

Mama told Papa,
Let the boy boogie...
Let the boy boogie...
It's in him and it's got to come out...
— John Lee Hooker,
"Boogie Chillun"

By Jan Loveland

American popular music is a strange con-

glomeration of many styles — styles as distantly related as traditional English folksong and Calypso. This weekend Mariah brings two such musical step-cousins to East Lansing in the form of John Lee Hooker, bluesman, and Townes Van Zandt, folksinger-songwriter.

To say that John Lee Hooker is a blues legend somehow implies that we should expect an aged black man with an acoustic guitar, painting tales of woe that remind us of dusty 78's. Hooker's music is, on the contrary, very much alive. His newest recording on Tomato Records, *The Cream*, is being released simultaneously with this tour. Hooker's music also remains alive in the music of the many white musicians he has influenced, the best example being Canned Heat.

Migrating from Clarksdale, Mississippi to Detroit in 1943, Hooker sought the golden promise of work in Mr. Ford's factory. Typical of the black experience of his generation, he also found the squalor of the budding Northern ghettos, which added to the force of his music. At the same time,



Boogie blues

young record companies searched the new colonies of black migrants for stars who would appeal to a lucrative black record market.

1978 marked Hooker's thirtieth year of recording. His story is fascinating because as a younger man he found an ingenious solution to a record business that treated black musicians oppressively. Most were recorded for a pit-

tance, while earning large profits for young record companies. Unsophisticated artists made this exploitation possible. Hooker avoided his "exclusive" recording contract (and the sure poverty that came with it) by recording for other labels under a variety of colorful pseudonyms. "John Lee Cooke," and "Texas Slim" were two favorites.



The power of Tower: funk and soul

By Tami McClaran

Tower of Power will demonstrate its blend of rhythm and blues and soul at Dooley's on Tuesday, May 9. Synonymous with West Coast funk, the ten-member California-based group has established itself through successful concert performances and best-selling albums.

Its current album on Columbia, *Came to Play*, features both laid-back selections and high-energy funk. Combining a tight horn section (Greg Adams, Emilio Castillo, Mic Gillette, Steve Kupka and Lenny Pickett) and an intricate rhythm section (Ronnie Beck, Bruce Conte, Victor Conte, Chester Thompson) with lead singer Michael Jeffries produces a dynamic mix.

Although the album is their ninth

since 1970, Tower of Power has undergone many changes in its structure and style. Jeffries joined the group in 1977 and is featured for the first time on the new effort.

Originally formed as the Motowns in 1967, the group's ultimate goal was to play the Bay area nightclub circuit. They incorporated stage uniforms and synchronized steps into their act.

In 1969 they changed their name to Tower of Power, mothballed their uniforms, dropped their steps and began using more original tunes in their show. Their club popularity soared, and they also gained recognition as a concert band. They became a regular feature at the legendary Fillmore.

In the intimate atmosphere of Dooley's, Tower of Power is expected to produce a hot show of dynamic funk and soul.

Casse Culver: going uncrazy

By Theresa Fleury

Casse Culver and the Belle Starr Band crowded their audience into a too-small room at the Unitarian-universalist Church for a long, joyous protest/celebration. Mellow Muse Productions brought it all together on April 24, two days after they produced the fine Willie Tyson concert as part of Everywoman's Weekend.

Casse Culver, who has been songwriting for 15 years, said the message she would like to spread to everyone — not just feminists and women — is "Unclench your assholes, enjoy yourselves and let others enjoy themselves. It's the only way we're going to get out of this death culture and into a positive, supportive culture."

Songwriting began for Culver in the early 60's when she was just out of high school and living in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. She began songwriting as a way of survival in a sexist, competitive society.

"My songwriting hasn't changed since then really," Culver said. "It's still basically about emotional survival on desolation row. I could easily have been a casualty of society after growing up in the 'burbs, but I wrote to go uncrazy, and I still do."

Influenced by the 60's folk groups and especially by Dylan, Culver began street singing about social problems and personal feelings.

"After street singing and going west with the hippie movement in the late 60's I was one tough cookie. I hadn't learned how to be diplomatic or nice yet," she said. "When I started working the bar scene in D.C. during the early 70's, I shocked a lot of peo-

Hooker's style is highly personal and different from other musicians like Muddy Waters who came out of the Delta area. The smooth slide guitar that has come to typify delta blues was not Hooker's choice: he chose instead a rough, rhythmic guitar style which complemented his deep percussive voice. Hooker assails the listener with a flurry of notes, and a pounding energy that just won't quit. An evening with the "Crawlin' Kingsnake" should prove exhilarating, even for newcomers to his repertoire.

A younger legend, Townes Van Zandt, opens for Hooker. Van Zandt is known by folk music fans of the early seventies for six promising albums on now-defunct Poppy Records. Some of his songs have been recorded by better-known artists (Emmylou Harris' *Luxury Liner* features his classic cowboy tune "Pancho and Lefty.")

Van Zandt almost epitomizes the singer-songwriter-drifter of his generation of young middle-class whites: although his songs are deserving of attention, he never seems to have collected a wide audience for them. With the reissue of his Poppy material on Tomato Records, we again have the chance to acquaint ourselves with his clever commentaries.

Strangely, Van Zandt seems to enjoy his isolation from success. His album *The Late Great Townes Van Zandt* by title alone almost revels in his commercial failure. I had a chance to see the elusive Mr. Van Z. at a small nightclub in Nashville recently. I am pleased to report that he is very much alive, despite the obscurity which surrounds his career. The promise heard on his records was in fact fulfilled in two very enjoyable sets. Van Zandt is a musical storyteller par excellence who can win his audience despite a shy manner on stage. No doubt it will be most people's first exposure to Van Zandt, but should make them anxious for more.

ple. That's when I became involved with the women's community in D.C. and it was a fine experience, because I needed an audience and they needed my music."

At that time, Culver decided country western music was the medium for her. She began touring cross country in 1974. In January 1978 Diane Zimmerman and Ellen Horton joined her as a full-time backup band.

"I realized I needed backup for both economic and musical survival," Culver said. "I also wanted to see more women get jobs in music, so I have two women sound engineers. It's great to see women actively working in the technical aspects of music. I tried working with men, and I've found I work better musically and emotionally with women."

A major feature of the evening was Culver's two new songs, released on a 45 rpm, "Queen of the Nite," and "What Are We Gonna Do (About Anita)?" The latter was especially moving with its driving reggae beat, and protest spirit inspired by the defeat of gay rights in Dade County, Florida. The entire audience chanted the refrain, "What are we gonna do?"

To continue their good work, Mellow Muse will bring Baba Yaga, a nine-women jazz band, into town May 13 for a concert/dance promoting the establishment of a women-owned and operated restaurant in the Lansing area.

The band is a group of top-notch musicians with backgrounds ranging from country to classical, playing electric guitars, trumpet, saxophone, drums, jazz piano and flute. Their lyrics reflect contemporary issues and subtly inspire political awareness, while their instrumental music, roughly half their repertoire, gets people on their feet.

For ticket information, see the CALENDAR.