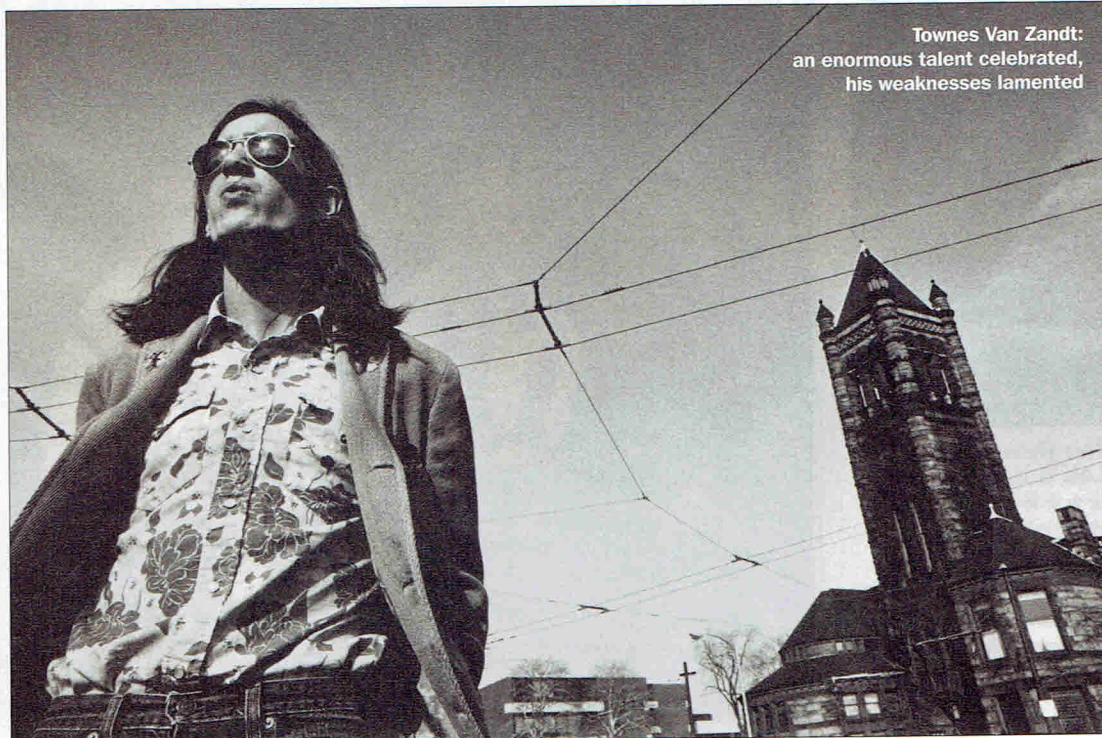
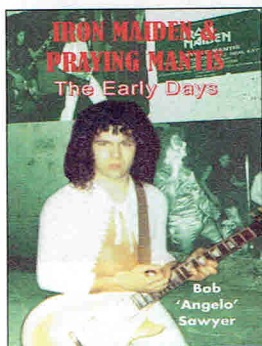


piece on Boney M's Rasputin and Ian McCann's masterly write-up of Ode To Billie Joe. However, while there are other similarly well-written contributions, such as Michael Hann on Tutti Frutti and Fiona Sturges on You're So Vain, it never erases the overall impression that there is little to be gained from assembling the articles like this. A presentational weakness is that some picture reproductions are sub-standard; this is surprising and disappointing, given the *FT* connection. With the book selling at nearly £15, prospective purchasers deserve better than that. *Steve Burniston*



**Townes Van Zandt:**  
an enormous talent celebrated,  
his weaknesses lamented



**Iron Maiden & Praying Mantis: The Early Days**  
Bob "Angelo" Sawyer

★★★★  
Wymer Publishing, £14.99  
ISBN 9781908724847, 152 pages

**Pre-Eddie rumbblings**  
Bob Sawyer's relatively brief stints with Iron Maiden and Praying Mantis took place during time-frames likely to be of interest to their respective fanbases. This is a sharp, engrossing, and humorous insight into Maiden's pre-fame days on the pub circuit (including losing a talent contest to a lady with a talking dog) and the early stages of their UK breakthrough, the author later landing the Mantis gig just as they embarked on consecutive tours supporting Steve Harris and co in 1980.

A keen diarist at the time, Sawyer uses that format to recount his path from school bands, through auditions in search of more ambitious prospects, until a chance encounter in 1976 with then-Maiden vocalist Dennis Wilcock – formerly singer of Sawyer's own outfit Nitro – saw him recruited for a seven-month tenure, during which Steve Harris' steely determination and the band's voracious appetite for gigging were already in evidence.

