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Staff Photo by Linda Kerr

FOLK SINGER TOWNES VAN ZANDT

Refreshing change in Austin musical entertainment

Townes Van Zandt Is Like Sunshine After the Rains

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Amusements

An evening with Townes Van Zandt and his Hemmor Ridge Mountain Boys is a refreshing change from the predominate country genre and raucous rock that permeate Austin music all too often.

Van Zandt and his folk performing are no aliens to Austin — with appearances during the past few years at small nightclubs including the 11th Door, Saxon Pub and Castle Creek, where he will be Saturday night for a final performance this week.

The usually solo Van Zandt has added bass and acoustic players to his show, Rex Bell and Mickey White respectively, all three who "have been friends forever," Van Zandt said.

They have been playing together at the Old Quarter Night club in Houston which Van Zandt considers home base, and Castle Creek was the first series they all played together outside of Houston.

The musicians present an informal coffeehouse style show, with casual interaction, droll wit and puns mixed with Van Zandt's beautifully written songs.

Always a folksinger, Van Zandt claims he has listed no address for the past eight years except "for my manager and my mother," looking sideways out of the corner of his eyes with eyebrows lifted; anticipating a laugh.

His songs are sensitive descriptions of personal feelings, relationships and in the traditional folk manner, American life. He combines several American musical genres of blues, country and western, ballads — all that evoke strong mental pictures of moving across the land.

Van Zandt also likes to tell stories, and explained about

one folk song that was the only one he ever really researched — he learned it from my grandmother, who learned it from a friend who was 90 years old, who learned it from her brother, who was 115 years old who lived in Dido, who learned it from Van Zandt.

He has recorded several albums on the Poppy label that include "Our Mother the Mountain," "Townes Van Zandt," "Delta Momma Blues" and "The Late, Great Townes Van Zandt." He recorded another album last spring that will be released in November.

Van Zandt and his music is subtle and fulfilling, and yet never common or boring. He is like the welcomed sunshine after four weeks of rain in Austin.

Another folk singer (rather, country-folk) appearing in Austin is Gosney Thornton, who has performed as back-up act to local groups here.

Only 24, Thornton has already traveled the circuits in Texas and California for several years, and recently decided to chance Austin with its growing reputation in music.

Thornton compared the current Austin scene with the cult that originated in the San Francisco Bay Area around 1966-67, saying there is a "general air of innocence in music" here.

He is also his own songwriter, with an interesting voice that evidences strains of Franke Laine, performing on acoustic guitar, banjo and harmonica, definitely showing more promise in guitar.

Thornton will be performing Sunday night at the Alliance Wagon Yard.

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Zachary Scott Sales Continue

Season ticket sales continue at the Austin Civic Theater at the Zachary Scott Theater Center where five plays and a musical highlight a new season with director Robert Swain.

The theater begins its season Oct. 11 with the play "Auntie Mame," which will be followed by "Witness for the