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Country Music

Van Zandt, Chenier Top Weekend's Music

By TOWNSEND MILLER
Special Writer

Two big favorites locally launch the week's live country music scene with performances this weekend. Personable **Townes Van Zandt,** whose singing and songs keep getting better with every visit, is at the Ritz Theater Friday night. We hope he'll have his two musical sidekicks, **Mickey White and Rex Bell** with him again, for they put on quite a show on their own. **Clifton Chenier** is at Soap Creek Saloon Friday and Saturday, where he is sure once more to attract capacity crowds to hear his Cajun Zydeco band.

David Allan Coe returns to Austin Sunday night, this time at Castle Creek. Coe, who has spent more than half his lifetime of some 30 years in jails and prisons, now spends a great deal of his time with rehabilitation programs. He first made his mark as a Nashville songwriter, and almost every country singer around, as well as some pop artists, have turned his songs into hits. The biggest was Tanya Tucker's rendition of "Will You Lay With Me in a Field of Stone," which Coe wrote as a wedding vow for his younger brother's marriage. Listen to the song with that in mind, and it takes on a whole new meaning.

More recently, Coe has begun to rack up hits of his own as a singer. His biggest probably are "A Sad Country Song" and "The Walls of This Bottle." Now he has a new hit single, "Would You Be My Lady," taken from his most recent Columbia album "Once Upon a Rhyme."

The nationally-recognized dean of the dobro guitar, **Josh Graves** comes to Castle Creek Wednesday and Thursday. Josh is well remembered here as a former star member of the Earl Scruggs Review — AND as an enthusiastic after-hours parlor picker and party-goer!

Joe's determined several years ago he was going to have an album of his own on a major label. He finally got it recently on Epic. It's called "Alone at Last." However, Josh is far from alone on it. A host of Nashville's finest instrumentalists back him up, a tribute to the respect they have for him there. Josh told me several years ago that if he said "when" he finally got the album, he warned me to write the liner notes. Instead, he had **Earl Scruggs** do it, and I bow humbly to that astute decision!

For fans tuned more to the blues, **Freddie King** will be at Armadillo World Headquarters Thursday through Saturday, where he feels so much at home, doing a live recording.

Looking ahead, next Friday and Saturday **Lightnin' Hopkins** is at Castle Creek, and next Saturday **Jimmy Buffet plus Jessie Colin Young** are at the Coliseum. Week after next, **Tony Douglas and the Shrimpers** are at Skyline, **Rusty Wier, Steve Fromholz, and B.W. Stevenson** are at Municipal Auditorium, and **Wheatfield** returns to the Alliance Wagonyard.

Country Calendar

(Compiled from information furnished by musicians, club owners and agents.)

Friday only . . . Downers Van Zandt at Ritz Theater. Carlos Santana and Journey at Erwin Center. Echo at Skyline. Jim McCord and the Dog

Carlos Y'uk City Ltd., Joe Pace (German brass polka band) at Split Rail. Univers at Armadillo.

Friday and Saturday . . . Clifton Chenier at Soap Creek. Groovy Wheels at Alliance Wagonyard. Silver City Saddle Tramps at the Lost Highway Band at Castle Creek. Buddy Wilson at Ballets Top-40 Dance Hour at Chicken Ranch. Gravity in the House at Pond Lot. Municipal Auditorium . . .

Saturday only . . . Bobby Bridger at Armadillo. Harmony "Sorkens of the Flower" at Creek Theater. Final performances. Ashley London at Bronco Spoke. Country Music Review at Silver City. Country Band at Split Rail. Country Gentlemen at Broker 'B'.

Sunday . . . David Allan Coe at Castle Creek. Buddy Bridger in musical narrative about the Old West at the Creek Theater. Performances. Joe Bell & Forrest Gill Band at Chicken Ranch. Buddy Wilson at Ballets Top-40 Dance Hour at Lakeside.

Monday . . . Josh Graves at Soap Creek. Jerry Jeff Walker and Michael Lewellen at Armadillo Wagonyard.

Tuesday . . . Acting at the Wheel at Castle Creek composers. Rick Cassidy at Chicken Ranch. Mexican conjunto (country) music at Split Rail. Austin All-Stars at Alliance Wagonyard.

Wednesday . . . Jerry Donahue at Skyline. Harris Bell at Soap Creek. Kenneth Threadgill at Broker 'B'.

Wednesday and Thursday . . . Josh Graves at Castle Creek.

Wednesday through Saturday . . . Frank Kelly at Alliance Wagonyard. Freddie King recording at Armadillo.

