Volume 36 Issue 4 Fall 2026 $5.95

THE WESTERN WAY

The Official Publication of the International Western Music Association



IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Jon Chandler

Colorado Storyteller of the West

PAGE 8

A VOICE STILL RIDES

The story behind the NEW Don Edwards album

PAGE 12

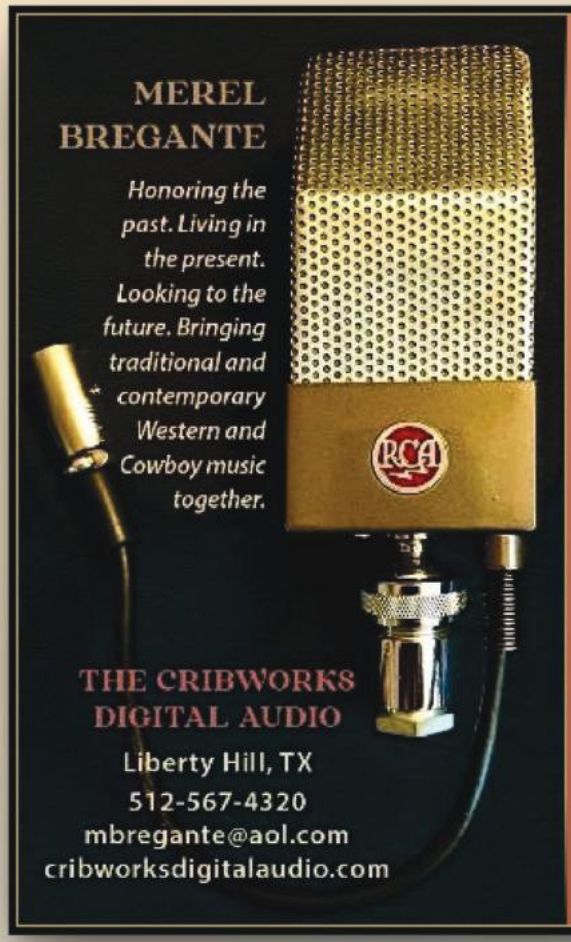
2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

PAGE 30

IWMA CONVENTION 2026

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

PAGE 46



MEREL BREGANTE

CMA of Texas — 2019 Producer of the Year
IWMA — 2025 Song of the Year (co-writer)
WWA — 2025 Spur Award, Western Song of the Year (co-writer)
WRMA — 2026 Will Rogers Medallion Award ×2 (Producer)

RECENT AWARD-WINNING ARTISTS

Jim Jones · Carol Markstrom · Randy Palmer
John Lowell · Joel White · Sarah Pierce



The Cribworks Digital Audio — Liberty Hill, TX

STRAYS at the GATE

A Production of American Cowboy Radio

THE WEEKENDER

Joel White and Ben Parks bring you *Strays at the Gate* daily
Along with a weekly interview program, *The Weekender*.
Western artists debut their new works and highlight their careers.

Weekdays at 2am, 8am, 7pm
Saturdays at 2am, 9am, 7pm
Sunday 1am, 9pm

AmericanCowboyRadio.com



FROM THE

PRESIDENT

99 REASONS for Being an IWMA Member and Attending the ANNUAL CONVENTION

Marvin O'Dell
IWMA President

1. The annual get-together in November that is just like a family reunion
2. Helping preserve the cowboy songs sung by Jess Morris, Sloan Matthews, and J.M. Waddell
3. The Western Way magazine
4. Albuquerque in November
5. The Old Albuquerque Hotel
6. Late-night jamming around the fireplace
7. Jamming all day and night throughout the hotel
8. Team-penning contests
9. Harmony contests
10. Poetry contests
11. Helping preserve the songs of Patsy Montana, Carolina Cotton, Louise Massey, and Rosalie Allen
12. Wednesday luncheon with great guest speakers at the annual convention
13. Sunday morning gospel concert that wraps up the annual convention
14. Friday Night Opry at the annual convention
15. The great Thursday night concerts each year at the annual convention
16. Saturday night awards show at the annual convention
17. The great and informative workshops held during the annual convention
18. The great showcases at the annual convention
19. The Youth Chapter of the IWMA
20. The wonderful Youth Chapter showcase at the annual convention
21. Amazing guitar players and other instrumentalists
22. The great cowboy poets who are members of the IWMA
23. Saturday morning breakfast honoring veterans and first responders at the annual convention
24. The good friends you make at the annual convention who share a common love of western music
25. The great Mexican restaurants found near the Old Albuquerque Hotel
26. The possibility that you might be the next feature article in The Western Way
27. The wonderful boutique found during the annual convention.
28. The annual convention mercantile
29. Helping preserve the songs of Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Rex Allen
30. The IWMA web site
31. The IWMA Hall of Fame (found on the IWMA web site)
32. Helping preserve the songs of Carl T. Sprague, Jules Allen, and Powder River Jack Lee
33. The Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the IWMA
34. Watching Ernie Martinez supporting others at almost every show during the annual convention
35. Belinda Gail's smile
36. Belinda Gail's laugh
37. Belinda Gail
38. Helping preserve the songs of the Sons of the Pioneers, the Cass County Boys, and the Reinsmen
39. The many state and regional chapters one can join
40. Helping preserve the music of Glenn Ohrlin, Buck Ramsey, and Chris LeDoux
41. The Cowboy Crisis fund
42. The opportunity to purchase unique, often hand-made items from the vendors at the annual convention
43. Attending the annual convention in November makes for a nice get-away vacation.
44. Learning about all the wonderful western festivals and cowboy music and poetry events taking place around the country
45. The wonderful harmonies of Gone with the West
46. Helping preserve the songs of Jimmy Wakely, Ray Whitley, and Tex Ritter
47. Finding your songs listed on The Western Way charts
48. Coffee with the DJs during the annual convention
49. Helping preserve the cowboy poetry of Badger Clark, Bruce Kiskadden, and S. Omar Barker
50. Networking opportunities with talent buyers and other musicians
51. Janet McBride
52. Meeting new friends who share the same love for western music that you have
53. Because you deserve a place where you can just be a cowboy for a few days
54. The energetic performances of 3 Trails West
55. Beautiful western outfits
56. The opportunity to visit with western author Johnny D. Boggs
57. Enjoying first-hand Marsha Short's amazing organizational skills
58. You can still purchase CDs there.
59. It's a lot more fun than sitting at home doing nothing.
60. You can bring your kids and educate them about what GOOD music is.
61. Rock music has Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osborne; we have Riders in the Sky and R.W. Hampton
62. Special shows at the convention that usually go at least 2 hours
63. Performers don't play and then go hide; they remain accessible.
64. You can get your picture taken with almost every performer
65. Nothing is boring at the IWMA convention.
66. Old Albuquerque Hotel motif that is perfect for a western gathering
67. If you don't remember someone's name, it's ok; they probably don't remember yours either,
68. Without the IWMA, where would you gather to link arms with others once a year who want to preserve the music?
69. Washtub Jerry
70. Registration made easy with ready-made information packets
71. A comfortable hotel lobby, making relaxing and visiting with others enjoyable
72. The shoeshine kid
73. Music that is family-friendly
74. The smiles you see during showcases
75. Western Swing music
76. Bluegrass music
77. Yodeling
78. Plenty of Parking
79. The mountains surrounding Albuquerque
80. A roomful of people singing "Happy Trails to You" at the end of a show
81. Cowboy hats and boots
82. Cowboy poets cultivating a sense of humor
83. Reasonable ticket prices for special shows
84. Often other events represent unpalatable values.
85. The apolitical atmosphere
86. There is a universal appeal to cowboy and western music.
87. Most performers just need a microphone, not an entire road crew.
88. All sound needs taken care of by Syd Masters
89. Without cowboy/western music, there would be a lot fewer b-western movies.
90. Helping preserve the songs of Stan Jones, Stuart Hamblen, and Wilf Carter
91. Everyone knows at least one verse of "Home on the Range".
92. For guitarists, there will always be someone willing to teach another chord or riff.
93. Nostalgia
94. Good food in the on-site Mexican restaurant
95. An opportunity to explore the diverse roots of western music
96. Performers happy to sign your just-purchased CD
97. Performers happy to have their picture taken with you
98. For those who live in the desert, an outside chance to see snow
99. Helping preserve the songs of Curly Musgrave, Jack Hannah, and Don Edwards

