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Cooper molds diversity into hits in marathon set for Front Porch Cafe

By ROB NEWBERRY

"Hopefully, you can expect diversity tonight," Dana Cooper said. "I'll play lots of stuff off the new tape, some stuff that Shake and I did, and even throw in some of the country songs that I've done."

Cooper, a longtime singer-songwriter-guitarist, played an all-acoustic set for more than three hours at a tape release party Saturday night at the Front Porch Cafe. With an audience of almost 50, Cooper rolled through selected numbers from his 20-year career.

Cooper has been performing since the late '60s. In 1973, he released a solo album on Elektra out of Los Angeles. He worked on several independent projects around Texas through the seventies and eighties, including his band DC3, later changed to Nuclear Family. Most of his fame now comes from his last few solo releases and his work with Shake Russell in 1978-82.

Living in Nashville, Cooper tries to make it to Texas for a tour every three months. He likes the audience in College Station because they seem to be the most enthusiastic.

During his set, Cooper played a lot of numbers from his new tape, *Somethin's Gotta Give*, released about two weeks ago. The album has ten songs done with his band in Nashville, but Cooper's own guitar and vocals are mixed louder to stand out.

From the new album, Cooper played "Flower in a Rocky Land," an intense song about the difficulty of keeping love alive. He also rolled through the title track, as well as "I Just Wanna Be Different," lamenting the difficulties of a young man trying to find an identity. "I just wanna be different. Like everybody else, I've got to find myself."

Cooper's style draws heavily from folk, with a lot of bluesy rock and country thrown in. As a guitarist, he is incredible—moving quickly through rhythm chords, but still hitting the lead licks with precision. His style, performing by himself with an acoustic guitar, lends itself to gut-wrenching songs about personal experiences, and most of his tunes have a lot of soul behind them.

From the 1988 release *Complicated Stuff*, Cooper played through "Sometimes Pretending" and "Mandaddy" with all the feeling those songs' lyrics need. But he also rocked through the upbeat "Great Day in the Morning" with the audience helping him out on the chorus.

Cooper also threw in "The Beat of My Desperate Heart" and "All or Nothing" from the new release, as well as "Complicated Stuff" and "King of Fools." As the second half of his set began, he played a few audience requests, like "Say It Isn't So" and "We Can Still Be Happy" from his days with Nuclear Family.

On a more humorous note, Cooper dedicated "The Menace" to those in the audience who knew about Houston traffic problems. He also played "Hamburger People" by request, a song about people caught up in the fast lane.

Cooper heads back to Nashville after another show on tonight in Houston. He says that he really prefers traveling to being at home, so he'll be back soon.

"I get real stir crazy sitting around at home. Nashville has its benefits, but it can be very frustrating," Cooper said.

"I also get a lot of my ideas for songs while I'm on the road," he said, "although by now, I try not to think about writing too much. The times I do think about it are usually the times I close up and get a block."

Cooper's show at the Front Porch is one of the best solo folk rock performances I've seen. He adds harmonica and great lead parts to his tunes wherever they're needed, but always keeps the lyrics in the front of the song, because that's where his emotion lies. And those lyrics have a lot of emotion.

Cooper and Shake Russell have a date scheduled together at the Front Porch on December 10.

Keeping the faith Graduate's sermon reaches past pulpit

By HELEN WOLFE

"It's a good way to be graded... on your sermon."

For Texas A&M graduate Dr. Frank Pollard, Class of '55, the grade was a reward from the third annual Best Sermons competition. His sermon, "Keep the Faith... Anyhow," won an honorable mention out of more than 2,000 entries.

The competition was sponsored by HarperSanFrancisco, a division of Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. A panel of seven experts on preaching selected six 1st place winners and eighteen honorable mention winners.

The sermons are classified into six categories: evangelistic, expository, doctrinal-theological, ethical, pastoral and devotional. Pollard won an honorable mention in the expository (explanatory) category. His sermon describes how Timothy kept his faith in God in spite of his imprisonment and his unfaithful friends.

As the pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., Pollard says he makes time to answer invitations to speak to university students.

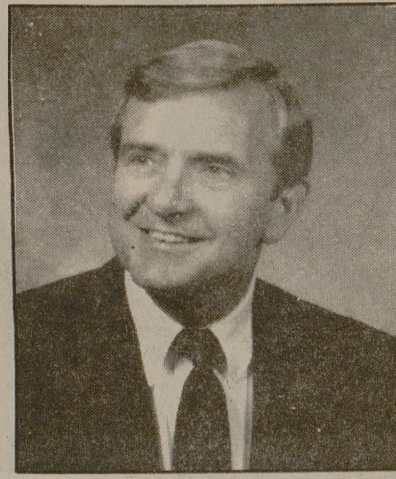
"I'm 56 years old, so I'm glad to speak to students," he said.

"I suppose they're hearing what I say," he said, citing the number of students who attend his speeches. He thinks that today's students are searching for the same things students searched for when he attended A&M.

While a student at A&M, Pollard was a member of the Corps of Cadets, president of the Baptist Student Union and a member of the baseball team.

"I was on the team but I didn't get to play," he said.

His most recent return to A&M was during a regional baseball game last season.



Battalion File Photo
Frank Pollard

Pollard says his next visit will also revolve around the baseball team. The Baylor game this spring will mark his 35th reunion, he said.

Now Pollard spends his time as pastor to a congregation over 7,000. He has been pastor of First Baptist Church for eleven years, with a six year hiatus from 1980 to 1986, to pursue other interests.

During this time, Pollard served as president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. He also hosted the religious program, "At Home With The Bible."

In 1979, Time magazine named Pollard and six other ministers as the "most outstanding Protestant preachers in America."

All sermons chosen in the third annual Best Sermons competition are published and available in "Best Sermons 3" for \$17.95.

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