

## **Tom Waits**

# **"Putnam County"**

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I guess things were always kinda quiet around Putnam  
County  
Kinda shy and sleepy as it clung to the skirts of the 2-  
lane  
That was stretched out like an asphalt dance floor  
Where all the old timers in bib jeans and store bought  
boots  
Were hunkerin' down in the dirt to lie about their lives  
And the places that they'd been  
And they suck on Coca Colas and be spittin' days work  
Until the moon was a stray dog on the ridge and  
And the taverns would be swollen until the naked eye  
of 2 A.M.

And the Stratocaster slung over the Burger meister  
Beer Guts  
Swizzle stick legs jackknifed over naughahyde stools  
And the witch hazel spread out over the linoleum floors  
Pedal pushers stretched out over midriff bulge  
And the coiffed brunette curls over Maybelline eyes  
Wearing Prince Machiavelli, Estee Lauder, smells so  
sweet  
And I elbowed up at the counter with mixed feelings  
over mixed drinks  
As Bubba and the Roadmasters moaned in pool hall  
concentration  
And, and knit their brows to cover the entire  
Hank Williams songbook whether you like it not

And the Old National register was singing to the tune of  
57 dollars and 57 cents  
And then its last call, one more game of 8 ball  
Bernice will be putting the chairs on the tables  
Someone come in say "Hey man, anyone got  
Any Jumper Cables, is that a 6 or 12 volt?"  
And all the studs in town would toss 'em down  
And claim to fame as they stomped their feet  
Yeah, boastin' about being able to get more ass than a  
toilet seat

And the GMC's and the Straight 8 Fords were coughin'  
and wheezin'

And they percolated as they tossed the gravel  
underneath the fenders  
Weave home a wet, slick anaconda of a 2-lane  
Tire irons and a crowbars a-rattlin', with a tool box and  
a pony saddle  
You're grinding gears, shiftin' into first  
Yeah and that goddamn tranny's just gettin' worse  
With the melodies of 'See ya later's' and screwdrivers  
on carburetors  
Talkin' shop about money to loan and palominos and  
strawberry roans

See you tomorrow, hello to the Mrs.  
With money to borrow and goodnight kisses  
As the radio spit out Charlie Rich  
Man and he sure can sing that son of a bitch  
And you weave home, yeah, weavin' home  
Leavin' the little joint winking in the dark, warm,  
narcotic American night  
Beneath a pin cushion sky, it's home to toast and honey

Gotta startup the Ford, yeah, your lunch money's right  
over there  
On the drainin' board, and the toilet's runnin'  
Ah, Christ shake the handle and the telephone's ringin'  
It's Mrs Randal and where the hell are my goddamn  
sandals?  
What do you mean the dog chewed up my left foot?  
With the porcelain poodles and the glass swans  
Staring down from the knick knack shelf  
And the parent permission slips for the kids' field trips  
And a pair of Muckalucks scraping across the shag  
carpet

And the impending squint of first light  
And it that lurked behind a weeping marquee in  
downtown Putnam  
And they'd be pullin' up any minute now  
Just like a bastard amber, velveeta yellow cab  
On a rainy corner and be blowin' its horn, in every  
window in town

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