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MSC Town Hall is a programming committee in the Memorial Student Center within the Division of Student Affairs; and is responsible for bringing a wide variety of music and entertainment to campus that appeals to the many diverse students of Texas A&M University. We are proud to present to you, the 2nd edition of MSC Town Holler.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN HALL

BY:IZZI GONZALEZ



Originally, Town Hall was created to bring all kinds of entertainment to campus. In the past few years, our organization has been going back to its roots to expand and include different forms of entertainment. We want Town Hall to be a highly recognizable on-campus organization. One event that has helped expand our reach and popularity was bringing *A Night of Comedy* with Kevin Hart to campus in conjunction with Aggie Cinema and WBAC, other committees within the MSC. This comedy event gave Town Hall a lot of publicity, with students camping out days in advance leading up to a sold-out show. It was a huge opportunity for Town Hall to get our name out there, and not to mention, providing an amazing show to the student body!

Another event that Town Hall has been involved with in recent years is the *Texas Grand Slam Poetry Festival*. Town Hall, along with Mic Check Poetry and WBAC all worked together to put this event on. This poetry event featured spoken word poets from all around the US, and nearly sold out Rudder Theatre. Amir Safi's Poem about Whataburger went viral - it even ended up on the Washington Post! We hope to see Town Hall gain more publicity and become even more of a distinguishable on-campus organization as we expand our reach into different forms of entertainment."

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VOLUME 2 - SPRING 2016



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After a semester's worth of planning, MSC Town Hall hosted it's first on campus music festival, *The 12th Jam!* The bands who played were a mixture of local, regional, and national talent. The five bands were LUCA, Calliope Musicals, Sphynx, Colony House, and Cherub, with DJ sets performed by Town Hall's very own Kai Castro. Town Hall gave out free stickers and T-shirts to students who attended and even Reveille stopped by to take photos with the attendees! With over 1300 students in attendance, it was a successful show that we hope to make an annual event.





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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: SARA WINTER

BY: TAYLOR HARWOOD

This semester, Town Hall's featured alumna is Sara Winter who is a Senior Vice President at Messina Touring Group (MTG). Messina Touring Group is based in Austin, Texas and manages the tours of musicians such as Taylor Swift, Vance Joy, Ed Sheeran, Kenny Chesney, and many more. I got the opportunity to chat with Sara about her journey at MTG thus far as she approaches her 10 year anniversary with the company this year. Sara started out working club shows at Warehouse Live in Houston and regional arena and theater shows in the Southeast for Messina Touring Group/AEG Live. As her career advanced, she moved on to working on the Taylor Swift team overseeing her tour marketing, and later joined the Ed Sheeran team overseeing his tour marketing in North America. As MTG has continued to grow and take on more artists she's advanced to overseeing tour marketing for all pop/Alternative artists for the company. With growing experience and clients, she has recently been promoted to a Senior Vice President position.

### WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN YOUR FIRST YEAR OF WORKING AT MESSINA TOURING GROUP?

I was very green my first year here, so every day was a learning experience and as mentioned in your question, fast-paced...so, I'd say for the first little bit it was challenging keeping my head above water with the amount of content between the club & regional arena shows I was assisting on, while also learning as I went. I think it was also challenging because the entertainment industry is definitely not for those who lack thick skin. It's odd because while the hours were crazy, I wouldn't necessarily say I found that challenging, as some might. I personally quite enjoyed it, but was also spending a great bit of time at Warehouse Live as well in my earlier days putting in hours and I had the energy to do so. I enjoyed what I was doing and felt fortunate to do it, and never felt overworked. I only highlight this because I think it's important to anyone who is interested in the industry to note that this may seem like a challenge at first for most.

### YOU'VE RECENTLY GOT A HUGE PROMOTION TO A SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT POSITION. WHAT DO YOU THINK WERE THE BIGGEST FACTORS THAT PLAYED A PART IN YOUR SUCCESSFUL CAREER THUS FAR?

