Songwriter teaching 'in the joint'

By RUSTY CAWLEY

Singer and songwriter Don Sanders is using his talents in a new job. He's teaching songwriting to boys in the state reformatory in Gatesville.

Sanders has performed profes-sionally since 1966. He has produced two albums, one single, a host of critically-acclaimed concerts and a small but dedicated following through southeast Texas.

"Yes, sir. Donny Joe's in the joint," Sanders told a Basement coffehouse audience at Texas A&M University Friday night.

'I'm gonna come out singing about how rough it is. Me and Johnny Cash.'

But in private, Sanders talks seriously about his work at the reform school. He teaches 120 students once a week. Out of those, 30 see him twice a week. They range from

Sanders is paid through a grant the program after. from the National Endowments for the Performing Arts. The program ear. will end June 30.

spends much of his time giving beginner guitar lessons. The school

has no other music program. "It really slows down the process of teaching songwriting, but it has to be done," Sanders says. "I just teach them basics. No baby chords using one finger, but basics like three-chord blues progressions.

"I think it's better to teach them that than to say 'Hum a tune and I'll take it down.' They'd learn nothing that way

Since this is the first music pro-

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13 to 17 years in age and from petty theft to murder in the crimes they have been convicted for. gram at the reformatory and since Sanders has no formal training as a teacher, he has nothing to model

So, he says, he literally plays it by

'I use a different language when I Though his job is to encourage talk to the kids," Sanders says. "I avoid technical words like 'metaphor.

> "I also substitute 'make up songs' for 'songwriting.' Songwriting makes it sound like too much work Sanders says he tries to simplify composition as much as he can for his students. He gives them a phrase such as: "I used to be. . . "I just say 'I'm bored and I'm tired of doing this. I go and you do what you want to do." phrase such as: "I used to be. ... but now I am.

The students complete the phrase, then sing it to a standard only or blues progression. The first line is course.

AGGIE NIGHT

sung twice and the second line completes the thought.

Some of the kids have been through a lot and don't like to express themselves like that," Sanders says. "But some of them can get

very symbolic. "One said, 'I used to be a '68 Dodge, but now I'm parked in my garage.' Very heavy." There are times when personality

differences between he and the stu-dents cause problems. But he says he doesn't bother trying to be a disciplinarian.

'That usually works.'

In the month Sanders has taught, only one student has dropped the

"He was wanting to get out of working. But he learned songwrit- is.

ing is work, too. So he quit." Sanders spends Monday through Thursday in Gatesville and the weekend on the road fulfilling concert bookings.

"One of the problems with the job was that they gave me so little time to make the adjustment," Sanders says. "I've got bookings to make, so I have to travel from Gatesville to wherever and back.'

After his final concert at the Basement Saturday, Sanders was scheduled to drive to Houston for a Sunday concert at Rice University and to drive back to Gatesville immediately afterwards.

He says he loses track of where he they haven't really listened

'All I know is is I'm in a Hotel 6 or a Holiday Inn. I can tell by whether or not there's a key in the TV

The traveling and the teaching combined to rob him of time once used for his own writing, he said. Sanders, small and lanky with a lightning smile, is known for humor-ridden, laugh-a-minute performances. He is half singer, half comedian.

But he says his image is a barrier to his becoming recognized as a serious composer.

"I get tired of requests for 'Open My Third Eye Momma' or 'Head Full of Reds.' Especially when I feel

"I don't want to write drug experience anymore. not interested. "I want to create image to express gentleness, tend

more serious songs.

Sanders says his audie expect a change in his style will be gradual.

"I won't ever lose my humor, I'm sure. But myp ance will take a more se I'm not sure how it will chan it will. "One thing is for certain."

afraid to change. "I'm not afraid of myse more

2,600 Aggies to graduate in two-day commencement Rascal

More than 2,600 students are expected to receive degrees at Texas A&M University in commencement exercises Friday and Saturday.

Commencement speaker for both programs will be Dr. Kenneth H. Ashworth, Texas commissioner of Ashworth was appointed to the top administrative post for the Coor-dinating Board, Texas College and University System, after serving in executive positions within the University of Texas System. He was vice chancellor for academic affairs from 1969 until 1973. That year he was named executive vice-president of the University of Texas at San Antonio, the position which he held prior to his current appointment. Exercises will be conducted at

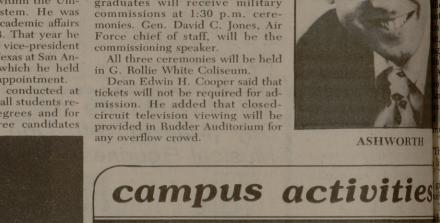
7:30 p.m. Friday for all students receiving graduate degrees and for undergraduate degree candidates from the Colleges of Architecture and Environmental Design, Education, Geosciences, Liberal Arts, Science and Veterinary Medicine. Ceremonies beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday will be for undergraduate degree candidates from the Colleges of Agriculture, Business Administration, Engineering and Marine Sciences and Maritime Resources.

Approximately 110 of the new graduates will receive military

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gram, Rudder Auditorium, 330 m Seminar, Dr. Andrew R. Mein Departments of Agricultural add Scoates 214, 2 p.m. Student Chapter Americe Cam Meteorological Society, Solar Ea-Seminar, "Sun Power for Fars," Henge of the Future," and "Energy" Dimes American Experience," continuous and lets, ings of the films from 11 am to 12 m, elt buck Oceanography-Meteorology 120 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Oceanogram Meteorology 1213 (free admission) This nu

FRIDAY Dead Week. Spring S-Spring Semester Classes End. Commencement, Dr. Kennet Ashworth, G. Rollie White Coliseur



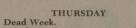
TUESDAY Dead Week.

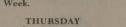
TUESDAY Dead Week. University Symphonic Band Concert, Rudder Auditorium, 8 p.m. Plant Sciences, Seminar: Dr. C. A. Beasley, University of California, River-sid, "In Vitro Ovule Culture Methods as a Means for Assessing the Influence of Environmental, Hormonal and Nutri-tional Factors on Auxin-Regulated Ovule and Fiber Development in Cotton," Plant Sciences 112-113, 3:30 p.m. Biochemistry/Biophysics Society, Election of officers, Rudder 308, 7:30 p.m. Tench With a Smile, Conversation Hour, MSC Cafeteria, 12 noon. Megistration, Eighth Annual City of Bryan Tennis Tournament, Sa.m. - 5 p.m. Entry forms available at Bryan Recreation & Ararks Department, Sears Tri State, A&M Sporting Goods and Hoover Tennis Service.

WEDNESDAY El Paso Hometown Club, Election of fficers, MSC 141, 7:30 p.m. Dance Arts Society, Modern, G. Rollie a.m. White 266.

Dead Week.

Faculty Achievement Awards Pro-





Comm Chite 266, 7:30 p.m. Student Senate, Harrington 204, 7:30 G. Rollia Final

Boot Dance, MSC 201, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY Mother's Day

Commissioning, Gen. David C. Rollie White Coliseum, 1:30 p. Final Review, Main Drill Field

SATURDAY Commencement, Dr. Kenne shworth, G. Rollie White Colis

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