

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 professionally 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 coffeehouse 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

13 to 17 years in age and from petty theft to murder in the crimes they have been convicted for. Sanders is paid through a grant from the National Endowments for the Performing Arts. The program will end June 30. Though his job is to encourage creativity from his students, he 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-

gram at the reformatory and since Sanders has no formal training as a teacher, he has nothing to model the program after. So, he says, he literally plays it by ear. "I use a different language when I 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... but now I am..." The students complete the phrase, then sing it to a standard blues progression. The first line is

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 students cause problems. But he says he doesn't bother trying to be a disciplinarian. "I just say 'I'm bored and I'm tired of doing this. I go and you do what you want to do.'" "That usually works."

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

"He was wanting to get out of working. But he learned songwriting 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 is. "All I know 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

they haven't really listened more serious songs. "I don't want to write about drug experience anymore. I'm not interested. "I want to create images to express gentleness, tenderness. Sanders says his audience expect a change in his style will be gradual. "I won't ever lose my humor, I'm sure. But my presence will take a more serious turn. I'm not sure how it will change it will. "One thing is for certain, I'm afraid to change. "I'm not afraid of myself more."

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2,600 Aggies to graduate in two-day commencement

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 higher education. Last year Ashworth was appointed to the top administrative post for the Coordinating 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 commissions at 1:30 p.m. ceremonies. Gen. David C. Jones, Air Force chief of staff, will be the commissioning speaker. All three ceremonies will be held in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Dean Edwin H. Cooper said that tickets will not be required for admission. He added that closed-circuit television viewing will be provided in Rudder Auditorium for any overflow crowd.



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campus activities

TUESDAY
Dead Week.
University Symphonic Band Concert, Rudder Auditorium, 8 p.m.
Plant Sciences Seminar: Dr. C. A. Beasley, University of California, Riverside, "In Vitro Oocyte Culture Methods as a Means for Assessing the Influence of Environmental, Hormonal and Nutritional Factors on Auxin-Regulated Oocyte 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.
French With a Smile, Conversation Hour, MSC Cafeteria, 12 noon.
Registration, Eighth Annual City of Bryan Tennis Tournament, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Entry forms available at Bryan Recreation & Parks Department, Sears Tri State, A&M Sporting Goods and Hoover Tennis Service.
El Paso Hometown Club, Election of officers, MSC 141, 7:30 p.m.
Dance Arts Society, Modern, G. Rollie White 286, 7:30 p.m.
Student Senate, Harrington 204, 7:30 p.m.
Dead Week.
THURSDAY
Dead Week.
Faculty Achievement Awards Program, Rudder Auditorium, 3:30 p.m.
Seminar, Dr. Andrew R. McFarland, Departments of Agricultural and Engineering, "Air Quality Status," Scoates 214, 2 p.m.
Student Chapter American Meteorological Society, Solar Energy Films: "Sun Power for Farms," "Dilemma of the Future," and "Energy American Experience," continues through the films from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oceanography-Meteorology 1213 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Oceanography 1213 (free admission).
FRIDAY
Dead Week.
Spring Semester Classes End.
Commencement, Dr. Kenneth Ashworth, G. Rollie White Coliseum, 9 p.m.
SATURDAY
Commencement, Dr. Kenneth Ashworth, G. Rollie White Coliseum, 9 a.m.
Commissioning, Gen. David C. Jones, G. Rollie White Coliseum, 1:30 p.m.
Final Review, Main Drill Field, 1 p.m.
Boot Dance, MSC 201, 8 p.m.
SUNDAY
Mother's Day.

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