A few factors - first and foremost I put a great deal of time, energy, and passion into my job here and it's never felt like a job to me. I am fortunate that I have been able to have a career in a field that I love. The second factor would be working so closely with my boss and mentor Louis Messina, who was able to see my talent and give me the opportunities to continue to be challenged, grow, and shine. I would often times say that the number years of experience, age, etc. can be a factor in some companies with how quickly you climb the ladder, but I have found at MTG getting to work so closely under Louis directly allowed me to climb that ladder quickly because he saw the work I was doing first hand. In addition to Louis, I would say that Kate McMahon in my office who is Executive Vice President of MTG and oversees the marketing for all of our Country Acts including Kenny Chesney and George Strait has been very influential in my success at this company, as she's been here for me as a mentor as well. I've been very lucky to work so closely with her, and have learned so much!



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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: SARA WINTER

I think as much as hard work and talent are the most important factors, the last thing I'll note can't be denied, is being at the right place at the right time. The way things have lined up for me here, with the timing of having come on board, plus my first years of doing club shows and regional arena shows for AEG Live, and then Taylor Swift came along as an opportunity and I was ready for it at that time, and from there much more opportunity came along...ex: Ed Sheeran, Shawn Mendes & Vance Joy.

### WHEN YOU DO GET TIME FOR YOURSELF AFTER WORK OR ON THE WEEKENDS, WHAT DO YOU LIKE DOING FOR FUN?

I find my line of work to be feast or famine- you either have no life, or you feel antsy because you have time you aren't used to, but I've actually learned to embrace it when it comes! Last year between Taylor's 1989 World Tour & Ed Sheeran's North American run with MTG, I frankly didn't have much free time and found joy in Netflix and my couch whenever possible. Ha! On a year when I don't have as much travel, I cherish getting to do typical things - brunching with friends, activities around Austin - Barton Springs, shopping, concerts, entertaining out-of-town guests, visiting friends in other cities, etc.

### HOW HAS YOUR WORK AND EXPERIENCES WITHIN MSC TOWN HALL HELPED YOU IN YOUR CAREER?

I found that what I did and saw within MSC Town Hall was a small taste of the ins and outs of putting on events. Having that base 101 knowledge is clearly helpful when entering into internships and this field. For me MSC Town Hall was very important in terms of my path to Messina Touring Group- through MSC Town Hall & Dave Salmon I found Barbara Hubbard, who is also a very key person in my success. At the time she was hosting interns every summer to run this Amphitheater attached to a theme park in Hot Springs, AR. I was able to obtain a spot for this internship and through that internship and that connection was introduced to Jeff Messina at Messina Touring Group, who would be my first boss here. He was the talent buyer for Warehouse Live in Houston and I came on at the end of 2006 post graduation and handled the marketing for the club, and also assisted a marketer in my office who handled arena marketing in the South East region for AEG Live touring.

### WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS ASPIRING TO HAVE A CAREER IN THE MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY?

The best advice I can give is to take as many internship opportunities in the field that you can find. My second piece of advice is to be excited and maximize every internship opportunity no matter how mundane it may seem to you. If you get an internship with a promoter or at a radio station, etc. and all you do is make copies, then read what you are copying and go ask questions. You'll be given tasks and you can do them well and potentially never stand out. The way to stand out is to make yourself known. Ask questions, ask for more work than you are given, and go above and beyond. Let's say you land that gig after college, my next biggest piece of advice is to go in knowing this is not a 9 to 5 gig.

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Getting to speak with Sara Winter and learn more about the entertainment industry was a very enlightening experience. She is someone who knows a lot about hard work and making the most out of every opportunity that arises. While she does highlight in the interview that the work hours may be hectic and some months are certainly busier than others, the people at MTG are altogether very passionate and dedicated workers. Sara added that while you do have to know how to manage yourself and be independent, she enjoys the people around her. This is something she discovered was important to her through Town Hall. Town Hall helped her "make friendships with like-minded people and gave basic experience on the processes of a show."



