



Townes Van Zandt "**Texas Rain**" Tomato Records

At various stages during the final years of his life, Townes referred to the *earning potential* of the tracks on this album as his "*retirement plan*" and the "*college fund for my kids.*" In fact if the rumour about these recordings are fully borne out, this disc only reveals a fraction of what is yet to come. The rumour....employing approximately fifty well-known – mainly Texas based – vocalists/musicians, Townes revisited sixty of his songs as duets etc. For instance, the late Doug Sahm turns up on a trio of cuts. "Two Girls" is performed as a straight duet, while Doug's close compadres Freddy Fender and Augie Meyer plus Austin's premier Mexican band, Ruben Ramos & The Texas Revolution bring their full weight to bear on the much loved and respected "Pancho & Lefty" and the lesser known "Quicksilver Dreams Of Maria." John Kruth's liner notes confirm that sixty songs were cut so, based on the twelve selections included here, at some indeterminate future date the fifth disc should witness the completion of this project. Townes' twilight years brought a slew of live recordings of indifferent sound quality, marked generally by repeat upon repeat of the same song selections, while the legality of some of those releases was hard to determine. Throughout his recording career, whether studio or live, Van Zandt displayed a penchant for cutting his songs more than once. In that regard this project will reveal no previously unrecorded Van Zandt songs, so it's a case of whether you consider this five CD *all-star reprise* as a worthwhile addition to your collection. The production of certain cuts on Volume I - "**Texas Rain**" - lean toward *upbeat sweet pop* parodies of Townes' original *versions*. If the backing track isn't dripping with strings, then there's a *massed* female choir cooing in the background. Was that really Townes' style? – I think not. That said, there's some great guitar work throughout from John Inmon, but then I'd expect nothing less. Among the *famous voices* featured on this episode are Emmylou Harris, Jerry Jeff Walker, Katy Mattea and Willie Nelson. I'm on the fence with this one.....maybe, by numero five ???

[**Ed. Note.** The latest issue of the music magazine, **No Depression**, contains the quote "*The disc is not recognised as an authorised release by Van Zandt's estate*".]

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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