

Showing it off

Aggie talents to share the stage to impress peers and family at MSC Variety Show

By Robert Saucedo
THE BATTALION

Last year, while Justin Huggins, now a freshman biomedical engineering major, was contemplating his final choice of colleges, he visited Texas A&M. What started out as a casual trip ended up in a life-changing decision.

A senior at John Tyler High School, Huggins traveled to College Station during Parents' Weekend at Texas A&M a year ago in order to support a friend in the Memorial Student Center Variety Show. What he got out of the trip was not what he expected.

"My friend, Mark Manglicmot, was performing with the Texas A&M Philippine Student Association in a modern hip-hop dancing team," Huggins said.

While the variety show wasn't the only factor in his decision, Huggins said it played a role in his final choice among colleges.

"As a senior in high school, the variety show was a unique opportunity for a one-weekend event that not only showed the talent on campus, but showcased the diverse interests of the student body," Huggins said. "It was a key deciding factor in my options."

The MSC Variety Show is a student-run talent show that takes place every year during Parents' Weekend. A&M students compete for a chance to take home one of three awards and the glory of being recognized for their talent.

Juliette LeBlanc, a senior political science major and executive director of the MSC Variety Show, said she hopes that when students are deciding which events to take their parents to during Parents' Weekend, they choose a little variety.

"The MSC Variety Show has been going on for 40 years," LeBlanc said. "Since the variety show has been around for so long, it's pretty much set in stone. It's entertaining and anyone (can) enjoy it."

LeBlanc said the final selection process of performers is streamlined.

"We have an audition process," LeBlanc said. "Forty acts apply over three days and we select nine. It's pretty intense."

A volunteer judge panel of students without ties to the variety show chooses the acts that will compete in the final show. The top nine performers will compete Friday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

Autumn Holcomb, a senior journalism major and director of acts, has been involved with the variety show for three years. Holcomb joined MSC Town Hall, the organization in charge of the event, her sophomore year.

"My roommate performed in the variety show and it was awesome," Holcomb said. "I joined Town Hall the next year and knew that I had to be involved with the variety show."

Holcomb said every year's variety show is different.

"People graduate and new people come in," Holcomb said. "We (even) have a mariachi band this year."

LeBlanc said she agrees with Holcomb.

"This year's acts have a lot of diversity," LeBlanc said. "In the past we've had too many acoustic acts. This year we have a lot of different (performers)."

Even though this year's lineup contains a mariachi band and a reggae band, Holcomb said the school's recent emphasis on cultural diversity has no effect on determining what acts will perform. But since the performances cater to the Aggie audience, the performers are all Aggies.

"The show is culturally diverse but we (don't set out) for it to be," Holcomb said. "It comes to us. That's just the way it always turns out."

Even though the show is live, Holcomb said Aggies shouldn't expect any "wardrobe malfunctions" or other unannounced shenanigans during the show.

"The acts have to audition with the exact show that they're going to do," Holcomb said. "We've never had anything odd the three years I've been involved."

LeBlanc said the variety show takes place during Parents' Weekend for specific reasons.

"During Parents' Weekend, we have a lot of people on campus," LeBlanc said. "Because it's a talent show, the event is more family-oriented than other events. People's families and parents are more likely to come to the event than the average college student. The money raised will act as a fundraiser for Town Hall."

Holcomb said the show tries to be a way for parents to connect with their children's Aggie community.

