

# Country Cult Favorite Van Zandt City-Bound

By Mary Sue Price

Townes Van Zandt rarely performs in Oklahoma City, but he's no stranger.

In the late '60s, Van Zandt and Guy Clark worked regularly at clubs and coffee houses in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, notably at the old "Sword in the Stone" on Walker Avenue.

Van Zandt and Clark will present a concert at 8 p.m. Friday at Stage Center, 400 W Sheridan.

These days, Van Zandt and Clark are successful songwriters with hits at the top of the country music charts, but neither has strayed far from his folksy, coffee-stained origins. Both are Texans and have left the glitter of Nashville for the relative peace and quiet of the Lone Star State.

"I almost consider anybody born north of the Houston airport a Yankee," said Van Zandt, during a recent phone conversation.

"But that's not really true," he added in a soft Texas drawl.

Van Zandt and Clark have several critically acclaimed albums to their credit. (In fact, Van Zandt has a new

one scheduled for release early this summer) and both work regularly on the small-club circuit. But their songs have become famous when sung by other artists.

Van Zandt's "Pancho and Lefty," for example, went straight to the top of the country charts when cut by Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard. The enigmatic tune about trouble between two friends also shows up on albums by Emmylou Harris and Hoyt Axton.

Don Williams and Emmylou Harris teamed up for a hit cover of Van Zandt's "If I Needed You," which has been cut by Doc Watson. Steve Young, another Texas folk and blues singer, has released a stunning interpretation of Van Zandt's "No Place to Fall" and country singer Bobby Bare has cut Van Zandt's "White Freight Liner Blues" and "Tecumseh Valley."

Clark has found recent chart success with The Highwaymen's version of his "Desperados Waiting for a Train" and with Ricky Skaggs' version of "Heart-broke." Other artists also have re-

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