MARVIN O'DELL
President IWMA

CONTENTS

FEATURES

8 **JON CHANDLER**
Tom Swearingen

46 **2026 IWMA CONVENTION**
Schedule of Events

JON CHANDLER is a songster, novelist, lyricist, musician, performer and entertainer extraordinaire with a voice uniquely captivating. His words paint a picture of the West that vividly describes the lore and the legends as none other, and his verse set to music propels the listener on a journey from a historical time and place to the present-day American West.



ARTICLES, UPDATES & MORE



A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY 40

3 From the President
5 Editor's Insight
6 From the Executive Director
10 A Voice Still Rides - Orin Friesen
14 Chapter Updates
15 Ride Easy Pard - Vic Anderson
16 IWMA Lifetime Members
18 In Memoriam
22 MAILBAG
23 Penned by Lantern Light - Duane Nelson
32 Western Charts
34 Western Playlist Reporters
36 Book Nook - Karen Campbell
38 In the Spotlight - Marvin O'Dell
43 The Western World Tour - Rick Huff
44 The International in IWMA - Carol Markstrom
51 Patron Members





30 2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

REVIEWS - CDS | DVDS | BOOKS

24 A Musical Note & REVIEWS - O.J. Sikes
26 Rick Huff's Best of the West REVIEWS
28 Rick Huff's Sampling the Singles

**Contents and opinions expressed in articles and reviews published in The Western Way are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the IWMA or The Western Way*



Theresa O'Dell
Editor

"A.I. EVERYWHERE"

A MEMBER'S RESPONSE

The following is a response to Editor's Insight, Summer 2026, edited for length/reprinted by permission.

I'm an IWMA member out of Colorado, and I write and produce story-songs about the heroes and outlaws of the old West under the name Wild West Ballads…every one of them made with AI in the harness and my hands on the reins. I've spent the past year working out how to do that honestly. So, when your Editor's Insight asked members to start looking for answers and share strategies with one another, I figured that was aimed at people like me.

First, though, the story out of Japan…I did some digging, and I believe two different stories have gotten braided into one. The hologram singing to a sold-out house with a merchandise table is real, but she's Hatsune Miku, a Japanese synthetic voice that's been performing that way since around 2009. Her songs are written by human songwriters, thousands of them over the years. She's an instrument, not an author.

The AI act that actually topped a chart did it in country music. Last November an act called Breaking Rust, generated start to finish with no human performer anywhere in it, went to No. 1 on Billboard's Country Digital Song Sales chart with a song called "Walk My Walk."

Do we embrace these tools thoughtfully? Yes. Every industry gets handed something like this every few decades, and ours has been handed more than its share. Recorded sound was going to kill live music — in 1942 the musicians' union kept its members out of the studios for two years to prove it. Radio was going to finish off the concert hall. Electric instruments weren't real country. The Opry kept drums off its stage and Bob Wills brought his anyway. Multitrack was cheating because nobody played it all at once. Drum machines, Auto-Tune, downloads, streaming. Same alarm every time. And every time, the people who learned the new thing and set its terms came out ahead of the people standing at the door with their arms crossed. Those who adapt, flourish. Those who resist fade into the gray abyss.

Do we ignore them and risk losing relevance? No. Emphatically no. Ignoring is just resisting on a slower clock. These tools aren't waiting on our approval — Breaking Rust didn't write the IWMA a letter first. If our genre sits this out, the rules get written by people with no stake in whether Western music is still here in twenty years. I'd rather we wrote them.

How do we protect authentic human performance while adapting? This is the real question… It isn't keeping the machines out. That fight is over. It comes down to two things: tell the truth about how the work was made and never hand over the judgment.

Here's how it works in my shop. The subject is mine; the research is mine. AI drafts lyrics inside a framework I've built…, and then I rewrite them until they're mine too. I write the production brief, direct the recording…, pick the keeper. What I never do is let the machine tell me whether the song is any good. It's the one thing in this business that can't be handed off, and I'd argue that's where the real line sits — not at whether a tool touched the work.

And I disclose everything. Every release carries the same production note, AI-assisted and human-revised. Everyone gets screened against existing recordings before it ships, registered with the Copyright Office, registered with ASCAP… The Association could set that standard for our genre now, while we still get to choose it. Disclosure, not prohibition.

One last thought on authenticity, because I think we're overcomplicating it. Nothing generated is going to stand on a stage in Elko and hold a room for an hour. Live performance is the one thing in this genre a machine can't counterfeit, which makes it worth more today than it was five years ago, not less. Glad to share anything I've learned with whoever finds it useful. Contact: **rick@wildwestballads.com**
Respectfully, Rick Kennerknecht (CO)

Theresa

*This material is provided for information only and is not necessarily endorsed by the IWMA or the Western Way.

INTERNATIONAL WESTERN MUSIC ASSOCIATION

FOUNDER
Bill Wiley

OFFICERS
Marvin O'Dell, President
Jerry Hall, Executive V.P.
Tom Swearingen, V.P.
Belinda Gail, Secretary
Diana Raven, Treasurer

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Marsha Short

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Leo Eilts, Roger Eilts, Belinda Gail, Jerry Hall, Carol Markstrom, Dan McCorison, Mark Munzert, Marvin O'Dell, Theresa O'Dell, Diana Raven, LeeLee Robert, Tom Swearingen, Scott Tonelson

BOARD OF ADVISORS
Rex Allen, Jr.
Cheryl Rogers Barnett
Ray Benson
Robert E. Fee, Esq.
Douglas B. Green
Mike Mahaney
Suze Spencer Marshall
Gary McMahan
Michael Martin Murphey
O.J. Sikes
Red Steagall
Steve Taylor
Johnny Western

STAFF WRITERS
Aspen Black, Rick Huff, Marvin O'Dell
Theresa O'Dell, Marsha Short, O.J. Sikes

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Vic Anderson, Johnny D. Boggs,
Karen Campbell, Orin Friesen,
Carol Markstrom, Tom Swearingen

THE WESTERN WAY
The Official Quarterly Publication of the IWMA
Deadline for next issue: Dec. 1, 2026

MANAGING EDITOR
Theresa O'Dell
editor@westernmusic.org; 805-551-7763

ADVERTISING
Marsha Short
marsha@westernmusic.org; 505-563-0673

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Rick O'Dell Design
rickodelldesign@gmail.com

Midwest Print Company
orders@midwestprintco.com

PRINTING
Modern Litho, Jefferson City, MO

INTERNATIONAL WESTERN MUSIC ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 648, Coppell, TX 75019
Cell Phone 505-563-0673
marsha@westernmusic.org
www.iwesternmusic.org

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...