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## P.T. BANKS: MOONLIGHT IS SUNLIGHT

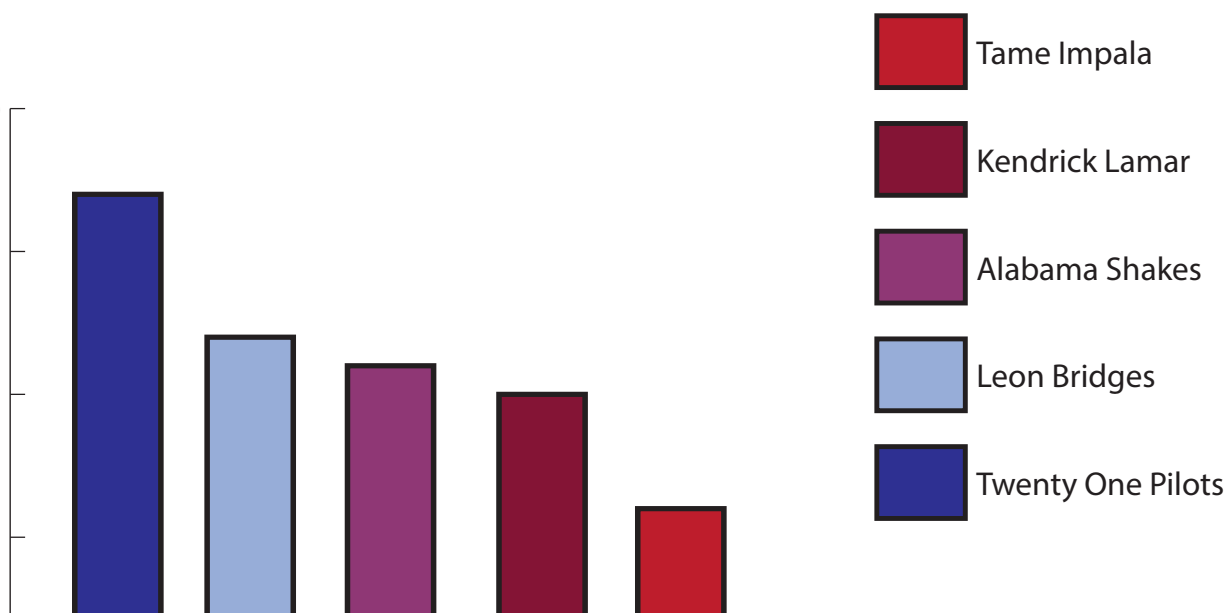


MSC Town Hall's Alumni Spotlight this month, Sara Winter, has recently gotten engaged to Paul Banks. Not only is Paul the leading artist of P.T. Banks but he is also another former Town Hall alumnus.

Banks recently came out with a new L.P., *Moonlight is Sunlight* in February. It is an indie rock album that according to Austin Monthly, "explores a sonic terrain where bouncing melodies illuminate buzzing rock songs and strings buoy somber ballads."

You can check it out on itunes or at [www.facebook.com/PTBanksmusic](http://www.facebook.com/PTBanksmusic)

## TOWN HALL'S FAVORITE BANDS





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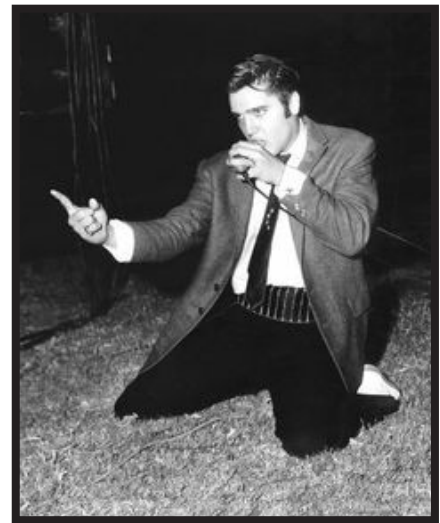
## A LOOK BACK: ELVIS PRESLEY

BY: MICHAEL MOLANO

MSC Town Hall has had a long history that in a way has become its own living legend. Over the years, Town Hall is said to have brought legendary bands and musicians like Elton John, The Beach Boys, and even Journey. But those bands, as great as they were and are, aren't even the most legendary musicians ever to grace our fine campus. That title belongs, in my opinion, solely to Elvis Presley.

