

All Roads Lead to Townes - RAKE

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
Thursday, 01 November 2012 10:24



ALL ROADS LEAD TO TOWNES - "Rake"

Rake - def. - *A fashionable or wealthy man of dissolute or promiscuous habits.*

When Steve Earle released his tribute to Townes in 2009, the "Twilight" series was at its zenith, so this song became a surprise favorite of a lot of young Twilighters. It's the perfect tune for vampire fans – the classic battle between young and old, good and evil and light and dark.

Townes released the song on his fourth record, the 1971 "Delta Momma Blues." It's written with the voice of a man who faces the end. The story tells of a man who lived by his rules, never felt time passing by, who enjoyed wine and guitars, commanding women to kneel before him – and although it doesn't cause a ripple today, it was a shocking visual/sexual image in the early 1970s.

Townes' appetite for the ladies and liquor – and any kind of mood-altering substance – was legendary. In the end, after his third divorce, the ladies left, but while he was young, he was the man.

When poetry and music combines like this, magic happens. Townes didn't make the big time or chart many of his own songs, but just ask any songwriter who has come behind him – his legacy casts a wide shadow.

RAKE

I used to wake and run with the moon
I lived like a rake and a young man

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I covered my lovers with flowers and wounds
My laughter the devil would frighten
The sun she would come and beat me back down
But every cruel day had it's nightfall
I'd welcome the stars with wine and guitars
Full of fire and forgetful

My body was sharp the dark air clean
And outrage my joyful companion
Whisperin' women how sweet did they seem
Kneelin' for me to command them
And time was like water but I was the sea
I'd have never noticed it passin'
Except for the turnin' of night into day
And the turnin' of day into cursin'

You look at me now, and don't think I don't know
What all your eyes are a sayin'
Does he want us to believe these ravings and lies
They're just tricks that his brains been a playin'?
A lover of women he can't hardly stand
He trembles he's bent and he's broken
I've fallen it's true but I say unto you
Hold your tongues until after I've spoken

I was takin' my pride in the pleasures I'd known
I laughed and thought I'd be forgiven
But my laughter turned 'round eyes blazing and
Said my friend, we're holdin' a wedding
I buried my face but it spoke once again
The night to the day that we're a bindin'
And now the dark air is like fire on my skin
And even the moonlight is blinding

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Click [here](#) for a 1988 video of Townes doing "Rake" at a private concert. Let the video run until the end ... you'll see the heavy toll years of substance abuse has exacted on him. It's tragic, really, to see him wipe away a tear, giving the performance a powerful emotional punch.

Click [here](#) for an audio clip of Steve Earle's mournful cover from the 2009 tribute CD TOWNES.

Next week - KATHLEEN

This is the fourth in a series of blogs inspired by Darrell Scott, the talented singer/songwriter and Nashville musician who wisely said once during an interview several years ago, "All roads lead to Townes." Thank you, Darrell, for the lovely idea.