Marsha Short
Executive Director

Many years ago, I had the privilege of hearing Robert Fulghum (author of "All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten") at a conference in Chicago. He started his session talking about shared knowledge. He began doing some hand gestures and said, "when you know what I'm doing, please join me." Within seconds over a thousand association executives from around the country were singing "Itsy Bitsy Spider," complete with all the motions. I feel pretty confident that not many people in the audience had even thought about that song in years.

Dr. Fulghum then went on to talk about things we all learned on the first day of school: share everything, play fair, don't take things that aren't yours, take a nap every afternoon, and when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Those are just a few, but it's starting to sound a little like the Cowboy Code, isn't it? If you hear, "some trails are happy, others are blue," you know what's coming next, and you're ready to sing along. Our shared knowledge.

An important part of IWMA's mission is to share knowledge. The perfect place to do that is at the Annual Convention coming up in Albuquerque. The educational sessions offer a chance to build on what you already know or learn something new. If you're looking for a mentor, IWMA performing members are more than happy to sit down and share what they've learned over the years. Sessions especially for fans are designed to give more insight into what makes up Western Music and Cowboy Poetry. And, of course, there are the shows…Wednesday night's Swing Dance, Thursday night's Bluegrass Wranglers Benefit Concert, the Friday Night Opry, Saturday's Awards Show, and all sorts of entertainment going on all day long. It all winds up with a great Gospel Concert on Sunday morning.

Don' miss this opportunity to be with the IWMA family….to share, play, stick together and hold hands, and maybe have a few minutes for an afternoon nap! See you in Albuquerque.

Marsha

INTERNATIONAL WESTERN MUSIC ASSOCIATION

ADVERTISE IN THE WESTERN WAY

AND REACH THE PEOPLE YOU NEED TO KNOW!

RESERVE YOUR SPACE TODAY!

	Rate/Issue B&W or Color	4X Rate/Issue B&W or Color
Full Page	$700	$650
Full Page Inside Cover	$800	$750
Back 3/4 Page Color	$650	$600
Half Page	$450	$400
Third Page	$375	$325
Quarter Page	$300	$250
Sixth Page	$250	$200
1/12th Page (Logo with text only)	$125	$100
Classified ads	$20 for the first 10 words, then 10¢ per word	

INCLUDE THE WESTERN WAY IN YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Multiple copies are placed in strategic locations throughout the US and distributed internationally through our broad global membership outreach. As a quarterly publication with a dynamic online digital presence, your ad continues to work for you into the future. The Western Way readership is "mobile and on the go"... shouldn't they know your business is where they are going to be?

Example of Distribution Outlets:

- Museum of Western Film History – Lone Pine, CA
- Booth Western Art Museum – Cartersville, GA
- Stockyards Museum – Ft. Worth, TX
- Tigard Public Library, Tigard, OR
- IWMA Chapters at Local Gatherings and Festivals
- iwesternmusic.org
- Rooks County Historical & Museum, Stockton, KS

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 505-563-0673

The Western Way is the official magazine of the International Western Music Association, a non-profit 501(c)3 Corporation, and is supported through paid advertising.

COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING

CELEBRATING AMERICA'S WILD WEST HERITAGE

WHERE THE WEST CAN STILL BE WON

The Old West Comes Alive with a Membership in SASS®

Members receive a numbered shooters badge, alias registration, an annual subscription to The Cowboy Chronicle and much more!



SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY™

Toll Free: 877-411-SASS

505-843-1320

www.sassnet.com

JON CHANDLER

COLORADO STORYTELLER OF THE WEST

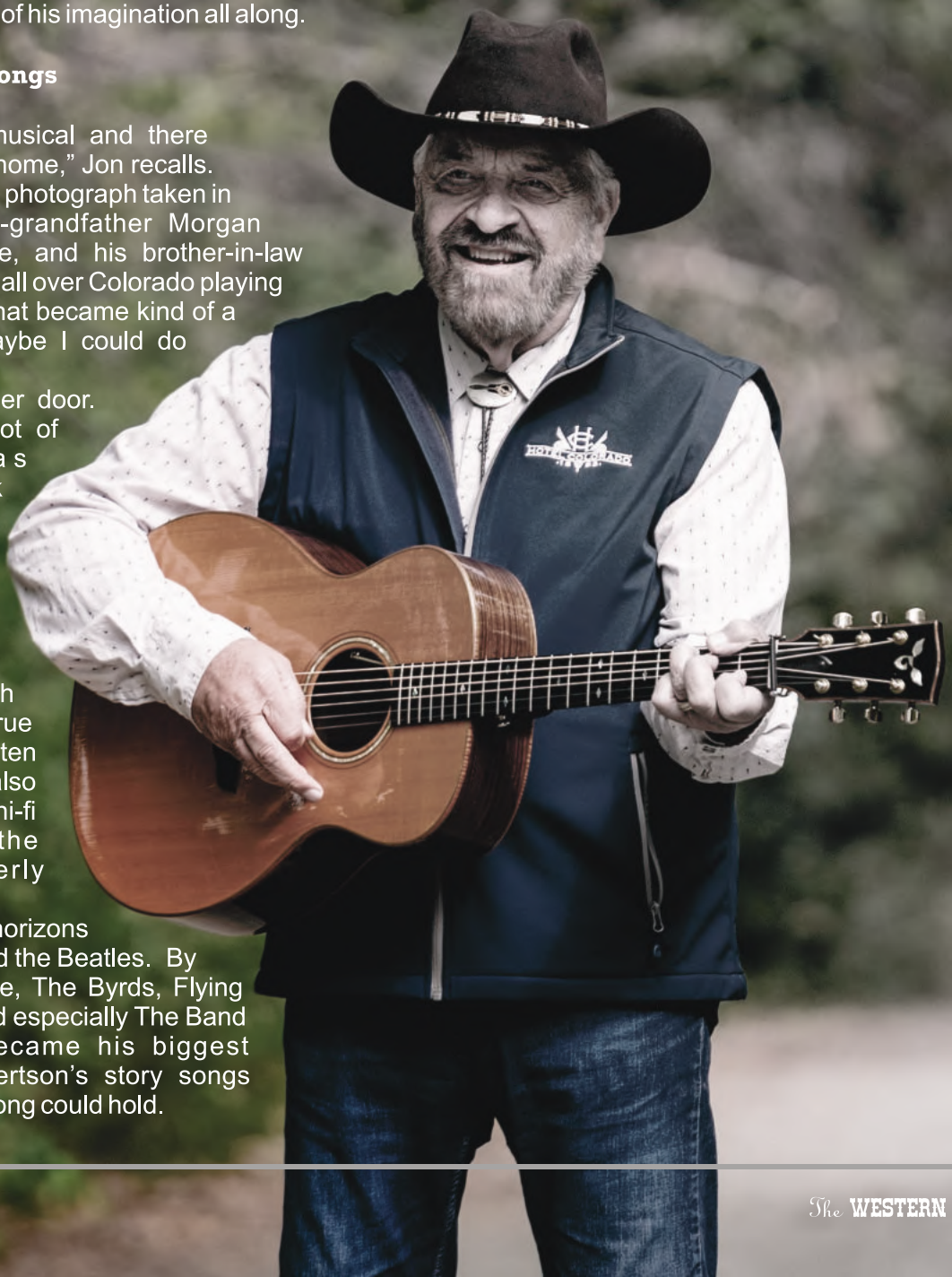
IN THE CROSSHAIRS

by Tom Swearingen

Where to start when putting the crosshairs on Jon Chandler? There are so many targets. Musician, novelist, educator, and the list goes on. At the heart of it all though…Chandler is a Westerner.

