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Bands can play live in new WUSC studio

BY MARJORIE RIDDLE
THE GAMECOCK

USC's student radio station is installing new equipment to allow live, electric performances.

WUSC is eyeing April 30 for starting the live shows and plans to feature bands I am the World Trade Center and Paper Lions.

Station manager and fourth-year philosophy student Elyn Blackman came up with the idea for the Russell House studio after she realized that musicians couldn't perform their music on WUSC live because of small space and a lack of equipment.

"We've only had live acoustic music with the equipment we've had. Now we'll be able to do electrified music," Blackman said.

The previous live performances WUSC featured consisted of a musician with an acoustic guitar next to the microphone.

Now, in a room next to the announcers studio, musicians can set up their instruments and play with the sound controlled with a soundboard across the hall.

"We're hoping to schedule a specific block once a week for live music, starting in the summer,"

Blackman said.

The equipment costs between \$2,500 and \$3,000.

The operating budget, along with the allocation from Student Media, paid for the equipment and set up.

The studio will require no construction, and the equipment will have no effect on the station's broadcasting and airtime.

The connection cables will be routed through the production room and sound checks will be run through there.

"We have everything now. It's just a matter of training the staff and testing it all through, making

sure we have all the kinks worked out," Blackman said.

Public Affairs Director and second-year electronic journalism student Marti Hause said she's looking forward to the positive effects the addition will have for public affairs.

"Our job is to bring in interviews. With the studio conversion, it'll be more worth their while because they'll be able to play live," she said.

Hause said the station is also in the process of interviewing other potential bands to try out

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PHOTO BY MICHAEL LAFORGIA/THE GAMECOCK

A view through the WUSC radio tower on the Russell House roof.

Rising ticket prices affect USC

BY IRA KLEIN
THE GAMECOCK

The average price of a top-50 tour concert ticket has risen by 130 percent during the past 10 years, and USC students could be affected this month as several big acts are coming to Columbia month.

Floor tickets to the upcoming April 28 Shania Twain concert are selling for \$80, floor and lower-level seating tickets to the April 21 Prince show will set students back \$75. Wednesday's Aerosmith concert tickets went for \$73 a pop, and seeing Jimmy Buffet on April 29 costs \$65 for floor seating.

The average price for a big-name concert ticket in 1993 was \$24.05, while the 2003 average was \$55.26, according to the Recording Industry Association of America. Even when adjusted for inflation, this still represents a 50 percent leap in price, according to the Chicago Tribune in a recent story. It appears the trend is continuing since, according to figures from Pollstar magazine, the average admission prices for 2003's top 100 tours rose by nearly 8 percent over the previous year, not including service fees, convenience charges or parking.

Laura Bundrick, marketing manager for the arena, said the Colonial Center's ticket prices "are lower than the (national) average for most concerts." While this is true for much of the upper-level seating, the prices for most lower-level and floor seats actually exceed the national average for the top-50 acts appearing at the Colonial Center this month, except for Kenny Chesney.

In a story about rising ticket prices, The Chicago Tribune pointed out that because many new musical groups are making money off the "one hit wonder" phenomenon, they frequently do not have enough songs to fill a show or do not have enough popular songs to entice a significant number of fans to come to the show. Thus, promoters are increasingly turning to older acts to fill seats; older acts which tend to charge more for their talents than the younger acts.

According to Gary Bongiovanni, editor in chief of Pollstar magazine, older artists, such as Aerosmith, are charging their aging, wealthier fans higher ticket prices.

Explanations for the increase in prices differ, but many industry experts say the primary factor driving the costs is how much money the artist wants to make.

Although grosses are up for the

◆ TICKETS, SEE PAGE 3

Carjackings prompt student safety scare

BY KALYN PALMER
THE GAMECOCK

Days after USC issued a security alert stemming from two recent armed carjackings, many students are re-evaluating the safety of USC's parking facilities.

Campus safety has always been a hot topic with students, and Student Government candidates almost always use safety as part of their platform.

Second-year political science student Josh Bellamy said he has never really thought about the chance of being the victim of a crime.

"I've never really felt safe, but I've never felt like I should fear for my life," he said.

Bellamy said lack of lighting is a problem for students.

First-year business student Sarah Bjorkman agreed.

