

## People &amp; Places

## Books

## 'Unrequited Infatuations'

## Van Zandt explores his fascinating life

By Mark Kennedy

About halfway through Steven Van Zandt's new memoir comes the point of no return.

That moment was in 1983, during the recording of Bruce Springsteen's breakthrough album "Born in the USA." Van Zandt, the bandanna-wearing guitarist for Springsteen's E Street Band, had a fight with The Boss. And then he walked away. On the cusp of the big time.

"Leaving the E Street Band when I did, ended my life as I knew it," Van Zandt tells The Associated Press in a recent interview. "You can't be reborn until you die. So that had to happen."

Van Zandt would go on to remarkable things. He became a solo artist, an outspoken voice for the oppressed around the world, a music educator and a radio host who found a second act as an actor on such TV shows as "The Sopranos" and "Lilyhammer."

But he still looks back on that temporary break — Springsteen and Van Zandt would eventually reconcile — as a key turning point. In his book, "Unrequited Infatuations," he calls it "the big mistake of my life" and "my very public career suicide."

"In the end, you come to the same conclusion, which is: I wish I could have done both. I wish I could have stayed in the band and done all of these things," he says. "But that's not really realistic."

Like its author, "Unrequited Infatuations" from Hachette Books is unassuming, smart, funny and honest, sometime brutally so. Van Zandt covers his life chronologically and also fills the book with the history of rock, his vision for a better world and advice for fledgling rockers.

"My narrative, which is kind of weaving its way through, is the least important part of it to me," he says. "I didn't need to confess anything. If I could find a way for it to be useful, I thought then it's worth writing."



Van Zandt

## Spotlight

Readers get a chance to explore all the different parts of the peripatetic Van Zandt, who produces and writes for other musicians, reunites rock pioneers like The Raspals, fights for the LGBT community in North Carolina and shows up on one of the most important TV shows of the 20th century.

It turned out that playing mob consigliere and strip club owner Silvio Dante on "The Sopranos" was a natural fit. He played the same role in the E Street Band, the guy with the good advice who doesn't want the spotlight. Both were sort of faithful underbosses.

"Before you know it, I'm playing that role that I have, in fact, played in real life," he says. "Somebody has to be that guy in order for a family or a band or anything else to actually function properly. It ended up, very, very natural. And I think that's why it worked so well."

Ben Greenman, a novelist and journalist who has collaborated with such musicians as Questlove, George Clinton, Brian Wilson and Gene Simmons, said editing Van Zandt's book was endlessly fascinating since stories had a tendency to tumble out during their regular calls.

"I think the book is a real accurate reflection of the person — there's plenty of humor and excitement and vivid writing and cameos," he said. "A good rule of thumb is if it's this fun to work on, it's probably this fun to read."

While building a portrait of one New Jersey artist, another emerges — that of Springsteen himself. To anyone who thinks The Boss' current persona as a working-class hero standing up against a rigged system was always there, think again.

Van Zandt explores a U-turn Springsteen made between "Born to Run" and "Darkness of the Edge of Town," when his identity flipped from a rebel leaving town to conquer the big city into a rural, stand-and-fight balladeer.

"He completely, 180 degrees changed his identity. He's fronting, he's playing a character," says Van Zandt. "That was the most important moment of his life, because he stayed in that persona forever."

Van Zandt sent Springsteen the manuscript before publication and he suggested no changes. "He was in the book more than I planned on him being in the book because he turns out he's a very big part of my life, you know?" Van Zandt says.

After his break with The Boss, Van Zandt made perhaps his biggest global statement when he spearheaded a cultural boycott of South Africa, forming Artists United Against Apartheid in the mid-1980s and writing the anti-apartheid anthem, "Sun City," which shamed artists who performed in South Africa while Nelson Mandela was jailed.

## Career

"Would Mandela have gotten out of jail? Would the South African government have fallen? Probably. But we took years off both of those things," Van Zandt writes.

Told that bringing a hateful regime to its knees was probably better than playing guitar in a band and Van Zandt laughs. "That's not a career," he says. "It doesn't pay the bills, you know? And Nelson never offered to pay my rent."

Van Zandt often found frustration without the comfort of the E Street Band. There is a shelf worth of albums he helped make — from a punk album to a musical theater show for Meat Loaf — that flopped or were shelved. A constant refrain in the book's second half is: "Nobody heard it."

