



## Townes Van Zandt **Be Here to Love Me**

Townes Van Zandt is one of the quintessential critically acclaimed/commercially doomed artists of all-time. Like Big Star's Alex Chilton, Van Zandt's records suffered from criminally poor distribution. As a result, most people have never heard of Van Zandt, let alone listened to any of his albums. If you have heard of him, most likely it's Willie Nelson's cover of "Poncho and Lefty" that you know. The son of wealthy socialites, Van Zandt was given shock treatment as a young man to cure him of his rowdy and, at times, suicidal ways. Ultimately it resulted in the loss of his childhood memories, and he, unfortunately, never really recovered. Director Margaret Brown's excellent documentary about the brilliant though enigmatic Texas singer-songwriter not only tells Van Zandt's sad story, but captures the reckless spirit of the freewheelin' '60s, as well. Character witnesses to the hard-drinking drifter include Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris and Steve Shelley. "I don't envision a very long life for myself," he remarks in the film. "Like, I think my life will run out before my work does. I designed it that way." Mission accomplished. —Allan Martin Kemler

[PalmPictures.com](http://PalmPictures.com)

## Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music

While there's nothing inherently wrong with "Christian" music in principal, most of it never really rises above the level of mediocre. That said, this film goes a long way towards debunking the myth that all Christian music sucks. First-time directors Vickie Hunter and Heather Whinna do a great job of treating the whole subject of Christian rock seriously and respectfully, and end up with perhaps the first (and best) secular documentary on the subject ever. Of course, hearing crossover artists like Daniel Smith of the Danielson Famile assent to the fact of contemporary Christian rock's utter suckitude opens the door to a rational conversation. But because it's hard to determine the shared theological beliefs of everyone represented in the film, at times it's hard to resist making judgments. Especially when you start hearing talk about the rapture and backwards masking in songs like "Stairway to Heaven" and "Another One Bites the Dust." Still, compared to secular social scenes, the apparent lack of self-consciousness is intriguing and, frankly, beguiling. It makes for great cinema, too. Dan Sinker of Punk Planet is excellently cast as the voice of secular reason, and says everything you'd want to say if you were in his shoes. With performances by Zao, Cool Hand Luke, Pedro the Lion, Danielson Famile, Celestial Static, Joy Electric, Victoria Williams and Squad Five-O's airtight cover of Alice Cooper's "School's Out for Summer," it's a worthwhile hour, or so, of power. —Allan Martin Kemler

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## The Small Faces **Under Review**

The Small Faces were four elfin lads from the East End of London who sang like 50-year-old black men from the United States. Or better yet, they were the English version of Booker T and the MGs. "If any band sums up the 60s, more than the Beatles and the Stones," remarks Melody Maker's Chris Welch, one of the film's reviewers, "It's the Small Faces." While that may be a stretch, this look at nine of the legendary Mod band's singles is a treasure for anybody who loves such R&B-infused songs as "What'cha Gonna Do About It?" and "All or Nothing." Featuring commentary by journalists from publications like NME, Uncut and Total Guitar, as well as British rock biographer Paolo Hewitt, *Under Review* takes viewers on a journey through the history and behind-the-scenes remembrances of the circumstances surrounding each song's genesis. An additional twist to the average rock biography is the addition of commentator dedicated to deconstructing the signature riffs and chord patterns of each of the band's hit songs, which is a treat for music theory nerds like this reviewer. As if that weren't enough, there are also loads of period photographs and performance clips from the band's numerous television appearances. Well recommended for all Anglophiles. —Allan Martin Kemler

[MusicVideoDistributors.com](http://MusicVideoDistributors.com)

## The Shield Around the K **The Story of K Records**

For the past 20 years, the Pacific Northwest has acted as the de facto "it" region for next wave rock 'n roll in the United States. At the heart of all this creative influence are two labels from Olympia, Washington—K Records and Kill Rock Stars. But K predates Kill Rock Stars by nine years, and at the heart of K Records is Calvin Johnson. So it makes sense that there's finally a documentary about the charismatic and visionary label owner. Director Heather Rose Dominic's story begins circa 1980, when Johnson was marking time as a DJ at Evergreen State College, and travels on to the founding of Beat Happening and through to numerous recollections from friends like Ian MacKaye, Dean Wareham and Lois Maffeo. With tons of performances by such label stalwarts as Mecca Normal, Halo Benders and Lois—including some archival Fugazi—*The Shield Around the K* makes for a good yarn about one of the founding fathers of the contemporary independent music scene and the seminal label he co-founded. Extras include footage of Beat Happening and Mecca Normal from the 1991 International Pop Underground convention. —Allan Martin Kemler

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