THE GUARDIAN Wednesday December 14 1994

# Scarlett's new fever

#### Television

### Nancy Banks-Smith

vomited into the commode, we knew, quick as a flasher, we were in for one of those noisy childbirths so prevalent in costume drama.

noisy childbirths so prevalent in costume drama.

And pretty soon, shricking a reat, she was lashed to the kitchen table for a Caesarian while he lich can be considered to the control of the control of

lashed to a table and threatened with a bloodstained knife, Gielgud seems happy to accept any part offered. Halfa horse in a pantomime, as long as it's the back half and he gets to sit down a bit.)

Last night Scarlett visited a number of huffy relatives and left in a marked manner after a row. Rather like Christmas, really. The little gem was Sarah Crowe (you know, the girl who's so fond of cheese) just zinging away as a fulfy-headed whore.

However, if you like melodrama with knobs on, things cheer up considerably tonght when Scarlett, pregniah with ot too strong on obstetrics ("The ace is up my sleeve now"), returns to the old sod.

The British are being brutat to

sod. British are being brutal to so the Irish (this bit should go down well in Boston) but none as brutal as Sean Bean ("Actually I'm the Earl of Fenton"). Not only does he smoke in bed, he stubs out this cigarette on his mistress. There is a bottled menace about Bean here like a petrol bomb in a crate of singer pon.

Death Of A Princess, I remember seeing him sitting not in an office but in the corridor, as if the high tide of outrage was carrying him and desk out of the door.

Between Life And Death (entra) sitting the control of the control o

didn't hardly know where he was, he was so high.

And he really didn't get any money, just wine. And he came out of the store with a gun that didn't have any bullets in it. We were in the automobile waiting on him and the guy that ran the liquor store walked out behind him and literally blew his heart out the front of his chest.

blew his heart out the front or nis chest.

"He fell around the parking meter, broken glass and wine and blood and he cried 'Oh, God!" And he was screaming 'Don't come here! There's no way out!"

Ron, a brand snatched from the burning, is a preacher now in the durt poor, beautiful mountains of Tennessee where there is no way out but up.

TV contracts, dog food ads, Raleigh chopper japes, Tampax titters, and all enveloped in a cardy and slippers image. Is comedy really the new rock'n'roll? Maybe not

# Laugh? I really tried

### Lyn Gardner

HERE are few sadder sights than the comedy addition is street of quick that he comedy addition is street of quick that he street of the street of



Jack Dee . . . from grumps stand-up to campy widgets

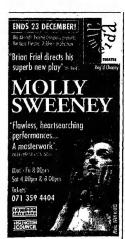




Rhona Cameron ...'I'm more together than I seem'

## Townes and country guru

Townes van Zandt, the original coutnry slacker, lights up the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms



## Bob Flynn

HESE days a Townes van
Zandt concert is aktin to the
eventual to the control of the
musical world, a sad yet
elevating experience. A countryblues guru for 30 years, a neargenius songwriter and the
original slacker, van Zandt
carries the personalised
wreckage of life into his songs.
Revered by the likes of Steve
Earle—who once said that he was
prepared to stand on Bob Dylan's
coffee table and proclaim van
Zandt ast he greatest songwriter
alive—through to the new kids,
Tindersticks and The Cowboy
Junkies, with his songs covered
by everyone from Nanci Griffith
to Willie Nelson, he remains at
the sideroads of fame, courting a
life of bottles and break-ups, not
commercialism.

If the three-bottle-a-day stories
are true, he makes Shane
MacGowan look like Bass-Hume,
manifel the makes Shane
MacGowan look like Bass-Hume,
malifel to make the side of his
European tour at the Assembly
Rooms. As it was he just about
made it to his on-stage chair and
it was obvious that the legend of
this holy drinker was not
exaggerated.

A long, rangy string of a man,
he seemed half wasted and

this holy drinke: was ....
exaggerate.
A long, rangy string of a man,
he seemed half wasted and
lurched from rambling jokes that
made him exstatically happy to
songs that ached with a suicidal
despair.
Like Hank Williams before

him, the original country god on self-destruct mode, he is someon speaking straight from the soul, the truth twanging out at you. If anyone encapsulates the idea of country as the white blues, it is

country as the white blues, it is him.

Far removed from the tinselly troubles of the MTV cowboys, van Zandt is the real thing and the scars, emotional and otherwise, are so evident it is sometimes hard to worth.

are so evident it is sometimes hard to watch.

"Sometimes you just give up, you know," he told the sellout crowd and, he told the sellout of the recording studies when the manic benders and depressions get hold, it looked like he might walk, or fall, offat any moment. But he carried on, the voice a dry, cracked parchment singing songs that came like brilliant shafts of light out of muddled clouds.

From his new album, his first in

shafts of light out of muddled clouds.
From his new album, his first in nearly a decade, Marie was one of the hardest, loneliest songs I have heard and a sudden dazzling burst of Lightnin' Hopkins-style blues-picking on Going Down To Memphis highlighted the immense talent below the alcoholic baze.
He ended up meandering into a Woody Guthrie singalong and then faded very quickly into his own confusion. During all this I had the tragic vision of Garth Brooks's limo purring towards another megahowle stravaganza while Townes van Zandt, with his battered guitar case, tried to hitch a ride.