On October 3rd, 1955, Elvis Presley performed on the stage of G. Rollie White Coliseum along with the seven other acts that composed the Louisiana Hayride Jamboree. This Jamboree was a travelling tour that had passed through Bryan a couple months prior on August 23rd. Tickets were a dollar at the door, which by today's standards would have been an astoundingly low \$8.85. Although Elvis' October performance wasn't the first in the area, it definitely wasn't any less interesting. Students were seen marvelling the rock star's Cadillac, and an altercation between Elvis and some cadets almost broke out when Elvis allegedly spit his gum out on the stage. Luckily, a company commander was there to stop anyone from rushing the stage, and Elvis issued a quick apology that seemed to satisfy the angry cadets.

Elvis Presley was, perhaps, the greatest musical revolutionary of the 20th century. Referred to as "The King of Rock and Roll" or just simply "The King", he is often credited as being the man who thrust rock and roll onto the stage, and into the hearts of rebellious youths around the country. But before that, Elvis stepped foot on the stage of the Jollie Rollie, and rocked Texas A&M.





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## TOWN HALLER SPOTLIGHT

### COFFEEHOUSE EXEC, TESS

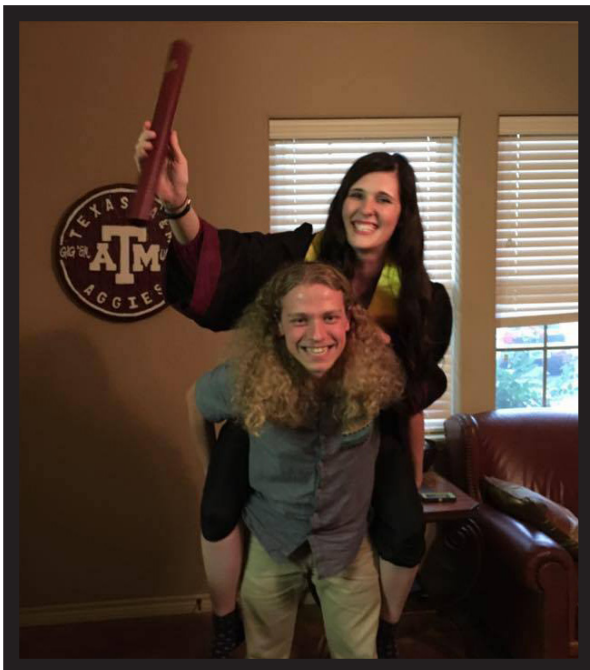
BY: TRAVIS DOGGETT

Tess Rose is a senior from Fort Worth, Texas, and is the Coffeehouse executive for Town Hall this year. This position entails a slew of duties that must be done in order for Coffeehouse to take place every other week in the lower level of the MSC. Tess' responsibilities as the Coffeehouse exec include managerial duties such as ordering the food and drinks given out to attendees, booking the performers and assigning tasks to her committee members. Additionally Tess dedicates herself to the improvement of Coffeehouse and is constantly striving to make the event even better for the student body. I got the chance to ask Tess about her passion for both Town Hall and music.



#### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN TOWN HALL?

Music has always been a huge part of my life. I've played piano and French horn for a large chunk of my life, and growing up my dad and mom instilled a love for music in me. I can't remember a time I wasn't looking for another festival or show to go to, or a time I wasn't looking for new artists and genres to explore. When I came to A&M I wanted to share my



love of music with like-minded people, and share that love of music with other students outside of that niche as well. It's been such an integral part of my life; I can't imagine not dedicating a large portion of my time to something music-oriented.