"I park in the Blossom Street garage, and I feel uncomfortable with the lack of bright lights. It's really dim and scary," she said.

Another concern is the distance between the garages and some of the university dorms leaving students vulnerable to criminal activity.

"Many students park in garages and then have to walk three to four blocks to their dorm. And of course, the farther you have to walk, the more your safety is jeopardized," first-year pharmacy student Tammy Kim said. She suggested police show a more pronounced presence around areas such as garages and parking lots, which are more prone to theft.

The USC Police Web site has many safety tips posted for students. Officials insist that students should never travel alone and always try to park in well-lit areas. While in their vehicle, students should keep their doors and windows locked. Officials also say never to resist a robber, especially if he or she is brandishing a weapon. Students should also be aware of the locations of more than 90 emergency call boxes placed around campus that immediately alert USCPD.

Many students, like third-year advertising student Lauren Gray, make sure to follow these suggestions in order to ensure personal safety.

"I park in the outside part of

◆ SAFETY, SEE PAGE 3



PHOTO BY MORGAN FORD/THE GAMECOCK
Gervais Street is home to the many stores and businesses that gave Columbia its No. 50 ranking out of more than 400 in the new book, "Cities Rated and Ranked."

Columbia basks in top 50 ranking

BY JULIE LEDBETTER
THE GAMECOCK

A new book has ranked Columbia one of the top 50 cities to live.

"Cities Ranked and Rated," by Bert Sterling and Peter Sander, ranked Columbia No. 50 out of more than 400 listed in the book, using criteria such as climate, education, culture, cost of living, economy and jobs.

Sterling, creator of Money magazine's "Best Places to Live" list, compiled the data and Sander wrote the book. Sander also wrote, "Value Investing for Dummies" and "The Pocket Idiot's Guide to Living on a Budget."

City leaders said USC helped boost Columbia's rankings, and first-year electronic journalism student Katie Seifert agreed.

USC "is such a focal point of downtown Columbia," she said.

Leshia Utsey, director of public relations for Columbia, said USC brings a lot to the city.

"Not only is it a very prestigious university, but also the fact that USC has been one of our local leaders in the technology field and of course in technology research and development, and they've worked very closely with the city of Columbia," she said.

"Knowing that there is a

high ratio of students that actually when they graduate, they look for employment in the city where they attended college. So by the ranking helping to improve economic development, that could possibly mean more jobs in the area, which would benefit students," Utsey said.

Seifert said Columbia's national ranking will draw attention to the city and attract new students to USC.

"I think that potential students will want to come see what this town is about and why it is so great," she said.

First-year early education

◆ COLUMBIA, SEE PAGE 3



PHOTO BY MORGAN FORD/THE GAMECOCK
Matt D'Amore, a third-year public relations student, walks out of Senate Street Garage.

Princeton combats grade inflation, other schools may follow

BY JUSTIN POPE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — College grades have been creeping steadily upward for 30 years, but Princeton University may try to break the trend by rationing the number of A's that can be awarded. The proposal has academics wondering already about the possible impact at other

schools.

In what would be the strongest measure to combat grade inflation by an elite university, Princeton faculty will vote later this month on a plan that would require each academic department to award an A-plus, A or A-minus for no more than 35 percent of its grades.

A's have been awarded 46 percent of the time in recent years at

Princeton, up from 31 percent in the mid-1970s. Since 1998, the New Jersey school has been encouraging its faculty to crack down, but marks have kept rising. Finally, Princeton administrators decided that the only solution would be to ration top grades.

"I think it's tremendously significant that Princeton is doing this, and I do think it will have a

ripple effect," said Bradford P. Wilson, executive director of the National Association of Scholars, a group that has spoken out against grade inflation, and also a part-time teacher at Princeton. "What goes on at the premiere institutions sets the standard of quality for every institution in the country."

So far, most schools that have

tried to stem grade inflation have little to show for it. Harvard University, criticized several years ago for allowing more than 90 percent of its students to graduate with honors, cut back its honors degrees but has not ordered faculty to lower or limit grades.

Grade inflation seems to date to Vietnam War era, when many professors were reluctant to flunk stu-

dents and consign them to the draft, said David Breneman, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia.

Other factors made it snowball, including competition to attract students, and tuition increases that have convinced some students and parents that good grades are an entitlement when they pay as much as \$35,000 per year.

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