Another career as an actor in "The Sopranos" and "Lilyhammer" blossomed but there is a wistfulness that his solo music never caught on: "The third career, if you will, as an artist, really never found its audience, not yet anyway. Hence the title."

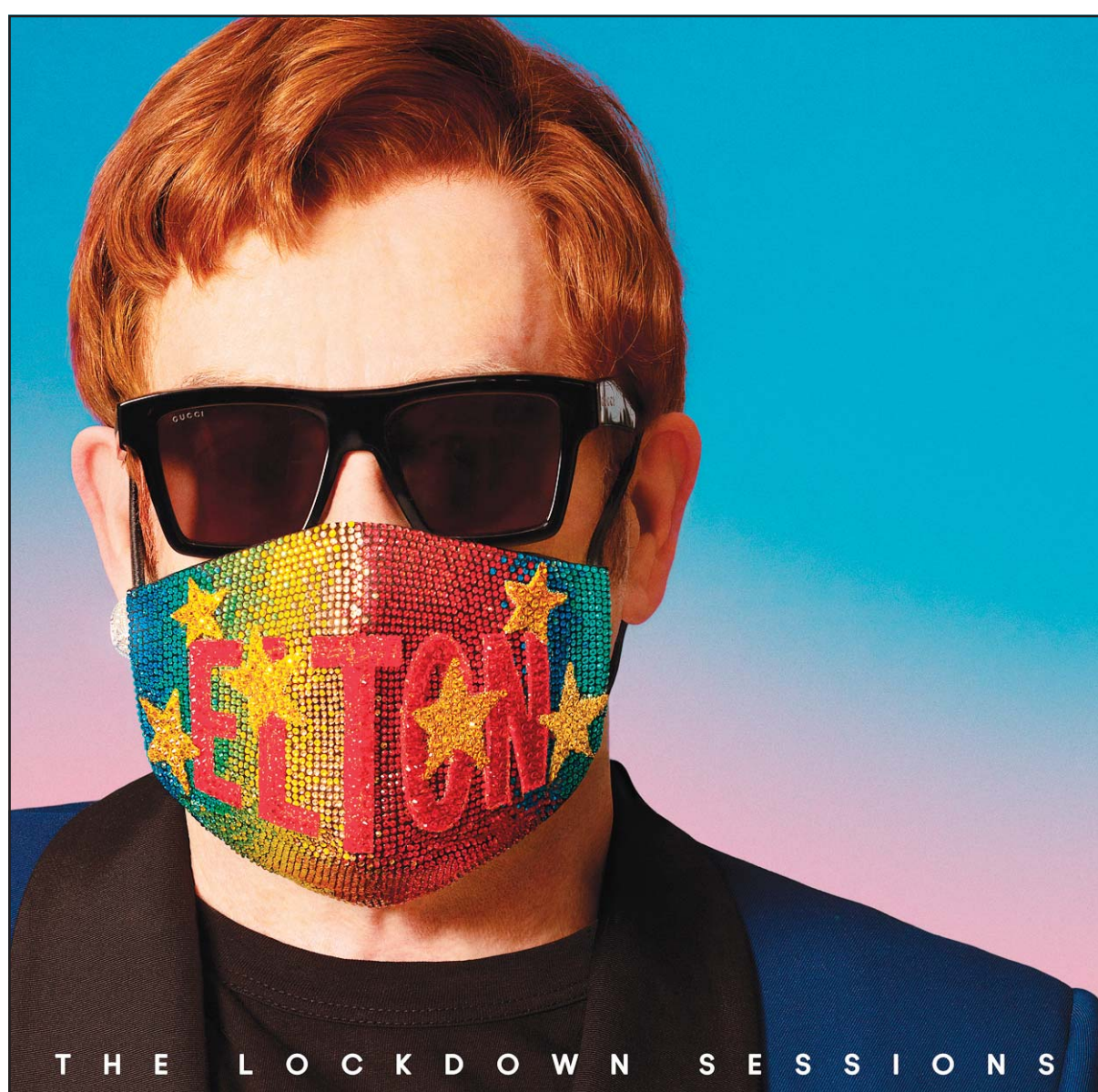
Along the way, he throws shade at Paul Simon, Frank Zappa and Whitney Houston, while sharing how he became political and his rules for the best cover songs, nominating "You Keep Me Hanging On" by Vanilla Fudge as the best attempt.