Mexican Conjuntos Music

Austin fans are beginning to discover **Mexican conjuntos** music and I predict it can become quite popular here, provided it is given the proper exposure. **Paul Tovar** of the Rockin' M Club gave me my initial education when I became interested in the music several years ago. Conjuntos is the Mexican equivalent of our own country music. It originated not in Mexico, but in the rural areas of South Texas. The basic instruments are the accordion and the bajo sexto, which is sort of an enlarged 12-string guitar and is played as a rhythm instrument. Other pieces are drums and either a bass or standard guitar or both. Brass occasionally is added.

The music is easily danceable (even I can dance to it!), which adds to the enjoyment. It often has a strong German polka influence, which is something no one has been able to explain to me.

That matter of conjunto music getting the proper exposure may be a problem. Best place to enjoy it is at the **Split Rail,** where **Ed Bennett and Jim Parish** have inaugurated a conjuntos night every Tuesday. It's a beautiful night to see the gringos and chicanos sharing enjoyment of the music there! Just another example of how music can bring people together.

CLIFTON CHENIER
At Soap Creek Friday, Saturday

When **Falaco Jimenez** brought his conjuntos band from San Antonio to **Soap Creek Saloon** last week, he got a tremendous reception. If Flaco, who is recognized as a master of the finger accordion in both chicano and gringo circles, can get a few more bookings in Austin, he could do much for the cause.

Country Pickin's

My failure to mention the concert Wednesday night by **Willie Nelson, Kinky Friedman and Jerry Jeff Walker** wasn't intentional. No one told me about it! And since I recently have cut down on my nightly cruising, I didn't pick it up via the grapevine . . .

It was great having Willie's father, **Pop Nelson,** and his band, the Texas Rhythm Boys, from Cleburne here at the Alliance Wagonyard! Willie's brother, **Charley,** was here as road manager, along with Willie's genial stepmother . . .

I love country music in the outdoors, where, as Tom T. Hall once said, it is in its natural environment. The first of this years' outdoor concerts is on the way, and it's a honey! The promoter, **David Dews,** has reached agreements with **Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker and Plum Nelly.** Negotiations are under way with **Kenneth Threadgill and Wheatfield.** It's slated for Sunday, April 27, near the Bull Creek Party Barn but in an area that will accommodate a great many more people . . .

The **Pointer Sisters,** slated for Armadillo next week, have postponed until May 14-15 . . . **Split Rail,** which states **Mexican conjuntos (country)** music each Tuesday night, is expanding its ethnic trend. Friday night they launch old-time **German polka** music with **Joe Pass's** band from Shiner . . .

Saturday and Sunday will be the last chance to catch **Bobby Bridger's** highly successful two-part musical narrative about the Old West at the Creek Theater. Final performance of "Seekers of the Flower" will be Saturday night and "Lakota" Sunday . . .

Wednesday night was the big one for **Plum Nelly. Don Gant,** Mr. Big for ABC-Dunhill records, made a special trip here to give a listen, after a long string of lesser lights in the company had recommended them for a recording contract. There is talk that fiddler **Benny Thurman** may be leaving the group, to be replaced perhaps by **Richard Casanova,** who recently left Asleep at the Wheel . . .

Ronnie Petersen, popular owner of El Paso Cattle Co., and **Trudy Hyatt** plan to be married at the club May 13. A host of Austin's top groups have volunteered the music in honor of the occasion . . .

Still no word from Lone Star Beer people on an exact date for the start of their Texas and Austin country music television series, but the first of the six one-hour programs, which should be shown soon, will feature sort of a roundup of all the 15 musicians and groups who will appear on the series . . .

Bob McKenzie phoned from Houston to tell me that **Billy Gray** died this week. Gray, long-time friend of Willie Nelson and a popular band leader in the Fort Worth area, suffered a heart attack several weeks ago. He was only about 40 years old.

Austin country music in general and radio KOKE-FM in particular have been cited in the **Congressional Record** by Rep. **Jake Pickle,** who several years ago also paid similar tribute to **Kenneth Threadgill.** The latest citation quoted an excerpt from this column and a story from Billboard magazine . . .

The annual Grammy Awards presents almost 40 different awards in various musical categories. It has taken some doing to filter out this year's winners in country music, but here they are: male vocalist, **Ronnie Milsap;** female vocalist, **Anne Murray;** best duo or group, **The Pointer Sisters;** best country instrumental performance, **Chet Atkins and Merle Travis** for their album; best song, **Billy Sherrill and Norro Wilson** for "A Very Special Love Song," and best album liner notes, **Charles Townsend** for the Bob Wills album "For the Last Time."

