

head and said, 'Dads, you've got all those recordings I gave you, you go make your record.' I immediately called Eric Paul and told him to start booking studio time and musicians. It was like Townes was telling me to go fearlessly, don't worry about labels, don't worry about money, just do it. So that's what I did."

Halfway through the production process, Austin/Austin called Eric Paul in search of unrecorded Townes Van Zandt recordings. Jeanene said, "Everything has been like that with this project—every day that I needed opened, opened. I didn't have to bang my head up against doors, they were swinging open in front of me. I didn't even have to knock outside. The whole process was just incredible. It just doesn't happen this way."

*A Far Cry From Dead* mostly reverts some of Van Zandt's strongest material from his early period, with the exception of the eerie "Satanian Blues," a haunting tale of death and dying which was the last song he ever wrote (recorded in 1996), and "Souls," a haunting dirge about roadkill. But where most posthumous overdub projects are sketchy propositions of the "What were they thinking?" variety, *A Far Cry From Dead* has the feel of a well-made record by an artist very much alive.

Eric Paul explained the synchronous process of the project's completion: "I first worked with Townes at Willie Nelson's Pedernales Studio in Austin in the late '80s. It's so fascinating to me that I ended up producing this record after his death—it's almost like he knew his own reason, in the time we spent together, he was able to convey a lot of feelings that I remembered vividly when I was working on *A Far Cry From Dead*. It was by no accident

that I became involved in this project. Jeanene knew that Townes and I had a musical relationship and she trusted me. This whole thing was special from the beginning. The most important thing was Jeanene Van Zandt's presence. I didn't have the option of the usual sounding head of the artist by my side. And, the relationship between myself and Jeanene during the making of this record was not the typical relationship between producer and executive producer. That was important because it took the mystery between the two of us to make this happen. It would have been a lonely road for me if I hadn't had Jeanene there."

Jeanene Van Zandt added, "There was no one big ego in the room, no 'witty' telling us what to do. It was me and Eric and the musicians, and of course he was there. Townes' presence was so strong in the studio, everybody felt it."

Some of the musicians Eric Paul selected for the project include Michael Spriggs (acoustic string instruments), Richard Bennett (electric guitar), Larry Kuehnel (keys), Kenny Malone (drum and percussion) and Charlie McCoy (bassoonica and vibes). Some knew Townes better than others, but all felt the special vibe of the project.

According to Eric Paul, "There was definitely a vibe in the studio during the whole thing in that everyone knew that this was something special happening. Every musician that was there got into what they were doing on a sensitive level and a very deep level. I believe that no matter what your religious beliefs are, Townes' spirit was definitely there. It showed up on tape."

Although a meticulous process, it was a labor of love for Eric Paul. Starting with the two guitar and vocal tracks which were dubbed over to multi-track, Paul then brought in Spriggs to reinforce the guitar foundations of the songs. From there, it was the slow process of adding each instrument and getting it right. The result is a recording that oozes out of sync, uncoordinated or inappropriate. From searing electric guitars and driving drum beats to acoustic instruments and subtle percussion and keyboard nuances, each song takes on an enhancement of its original character. The end result is a complete album that has a life of its own. It also has a warm sound missing from many of today's releases. *A Far Cry From Dead* was produced almost completely with analog equipment, and you can hear the difference.

Longtime fans will recognize the soulful as hidden gems of Van Zandt's best—"Dollar Bill Blues," "Panda And Lefty," "Rock Blues," "Lower Song," "The Tale Of The Song," "Snake Mountain Blues" and more. The album's release should garner Townes Van Zandt a whole new core of fans, along with more airplay than he ever received while he was living, just like he predicted.

Eric Paul himself predicts, "I think his career is about to take off on a large scale for the first time with this record. I think it is totally amazing what is happening here with a relatively unknown artist who had a profound effect on the evolution of his craft but didn't become fully known until after his death. I feel like what's happening with Townes is that there are a huge amount of people just discovering his music, and many more on the verge of that discovery."

And what a discovery. His old friend Jonnie Dale Gilmore says it best about the depths those on-the-verge fans are about to experience: "In his songs, Townes is usually talking metaphorically about consciousness and the primal, universal battle of darkness and light. He was so passionately feeling that he spent a whole lot of energy trying to escape the intensity of his feelings. That's really clear to me, especially looking back on it."

"He was a poet, and there's kind of a tradition of that—the depressed outsider. But he also had this incredible sense of humor—despite the sadness—that was a real companion bond among all of us who knew him. He sidestepped his pain with humor. There was a mixture of darkness, light and slapstick going on. Townes could make us feel his pain, laugh and feel hopeful all at the same time."

*We all get holes in fall  
These holes are all that's real  
Some fall on you like a stone  
Sometimes you dig your own  
But choice is yours to make  
And over in years to take*

*Some dive into the sea  
Some sail upon the coast  
To live is to fly  
Low and high  
So shake the dust off your wings  
And the sleep out of your eyes*

*"To Live Is To Fly"  
—Townes Van Zandt*

Jim Madden is (502) 418-1111 in Bloomington, Indiana. He also writes a weekly column for the *Indianapolis Independent Star* on the subject of #13. 201-1000 or via E-mail at jim@jimaddison.com.

Write us now about Townes Van Zandt! Give The Heart of a Lion a shout-out! The phone number is 512-848-9100.

# Townes Van Zandt

**Cactus**  
CAFE & BAR  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

**12 November 1992**

**Cacti Cacti Cactus**  
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CAFE & BAR AUSTIN, TEXAS

**TOWNES VAN ZANDT Live @ the Cactus 12 November 1992**

<b>TOWNES VAN ZANDT</b>		
<b>LIVE AT THE CACTUS CAFE, AUSTIN, TEXAS</b>		
<b>CD 1 12 November 1992</b>		
1.	<b>Intro &gt; Dollar Bill Blues</b>	3:57
2.	<b>Still Looking For You</b>	3:33
3.	<b>BW Railroad Blues</b>	3:59
4.	<b>Blaze's Blues</b>	3:44
5.	<b>Rex's Blues</b>	3:21
6.	<b>Coo Coo (Clarence Ashley)</b>	3:33
7.	<b>Jokes</b>	1:57
8.	<b>Two Girls</b>	4:06
9.	<b>Highway Kind</b>	2:47
10.	<b>Marie</b>	5:05
11.	<b>Lungs</b>	3:38
12.	<b>You Are Not Needed Now</b>	5:27
13.	<b>Mr Mudd And Mr Gold</b>	2:54
14.	<b>Talk</b>	2:06
15.	<b>Hey Willie Boy</b>	2:42
	<b>Total time</b>	<b>52:55</b>
<b>CD 2</b>		
1.	<b>The Hole</b>	6:10
2.	<b>Flyin' Shoes</b>	4:08
3.	<b>White Freightliner Blues</b>	4:12
4.	<b>Snowin' On Raton</b>	3:30
5.	<b>Nothin'</b>	3:07
6.	<b>Kathleen</b>	2:41
7.	<b>No Deal</b>	4:20
8.	<b>Dead Flowers (Mick Jagger-Keith Richards)</b>	4:22
9.	<b>Fraternity Blues</b>	3:41
10.	<b>Loretta</b>	3:20
11.	<b>Rake</b>	3:17
12.	<b>Talk &amp; Tuning</b>	1:58
13.	<b>Tecumseh Valley..... *</b>	4:39
	<b>Total time</b>	<b>49:31</b>

\* song/concert ends prematurely with Townes saying he doesn't feel well.

**TOWNES VAN ZANDT Live @ the Cactus 12 November 1992**