Gambin', ramblin' and writing gems

Bob Dylan's coffee table bears witness to Country's adoration of Texas rambler Townes Van Zandt. DAVE DAWSON reports.

"Some times I don't know where this dirty road is taking me, some times I can't even see the reason why. But I know it's going to be all right," he sang. These are words of the 1960s' great singer-songwriter, the great Townes Van Zandt, to be celebrated in a joint exhibition and book launch this week.

Van Zandt was the son of a Texas rancher and oil man named Howard, and he met his girlfriend before he saw the world, "She caught me on a fairly fair morning, twice and Townes said he's in love with his love on an Australian tour."

They were filming me at my "Back Door Highway." The sound and sight crew were from New York and Sweden and they generally though I had some sort of Swede rambler interpretation, but not really because it is how I played it to the kids.

I was introduced to my own self, my style, to the music. It was interesting to me. Although Townes, 68, has struggled with alcohol and addiction throughout his career, he had his greatest success in the 1970s, when songs like "Hawks and Doves" and "Route 666" sold millions.

Townes Van Zandt, a Texas singer-songwriter, died of a heart attack at age 59 in 1997. He was a key figure in the Austin, Texas, music scene, and his songs have been covered by countless artists, including Bob Dylan and John Prine.

Steve Earle may think he's better than Dylan, but Van Zandt still looks like Col Joye.

Steve Earle, then a teenager, has been working his way into the national country, folk and blues music circuit.

Townes is best known for the songs "Piney Woods" and "All My Life," but his influence on other musicians like Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Will Oldham (aka Bonnie "Prince" Billy) is immeasurable. "Townes was a great poet and a wonderful musician," said Nelson.

Van Zandt's music was characterized by his subtle, understated style and his ability to capture the essence of everyday life. His songs often dealt with themes of loss, love and the transient nature of existence.

The family of Van Zandt, who died in 1997, has been working to preserve his legacy and celebrate his work. The exhibit, "Townes Van Zandt: A Life in Words and Music," is being held at the Austin City Limits Museum. It features photographs, recordings, and memorabilia from Van Zandt's life and career.

The exhibit runs through December 31, 2016, and is free to the public. It is the first major exhibition dedicated to Van Zandt's work, and is expected to draw thousands of visitors.

For more information, visit the Austin City Limits Museum website or call (512) 472-2233.