It's all punctuated with advice from someone who's been on top and down low. "As soon as you can afford it, get separate rooms," he advises new bands. To the main songwriters, "share a bit of the publishing money. It won't kill you," he writes. Perhaps the biggest pieces of advice: get a manager, something Van Zandt never did and still rues.

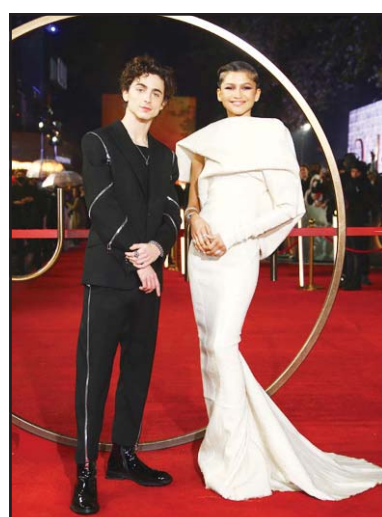
"It really did serve as some kind of a bit of therapy," he says of the writing his memoir. "It's always painful going through the mistakes and saying, 'I wish I could have done this. I could have done that.'" (AP)



Cast member Angelina Jolie arrives at the premiere of 'Eternals' on Monday, Oct. 18, in Los Angeles. (AP)



This cover image released by Interscope Records shows 'The Lockdown Sessions' by Elton John. (AP)



Timothee Chalamet, (left), and Zendaya pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Dune' on Monday, Oct. 18 in London. (AP)

## Variety

**LOS ANGELES:** Kanye is now Ye. A Los Angeles judge on Monday approved the request of the rapper, producer and fashion designer to legally change his name from **Kanye Omari West** to just Ye, with no middle or last name.

"There being no objections, the petition for change of name is granted," Judge **Michelle Williams** Court said in court documents.

The petition filed Aug 24 cited "personal reasons."

He has called himself Ye on his social media pages for years. He tweeted in 2018 that he wanted the change saying, "the being formally known as Kanye West. I am YE."

The moniker was also the title of his 2018 album. He has said in interviews that, along with being a shortening of his first name he likes.

The 44-year-old is in the middle of a divorce with **Kim Kardashian West**, who did not ask that her last name be changed back to just Kardashian when she filed to split from him in February. The couple's four children also have his former last name. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Cuba Gooding Jr will go on trial in February in his New York City groping case, a judge said Monday, with prosecutors planning to portray the actor as

## Music

## All stars 'Lockdown Sessions'

## John taps talented friends

By Mark Kennedy

**'The Lockdown Sessions,'** Elton John (Interscope Records)

It's been more than 35 years since Elton John recorded with Stevie Wonder and that's clearly way, way too long. But the wait is over: The legends join on the new gospel-flavored song "Finish Line," enlivened by Wonder's trademark harmonica and John's piano work. It's a victory lap of a song.

It's also a highlight of John's 16-track album "The Lockdown Sessions," which sees the Rocket Man outsmart the pandemic by working with an eclectic mix of artists, from Stevie Nicks to Lil Nas X. Not all of it works, but most of it does, and credit John for the supreme musicianship to bend to his guests' strengths in music's every genre.

The album kicks off with the slinky "Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)" — melding John's songs "Kiss the Bride," "Rocket Man," "Where's the Shoo-rah?" and "Sacrifice" — into a dance bop featuring vocals by Dua Lipa. It's addictive stuff, and the bad part is the song has to end at some point.

John then has a twang with Brandi Carlile on "Simple Things" — repeat-

ing a line about the finish line — and a foot-stomping, '70s rock groove with Eddie Vedder on "E-Ticket." But John is a subdued presence on both Lil Nas X's cut "One of Me" and a cover of Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" with Miley Cyrus, who, turns out, slays at metal singing.

John gets glam rocky and spacy on the Gorillaz's "The Pink Phantom" with 6lack, and soars perfectly with Charlie Puth in "After All," but he stumbles in a pairing with Young Thug and Nicki Minaj on "Always Love You," his piano and vocals ill-fitting this particular vehicle. And "Beauty In the Bones," a duet with country singer Jimmie Allen, is flat since the song is weak tea.

