

Vanguards revitalizing ethnic roots of Texas rock

KANM sponsors Austin group's free A&M show

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

Austin's The Vanguards will dish out a double dose of spicy Texan "rock-a-mole" in College Station this Friday.

The Cajun-styled rhythm and blues group will kick off the weekend at 1 p.m. in DeWare Field House with a free performance sponsored by KANM. Then they will pack up and rush over to the Front Porch Cafe (formerly the Texas Star Tavern) for a late-night concert.

The six-piece band will be in town promoting their new release, *Hope and Schemes*, as part of a nationwide self-promotion tour for their Jamboni Records release.

Fred Jarmon, guitar and accordion player for The Vanguards, says the group is learning plenty of new skills with the new album.

"*Hope and Schemes* is the first release by Jamboni Records, which is an independent label," Jarmon says.

"So right now we're really trying to go out and do our own promotional work. We're stopping by radio stations and record stores in each town we play at.

We're learning to plug and sell, as well as record our albums."

Jarmon says the group got together seven years ago but settled into its present format two years ago.

Joining Jarmon is his brother Spenser on guitar, Jim Trimmier on saxophone, George Rarey on guitar and John Jordan (formerly with Jr Medlow and the Bad Boys) and John Treanor as the bass and drum rhythm section.

Jarmon says The Vanguards are committed to revitalizing the ethnic and regional flavor that typified early rock-n-roll.

"When rock-n-roll first started in

"We concentrate on rhythm and blues roots across the country that are very interested in hearing a Texas slant on traditional rhythm and blues forms."

— Fred Jarmon, Vanguards guitarist and accordionist

the 1950s it really drew on the regional ethnic differences," Jarmon says.

"Philadelphia had its own sound. New Orleans had its own sound. Detroit and Chicago had their own distinctive sounds. Each geographic region began cultivating its own style.

"In the last 10 years music has begun to conglomerate into a national sound that has abandoned any regional flavor.

"We're trying to deliver the regional sound of Texas and especially South Texas where my brother and I grew up."

Delivering the salsa-blues flavor of Texas means taking the group's show out on the road, which is exactly what The Vanguards have planned.

The band has made one previous trip to the West Coast and will travel to both coasts and many places in between this summer.

"The response outside of Texas has been great," Jarmon says.

"The reputation of Austin, Texas music precedes us wherever we go because of the reputation that Austin has for great bands.

"We concentrate on rhythm and blues roots across the country that are very interested in hearing a Texas slant on traditional rhythm and blues forms."

Hope and Schemes is The Vanguards' third release, but their first on LP and compact disc. The band previously released a single and a cassette.

Jarmon says the band plans to play more outside of Texas, and specifically Austin, but that Texas will always remain the focal point for The Vanguards.

As one of the rising stars of a Texas primed with unsigned, original bands, The Vanguards appear ready to slip into the ever-burgeoning pocket of heavily-scouted Texas acts.

Certainly Friday will be an ideal opportunity to refamiliarize ourselves with a little ethnic Texas flavor.



Battalion file photo

Austin's The Vanguards are: guitarist and accordionist Fred Jarmon, guitarist Spenser Jarmon, saxophonist Jim Trimmier, guitarist George

Rarey, and John Jordan and John Treanor as the bass and drum rhythm section. They will give two shows in College Station Friday.

Whistling bellybuttons, shower raids and polka-dancing chickens Americans' home video antics become surprise prime-time comedy successes

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Mailbags stuffed with fainting brides, singing dogs, polka-dancing chickens and raids into the privacy of the shower arrive daily at the busy shop that produces ABC's surprise hit, "America's Funniest Home Videos."

Programmers — and analysts of what the television audience wants to see — are agog at the reaction to the half-hour Sunday show, which has host Bob Saget introducing and narrating clips from home videos sent in by viewers.

Network television, which has lost viewers steadily over the past decade due in part to the advent of video-cassettes, has found a way to bite back.

The midseason replacement series reached No. 1 in the A.C. Nielsen ratings for the second week of March, and a one-hour rerun special knocked venerable "60 Minutes" out of the Top 10 slot. It also has mugged "Murder, She Wrote."

In the cramped warren of rooms at ABC where "America's Funniest Home Videos" is made, executive producer Vic Di Bona oversees a hustling young staff of 70.

They have learned, this weary-eyed crew, some amazing trivia about America:

• There are still plenty of out-

houses in this country, just waiting for someone with a Camcorder to kick open the door and astound the occupant. And spouses like to surprise each other in the shower with a video camera.

• There also are more folks than you realize who can make their bun-

"This is a show that is truly hard to mouth. If the country ain't funny, I ain't funny."

— Vic DiBona, executive producer

ched-up bellybuttons whistle out a tune.

• Nearly every kid in the nation sticks their faces and hands into their first birthday cake.

