

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

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 as 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-it-out 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

**Townes' songs are mostly very simple, very melancholy and very sad—mood music for his listeners. He writes and sings his song 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.**

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.



TOWNES VAN ZANDT

## Jimmy Webb music a tasty brew, indeed

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portant people will be there," they told him. Like Zsa Zsa Gabor.

The concert was chaos. A hundred musicians and singers on stage, playing largely without benefit of rehearsal, Jimmy in the middle, trying vainly to hold the beat and sing and play at the same time.

"Unfortunately, the critics couldn't appreciate the humorous aspects of the event."

"Rolling Stone and such publications fantasize that I am an establishment success story. They've written about me several times, in most uncomplimentary ways, but they've never come over and asked me what I thought about anything. The criticism is irrelevant. I've got books of it. It doesn't matter."

"My whole experience writing words and music has been to see what I could do, to explore the possibilities that presented themselves, that's all."

"So what if it doesn't take me six months and I don't have a nervous breakdown while I'm writing a song. If you're a songwriter your job is to write, not go around being tortured all the time, torturing yourself. You know, 'so it's real, man, blood, sweat and tears.'"

"I feel everything I write, but I feel it all consistently. I don't stop feeling when I stop writing, either. It's difficult to explain . . ."

The hour is getting late, so Jimmy and manager Sandy take off for the Main Point, where a long night-before rehearsal is about to happen.

The crowd is small for the Thursday night opening, but by the time Jimmy and his group are through, the place is exploding with applause.

He performs a few of the oldies, a pile of more contemporary numbers, in a sandpaper-rasping, twangy voice filled with emotion and energy.

His band has an ensemble feel, working exceptionally well with Jimmy's classical cum Jerry Lee Lewis piano stylings.

Especially refreshing and vibrant is Freddy Tackett's guitar work; flighty, jazz-rooted licks in the image of Freddy's good friend, Larry Coryell. Ray's drums and Skip's bass are consistently on top of things.

Webb music is a tasty brew, indeed. Not the stuff that dreams are made of, necessarily, not as "significant" as the art songs of Randy Newman or David Ackles, but immediately enjoyable, well crafted, rhythmic and melodic tunes, joined to lyrics that know the power of saying less to mean more.

"This is one of the greatest nights in my life," he confesses.

I believe him.

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