

# Let Us Entertain U.

**If you've seen Pearl Jam or P.J. O'Rourke for free at your campus, thank your student activity council**

**BY COLLEEN RUSH**  
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**P**ICTURE IT: BLOOMINGTON, IND., fall 1994. Big Head Todd and the Monsters are playing IU's 2,500-seat venue. Opening for the band is a funny little no-name group called Hootie and the Blowfish.

*Who and the Whatfish?*

Ask that question today and you're likely to elicit some serious stares. But Brandon O'Leary, director of IU's student programming board, knew last year — when he booked them for less than \$1,000 — he had a winner.

"It's exciting to know we had the band before they got big," says O'Leary, a junior. "Six months after they played IU, they couldn't have played in our venue. They're too big."

And too expensive. According to Harris Goldberg, president of Concert Ideas, the band that once was mistakenly referred to as Homey and the Goldfish is now going for \$100,000 to \$150,000 a night.

**Forget about frat parties, kids**

Imagine what it was like to book the Red Hot Chili Peppers when alternative was alternative. Then imagine what it's like to bring Hal and the Polka Kings to campus for the annual Spring Fling weekend — hey, who says polka isn't about to make its big breakthrough?

Just when you thought it was safe to be entertained, college programming boards are at it again.

Programming boards, concert/lecture committees, campus activity councils — whatever you call 'em — are the ones who can make or break campus life.

Made up of students devoted to the business of entertaining, programming boards spend many a day every semester tracking bands, speakers and their agents and bargaining and booking performers for the right (or sometimes not-so-right) price... all while trying to gauge who's hot and who's not on the college circuit.

"Providing the best entertainment at a price students can afford, knowing I had a part in helping 4,000 people forget about everything but having fun for two hours — that's what it's all about," says Ron Opaleski, a senior at the U. of Florida and chair of Student Government Productions. "I got that feeling looking out at Natalie Merchant, just watching the crowd have a great time."

But it's not all love and glory for the students who bring names like Ross Perot, Dan Quayle and, um, Barry Williams (a.k.a. Greg Brady) to campus. First, there's the money situation.

The size of a school's concert or lecture budget (usually a

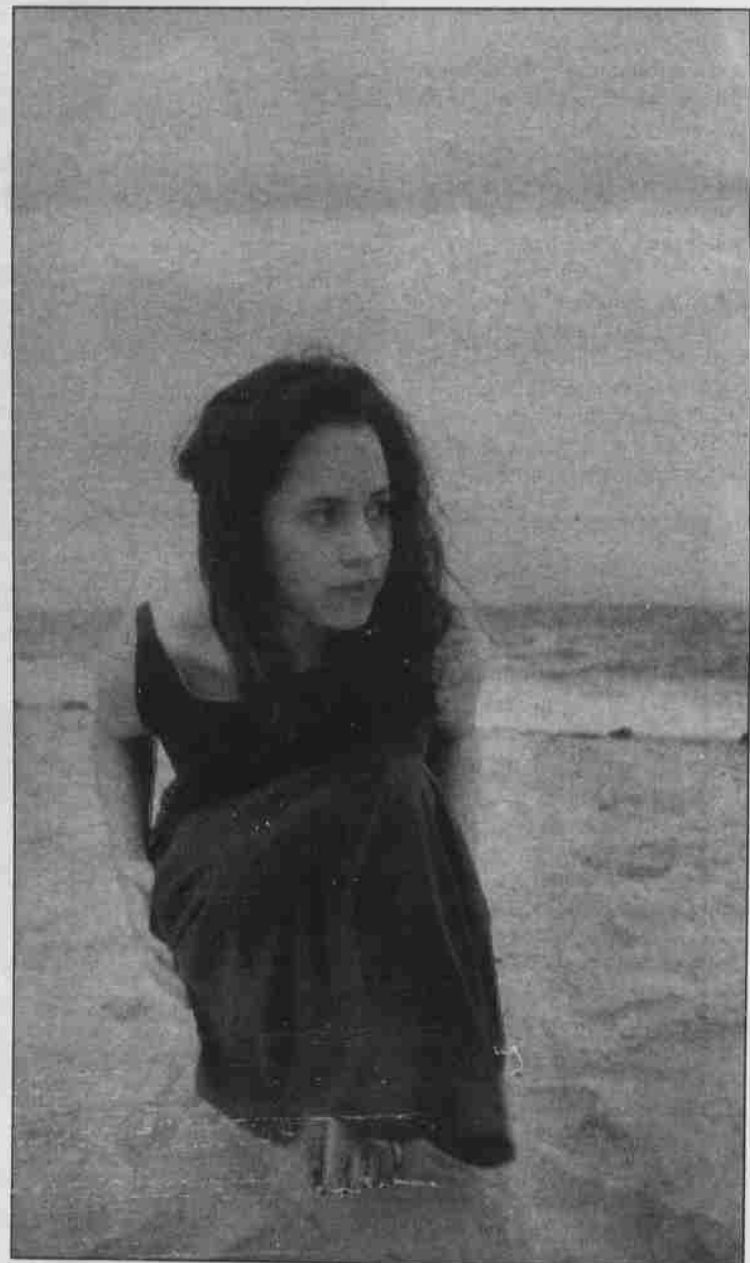
flat rate or percentage of student activities fees) may not be the sole factor in who it can get, but it sure does help.

With a whopping \$100,000 to dish out, Reid Cox, co-director of the lectures committee at IU, snagged Spike Lee, William F. Buckley and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. last year. P.J. O'Rourke and Ralph Nader highlight this year's guest list.

"It's also who will give us a good deal," says Adrienne Bradley, a programming assistant and grad student at Western Michigan U. "That's definitely a consideration when you're dealing with student money and trying to be conservative."



**Students with a taste for music like their G. Love with Special Sauce.**



**Natalie Merchant takes her "Carnival" on the road this year — maybe to a college near you.**