

FOCUS

Entertainment supplement to The Battalion

Thursday, October 8, 1981



Francis Mendenhall as Miss Mona and Christopher Wynkoop as Sheriff Ed Dodd will appear in MSC Town Hall's presentation of "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas."

Town Hall presents concert, Broadway play

From Motown to La Grange, from soul to sex MSC Town Hall is providing plenty of entertainment this week.

Friday night the Commodores will bring their unique blend of ballads, jazz and soul to G. Rollie White Coliseum, a show guaranteed to boost the blood pressure of any soul fan.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings the American Theatre production of "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" will sing and dance across the stage of Rudder Auditorium. What new can be said about the attraction of this show, based on Marvin Zindler's zealous fight to close the La Grange Chicken Ranch?

The regional appeal of "Best Little Whorehouse" — La Grange is just a couple of hours away — its rave reviews and a natural curiosity about brothels explain why this show is sold-out.

But why would thousands of students from a conservative University such as Texas A&M rush to sit in a gymnasium and listen to soul music?

Maybe it's because the Commodores can play jazz, funk and romantic ballads — and do it all well. With hits varying from the funky "Brick House"

and "Too Hot Ta Trot" to ballads like "Three Times a Lady," the band is able to keep its audience alternately energized and mellow.

The group's lead singer, Lionel Ritchie, is responsible for most of the group's softer tunes, and is the band's balladeer. Drummer Walter Orange wrote some of the group's more sizzling numbers, like "Too Hot Ta Trot" and "Squeeze the Fruit."

Other members of the band are trumpeter and business manager William King, bassist Ronald LaPread, Thomas McClary, guitarist, and on keyboards, Milan Williams.

Just when everyone here has a chance to rest from the excitement of this concert — not to mention that of midnight yell practice and the Texas A&M-Houston game — "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" comes to town. The show, that is.

The musical is based on the La Grange Chicken Ranch, a brothel that got its name during the Depression, when customers often paid for services with poultry instead of cash. Francie Mendenhall plays the madam of the amorous establishment, which was allowed to flourish under the watchful eye of local

law officers until 1973, when Houston reporter Marvin Zindler went on a successful crusade to close the "cancerous growth on LaGrange." For his efforts, Zindler received several broken ribs, courtesy of the La Grange's sheriff, as well as state-wide publicity.

Zindler is portrayed in the play as Melvin P. Thorpe, a reporter who wears an American flag necktie. That pretty well sums up the character.

The sheriff is romantically involved with the Chicken Ranch's madam in this version of the La Grange escapade. Put a madam with a sheriff and throw in a do-gooder reporter, and you've got some basis for a play.

The musical score of "Best Little Whorehouse" is accented with a country-western tinge to give it an authentic Texas flavor. The characters speak with drawls, and there's even a scene featuring Aggies.

The play is regional in nature, about Texans in a place almost as well-known as the Alamo, but that hasn't stopped it from becoming a hit on Broadway, where it's in its third year. Or on the West Coast, where a national touring company has been playing for two years.

Basement reopening next week

For explosive entertainment, bop over to 201 Memorial Student Center tonight and Friday night, where the MSC Basement Committee is presenting the Explosives, an Austin new wave trio.

In the two years since its conception, the band has played to packed houses in Lubbock and Austin, and opened shows for the Ventures, the B-52's and Robin Lane and the Chartbusters. The band — Cam King on guitar, Freddie Steady on drums and Waller Collie on bass — returned from California last April, where its single "Girl Like You" made the FM charts.

Taking a pop stance toward new wave, the band mixes

originals tunes with oldies such as the Four Top's "Reach Out," Bobby Fuller's "I Fought the Law" and Sam the Sham's "Ring Dang Doo."

But the entertainment won't stop when the Explosives pack up and head home to Austin.

Starting Monday, Basement has a week of entertainment scheduled to launch the reopening of the Basement, formerly the Basement Coffeehouse. This schedule, subject to change, is:

Monday — Monday Night Football (what else?) on the video screen.

Tuesday — the Marx Brothers

in "A Night of the Opera," presented by Aggie Cinema.

Wednesday — video concerts, to be announced.

Thursday — a dance, featuring a disc jockey and a variety of music.

Friday and Saturday — shows by local performers.

All these activities will be in the Basement, which the committee had unofficially renamed the Hideout. However, this name was rejected by the MSC Building Studies Committee this week.

For additional information on next week's events, call 845-1515; tickets for the Explosives are \$3, and are available in the MSC Box Office and at the door.



THE EXPLOSIVES