#### WHY DO YOU LOVE MUSIC?

This is a loaded question in my opinion, because it's hard to define my love for something that seems to overlap with almost all aspects of my life. I listen to the music I love as often as I can; I go to as many shows as I can with my friends. I guess that's why I love music.

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## TOWN HALLER SPOTLIGHT

COFFEEHOUSE EXEC, TESS

BY: TRAVIS DOGGETT

It's a way for me to connect with my friends and others, and it's a way for me to let go, just listen, and feel. Music is an incredibly freeing experience if you really appreciate it and love it.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE EVENT/PROJECT IN TOWN HALL?**

Of course my favorite project in Town Hall has been Coffeehouse Series. It's really been an awesome creative outlet for me. I've made so many changes to Coffeehouse as a whole, with adding coffee and snacks, making the music primarily student-focused, and adding decorations. It's been really great to see it all come to life after coming in as an executive my junior year with small ideas I didn't know could be actualized. Coffeehouse has meant a lot to me, and for me it plays a huge role in what Town Hall means to me.

### **WHAT MAKES A CONCERT AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE FOR YOU?**

A concert becomes an amazing experience for me when I feel connected with the music in the moment, and when I have my friends surrounding me. I love going to concerts and feeling like the entire crowd is connecting with the music as much as I am, and for me that really defines the concert experience.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS/ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?**

I'll be graduating come May with a degree in Psychology, and I'll be going to UT's Master's Social Work program in the fall. My dreams are simply to help people who need it, and help people remember that life goes on and we are all worth it. Hopefully I will eventually also earn my License in Clinical Social Work, so not only can I work in the Social Work field, but also in the mental health field- I'm hoping as a therapist one day. Apart from that, my aspirations are really just to explore the world and the people in it.

It should be clear to all of the readers that the passion that Tess has for this organization is strong and true. Tess' desire to help people and spread her love of music is what makes her such an essential executive to Town Hall, and there is no doubt that she will continue to use these amazing qualities to influence countless people for the better in her future.





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## NEW ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:

### JON BELLION

BY: JUSTIN HAIRSTON

Not many people know Jon Bellion's name, but they've probably heard his musical fingerprints without realizing it. Though he's been making music professionally since 2011, he's recently achieved large-scale success for helping write popular hits like "The Monster" by Eminem and "Trumpets" by Jason Derulo, the former of which won a Grammy last year. Though he's accumulated success and (relative) fortune from collaborating with big stars, Bellion has stated in interviews that he takes these jobs purely as a means to finance his more personal creative endeavors.

As a solo artist, Bellion put out his first work on a mixtape called *Scattered Thoughts Vol. 1*, released in 2011. This release earned him a moderately sized but passionately engaged fan base that continued to grow after he signed with Visionary Music Group in 2012. After releasing a few other free mixtapes, Bellion released *The Definition* in 2014. The album was available for free download on his website, and quickly earned Bellion a whole legion of new fans.

It's tough to even describe Bellion's music or to categorize him neatly into one genre. His music incorporates a myriad of influences and styles including techno, pop, hip-hop, and jazz, while maintaining the esoteric appeal and intimacy of a singer-songwriter. While his vocals are crisp and faintly reminiscent of Ben Gibbard (of *Death Cab for Cutie* or *The Postal Service*), Bellion truly breaks the mold with his production. He incessantly tinkers with every backing track, spending hours on end playing single drum loops over and over until each kick and snare pocket is perfectly aligned with the music in his head. He personally builds the majority of his vocal loops (when not tapping friends like Travis Mendes for features), and his tracks often incorporate soaring, chorus-like harmonies. While his process may seem obsessive or neurotic to an outsider, it's this visionary drive that sets Jon apart from his contemporaries.

