

A lot to offer, but Townes goes almost unnoticed amid tons of hype



TOWNES VAN ZANDT

By CHRIS ELMORE

Over a year ago I bought the Townes Van Zandt album, "Our Mother the Mountain," because it cost me only 99 cents and I liked the cover. It was one of my luckier finds. With that album Townes became one of my favorite musical expressionists.

Townes is one of those singer-songwriters with a lot to offer, but whose talents go unnoticed by the public, lost amongst the hundreds of new record releases and tons of hype for which record companies are famous.

Townes was born in Texas 26 years ago. His family never seemed to stay in one place for too long. They moved all over the Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado areas. When Townes is asked his hometown, he replies with the many places he has lived.

Townes spent some time at the university of Texas but dropped out after a few years. He then began to devote most of his creative energies to writing songs, playing guitar, and singing.

Two and a half years ago, Townes signed with Poppy Records, the company which also records Dick Gregory and Mandrake Memorial. A few months later he recorded his first album, "For the Sake of the Song."

Since then, Townes has recorded three more albums and spent a lot of time on the college and city coffeehouse folksinger circuits, usually appearing as a second act.

He has played the Main Point and the now-defunct

Second Fret in the Philadelphia area. He hopes to return to the Main Point this month or next.

"For the Sake of the Song" was recorded and released when Poppy Records was a subsidiary of MGM. Now Poppy is under

ers himself to have only three albums.

Townes says that he was a "tone-cut hippy" when he recorded that album—a phase well-passed. Townes later recorded some of the songs on "For the Sake of the Song" on his album

ago. All of these albums are near-perfect—the production, singing, lyrics, arrangements, backup and even the covers. Never is the backup or production pretentious or burdensome, but always in perfect keeping with the mood set by the lyrics.

Townes' songs are mostly very simple very melancholy and very sad—mood music for his listeners. He writes and sings his songs of hard times, loneliness, country towns and lost loves in a way that lets you know that he is experiencing what he is singing and playing.

Townes' lyrical, vocal and guitar styles can only be categorized as simple and honest. His music is not folk, not country. It is Townes. It is Townes' honesty and it is Townes' simplicity, so his style is most refreshing and unlike anything else you have ever heard.

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the watchful eye of RCA, and the material recorded when the company was part of MGM is no longer available.

Because of this and his overall disappointment with the record, Townes consid-

"Townes Van Zandt."

In the last year and a half Townes has released three albums: "Our Mother the Mountain," "Townes Van Zandt" and "Delta Momma Blues," the latter released about three weeks



THE CHAMBERS BROTHERS headline the Feb. 5 dance concert at the Spectrum. Sharing the bill with them are The Allman Brothers, a country-rock band known as Cowboy and Little Richard.