



Don't you think it ought to be Texas?

www.byboth.net

www.myspace.com/byboth

In my mind's eye I take a drive out to a small town in the drowsy heat of a Texas sun. On the corner a small café diner, out back a band are setting up in the shade of a porch. I have a road map to such places away from the sanitized Starbucks experience slipping in all over.

My waitress brings me hammerhead coffee and the menu for lunch. The elderly couple on the next table are ready to order. Chicken fried steak, cornbread and beans, with a side of guacamole. I stop the waitress "make mine the same please ma'am." "Sure." "Thank you" "You're welcome."

I sip my coffee while the band tune mandolin and guitars and adjust the settings on a road worn amplifier. The elderly man on the next table leans over. "You from England, what part?" I'm still shooting the breeze with the couple when the food arrives and the singer and the band are a half dozen songs into their set. He might have sourced the material right here in this room, good neighbours reminiscing about what they've seen and experienced, the taste of mum's apple pie and the twists and turns on the road of life.

The rooms loving it and he's got 'em in the palm of his hand. He sings:

"Well there's a place you can go where the pace can be slow, don't have the wind or the rain or the snow, if you gotta go somewhere don't you think it ought to be Texas."

Our waitress is laying down the plates her hips swaying to the subtle shifting beat. With a peach of a voice our waitress responds: "Don't you think it ought to be Texas."

I sure do, the troubadours Texas. And I order up a long neck beer.

The band have sidled to the side and left the songwriter to retune his guitar. He looks up "This is for Townes" is all he says.

The song is drawn up from the well of the saints over a classic probing troubadours picking pattern:

"Springtime came with tears in my eyes, your trip to my hometown was denied, the show went on we listened anyway, everyone who knew you came to play, we sang the songs we carried on, New Year's Day."

When the beer came I needed it. I know a handful of songs about Townes Van Zandt and this one keeps good company with them.

The band return and its another song I've never heard, a Kevin Welch song the singer says, Flycatcher Jack and The Whippoorwill's Song. One verse in the mandolin, the guitars and the singer's clear crystal tone has me hooked and whooping like a Texan at the end.

The old man leans over and says "You like that?" "Yep cracking stuff." "He's got a CD . . ."

And so it came to pass, in my minds eye, that I've been sat out back of a diner listening to a storytelling Texan string a set of songs from his life, filled with characters and times, warmth, humour and sadness in a turn or two. More than once I wanted to kick off my shoes and dance.

And I'm smiling because the master, the man from Oklahoma, honorary son of Texas, Ray Wylie Hubbard has produced the album. The sound is uncluttered; the clarity of David Byboth's voice is captured as clear as a bell.

And as the waitress brings my bill I tell her "I think it ought to be Texas" would make a great bumper sticker.

Ragamuffin Mike



Above: guacamole and beans country. Below David Byboth. Bottom Ray Wylie Hubbard.

