



Townes Van Zandt "**Absolutely Nothing**" Normal Records

This collection merges a dozen songs recorded at a 1994 Townes gig in McGrory's Bar, Culdaff, Inishowen, Co. Donegal, Ireland, with six *previously unreleased* studio recordings. Well almost since the closing cut, a rendition of the late Ewan MacColl's "Dirty Old Town," previously appeared as the "B" side of a 2000 copy limited edition 7" vinyl single issued by the German Exile label in early 1997. The "A" Side of that single was, "Riding The Range," a song composed by another Brit, Michael Weston King.

Townes' between song links from the McGrory's gig have been retained, although many of them boil down to his usual polite "*Thanks everybody,*" while the material featured mostly equates to familiar highlights from his Tomato Records oeuvre [1968 - 78]. That said, circa the McGrory's show, Philip Donnelly had recently completed the production of Van Zandt's studio album "**Deeper Still**" in Limerick. From that collection Townes performs "A Song For," "The Hole" and "Marie." The only other *non 1968 - 78 tune* included here, "Snowin' On Raton," debuted on Van Zandt's 1987 comeback album "**At My Window.**"

A quartet of the "**Absolutely Nothing**" tracks were recorded at Flashpoint Studio in East Austin less than four weeks before the Texan's passing. Townes reinterprets "German Mustard" and "Heavenly Houseboat Blues" from "**The Late Great Townes Van Zandt,**" along with "Where I Lead Me" from "**Delta Momma Blues**" and from the same album, "Nothin'" - the song from which this collection ostensibly takes it's title. Towards the end of the latter cut, Van Zandt hesitatingly delivers the final lines of his lyric in a spoken voice – *almost like a chillingly final epitaph* - while his guitar playing on the four cuts is best described as *choppy* on the up-tempo tunes and *minimal* on the others. Townes' composition "Hey Willie Boy" was included on the aforementioned "**Deeper Still,**" and the version that appears on this disc dates from 1991 having been cut in Austin's Terra Nova Studio.

Sneaky is, as sneaky does – hidden at the end of Track 18 [ie. "Dirty Old Town"], Townes relates a couple of his favourites jokes. One joke, in particular, is a classic. It's hard to see that this disc does anything to enhance Van Zandt's unique musical legacy, and as such I'd mark it *for completists only*. Heaven knows why I'm telling you this - I'm one of the latter. I guess that's why Lucy Kaplansky nicknamed me "*the anorak.*"

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

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