Regardless of whether you like his music or not, it's indubitable that his sound is unique and bursting with individuality. While his songs are easily accessible to anyone who enjoys pop music, more discerning listeners can discover a wealth of creative nuance buried within the layers of each deceptively complicated track. In a current period when hordes of "producers" are mindlessly creating computer-driven music, it's refreshing to hear someone using modern musical tools to create something innovative, timeless, and bursting with voice.

You can stream *The Definition* for free on Spotify. Bellion's first major label LP, *The Human Condition*, will be available for purchase on all platforms. The first single from that album, *Guillotine*, is on Spotify and iTunes now.





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## DANCE MUSIC & TEXAS A&M

BY: JUSTIN HAIRSTON

Dance music, though misunderstood by many (including me, I found), is a broadly defined genre whose reach and influence has spread across the globe. I thought I had a decent understanding of the genre - that is, until I talked to Brandon Castro and Tommy White, Town Hall's current chair and exec of SPAM, respectively. Both of these guys are dance music fanatics, so I went to them to better understand the genre, as well as to gain perspective on dance music's presence (or lack thereof) on Texas A&M's campus.

I asked Tommy and Brandon to explain EDM music to me, and right off the bat, both of them explained my misuse of the term. According to them, EDM is a more specific term that refers to the largely popularized drop-based music that is popular at major music festivals. This term gets applied to dance music, when dance music as a genre actually includes many styles and genres that are much more nuanced and complex. The genre expands far beyond the Top 40 style of popular EDM artists, and includes artists who focus more on the musical composition than the pure, often cheaply fabricated emotion of EDM tracks. In simplest terms, Tommy described dance music as music created to make people dance. In a more abstract sense, Brandon described it as an "infinite canvas." In other words, it's a medium through which all kinds of artists can create incredible and unique sounds that inspire people and create a sense of community among listeners, whether they're dancing in a club or staying up late studying. An interesting bit of historical context: Tommy pointed out the fact that dance music has significant roots in the LGBT and African-American cultures of the 70s and 80s. Because of this, dance music has been and continues to be geared towards the inclusion of people who might not comprehensively fit into normal society.

When I asked Brandon and Tommy about dance music's presence on A&M's campus, both bemoaned the lack of a true outlet for true dance music fans. Though clubs on Northgate technically play dance music, their selection predominantly dips into the poppy-EDM songs discussed above. There is one group attempting to change that, however. DJs of Aggieland is a club that promotes true dance music, and Brandon and Tommy both suggested that anyone interested in or curious about dance music in general should go to their events on Wednesday nights at Hookah Station on Northgate. At these events, the group plays whatever music they want, which recreates the traditional dance music performance style of DJs spinning whichever unique tracks fit the feel of the crowd (or in this case, the room).

One theme I picked up on from my discussion with both Brandon and Tommy is the idea of exploration within the genre of dance music. Both guys recommended that anyone even curious in dance music should dive into the genre in order to discover their own personal preferences in style. In order to do this, both guys also recommended starting with more accessible artists like Disclosure, who have had several pop hits in addition to producing more technical dance music. Beyond that, Tommy recommended fully immersing yourself in dance music for a while to begin to truly appreciate the intricacies of the production and style. Brandon recommended starting on Spotify, but making a conscious effort to branch out beyond the front page, where more poppy artists live. By finding an artist you like, then listening to music from their label-mates and similar artists, you can truly begin to explore the genre.

My own interest in the genre of dance music was definitely piqued during my conversations with these two passionate Town Hallers, and I'm very curious to explore some of this new music for myself. If you're a casual fan, or even if you've never heard of dance music, I encourage you to follow their advice in order to enjoy a whole realm of incredible music that is criminally undervalued in the music scene at large. But then again, that social subversion is part of dance music's charm.

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**HAVE ANY PICTURES OR STORIES  
OF PAST TOWN HALL EVENTS?  
EMAIL THEM TO:  
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AND THEY COULD BE FEATURED IN OUR NEXT  
NEWSLETTER!**

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