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The Austin Statesman

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11th Door Duo on Singing, Hippies, Protest -- 'Satisfy Yourself'



By ALICIA BELTON Staff Writer

"These fellows sing just for the joy of it."

Thus spoke 11th Door manager Richard Gammon of singers Bill Moss and Townes Van Zandt, who appear together for the last time this weekend at his club.

Gammon, Moss and Van Zandt have common views on several subjects, including the image of young people, a society over-discussed topic these days.

"As you grow up," Gammon opined the other day at Moss's hippie home beyond Mount Bonnell, "you learn that groups fall you. You have to satisfy yourself. It's not cynicism," said the son of an A.M. University bacteriology professor, "that's the way it is."

"I'm not detesting anyone or anything in the way I dress or live. It's mine — my way," he continued. Someone else pronounced, "We're not hippies."

Dick Roberts, a friend who is a freelance photographer from Cambridge, Mass., said, "you have to have a lot of money to be a hippy."

Roberts has traveled on both coasts and through Europe, and has stopped over with "hippy" bunches most of the way.

Consumers of LSD and STP are called druggies or freakies — because of their hang-ups, the group agreed, they are looked down upon.

"The militant groups are becoming increasingly obnoxious," Gammon said. "They miss the days of being martyrs for a cause, and are determined to be unpopular."

Of Moss and Van Zandt, Gammon said, "These fellows think it's more important to believe that people can be reached through their music freakies — because of their hang-ups, the group agreed, they are looked down upon.

The 37 songs Van Zandt has composed range from blues to country-western to contemporary surreal folk.

After his stint at the 11th Door, he returns to Houston to sign publishing and recording contracts with a large country music company, after which, said Lee Bryan, 11th Door handyman and former manager, "we can't afford him."

Dubbed a "Frank Williams type" by record company brass, Van Zandt said he started writing songs because when he was a neophyte professional competing for audience attention he needed fresh material that hadn't yet been perfected, and he needed to demonstrate his aptitude to himself and the other musicians. Songwriting at first a challenge, is now a compulsion — "I couldn't stop if I wanted to," he said.

Big bill Moss, sometimes referred to as "the voluble laddy bear," may be a sound big enough to match his voice. Once, before an all-star audience at the Door, Moss had an opportunity to really let go with some blue numbers — instead he chose some sweet, smooth ballads that had the audience, to a man, eating from his hand.

Equally skilled on the six-string guitar, banjo, harmonica, autoharp, kazoo, piano, organ and violin, Moss is also a gunsmith, hunter, auto mechanic, sound engineer, exterminator, guide, maker and cook who lives happily in a clutter of with formal music study at canners, tape recorders, college and, best of all, his biographical data sheet contains some typical incongruities, to wit: A family part-Baptist and part-Jewish; an education that mixed piano study from mother and aunt with formal music study at canners, tape recorders, college and, best of all,

experience that includes serving with Smokey Joe (the "Sustained Fidelity") and his Smokey Mountain Boys on the Wheeling, W.Va., radio. The list continues: Naval combat veteran; co-owner of the White Horse of Bleecker Street coffeehouse in New York; game warden-cooperatives in Texas and Colorado; and singing his club in St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago and Houston.

During the Bleecker Street period he was rated one of the nation's top 10 guitarists in a national music magazine poll. Now that he's "settled for a while" in Austin, scores with a "you're on any night" arrangement with the 11th Door. Moss seems to have found a temporary groove.

BILL MOSS AT HIS HILLTOP HOME. Sportsman and guitarist extraordinaire

Jade Room Star Closing Stand Here

Friday and Saturday will be the last nights Austinites may hear popular singer-songwriter Jimmy Eldridge before he closes his stand at the Jade Room and moves on to a date on the West Coast.

The New Orleans artist accomplished both as a singer and as a pianist, specializing in rhythm and blues. In the Jade Room he is being backed by the Rhythm Kings, versatile troupe band which also provides dance music between sets.

Well known for his hit single recording of "Funny How Time Slips Away," Eldridge has

"Funny Girl" is breaking all attendance records for the Zachary Scott Theater Center.

Jerry Barber, president of the theater board, said that, because of the large audience and the popularity of the play, "Funny Girl" has already broken all attendance records. Near capacity crowds at the 300-seat audience have been noted during each previous performance, he said.

Tickets for the two remaining performances may be purchased at the boxoffice, 204 E. Fifth, or reserved at GR 6-6911.

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