

If things were noisy for the Junkies' set, they were out of control for the opening set by Townes Van Zandt. As a result, the loutish crowd missed the best-written songs of the evening, as done acoustically by the lanky Tennessee songwriter, best known for his "Pancho and Lefty."

Looking like a latter day version of young Abe Lincoln, Van Zandt offers songs that are honest, precisely drawn and affecting. The indifferent crowd put a damper on the unpretentious troubadour's usual dry between-song humor, however, as he ran through his half-hour set.

There was one consolation, though: "With a crowd like this, you don't have to worry about tuning," he said.

No doubt, things will be suitably more quiet when the show moves from the barroom to a theater atmosphere at the Paramount Performing Arts Center in Springfield Saturday.