

'Spamalot' brings quest to Happy Valley

By Hannah Rishel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Taunting Frenchmen who catapult cows and a killer rabbit made their appearance in Happy Valley Tuesday night.

The national tour of Monty Python's "SPAMALOT" performed the Tony award-winning musical last night to a packed Eisenhower Auditorium. A second performance will be held tonight at 7:30 in the same venue.

The musical, based on the cult classic film "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," stays true to the movie, including famous scenes like the Black Knight who gets his limbs cut off, with splashy musical numbers thrown in.

Some of these musical numbers played off original jokes, like "I Am Not Dead Yet," while others broke down the fourth wall, having the actors sing to the audience direct-

ly, like "The Song That Goes Like This," which pokes fun at traditional musicals.

Penn State alumna Caroline Bowman returned to Happy Valley as the Lady of the Lake, who gives King Arthur the sword Excalibur, making him king of Britain. She then helps him on his quest to find the Holy Grail, appearing to him in times of need and falling in love with him in the process.

Bowman's fellow cast members paid tribute to her alma mater, and played to the State College crowd, by working in a "We Are... Penn State" cheer into one of the scenes, that was met with a round of applause from the audience.

Tessa Croft, who had seen "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" a few times before attending the musical, said the Lady of the Lake was her favorite character.

"It's pretty cool whenever she

appears," Croft (sophomore-elementary education) said.

Stephen Trippett, a Monty Python fan, also thought the Lady of the Lake was an interesting character. She is only mentioned in passing in "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," but never makes an appearance.

"I was worried they'd follow the movie too faithfully," Trippett, a State College resident, said.

Scott Singer, also a State College resident, said that he was a little leery going into the show as a Monty Python fan, but the show exceeded his expectations.

"It was definitely far better than I thought it would be," he said.

Croft said her favorite parts of the show were when the entire cast sang together, such as the Vegas-inspired "Knights of the Round Table" number — when Arthur and his knights arrive in Camelot — and the "Find



Tom Ruane/Collegian

The Mayor gets slapped in the face by fish in the "Fisch Schlapping Song," the opening song in Monty Python's musical "SPAMALOT."

Your Grail Finale-Medley" closing song. After the actors took their bows, they led the audience in a sing-along of the Monty Python classic "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life."

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Bar aims to revive original music

By Josh Bollinger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Shifting trends in State College have resulted in the death of the original music scene with little room for regrowth, local music enthusiasts say.

One reason? There's not a demand for it, said Maria Agresti, general manager of the 797 Lounge and host of a morning radio show on 105.9/106.9 Qwik Rock. Agresti said original bands don't last long in State College because they simply aren't making any money.

Much of the time, students want to go to clubs to hear club music, she said, but the 797 Lounge is trying to bring original music back to State College with its "Local Bands" series that runs at 10 p.m. on Wednesday nights. There's a \$3 cover and only people ages 21 and older are admitted.

Agresti said the quality of original music is better than something on the radio.

"I don't think someone can cover someone else's song as good as they can," Agresti said. "If I want to hear Slipknot, I want to go to a Slipknot show."

Original reggae band RT and The Earthtones has been playing in State College since 1985 and is tonight's featured local band at the 797 Lounge.

Bandleader Rodney "RT" Thompson said the group plays some covers during its shows because reggae doesn't get much radio play.

"It's a little more different for us than a rock band or alternative

"I understand that we're a town that runs on football and beer, but we're also a town that has a lot of talent around here."

Brian Walker
senior-psychology

band because their music is on the radio," Thompson said. "We're playing stuff that people would never hear unless they hear a live reggae band."

Thompson said it doesn't matter if it's a cover or an original tune that he's playing — just as much feeling and passion go into it. He said the band puts its own spin on covers it performs by changing endings or by segueing back and forth between different songs.

But Thompson said the bottom line for him is that it's all about the music and showing the crowd a good time by coercing them to dance and enjoy his band's music.

"They dance their way out of their constrictions; forget about their problems and stuff for the evening," Thompson said. "They can always pick them up on the way out."

Songwriters Club President Brian Walker said it's sad there's such a lack of original music in town.

"I understand that we're a town that runs on football and beer, but we're also a town that has a lot of talent around here," Walker (senior-psychology) said.