"I'm basically a Colorado boy through and through with a deep love for the American West, which I think came from my family," Jon suggests. "My mother's people were very early pioneers in the state of Colorado. And my dad's people were the same in the Midwest. Growing up I learned about and learned to revere people that were involved in the Civil War and the Iron Brigade, and people who were friends of Bill Cody. It was something I always felt was a real part of me." Chandler grew up in Thornton, Colorado, a brand-new suburb of Denver at the time. The city he remembers was smaller and less crowded, long before the metropolitan area spread across the Front Range. As a child, Chandler was drawn to ancestry, family lore, and legendary figures of the West.

That inherited sense of the West came before the music, the novels, and the awards. Later, when he began writing songs and fiction, it was natural for him to be inspired by material that had been part of his imagination all along.



The Discovery of Story Songs

"My parents weren't musical and there wasn't much music in our home," Jon recalls. "But I was taken with an old photograph taken in the 1880's of my great-grandfather Morgan Patterson playing a fiddle, and his brother-in-law playing a banjo. They went all over Colorado playing barn dances and so on. That became kind of a romantic allusion that maybe I could do something like that."

Records opened another door. "My sister-in-law had a lot of albums, and I was particularly struck by Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely and those thoughtful deep love and lost songs by the greatest songwriters in America at the time. Another was Johnny Cash Sings the Ballads of the True West and I would just listen and listen and listen." He also recalls an aunt who had a hi-fi where he'd listen to the harmonies of the Everly Brothers.

And then his musical horizons opened with Bob Dylan and the Beatles. By the time he was in college, The Byrds, Flying Burrito Brothers, Poco, and especially The Band captivated him and became his biggest influence. Robbie Robertson's story songs showed Chandler what a song could hold.



Jon at Ryman Auditorium in Nashville with Randy Rigby (guitar) and John Macy (steel guitar). Photo by Ron Nichols



Jon at Swallow Hill Music CD Release 2024. Photo by Lowell Whitney

He had played trumpet from grade school through high school, but when the folk, rock, and country-rock currents of the 1960s and '70s arrived, he lost interest in that and began writing songs and teaching himself to play guitar.

At the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, he began performing with lifelong friend Bob Pacotti on guitar and Jon singing and playing harmonica. "I was a good harmonica player and a poor guitarist," he says with a laugh. But that changed after he and his wife Pat married in 1973. Pat bought him a Gibson J55, and the gift pushed him to learn the instrument seriously. Decades later, he still owns the guitar, scarred by years of touring but cherished as the instrument on which he composes much of his work.

PR by Day, Singer by Night

Chandler earned a communications degree from UNC and soon returned for a master's degree in marketing. As his professional life began, so did his musical one. He worked first with Darcy Communications, where national clients introduced him to corporate media and public relations. At the same time, he was writing, recording, and building bands. Eventually the Jon Chandler Band became a popular Denver-area act.

A newspaper story once described him as a "PR guy by day, singer by night," and Chandler says that was exactly right. The two sides of his life rarely stayed separate. At Rocky Mountain Energy, the mining subsidiary of Union Pacific, he produced videos, wrote scores, created songs, and did voiceover and commercial work. Later, through his own firm the Clay Group (cleverly named for the street he lived on), he continued moving between communications, recording, performance, and storytelling.

Continued on next page...



Hole in the Wall Gang near Kaycee, WY. Photo by Paul Pape

Red Fenwick and the Hole in the Wall Gang

One PR assignment changed the shape of Chandler's Western life. Darcy Communications was working with Atlantic Richfield on Wright, Wyoming, a new community tied to the Black Thunder Mine. Chandler's job included staging a national event, and he wanted Denver Post columnist Red Fenwick to emcee it. Fenwick accepted, and the meeting became a turning point. Fenwick, already a legendary Western voice, became Chandler's mentor. He had founded a group called the Hole in the Wall Gang, a modern nod to Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, built around annual rides into Wyoming's Hole in the Wall country. Chandler was invited along and became the group's eighth member while still in his early twenties. Fenwick also helped draw public attention to Chandler's music with a Denver Post feature placing Chandler on the front page of the Sunday paper.



Teaching harmonica to fourth graders in Durango, backed by Ernie Martinez. Photo by Pat Chandler.

Projects That Created Connection

Again, Chandler's life seemed to work by connection. Through Grammy award-winning producer John Macy, with whom he began collaborating in the late 1970s, Chandler became involved with Newport Publishers. "The company had rights to several Zane Grey and Cameron Judd novels and wanted me to narrate books on tape. It turned out I not only narrated, but I abridged the stories, wrote background music and theme songs, and helped shape fully produced audio dramas."

Newport then asked him to create original music projects. Cowboy Critter Campfire Tales became a children's recording that continues to find listeners years later. Out West of Laramie for Newport gave him a Western album of his own. A project called Keepers of the Flame grew from a song on that album into a major project for agricultural and conservation organizations, eventually leading to a full recording, extensive touring with a band, and a performance at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Producer Macy used top musicians from Nashville, California, and Colorado for the recordings, including multi-instrumentalist Ernie Martinez. The two have played together ever since. According to Chandler, each thread wove to another: PR clients, recording studios, agricultural groups, Western friends, and performance opportunities.



Pickin' a monster Gibson. Photo by Ray LeJeune

The Novelist Arrives

Newport Publishers also gave Chandler a push into fiction. Because the Zane Grey audio work had gone well, the company encouraged him to write novels of his own. A publisher in Loveland, Colorado, released his first novel, The Spanish Peaks. The novel was well received and won the Western Writers of America Spur Award for Best First Novel. That recognition opened another world. Chandler, a lifelong reader of Western history and fiction, suddenly found himself at conventions with writers whose work he had long admired. Friendships followed with figures such as Elmer Kelton, Mike Blakely, and Johnny D. Boggs. Fiction, magazine writing, music, and Western history became parts of the same creative identity.

The novel also led to Chandler creating Westerns, which he considers a landmark record for him. "I decided to produce a theme song for the book The Spanish Peaks," he recalls. "It took off from there. I began to collect a few songs I'd been editing, plus a bunch of new tunes, weaving them into a near-literary 'aural library,' a recording filled with mini-westerns." The album received wide praise such as, "Chandler emerges as the best songsmith since Ian Tyson on this incredibly diverse and accomplished set of trail tales," according to the Los Angeles Daily News. Westerns also helped carry him into major Western stages and gatherings.

Finding a Community

For years, Chandler had been working in Western music before he fully realized where that community was gathering. He played Colorado cowboy poetry events, knew people such as Baxter Black through mutual connections, and crossed paths with musicians, poets, and soundmen. But his deeper involvement with Western music came later, after Ernie Martinez, Dan McCorison, and other friends urged him to attend the annual International Western Music Association convention. Once there, he recognized the missing piece. He had found musicians and poets who were, in his words, exactly like him.



Snoozin' onstage. Photo by Bill Patterson.

Recognition followed. Chandler received International Western Music Association Male Performer of the Year honors in 2023 and 2025 and has multiple nominations for Entertainer of the Year. He's also deservedly proud of his Western Writers of America Spur Awards for Best Song for "Morning Star Moon" and "Linwood" and his induction into the Colorado Country Music Hall of Fame. The awards matter, he says, because they signal that the work has reached people who understand the tradition.