Mantis-era memoirs from the *Metal For Muthas* jaunt and Maiden's first solo headlining trek shed light on the exhilarating thrill of both bands' emergence as NWOBHM frontrunners, and on the developing tension

between Harris and singer Paul Di'Anno. Illustrated with copious photos, cuttings, gig lists and a family tree. *Rich Davenport*



**Non Serviam: The Official Story Of Rotting Christ**

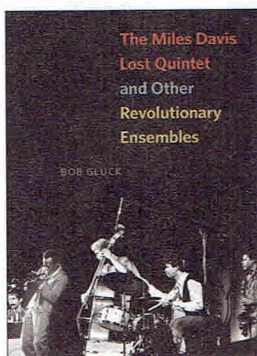
Sakis Tolis & Dayal Patterson  
★★★★  
*Cult Never Dies*, £15  
ISBN 9780993307782, 300 pages

**Smashing eardrums not plates**

If black metal exists at all in the popular imagination, it's probably as a shadowy Scandinavian import, characterised by burned churches and painted faces. But, though less theatrical and certainly less headline-grabbing, the Greek black metal scene spearheaded by Rotting Christ which developed alongside its Northern cousin, is held in equally high esteem by those in the know.

This beautifully produced, extremely lavishly illustrated book tells the story of that scene (and beyond) from the inside, co-written by guitarist/vocalist Sakis Tolis and with sizable contributions from drummer Themis Tolis and the

band's other founder members. It's both illuminating and gripping, especially concerning the roots of Greek black metal in the 80s and 90s, balancing the apparent restraint of the local scene (no burned churches) against the context of the deeply conservative, religious Greece of the era. Controversy aside, though, it's a story, well told, of growth from crude, aggressive beginnings to a thoughtful, sophisticated artistry no less distinctive and potent. A niche publication, perhaps, but it's hard to imagine a better handling of its dark and mysterious subject. *Will Pinfold*



**The Miles Davis Lost Quintet And Other Revolutionary Ensembles**

Bob Gluck  
★★★★  
*The University Of Chicago Press*, £20.44  
ISBN 9780226527000, 264 pages

**Rediscovering Miles' legendary lost band**

"What the fuck is going on out there?" So said Miles Davis to Wayne Shorter after he walked offstage for a few minutes during a 1969 gig while the rhythm section of

his first electric band carried on and served up a wild cacophony of searing, outlandish free jazz improv. Jazz historians have dubbed that particular band (Shorter plus Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette) the "Lost Quintet" because they never appeared in the studio in that exact iteration, though they recorded with Miles in various other configurations during the same time-frame (on albums like *Bitches Brew*).

Musically, they were undoubtedly Miles' most exploratory unit, and here Gluck examines how the "lost quintet" exerted a major influence on developments in free jazz and the avant-garde scene. Though microscopic in its detail, Gluck's analysis is compellingly incisive, drawing a credible through-line that links Davis' late 60s explorations with the more outré sonic experiments of Ornette Coleman, Circle (the band that Corea and Holland formed after leaving Miles), Anthony Braxton, and the Revolutionary Ensemble. Unlike those acts, writes Gluck, Davis always retained a sense of groove, which combined with loose, open structures and unfettered improv led to a sense of tension that was a central component of his music in the late 60s and early 70s. An insightful read. *Charles Waring*

**My Years With Townes Van Zandt: Music, Genius & Rage**

Harold F Eggers Jr With LE McCullough  
★★★★  
*Backbeat*, £25  
ISBN 9781617137082, 252 pages

**An honest first-hand account of a complicated cult figure**

The list of artists who've covered Van Zandt's songs is impressive (Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, around 500 others), though the man's own demons contributed to him never attaining anything greater than cult status and the respect of his contemporaries. Eggers is well-placed to tell Van Zandt's story, in his multiple roles as road manager, record producer and business partner, and – as he maps out in this book – he spent just as much time as babysitter and therapist for the often-volatile figure.

Though he was only 52 when he died on New Year's Day 1997 (the anniversary of his hero Hank Williams' death), Van Zandt's life could have been even shorter were it not for his friend's care and attention, but Eggers never blows his own trumpet in these pages. Instead, he offers a keenly observed and evocative chronicle of a troubled man that celebrates an enormous talent as much as it laments his weaknesses and fragility.

It may be a cliché to draw parallels between great suffering and great art, but the author is persuasive in his argument that Van Zandt routinely expressed in song the thoughts and fears he struggled to articulate in person. The Tennessee troubadour was clearly not always a likeable individual, and it's to his friend's credit that he writes with deep affection while neither sugar-coating nor sentimentalising the man's shortcomings. *Terry Staunton*