

Townes Van Zandt back on road again

By MARK PEEL
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Townes Van Zandt, the one-time reclusive Texas singer-songwriter, is back on the road again, has been writing some new tunes and hopes to get back in the recording studio for a new album as soon as possible.

Van Zandt, a Fort Worth native, is making his first appearance in the Wichita Falls area and will close out a two-night stand at the Flamingo Club Wednesday. After living in Houston and Austin, he now makes his home on a farm outside Nashville.

"I've been writing some new stuff and in a couple of days, I'll have enough for an album," Van Zandt said recently. "I'm not sure when I'll be able to get in the studio to start recording, but I imagine it will be after the first of the year."

His two most recent albums were "Flying Shoes" and "Townes Van Zandt Live at the Old Quarter."

Van Zandt said he's been playing mostly small clubs and college dates, but he added, "It's fun to be back out on the road again. I like just getting up there with my guitar, playing and singing my songs." He's accompanied by friend Danny Rowland and their sets are mostly acoustic.

With an intense cult-like following, Van Zandt is probably best known for his composition "Pancho and Lefty," a tune also recorded by Hoyt Axton and more recently by Emmylou Harris. "Guy Clark (a fellow Texas expatriate) and his wife Suzzane are about my best friends in Nashville and Suzanne and Emmylou are close friends, so that's how she came to do 'Pancho and Lefty,'" Van Zandt explained.

Most people who hear "Pancho and Lefty" think the song refers to Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa, but Van Zandt said that's not really the case. "When I wrote the song, I was playing at the old Rubaiyat club in Dallas and the song just started coming to me. I had the first verse written and B.W. Stevenson came in and we played and I finished it the next day.

"Usually, it takes me just one day to write a song," he



TOWNES VAN ZANDT

continued. "I didn't really write it about Pancho Villa, just a guy named Pancho. But if people want to think it's about him, that's OK with me. I usually write a song first and then try to figure out what it's about later."

Although most of Van Zandt's music could fit into a folk-music vein, he said he really doesn't like to put any labels on it. "It's just Townes Van Zandt music. Although I will say that most of the people who cut my songs are country oriented."