kelly.

But the band's recent rise in the charts didn't happen overnight.

Co-lead singers and lead guitar players Sam Sanchez and Jerry Martin started the band after meeting at a songwriter's night in New Braunfels three years ago.

"We started out just because we wanted to do it for fun," Martin said. "We started getting into a little more higher profile

places, and the next thing you know we were opening up for Charlie Robison. It took on a life of its own the last two years or so."

Sanchez and Martin have written all of the group's songs, but almost all of them were written individually. The two have not collaborated until recently.

"We'd known each other for a while before we started doing that," Sanchez said. "We're both kind of independent as writers so breaking outside of that bubble took a while."

In addition to breaking out of bubbles, the guys in Rivertrain have had to step out on some limbs here and there in pursuit of success on the Texas

music circuit.

Less than two months ago, Martin was still working fulltime selling fiber optic cables and touring with the group on the weekends.

But with the band's increasing exposure and the rigorous tour schedule of an up-and-coming band, he finally decided to become a full-time musician.

"It's a pretty big leap of faith," Martin said. "I'm not making the money I was, but as long as I can pay the bills doing this I'm happy."

Drew Campbell, the band's drummer, and

Sterling Finlay, who plays bass, both joined the band in the past year. Finlay said he enjoys the band because everyone feels like they are an important piece of the group.

"In some bands, there's one guy that's the front man and everyone else is a hired gun," he said. "But we're all pretty equal in this band and we have a lot of fun. We're always going to keep having fun."

This weekend Rivertrain plans on having lots of fun in Aggieland.

The band will make its first appearance in College Station in more than a year, this Saturday.

The stop is especially important for Sanchez, who said some of his best memories are from the two years he attended Texas A&M from 1996-98.

"I have great memories of A&M," he said. "Playing bones at The Chicken and going to yell practice and all the games at Kyle Field. I love College Station."

Sanchez hasn't had time to return since the band came through last year because of the band's busy tour schedule, but he said there is something special about playing in College Station.

"Everyone seems to get along and the whole vibe in the town is really cool," Sanchez said. "I've been looking forward to this gig for a long time."

Campbell, who is still in school at Texas State

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— Jerry Martin  
Co-lead singer, Rivertrain



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIVERTRAIN

The members of Rivertrain (above from left to right) are Sam Sanchez, Jerry Martin, Drew Campbell and Sterling Finlay. The band will bring perform at Margarita Rocks at 10 p.m. Saturday.

University in San Marcos, said his first taste of College Station was at an Aggie football game with a friend of his from high school.

"He talked me into going to the game and at the beginning I was like what is all this stuff they're doing," he said. "But by the end of the game I was standing up doing all the yells. The people in College Station are a blast."

Campbell said as a new band on the Texas music scene it's important to put on a quality show for the fans seeing them for the first time.

"We try to break the awkwardness of seeing a band for the first time by throwing out some energy," Campbell said.

"We like to get them loose and have a real good time and try to make a lasting impression on them and get them to come back and show that we can

do that every time."

Martin, who attended Texas Tech University, said he is excited about the chance to play in College Station, which is known as one of the hotspots of the state's music scene.

"Of course there's a big rivalry but I believe both schools are similar, in that they aren't Texas," Martin said. "(Aggies) are real open-minded to the Texas music scene, even more so than people at Tech."

Martin said the show in College Station is important this weekend because of the passion fans in the area have for Texas music.

"We want to grow the music, grow the crowds and grow the people," he said.

Rivertrain will take the stage Saturday at 10 p.m. at Margarita Rocks.

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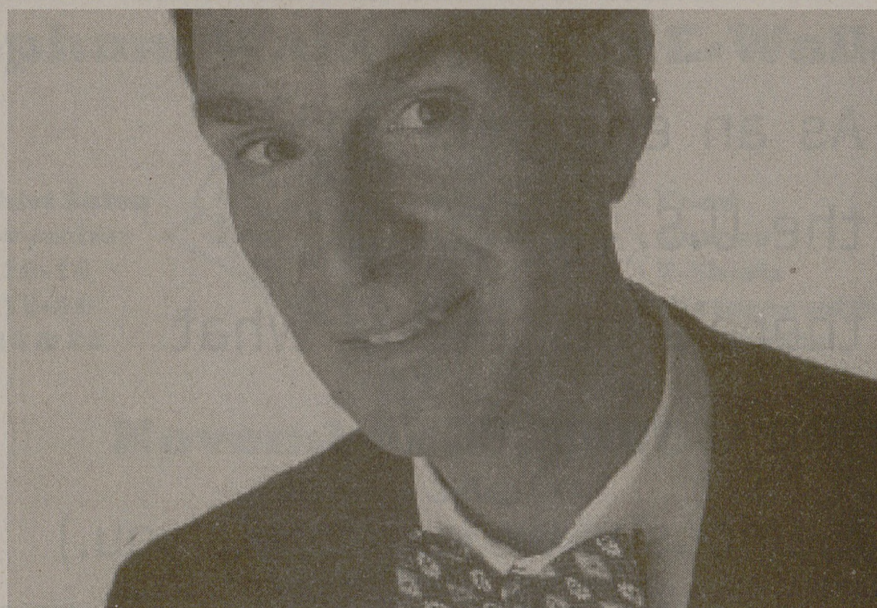
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