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money to distribute it himself or make a deal with independents so he had to make a deal with RCA, MGM or UA and they just filed it away. A lot of people get the wrong idea about that but he toiled and sweated just to bump up against the corporations. I was with him from the first and we were making class records."

If that strikes you as just one man's opinion a cursory look at the rare record market would prove otherwise. Van Zandt's early Poppy recordings have been graced with exorbitant price tags ever since the demise of Poppy and now Tomato plans to re-release five of those recordings to meet the demand. Those Poppy sides are hard to come by, but

then, he just found out that wasn't the way to do it."

A lot of people on the east coast lost track of Townes after Poppy folded and his one attempt to record independently was botched when the financial arrangement never materialized. The tapes from that session are gathering dust in a vault somewhere in Nashville. Without a label behind him, Townes decided to concentrate on encouraging other artists to record his material.

"I'm trying to do that. I moved to Franklin Tennessee a year ago to do that. To coordinate some tapes. I think it's catching on. The New Grass Revival did one, Hoyt Axton another and Doc Wat-



Tomato Records

Van Zandt: 'I figure they're in the library of heaven right now.'

Townes is confident that at least one repository has them all in stock. "Man, they're ace records, I figure they're in the library of heaven right now."

Van Zandt was born in Fort Worth, Texas and grew up listening to Webb Pierce and Bobby Helms. When he went off to college he was introduced to folk music through Dylan's recordings and began playing clubs in Texas toward the end of the folk movement in the early sixties. "I started playing joints in Texas with people like Allan Dameron and Bill Moss who had been all the way through the folk movement and they were good. I'm no great shakes at singing or guitar playing compared to the good guys so I decided if I was going to do it, something I decided the first time I saw Elvis on Ed Sullivan with all those girls screaming, I'd have to write."

Strangely enough it was Jack Clement, an associate of Sam Phillips at Sun Records during Elvis' time there, who was the first to record Townes. Mickey Newbury was impressed by Van Zandt's songs and contacted Clements whose production credits included the entire stable of Sun artists.

"Jack is a smooth producer. I was in the studio and they'd say 'Okay play this one' and I'd say 'okay, but let me tune my guitar' and they'd say, 'That's all right, just play.' From then on, though, I've had at least one third veto power, but on the first album it was 'Come on son, sit right down here and play.' Jack has been in on them all since

son cut "If I Needed You." That was the first big one." More recently Emmy Lou Harris had a sizeable hit with "Pancho and Lefty."

Van Zandt's first release on Tomato was a live set recorded by an independent producer in 1964 but his first studio album *Flyin' Shoes* should be on the racks shortly. *Flyin' Shoes* was recorded in February and marks a departure for Townes since it was produced by Chips Moman, the man who recently gave Waylon, Willie and Luchenbach Texas something to sing about.

As a native son of Texas, Van Zandt has some very definite opinions about the "outlaw" craze. "I don't know who the dumb button breath was who connected Austin with Nashville. Someone said Austin was the new Nashville. That's not true at all, man. It's like Austin is the breeding ground and Nashville is where it's recorded. That 'new Nashville' is all bullshit! I don't know who did it but that's how it all began. At one point there were thirty six clubs that were hiring two bands a night and that's like eight or ten cats times thirty six. Now it's down to eighteen clubs and it's healthier now because a lot of deadweights are gone."

As to why Townes has always maintained a low profile in Outlaw circles, Van Zandt is ready to admit that he never enjoyed fronting a band. "There's just something about splitting up the bread at the end of the night that depresses me. ●



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