Walker said cover bands take away from the artistic aspect of what a band should be, but the exception is when bands like RT and The Earthtones toy with the

song and make it their own.

Walker said it's harder for an original band to get a gig around town than a cover band, because bars are fearful of not getting enough business and losing money.

But Walker said the blame shouldn't be pointed at just the bars — it's the community's fault as well.

"The best way to make this local music scene work is to not look out for oneself, but to look out for others," Walker said.

He said the local music scene could thrive again if bars, students, community members and student music organizations get together to discuss the problems and share possible solutions.

"If everyone could get together and actually bother to listen to each other, it could work out," Walker said.

"But practically, that's not going to happen."

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If you go

What: RT and The Earthtones

Where: 797 Lounge

When: 10 p.m. tonight

Details: Must be 21 or older

SOMA to feature diverse performers

By Sarah Becks
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Students Organizing the Multiple Arts (SOMA) hopes students are interested in an event where they can see guitarists, singers, poets, stand-up comedians — and maybe even jugglers — all in the same place.

SOMA is hosting an open mic night at 7 tonight at Waring Study Lounge in West Commons.

"We allow anything and everything. If you can perform it, you're welcome to show up," SOMA Vice President Bill Nechamkin said.

Sign-up is at 7 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. The open mic night is open to anyone and is a way to have fun while showing off talents, Nechamkin said.

This is the first open mic night of the semester, but it has been a long tradition of SOMA.

The club has had an open mic night about once a month since it began, Nechamkin (senior-information sciences and technology) said.

The purpose of an open mic night is to give people an opportunity to express their creativity in front of an audience and have a good time doing it, chairwoman and host Amanda Earle (junior-psychology) said.

"I'm hoping the open mic night will showcase a lot of unknown talent that exists at Penn State,"

Because of the variety of acts that

show up at open mic nights — including magicians, rappers and even ventriloquists — it's always a fun event to go to with friends, Nechamkin said.

"Personally, I'm hoping we get some jugglers. We always had jugglers show up my freshman year," Nechamkin said.

SOMA also plans on putting spins on the open mic nights.

"We will even be hosting themed open mic nights, including a Halloween one and our infamous 'Find Your SOMAte' Open Mic/ Date Auction for Valentine's Day," Earle said.

Nick Miller (sophomore-film) performed at an open mic night last year.

"The most important element of the open mic nights is that when you perform you're not really looking to gain anything," he said. "You go there to learn and share your talents."

Performers can also perform original songs if they want to get their work out there.

"It's an absolutely great experience to perform and then listen to feedback from people in the audience who are usually fellow performers," Miller said.

SOMA gives students at Penn State opportunities, such as the open mic night, by involving arts of all kinds into their events, Earle said.

"Our club held some really great events, such as the We Are Scientists concert, Arts Crawl and many more," Earle said.



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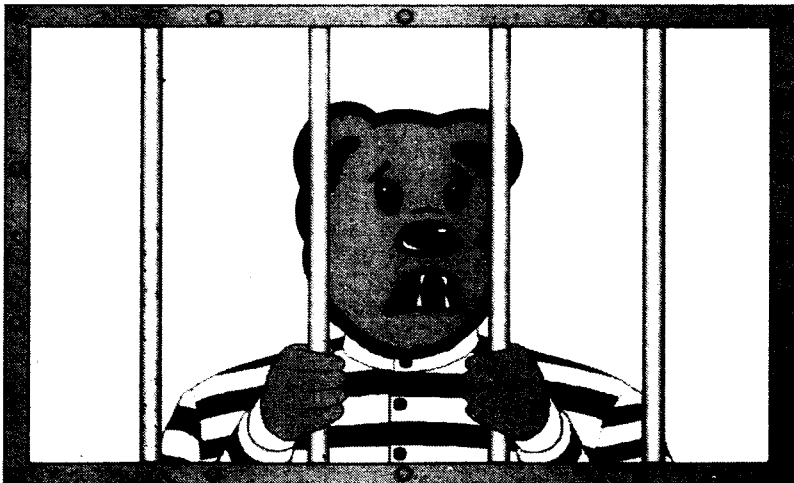
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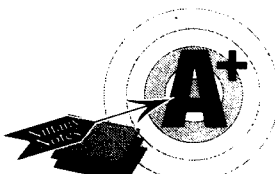
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