

All Roads Lead to Townes - QUICKSILVER DAYDREAMS OF MARIA

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
Thursday, 14 February 2013 14:56



This waltz was written in 1968 and released in 1969 on the self-titled record, "Townes Van Zandt."

It's also on "Texas Rain: The Hill Country Recordings," with a lovely duet with Freddy Fender. The record was released posthumously in 2001. Townes recorded several duets at the Fire Station in San Marcos in the early 1990s, but the sessions didn't see daylight until after his death.

I have a bootleg recording of the tune from a 1973 gig at the Whole Coffeehouse in Minneapolis, Minn. Imagine being one of the lucky people who were in the room that night.

Here's a post from someone who was there:

I was at this concert at The Whole in the basement of Coffman Union at the U of M. Although it was a long time ago, the memory of that evening is pretty clear. He was spot-on that night and we knew that we were witnessing something special. There were about 15 people in the room. About 10 or 11 of us were from the same small town in western Minnesota (Granite Falls) all part of Townes' following. To my recollection, there were 3 or 4 other folks there, at two different tables. One of them must have recorded this. We sat around and talked with Townes for a bit afterward, too. It is amazing to hear it again. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Steve Earle, one of Townes' best friends, put the song on his 2009 Grammy award-winning tribute record, "Townes."

Hardly anyone else has covered this song, which is a shame, because I think it's one of the most beautiful love songs ever written, and certainly one of Townes' best.

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Well, a diamond fades quickly when matched to the face of Maria
All the harps they sound empty when she lifts her lips to the sky
The brown of her skin makes her hair seem a soft golden rainfall
That spills from the mountains to the bottomless depths of her eyes

She stands all around me her hands slowly sifting the sunshine
All the laughter that lingered down deep 'neath her smilin' is free
Well, it spins and it twirls like a hummingbird lost in the morning
Then caresses the South wind and silently sails to the sea

Well the sculptor stands stricken and the artist he throws away his brushes
When her image comes dancin', the sun she turns sullen with shame
And the birds they go silent and the wind stops his sad mournful singing
When the trees of the forest start gently to whisperin' her name

As softly she wanders I'll desperately follow her footsteps
And, I'll chase after shadows that offer a trace of her sigh
They promise eternally that she lays hidden within them
But I find they've deceived me and sadly I bid them goodbye

So the serpent slides slowly away with these moments of laughter
And the the old washy woman, she's finished her cleanin' and gone
But the bamboo hang heavy in the bondage of quicksilver daydreams
And a lonely child longingly looks for a place to belong.

Click [here](#) to listen to the cut from the original record.

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Click [here](#) to listen to a cut from the Milwaukee coffee house recording.

Click [here](#) to listen to Steve Earle's cover.

The duet with Freddy Fender is available for purchase [here](#) .