The mailbags, bringing up to 1,800 tapes a day, are "America's Funniest Home Videos" lifeline.

"This is a show that is truly hard to mouth," said Di Bona. "If the country ain't funny, I ain't funny."

Di Bona said his weekly show costs about \$400,000. His material is free, but he claims his staff and equip-

ment costs are considerably higher than other half-hour shows.

He estimates, for example, that the video machines purchased a few months ago are about to wear out. And because the tapes are of private events, clearances have to be obtained from featured characters before it can run.

But the cost still is about half the estimated \$800,000 a week needed to produce a Top 10 series like "The Cosby Show" or "Cheers," even with the \$10,000 awarded to the funniest home video each week.

ABC's censors have so far squelched just two of the clips Di Bona submitted. A youngster applying the nozzle of a running vacuum cleaner to his face was nixed, as was one of a baby crawling with a clear plastic mixing bowl over his head — too close to the eyes and nose, censors said.

Efforts to stage events are so poorly done that they have always been spotted, staff members claim.

A clip gotten on the show after being viewed by a screener, who grades it on a scale from one to 10, with those with a five or below eliminated.

The others are viewed by an assistant producer and move up the line before being selected.

Shadow skating



Craig Wright concentrates on his balance as he jumps a three-foot concrete barrier on his skateboard in a vacant parking lot off Villa Maria Road in Bryan. The lot is a popular skating forum.

Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

'Roger and Me' scathingly witty

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

"Roger and Me" is a wickedly witty film that poses as a documentary about General Motors' closing several automobile plants in Flint, Michigan.

Flint was once the capital and hometown of the GM world. Now it seems to be something GM executives would rather sweep under the rug.

Essentially, the satirically presented theme says corporate America is callous and insensitive to its workers, but the film has a bitter edge of its own.

First-time filmmaker Michael Moore blames GM chairman Roger Smith for Flint's economic and social deterioration. When GM began closing its plants, 30,000 GM employees lost their jobs.

Since a majority of Flint's economy depended upon GM business, unemployment, high crime rates and evictions became the norm. Smith (Roger) supported closing the plants despite the consequences.

An angry Michael Moore decided to pursue Roger in an effort to convince him to visit Flint, see the people's plight and then — he hoped — change his attitude.

Although Moore's efforts to meet Roger seemed half-hearted, his pursuit of Roger is hilarious, as he castigates GM along the way.

Moore's film may not prevent Flint's rapid decline, but he takes a sad situation, finds humor in it, takes jabs at those he believes responsible and adds a bit of social conscience as well.

The humor of Flint's plight stems from Moore's presentation of differing perspectives of people involved.

Several big names — including GM officials — Flint tourist agencies and celebrities such as Bob Eubanks, Pat Boone and Miss America 1988, got burned during interviews with Moore. Surprisingly, Moore doesn't

trick them into their blunders — they do it all on their own.

My favorite "Oops, did I say that?" was when a GM lobbyist claimed that corporations make a profit first, and are not responsible for employees or other citizens. His statements are a definite public relations blunder.

However, Moore was entirely fair with his interview victims. He ignores the chronology of events and strategically places interviews to support his point of view.

For example, while we hear Roger's Christmas speech, we see a Flint family being evicted on Christmas Eve.

Also, take note of this warning: If you are a little squeamish, beware of the scene in which Moore films a woman skinning a rabbit.

ROGER AND ME
Written, directed and narrated by Michael Moore
Rated PG-13

"Roger and Me" is funny filmmaking but lousy journalism, so do not mistake this film for a documentary. That's the mistake many people made when complaining that "Roger and Me" deserved a Best Documentary Oscar nomination.

A documentary is supposed to be factual and objective. Moore keeps fairly close to the facts, but he isn't even in the same solar system when it comes to objectivity.

Although it fails as a documentary, "Roger and Me" is a winner as an entertaining and thoughtful film. Go see it.

In Advance

Play approaches China's troubles

The Aggie Players will present "Children of the Chairman," a play about political and social problems in China tonight at 8 in the Fallout Theater, Room 144 Blocker.

Performances will continue Friday, Saturday and April 10-14. "Children of the Chairman" was written by Christopher Destro and is directed by Michael L. Greenwald, Texas A&M associate

professor of theater arts.

A&M junior theater arts majors Jonathan Burke and Sara Waak will co-direct.

Tickets are on sale at Rudder Box Office. Prices are \$4 for students and the general public and \$2 for season ticketholders. Tickets are free for Aggie Contributors. For more information, call 845-1234.

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Symphonic Band concert tonight

The Texas A&M Symphonic Band will present its spring concert tonight at 8 in Rudder Theater.

The performance is sponsored

by the Bryan Rotary Club. Tickets are on sale at Rudder Box Office for \$3 for students and \$5 for the general public. For more information, call 845-1234.

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