

Ideal country-folk voice

Our Mother the Mountain (Townes Van Zandt, Poppy PYS 40004)

John Hartford (RCA Victor LSP-4155)

The Sensational Charley Pride (RCA Victor LSP-4153)

By DAVID F. WAGNER

A LOW-KEY folk-country singer and author, Townes Van Zandt, has been the recipient of an extensive ad campaign (Poppy is distributed by RCA), directed mainly at the underground press. (Columbia may withdraw its advertising dollars on principles, but RCA knows the only principle is the principal; the buck from the felonious freak has the same inflated-deflated?—value as it has from anyone.)

Anyway, Van Zandt is about as "underground" as a tall building (though I do not mean to imply that he is "straight" or "square" in the worst sense of those words), and the push can only be seen as an attempt to reach young record buyers.

"Our Mother the Mountain," a collection of 11 originals by Van Zandt, was recorded in LA and Nashville (mastered at Bradley's Barn in Nashville) with an artful and delicate manner. Towne's voice has the perfect static resonance, well-placed glottal stops and limited range (baritone) — idea for the country and folk fields.

His melodies are well-developed and occasionally borrowed from some readily identifiable sources. The anguished voice is always up front

