

Night Beat

It'd be hard to find a Texas songwriter more respected by his peers than Townes Van Zandt.

CountryBeat Magazine once quoted country performer Steve Earle as saying, "Townes Van Zandt is the best songwriter in the world and I'll stand on Bob Dylan's coffee table in my cowboy boots and say that."

His dark humor and bleak vision have attracted a diverse group of musicians including Emmylou Harris, Nanci Griffith and Cowboy Junkies, who have all recorded his songs.

Van Zandt's best-known work, "Pancho and Lefty," was a major hit for Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard. But the songwriter has issued tunes at his own pace, sometimes taking up to eight years between recordings.

Van Zandt's songwriting once moved a writer for *Rolling Stone* to call him "extraordinary" and say, "what makes him remarkable is that he's not a careerist. He's a throwback to the days of Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie, to people who sang and wrote songs as a part of their lives, rather than with an eye to the *Billboard* charts."

Executive Surf Club, 306 N. Chaparral. Van Zandt makes his Corpus Christi debut at 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. For more information, call 884-7873.

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Sporting a voice that is arguably one of the best in rock, Mickey Thomas and Starship land at the Piranha Room Monday night.

Thomas' R&B-influenced vocal on