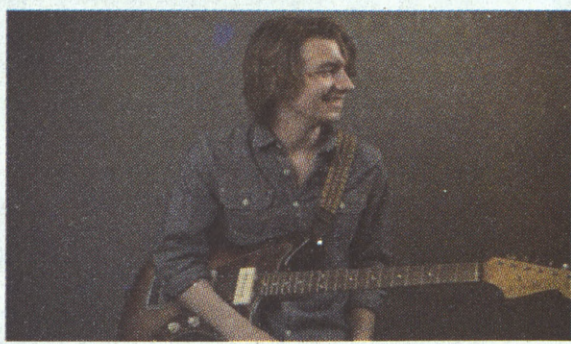


Grand Stafford Theater packs five bands into one weekend of music

Thursday: Three bands will play at the Grand Stafford Theater starting at 8 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$5.



Daniel Gonzales: "We have a singer-songwriter background, but with the full band we also get to pull from everyone else's background, which includes Jazz, Blues, Rock and Gospel. A little bit of everything gives us a really diverse and original sound. And what inspires me to make music is definitely family and close friends. Their support has meant the world to me."



Canvas People (Wes Maxwell, lead guitarist): "As for what kind of emotions we want to evoke in people when they listen to our music or watch us play, we want to emulate an honest genuine sense of excitement and elation."

Reminiscent of classic Rock n' Roll, Carson Brock and The Effect takes their guitar-based sound to a whole new level with a jazz and funk-influenced twist. Loyal to the vinyl days, Brock, lead guitar and vocals, grew up listening to Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix, a source of inspiration clearly reflected in the band's music.

Sunday: Two bands will play at the Grand Stafford Theater starting at 8 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$12.



Andrew Ripp started off as a songwriter for artists such as Ryan Cabrera. Ripp has recently moved into his own career as a songwriter, musician and artist. His music focuses on the catchiness of the pop genre while mixing in elements of soul culture.



Votary (Jack Thweatt): "We first formed as a singer-songwriter/pop band at Texas A&M. Votary strives to write songs that are relatable and catchy. We hope the first time someone hears one of our songs that they can immediately identify a time in their life that they have felt the same way."

Information compiled by Katie Canales. Photos provided.

ORGANIZATIONS

Israeli support finds home at Texas A&M

New pro-Israel group holds first fair

By Kylee Reid

Aggie Students Supporting Israel, ASSI, will host its "Israel Fair" on Thursday in an effort to teach the Texas A&M community about the culture and politics of Israel.

Jonathan Rahmani, senior kinesiology major and ASSI chief of staff, said the event's main goal is to break the stereotypes and common misconceptions people have about Israel, and to better open people's eyes to what Israel has to offer.

"The majority of students on campus are pretty apathetic about things when it comes to the Middle East, specifically with regards to Israel," Rahmani said. "Our goal is to let people know the cool things about Israel, such as how modern it is with regards to anything from LGBT and equality to its innovative and technological ideas."

Rahmani said there will be 10 tables stocked with different snacks, activities and information on varying topics.

"Topics will be anywhere from talking about Israeli innovation and sustainability in Agriculture to Israeli politics and how it relates to U.S. politics, and how to get involved with the political agenda in regards to Israeli-American affairs," Rahmani said.

Rahmani, who visited Israel during winter break with a group of 10 A&M students, said his experi-

es on the trip as well as his personal family ties make him passionate about teaching others about Israel.

"It's a very, very cool place," Rahmani said. "They took a desert and turned it into a metropolis and a thriving country, and the fact that they were able to do that in less than 60 years is just incredible."

Founded this past fall, ASSI has worked closely with Hillel over the past couple semesters.

Emily Schneider, senior agriculture communication and journalism major and Hillel VP of Israel programming, said the event will partly serve as ASSI's "coming out" event as its own separate organization.

"Aggies Students Supporting Israel are really using this event to get their name out to students on campus," Schneider said. "They are really transitioning from almost being a sub-organization of Hillel to now being an entirely separate organization altogether."

Schneider, who also went to Israel over winter break, said her experiences had a strong impact on how she looked at her own life in the United States.

"We are in such a bubble," Schneider said. "There are bombings left and right — we would not be able to fathom if that was our life. If there were a bomb threat here or a Code Maroon, we would all freak out. That's their everyday life."

The event will be from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday in Rudder Plaza.

SMITH CONTINUED

to raise awareness and morale and patriotism. And we also raise money for an organization called Boot Campaign, which gives back to soldiers returning home and reentering civilian lifestyle.

THE BATTALION: From the perspective of someone in the country music world, are you met with any kind of animosity from people who don't understand the Aggie family and its culture?

SMITH: That's kind of interesting because we tour so much, and for instance, today we're in Indiana and we played there last night and we'll usually

get to take a tour of their facility and campus. So yesterday we took a tour of Notre Dame and went through all the football facilities. I always will bring up — because I always have my ring on — I always bring up that I went to Texas A&M. I don't know if it's shocking, but it's mildly surprising that everyone holds A&M to a pretty high regard. In the university levels, if you're in the faculty or in the athletics facility at all, if you're an equipment manager or an athlete or one of the coaches, everyone holds A&M very high. Like yesterday, when I told the guy at Notre Dame I went to A&M, he was like, "Oh, my gosh, we took a tour there," — and this is the equipment manager saying this, — "We took

a tour there last summer to take some notes on how we can be better at Notre Dame." And he said that those facilities were amazing at A&M and everyone was so nice and, "Tell so-and-so I said hey if you ever talk to him." And so that's a lot of what I get. And I always try to show respect to other schools that we go to. And so they'll give me hats and so a lot of times I'll put one of their caps on and we'll take pictures, but I'll always have my ring on.

THE BATTALION: How has being an Aggie impacted you as a musician and as a person in general?

SMITH: As much as I don't like College Station, that's not what it's really about

to me, it's about the fans that I have. Because when I go there, I could pack a house. That's not what it really is. It's a lifestyle. And, you know, my dad went there. When I wear my ring, I look at my hand and that's my dad's hand and he's not with us anymore. That's something that's huge to me. And my brother goes there, he's in the Corps there, just like I was. He was the mascot corporal a couple years ago and had Reveille, so that's a big part of our family. And so we're close to her. And then my mom grew up in College Station, my grandmother still lives there, I have two uncles that live here and so not only is A&M home, but College Station is, in a lot of ways, considered a home to me.

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