(Townsend Miller's country music column appears each Friday in the American-Statesman.)

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Willie, Jeff, Kinky Start Slow; Concert, Crowd in Hot Finale

By JANE FRIES
Staff Writer

Four things come to mind about the Willie Nelson-Jerry Jeff Walker-Kinky Friedman concert Wednesday night: It was freezing, it was dusty, it was slow getting started, and it ended like dyn-O-mite.

Those that persisted through the night's various obstacles finally saw a good show by all three entertainers.

But, oh it started off badly.

A group called "Honeybuns McCoy," featuring a blonde female singer and a short cowboy, met with such disfavor by the crowd that they were finally booed from the stage. Maybe part of the crowd unhappiness was a result of their wanting to see Kinky, Jerry Jeff or Willie. Whatever the reason, Honeybuns was terrible. Their music was sort of a sour mixture between acid rock and folk.

Honeybuns started at 9 p.m. and played for less than an hour, but a testy sound crew didn't get things set up for Kinky until 10:30 p.m.

He came on like a wildcat. Donning a rainbow of colorful clothing, including red, white and blue chaps and a purple, fussy gaustar strap, Kinky delighted the crowd with his upfront style.

Kinky was just what the crowd wanted to see. But, after only about four or five songs, Kinky's turn on stage was over, leaving the crowd wanting much more from the Texas "Jewboy" who rarely performs in Austin anymore.

In contrast, Jerry Jeff was subtle after the flashy Friedman, but his well-known music again brought the crowd to its feet.

About midnight, Willie joined Walker on the stage. The show finally was really moving at this point — and it was a good thing because the temperature inside the dirt floored Philip-Mem arena was about 40-degrees. The good music kept the crowd clapping, and warmer.

Sometime in the night, mayoral candidate Jeff Friedman gave a short political speech, urging the audience to vote Saturday and promising to extent alcohol drinking hours to 2 p.m.

But, by that time, it was after 1 a.m. and everything was a blur anyway.

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ZSTC Play Opens Today

Based on Barbara Allen Legend

"Dark of the Moon" begins a three-weekend run at the Zachary Scott Theater Center Friday. The play is a joint production of the Austin Civic Theater and the Austin Community College.

The play is based on the ballad of Barbara Allen, the story of which revolves around John the Witch-boy who wants to become human for love of Barbara Allen.

Eleven students at Austin Community College are members of the cast. They include Tom Harrison as John Witch-boy, Larry Bargsley as Bart Dinwitty, Spencer Gardner as Mr. Bergen, Josie Garrett as Mrs. Bergen, Debra Hardy and Genny Scallorn as witches, Donald Jones as Mr. Atkins, Ben Knight as Mr. Jenkins, Scott Lanford as Marvin Hudgens, Kathy Saunders as Edna Sunney and Nelda White as Granny Gorman.

Raquel Gavia, program leader for foreign languages at Austin Community College, will play the part of Hattie Heffner.

Other members of the cast include Al J. Bieter, Cricket Blackburn, Stayton Calhoun, Dave Davis, Dick Groseclo, Sally Haley, Betty Hendrix, Margaret Noack, Eileen Smith, Nick Sweet, Ferrest Ward, Patty Womack and Janet Young. Naomi Kelly will play the role of Barbara Allen.

Charles Hawkins, a student at Austin Community College, is assistant stage manager.

The play will be presented Friday and Saturday at 8:15, and a Sunday matinee is set for 2:15 p.m. The play is also scheduled for the following Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, April 10-12, with a matinee April 13. The final weekend, April 17-19, will not include a Sunday matinee.

Reservations may be made by calling 476-0541. Admission is $4 for adults, $3 for students.

Organ Concert Slated at UT

Works by two famous French organists will be performed Sunday in a recital by University of Texas music faculty artist Frank Speller.

The recital will begin at 8 p.m. in the Music Building Recital Hall and is open to the public free of charge.

The artist will perform French symphonic organ pieces by Louis Vierne and Marcel Dupre, 20th century composers whose works are founded in the French penchant for improvisation.

The works, representative of the symphonic organ music tradition which has almost died today, include Vierne's Second Symphony and Dupre's Symphony Passion.

Wildlife Art on Exhibition

The third annual Texas Relays Cowboy and Wildlife Art Show will run through Saturday at the UT Alumni Center.

Works of cowboys-turned-artists including Jack Bryant of Azle, Bob Moline of Joshua, Wes Speir of Spicewood, Mark Storm of Houston, Wayne Terry of Odessa, Jim Thomas of Amarillo and Jack White of Austin will be featured.

The exhibit is open to the public Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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