Family, Teaching, and the Cabin

For all the professional milestones, Chandler's story is also anchored by family. He and Pat have two sons, Ben and Tyler, who with their wives Savannah and Amanda have blessed them with grandchildren Colton, Braden, and Reagan, whose presence brings them joy.

In recent years, he's also found joy in teaching harmonica to children. First asked to by Dale Major of the Cache Valley Cowboy Rendezvous, who had heard him play at the IWMA Convention, if he'd be able to do children's clinics at their gathering, Chandler recollects, "I figured, well sure, I've been playing forever and on probably 100 recordings so I'll give it a shot. And it worked out beautifully. I love hanging out with those kids." He now enjoys those sessions at Durango and several other major gatherings and measures his success simply. "By the time I'm done if in a class of 30 there are five of them that can play Shenandoah" I've done my job," he says with a laugh.

Jon and Pat also spend as much time as they can at Trail's End Cabin, their place in southern Colorado near the New Mexico border above San Luis that they've had since 2018. A retreat and writing place, the cabin sits at the end of a long dirt road beside El Poso Creek, a trout stream that has found its way into Chandler's music.

The Western Trail Continues

As you might expect, Chandler is not finished. He has a new novel, He Was No Hero, headed to a publisher in Arkansas, along with the publisher's plans for re-release of his first two novels and a couple more to follow. He is also developing a new project for the historic Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs that will combine short historical vignettes and songs about the hotel, the Roaring Fork Valley, Doc Holliday, Theodore Roosevelt, and the region's place in Colorado history.

Musically, he is writing autobiographical songs under the working title Biograph and gathering co-writes for another project called Pards. One new song "I'll Keep on Walking to the West," inspired by his late brother's imagined final walk into the Pacific, took 11 years to finish. Chandler says he has long enjoyed observing other people's lives and turning them into songs. Now, he is allowing his own life to enter the work more directly.

If there is a final image for Chandler, it may be this: a Colorado storyteller still carrying the West forward in songs, novels, schools, and on stage. The impulse to turn history into song and story has shaped nearly everything he's done. He cannot imagine not doing the work. The road may never have been linear, but it has always led back to the same place: the stories of the West, and Chandler's need to tell them.



Jon, Jesse Colter, Arlin Brower in Encampment, WY. Photo by Pat Chandler.



Tom Swearingen is an Oregon cowboy poet often inspired by his own experiences and observations from the saddle. 2025, 2022, and 2019 IWMA Male Poet of the Year, Tom brings his stories to life with rhythm and rhyme and a style that makes him a popular performer. Tom's book Reflection was named 2020 IWMA Cowboy Poetry Book of the Year. For more on Tom visit oregoncowboypoet.com.

A VOICE STILL RIDES

By Orin Friesen

The story behind the new Don Edwards album







Every so often a recording outlives the moment it was made. For lovers of Western music, cowboy songs, and the unmistakable voice of Don Edwards, One Last Ride With Don is one of those moments.

On a summer night in July 2010, at the Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper on the Kansas prairie, Don Edwards performed for a couple hundred people. Just his voice and his guitar, no band, nothing dressed up. Jesse Friesen was running sound that night. He was still learning his craft and recorded live shows to practice mixing afterward. Don's was no different. A few days later it went into an archive and was largely forgotten.

Neither of us knew that a decade later, after Don was gone, that recording would become the foundation of a new album. One Last Ride With Don.

This is not a typical tribute album. Most are built from covers; this one is built around Don himself, his vocals from that 2010 performance at the core of every track. The artists who joined didn't replace him. They gathered around a voice that was already there.

Jesse remembers the recording as almost an afterthought. "At the time, I was always looking for something to record, something to keep developing my mixing skills," he says. "We used basic equipment, but that night proved the quality of a recording depends more on the performance than the gear."

And Don was at the top of his game. Then, like so many bootlegs, the recording sat mostly forgotten.

That changed in 2023. I walked into our Geneva Sky Productions studio, and Jesse was holding a USB drive. "What's that?" I asked. "Do you remember Don Edwards' concert at the Prairie Rose? This is it." We listened, and it was obvious the performance had been something special. By then everything was different. Don had passed away in October 2022, and those tracks no longer felt like just another recording. We both felt the audio had been left in our hands for a reason.

Our first idea was simple. We would invite a few friends to sing or play along. But as we worked, the album grew into something more. Jesse's engineering skills had grown since 2010, yet arranging around a live solo vocal is harder than it sounds. "Don performed with the freedom of a solo artist, letting songs breathe and stretch rather than follow strict timing," he says. "That freedom made his music feel alive, and it made the engineering delicate." Piece by piece, a new foundation took shape beneath Don's voice. His voice stayed where it belonged, out front.

Michael Martin Murphey was the first guest to join, and his involvement gave the album its purpose. We took our cue from his "Big Iron" duet with Marty Robbins' original vocal. While recording a cowboy Christmas song in our studio, we asked him to lay down a vocal for "The Master's Call." He agreed, with two conditions: everyone involved had to donate their time, and the project had to benefit Don's widow, Kathy Edwards. That condition became the heart of the album, a way to honor Don's music and thank his family.

From there the project grew. Barry Corbin joined after Don's name came up while he and I were working on a film, leading to his vocal on "My Brown Eyed Texas Rose." Vince Gill had just bought one of Don's vintage Martins from Kathy, but we felt we wanted his electric guitar skills for "Bronco Rider's Blues." Peter Rowan, who'd once recorded a duet album with Don, returned as a nod to that history. And because Rex Allen had passed soon after his 1999 duet with Don, I asked Rex Allen Jr. to stand in for his father. He agreed right away.

The list kept growing. Red Steagall, Riders in the Sky, Andy Hedges, R.W. Hampton, Kristyn Harris, John McEuen, Ginny Mac, Pipp Gillette, and more each added depth around Don's performances.

The road trips to reach artists who couldn't come to Kansas mattered beyond the music. Time with the people who knew Don gave us their stories, every one of which pointed to the same truth, that his legacy was bigger than any single recording.

John McEuen, who once produced Don for The Wild West soundtrack, put it well: "When Don sang, you could smell the prairie. He did it with an air of grace. He was a gentleman cowboy singer, and I feel very fortunate to have called him my friend."