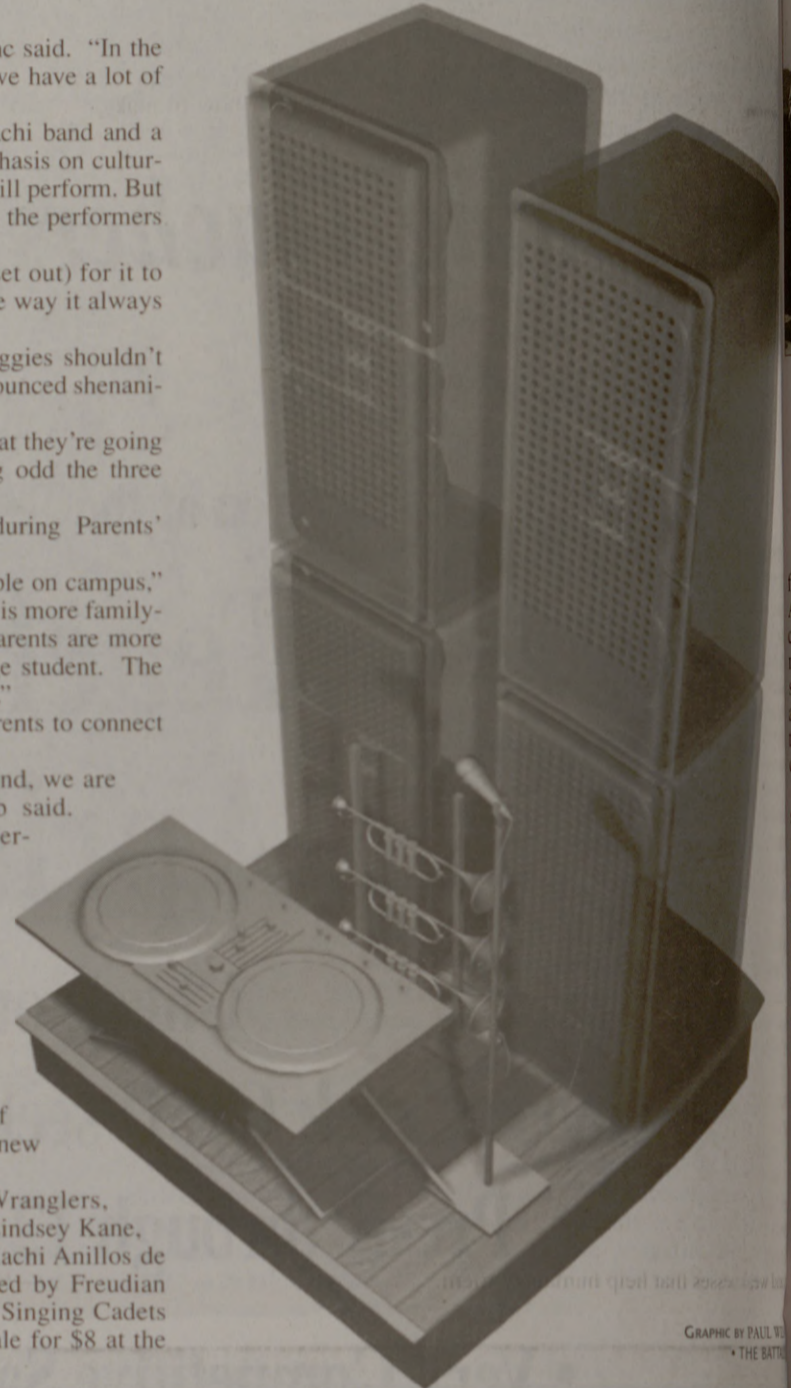
"Because it takes place during Parents' Weekend, we are always competing with other things," Holcomb said.

"We're here for the parents to watch their kids perform. They'll be able to see what's happening on campus. Most of the time on the A&M campus the shows are really directed to one particular audience or another."

Now almost finished with his freshman year, Huggins is content with his choice to come to A&M and plans to attend the Variety Show again this year.

"I enjoyed the show (last year)," Huggins said. "It was interesting to see other people's pursuits of their interests and their desire to express various new interests."

This year's lineup includes the Aggie Wranglers, Mountain Aire, Institution Soul, Gabe & Taylor, Lindsey Kane, Micah Sims, Aggies in Motion Dance Team, Mariachi Anillos de Oro and Mourning After. The show will be hosted by Freudian Slip and will feature special performances by the Singing Cadets and Percussion Studio. Tickets are currently on sale for \$8 at the MSC Box Office.



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