John rights himself on the driving tune "Stolen Car" with Stevie Nicks, duets beautifully with rising star Rina Sawayama on track "Chosen Family" and the album ends on a poignant note with "I'm Not Gonna Miss You," his Pro Tools collaboration with the late Glen Campbell, who died in 2017. "I'm still here/And yet I'm gone," Campbell sings while John somehow transcends the ultimate finish line. Long may he run. (AP)

a serial offender and the defense contending the case is an example of #MeToo run amok.



Ye



Gooding

Judge **Curtis Farber** set a Feb 1 trial date in the case, which involves allegations the Oscar-winning "Jerry Maguire" star violated three different women at three different Manhattan night spots in 2018 and 2019.

One of the women alleged Gooding pinched her private part.

Farber had expressed a desire to start the trial sooner, possibly in December, but Gooding lawyer **Peter Toumbekis** said he'll be tied up with trials in the Bronx then.

"I want to lock this down for trial," Farber said at a hearing in state court in Manhattan. "This case has been on my calendar for two years, going on three years." (AP)

## Music

## Network defensive

## EMAs to counter Hungary's laws

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 19, (AP): The MTV Europe Music Awards will be held Nov. 14 in Hungary, the network said Tuesday, reaffirming and defending the location despite the country's recent passage of legislation widely condemned as anti-LGBTQ.

The ceremony is an opportunity to make a stand for gay and trans civil rights worldwide in the central European nation that has moved to curtail them, said Chris McCarthy, president and CEO of MTV Entertainment Group Worldwide.

"We're looking forward to using the event to amplify our voices and stand in solidarity with our LGBTQ siblings," McCarthy said in an interview with The Associated Press.

No government censorship of the telecast will be tolerated, McCarthy said.

"We've made it very clear and we have from the beginning... we do not allow editorial input as it relates to the artists" and the content we create, he said. "That's always a condition regardless of whatever country we go into."

Hungarian Prime Minister **Viktor Orban**'s conservative ruling party introduced the measure that on its face was aimed at fighting pedophilia. Amendments ban the representation of any orientation besides heterosexual, along with gender change information in school sex education programs, or in films and advertisements aimed at anyone under 18.

## Measure

Human rights groups strongly denounced the measure passed in June, saying it wrongly links gays with pedophilia and is intended as a tool that could be used to stigmatize and harass residents because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. A majority of European Union leaders said it goes against the EU's values and that discrimination must not be tolerated in the 27-nation bloc.

In 2020, Hungarian lawmakers approved legislation banning the legal recognition of transgender citizens.

MTV, which made a deal two years ago to hold the show in the nation's capital, Budapest, planned to issue a lengthy memo to staffers in apparent anticipation of possible criticism of its decision.

"This may surprise anyone who knows that in June of this year, Hungary passed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation banning television content featuring gay people during the day and in primetime," allowing it only to run overnight, McCarthy said in the memo.

McCarthy said his immediate and personal reaction to the law, as a gay man, was to move the event to another country. But after consulting within MTV and with LGBTQ+ advocates globally, including in Hungary, the decision "was very clear to us."

"Instead, we should move forward, using the show as an opportunity to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community in Hungary and around the world as we continue to fight for equality for all," he said in the memo.

## Outreach

MTV's pre-emptive outreach comes amid backlash by some Netflix staffers to the streaming service's handling of a Dave Chappelle stand-up special, "The Closer," which includes derogatory comments about trans people. Netflix has declined to remove the program.

As a gay youngster in a Pennsylvania steel mill town in the 1990s, McCarthy said he felt isolated and alone until he saw LGBTQ+ characters on TV, including Pedro Zamora on MTV's "The Real World."

"I started to think, 'this might be OK,'" he told the AP, and said it's alarming to imagine a young person deprived of the same opportunity because of Hungary's TV restrictions.

The Europe Music Awards, known as the EMAs for short, will honor young LGBTQ+ activists with MTV's Generation Change Award, to be given in partnership with the activist group All Out to amplify its worldwide campaigns for equality, McCarthy said.

Proceeding with the EMAs in Hungary is "absolutely the right decision," given the nation's "concerted onslaught" on LGBTQ+ rights and scapegoating of minorities, said Matt Beard, executive director of All Out.

Such visibility "gives fuel to LGBTQ+ communities living in Hungary an incredibly precious sense of international solidarity that comes from a big global media event like the EMAs," Beard said.