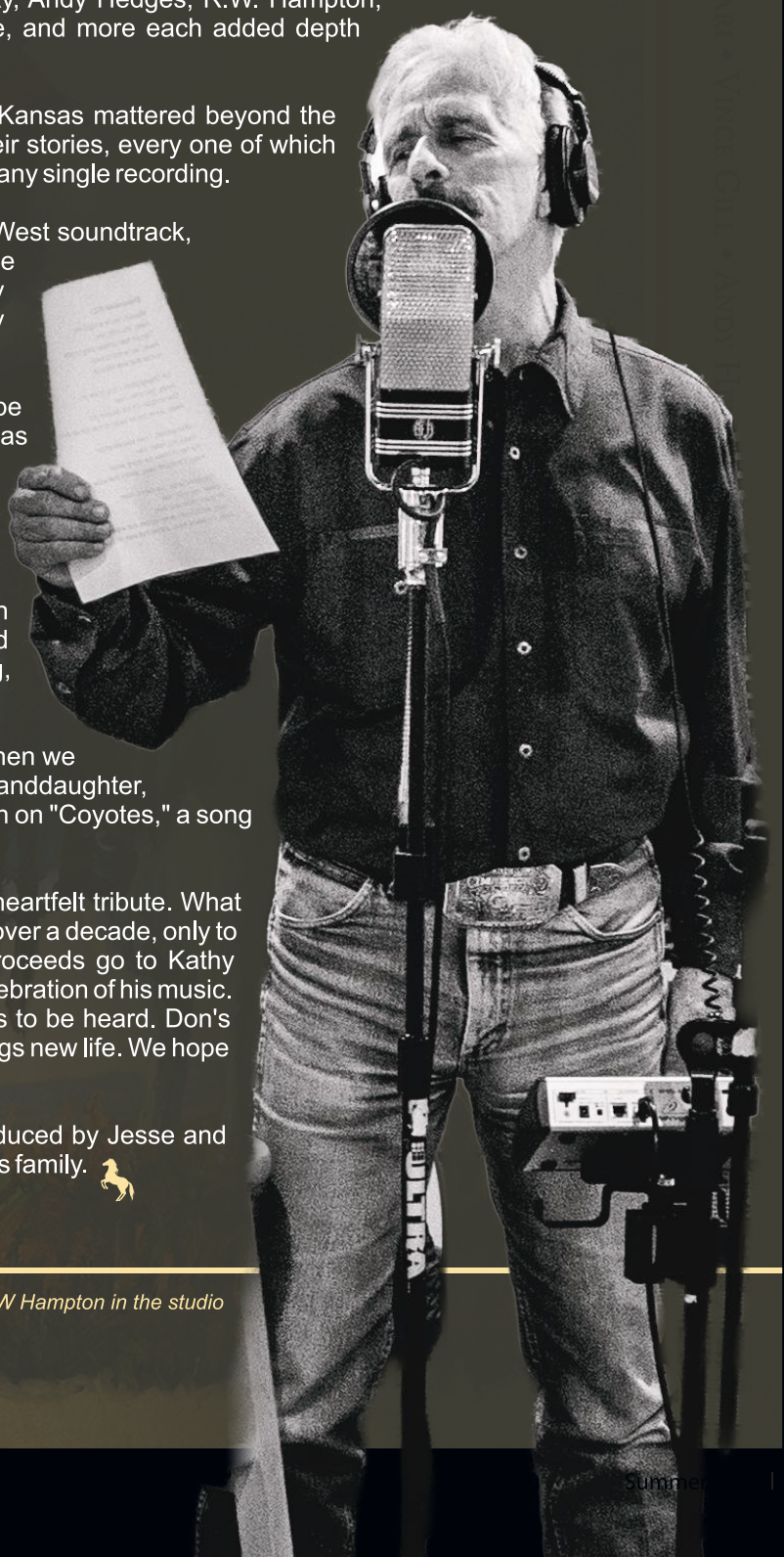
Rex Allen Jr. was just as direct: "Don Edwards should be considered an icon in what Western music is and has become. He took you on a musical journey through lyrics, not jokes or massive arrangements. He let the music do the talking."

R.W. and Lisa Hampton changed things. We'd shared early, unpolished tracks with them, and Lisa called soon after to serve as Executive Producer, bringing support and connections when we still hadn't sorted out editing, marketing, or distribution.

Kathy Edwards' support has been just as essential. When we asked her blessing, she had one request: that Don's granddaughter, Lauren Padgett, sing with her grandfather. We put Lauren on "Coyotes," a song so tied to Don, bringing the family straight onto the record.

One Last Ride With Don is both a rediscovery and a heartfelt tribute. What began as a practical 2010 recording sat tucked away for over a decade, only to resurface right when it was needed most. Because proceeds go to Kathy Edwards, it's as much a thank you to Don's family as a celebration of his music. More than anything, it's about a voice that still deserves to be heard. Don's voice anchors every track, and each guest brings the songs new life. We hope you'll join us for One Last Ride With Don this fall.

One Last Ride With Don releases October 2026. Produced by Jesse and Orin Friesen, with the blessing and support of the Edwards family.



RW Hampton in the studio

CHAPTER UPDATES

ARIZONA CHAPTER
President: Dan McCorison
danmccorison@icloud.com

On August 29, the Phippen Art Museum in Prescott hosted the premier of a presentation called "The History of Western Music." It was written and narrated by western historian Alan Rockman and featured slides by AZ member and graphic artist extraordinaire, Brett Frame. Dan McCorison produced it and sang songs along the historic trail. The presentation is scheduled to happen at the convention in November and will be made available to all the IWMA to use at future events. Contact Dan for details. On another note: our friend and fellow AZ Chapter member, Nancy Elliott hosted a song circle at her home in Casa Grande on Sept 13. The potluck event was well attended by both performers and fans and it is safe to say, "a good time was had by all!" The AZ chapter is looking forward to planning other events as we also look forward to cooler temperatures in the desert.

BLACK HILLS & BEYOND CHAPTER
President: Brad Exton
ramblinrangers@yahoo.com



Ramblin Rangers perform on the Charlie Russell Chew_Choo Montana Dinner Train

Summer may be nearing its end, but many of our Chapter members are still "hot" on the trail of fall performances. John and Joanne Lowell just completed a short tour in western Montana and have been performing for the Montana Historical Society. In addition, John is preparing for the Fishin' Musician Camp and the Livingston Songwriters Festival. Pegie Douglas is one busy lady around the Black Hills. Her "Hearts of the West" group, which includes poet, Sherl Cedarburg, will be performing at the St. Martin's Legacy in Rapid City. Her Badger Sett Band will showcase her Badger Clark tunes at the annual Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park, and Pegie Douglas will perform at the Dahl Arts Center in Rapid City for a Dolly Parton benefit show. Dean Bruce has been on the road visiting family but found time to perform at the Montana Cowboy Gathering in Lewistown this summer. Rik "Yonder" Goodell was the opening act poet at the night show in Lewistown and Dave Stamey was the headliner that night. Rik did a great job entertaining with his excellent prose. The "Youngins" from Montana wowed the audience at the Montana Cowboy Gathering during the summer. The group consists of 4 siblings that are now youth and BH&B Chapter members. Look for more out of them in the future. Sherl Cedarburg has been quite busy helping chapter members Carol Markstrom at the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish and the Ramblin' Rangers at various venues around the Hills, including the Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park. She'll be heading to Tulsa, OK to receive the Will Rogers Medallion Award for Recorded Cowboy Poetry. She is also an AWA finalist for Female Poet of the Year and Western Storyteller. The Ramblin' Rangers had a busy summer and fall with shows in Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska and Wisconsin. While at the 40th Annual Montana Cowboy Gathering, they were asked to play on the Charlie Russell Choo-Choo. September saw them perform at the Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park and then head to Wisconsin to play at a Celebration of Life for a friend and co-writer on one of Brad's songs. September also found them sharing the stage with chapter member Doug Figgs at the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish, SD. Doug also performed at the Buffalo Roundup at CSP. We're glad to see Doug travel up to the northern tier to perform and visit.



Aiden Bailey, 15 years old from Lewistown, MT newest Youth member

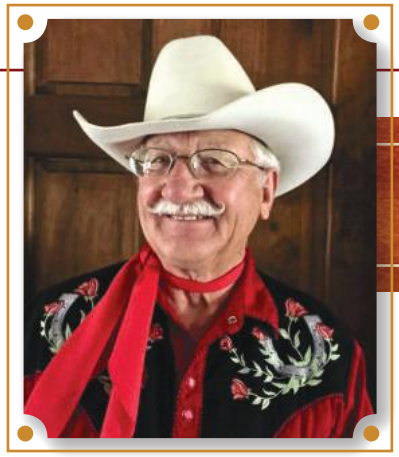


Four new Youth Members ages 9-15 from Hobson, MT are new to the Chapter



Marci Broyhill enraptures the audience with her stories

Continued on page 17



RIDE EASY, PARD!

Dan & the Mountain Lion

BY VIC ANDERSON

Dan, whom we all called dangerous Dan, and I moved from the hay ranch to the main ranch. We got to the ranch just about dusk. The boss saw us drive in and told me to take Dan to the bar and show him where things were and feed a couple of horses that were tied in the barn.

Up to the hayloft we went. The light switch was high above the ladder we climbed to reach the hayloft.

Sometime before then, I had been given a stuffed mountain lion we used for a roping dummy. It was placed behind some hay bales, head cocked to the side as if it was looking at the opening.

I went up, Dan followed. As he got to the top, I pointed out the light switch. Dan straddled the square opening and reached up to turn on the light. As he did so, he turned to look at the hay and saw the mountain lion looking right at him.

He hollered and jumped back down the hole. His chin caught on the edge of the hole and he swung back and forth a time or two and disappeared.

I climbed down to find him lying of the floor, cussing me, the lion, barns in general and anything that came to mind. I was relieved to find him alive and started laughing. After a few minutes he started laughing too.

He quit about a week later, but I don't know why.

RIDE EASY PARD.....Vic

VIC ANDERSON of Estes Park, CO, is a Singer/Songwriter, 3-time IWMA champion yodeler, virtuoso melodic whistler, poet, author, columnist and voice over narrator. As Vice-president of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the IWMA, Vic has long been an advocate for writing short stories as another way of presenting tales of the West.



IWMA LIFETIME MEMBERS

Frank & Linda Achary	Metairie, LA
Lonesome Ron Affolter	Mankato, MN
Nolan Bruce Allen	Grand Island, NY
Rex Allen, Jr.	Nashville, TN
Judi Anderson	Albuquerque, NM
Cindy Argyle	Hooper, UT
Cowboy Joe Babcock	Franklin, TN
Cheryl Barnett	St. George, UT
Troy Bateson	Vilonia, AR
Floyd Beard	Kim, CO
George & Doris Bensmiller	Armstrong, BC Canada
John Bergstrom	Atascocita, TX
Carol Bobroff	San Diego, CA
Robin Freerks (Ned Bodie)	Vancouver, WA
Sherry Bond	Nashville, TN
Ken Bucy	Mesa, AZ
Brandt Buffham	Saugus, CA
Stephen S. Burnette	Brownsville, TN
Robert Maxwell Case	Slick, OK
Susan Booth Case	Slick, OK
TJ Casey	Riverton, WY
Alan Chenworth	Edwards, CA
Woody Paul Chrisman	Nashville, TN
Patty Clayton	Edgewater, CO
Karen Cloutier	Conyngham, PA
Peggy Collins	Livermore, CA
Henry "Steve" Conroy	Sierra Vista, AZ
Polly Cooke	Wickenburg, AZ
Jan Michael Corey	Mesa, AZ
Stan Corliss	Hillsboro, OR
William Crowe	Van Horn, TX
Don Cusic	Nashville, TN
Mark & Marlene Davis	Chatsworth, CA
David DeBolt	Nolensville, TN
Sam DeLeeuw	Ephraim, UT
Rich Dollarhide	Sierra Vista, AZ
Dave Eaton	Scottsdale, AZ
Arlys Eaton	Scottsdale, AZ
Fred Engel	Kimball Junction, UT
Bonnie Exton	Hot Springs, SD
Brad Exton	Hot Springs, SD
Robert E. Fee, Esq.	Tucson, AZ
Juni Fisher	Wilton, CA
Rick Flory	Jackson, WY
Belinda Gail	Magnolia, TX
Norbert Gauch	Walzenhausen , Switzerland
Dixie Goodman	Sun City West, AZ
Douglas B. Green	Brentwood, TN
Chris Guenther	Chehalis, WA
Betsy Bell Hagar	Mill Valley, CA
Jerry Hall	Porterville, CA
Patti Hamel	St. Ignace, MI
Tex Hamel	St. Ignace, MI
Les Hamilton	Dubois, WY
Calvin Danner Hampton	Amarillo, TX
Lisa Hampton	Amarillo, TX
RW Hampton	Amarillo, TX
Lon Hannah	Visalia, CA
Joni Harms	Canby, OR
Eddy Harrison	Las Cruces, NM
Tom & Jane Hilderbrand	Little River, SC
Randy A. Hoyt	Clifton, CO
Rick Huff	Albuquerque, NM
Voleta Hummel	Sierra Vista, AZ
Elana James	Austin, TX
Charles Jennings	Rockville, MD
Emma F. Kaenzig	Walzenhausen, Switzerland
Paul Kelly	Santa Fe, NM
Karen L. Killion	Forney, TX
Ray Kraft	Loomis, CA
Fred LaBour	Ashland City, TN
Jane Leche	Westcliffe, CO
Paul Lohr	Nashville, TN
Cindy Longoria	Virginia City, NV
Robert Lorbeer, Esq.	Magnolia, TX
Clyde Lucas	Sylmar, CA
Mike Mahaney	Burbank, CA
Michael P. McAleenan	Piedmont, OK
Janet McBride	Rockwall, TX
Steven "Mac" McCartney	Aurora, CO
Tracy McHenry	Tucson, AZ
Gary McMahan	Laporte, CO
Al "Doc" Mehl	Turner Valley, AB Canada
Tree Menane	Taos, NM
Jon Messenger	Sierra Vista, AZ
Kathy Messenger	Sierra Vista, AZ
Joseph Miskulin	Kirtland, OH
Michael Martin Murphey	Nashville, TN
Marvin O'Dell	Sun City, AZ
Theresa O'Dell	Sun City, AZ
Tom O'Malley	Harvard, ID
Darren Oliver	Castle Rock, CO
Sara Lou Oliver	Castle Rock, CO
Billy Pitts	Kansas City, MO
Pamela Plaskitt	Waterloo, IA
Jeff Pundt	Lakeside, AZ
Diana Raven	Lakewood, CO
Herb Remington	Ruidoso, NM
Steven Rhodes	Foosland, IL
Victoria Rhodes	Foosland, IL
Don Richardson	Upland, CA
Barbara Richhart	Mancos, CO
LeeLee Robert	Jackson, WY
Jessie D. Robertson	Fort Worth, TX
Roy "Dusty" Rogers, Jr.	Reeds Spring, MO
Elizabeth Rukavina	Arleta, CA
Lori Rutherford	Sierra Vista, AZ
Mike Rutherford	Sierra Vista, AZ
Ray Ryan	San Jose, CA
Yvonne Ryan	San Jose, CA
Suzanne Samelson	Thermopolis, WY
Rudolf P. Schai	Bernhardzell, Switzerland
O.J. Sikes	Ridgewood, NJ
Lindy Simmons	Mancos, CO
Julie Spencer	Pacific City, OR
Dave Stamey	Orange Cove, CA
Cheryl Stanley	Roswell, NM
Red Steagall	Fort Worth, TX
Bob Taylor	El Cajon, CA
Steve Taylor	West Haven, UT
Terri Taylor	West Haven, UT
J. R. (Ray) Threatt	Oklahoma City, OK
Harvey Walker	Anaheim, CA
Carlos Washington	Youngsville, NM
Washtub Jerry	Fort Davis, TX
Leonard Werner	Flemington, NJ
Johnny Western	Mesa, AZ
Paula Erlene Williamson	Branson, MO
Norman Winter	Mills, WY
Joyce Woodson	San Juan Capistrano, CA

CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from page 14

COLORADO CHAPTER
President: Geary Parsons
gearyparsons@outlook.com



Ron Lynam, Patty Clayton, Joel Alden White and Julie Lyman

By the time you read this it will fall. Steve Jones his new CD, "A Driftin' Cowboy's Song", arrived in his hands in August. This is his fourth solo CD. It's mostly guitar and vocal, with a bit of other instruments on some tracks. Patty Clayton spent an entire week in Medora, ND entertaining tourists with her original and borrowed songs of the West. Then in August Patty and Joel Alden White performed a house concert in Colorado to a full house! Patty was accompanied by Joel's cousin Julie Lynam on bass and her husband Ron on fiddle and dobro. She then heads to Manhattan, Kansas as a featured performer for the IWMA KS Chapter Summer Roundup, hosted by Ron Wilson at his Lazy T Ranch. On Sept 20, the Day of the Cowgirl will be celebrated with a showcase from the IWMA CO Chapter in Denver featuring Susie Knight, Valerie Beard, Lynne Belle Lewis, and Patty Clayton with Ernie Martinez and Dan Welch. Lindy Simmons reports the July 18 First Annual Four Corners Western Music & Poetry Showcase was a great success. It was preceded by a chuck wagon cook-out at the



Susie Knight, Lynn Belle Lewis, Lindy Simmons, Rick Randolph Geary Parsons, Steve Jones, J. Michael Mullins



Lindy Simmons

Simmons Ranch. Performers were the Timberline Cowboys, Steve Jones, Lindy Simmons, Susie Knight, Lynne Lewis and an up-and-coming local Rick Randolph. Lindy performed at the 38th Annual Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering on August 6-8 and had her poem "Counting His Money" featured in the gathering program. Also performing at the event were The Timberline Cowboys.



Geary Parsons, Michelle Kuhlman, J. Michael Mullins

COLUMBIA CHAPTER
President: Tom Swearingen
tomswearingen@gmail.com



Thomas Fitzgerald and Tom Swearingen

Our 3rd annual "Around the Campfire" open mic at the Bowman Theater in Prineville, OR, drew an enthusiastic full-house crowd. Tom Swearingen hosted and members Kathy Moss and Thomas Fitzgerald were among the nearly 20 performers. Carla Swearingen and John Seger gave out "top hand" awards and helped keep the afternoon running smoothly. We'll return to the Bowman for our annual fall Showcase Concert featuring Larry Wilder, Kathy Moss, Duane Nelson, Tom Swearingen, Grace



Sydney Pierce



Larry Wilder



Kathy Moss

Clark, Thomas Fitzgerald, Chris Guenther, and our youth cowboy poetry contest winners. Next issue we'll be able to announce and celebrate those young poets. Following our matinee concert, RW Hampton will perform an evening show featuring three of our past youth poetry winners, Larry and Thomas Fitzgerald and Sydney Pierce (they're also musicians!) as



Chris Guenther

openers. The following day Chris Guenther will open RWs gospel concert. In individual news, Duane Nelson and Kathy Moss will be among the performers at the Lakeview, OR Cowboy Poets Gathering. Duane has a new poetry book titled Rangeland Ramblings about to be released. Dan Canyon continues studio work on his next album How Far Must I Ride. We mourn the loss of long-time chapter members Tommy Tucker, retired host of radio's "Snake River Roundup," and "Farmer" David Fulfs, half of the "Panhandle Cowboys" duo.



Grace Clark



Duane Nelson

Continued on page 20

In Memoriam

Vernon "Vern" Hugh Thomson (1954 – 2026)



Vern Thomson went home to be with his Lord and Savior on July 26. 2026. Vern fought the good fight of faith. He cared for and loved people so much. He had a very hard time saying no to anyone. Vern always looked for the best in everyone.

Vern's voice was unmatched and unmistakable. His distinctive voice was recognizable when talking or singing, or doing radio/tv commercials, or ministering. Vern was a phenomenal storyteller and used this gift to bless thousands of people who came to hear him at the Flying W Ranch and his churches. He was a legend singing Western music and will be missed in the Western music world.

Vern had the honor of playing music all over the world. He played at Carnegie Hall, Grand Ole Opry, in London England, with the Colorado Symphony, and the Kennedy Center. He appeared with artists such as Bobby Bare, Waylon Jennings, Faron Young, Reba McEntire, Ernest Tubb, Moe Bandy, Keith Whitley, Roger Miller, and Tanya Tucker. He even had the pleasure of singing for President Reagan as well as several US and Foreign dignitaries.

Vern lived a full life. He was a part of the IWMA Hall of Fame Flying W Wranglers for many years; he was part of The Colorado Wranglers; and he was co-pastor with Joe Stephenson at Colorado Cowboys for Jesus.

Vern deeply loved his beautiful wife, Kathy, whom he married in 1971. She was a treasure to him. He was a devoted father and was so proud of their three sons, their wives, and the grandchildren – Vernon, Jr. (Stacy), Michael John (Missi), and Dusty (Kacy); grandchildren Ty, Ashlyn, and Jacob. Vern loved sharing his family.

Vern Thomson - Preacher, Husband, Father, Grandfather, Friend, Storyteller, Entertainer, and Faithful Servant, thank you for all of your love.

Thomas "Toe Tappin' Tommy" Tucker (– 2026)



Thomas Plotts, born in Spokane and known to generations across the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley as "Toe Tappin' Tommy Tucker," passed away peacefully Thursday, June 18, 2026, leaving behind a legacy of music, laughter and genuine human connection. For nearly 40 years, Tom was a beloved voice on the radio — an award-winning country-western DJ whose warmth, humor and unmistakable presence made him a daily companion to thousands.

Tom had a rare gift: he didn't just play music, he made people feel seen. He remembered names, stories and moments. He treated every caller, every listener, every stranger as someone worth knowing. His love of people wasn't a trait — it was a calling.

Long before he became a local radio legend, Tom served his country with honor as a Vietnam-era U.S. Navy veteran aboard the USS Saratoga. His time in the service shaped his sense of duty, loyalty and camaraderie — qualities he carried with him throughout his life.

But it was in the valley, surrounded by the community he cherished, that Tom found his true rhythm. His radio shows were more than entertainment; they were a gathering place. People tuned in not just for the music, but for him — for the stories, the jokes, the kindness in his voice and the way he made even an ordinary day feel a little more special.

Beyond the studio, Tom was a devoted father, grandfather, a loyal friend and a man who believed deeply in relationships. He lived with an open heart, and those who knew him will remember his generosity, his easy laugh and the way he could turn a simple conversation into a moment worth remembering.

He is survived by his son, Mike Plotts, daughters Heather Plotts and Jenna Leah, bonus daughter Holly Armstrong and grandchildren Jarod, Emmie, Zane and Davien, who will forever carry his love, his stories, and the music he brought into their lives.

A celebration of Tom's life was held in July. Til we meet again, keep those toes a tappin'…

J. Perry Lewis (1938 – 2026)



J. Perry Lewis, born April 6, 1939, passed away on August 23, 2026. He was a well-known figure in the Four Corners area. Horseback from childhood in the Mancos Valley, his life was embedded in the cowboy way. A graduate of Mancos High School, he went on to earn a degree from New Mexico State University in agricultural science. In earlier days he worked for Farmers Home Administration and did ranch management. Perry developed skills in leather craft and hat making. He rode a saddle and wore a pair of boots he had made in his saddle shop. In later years, he broke away from commercial enterprise to work on Arizona dude ranches, returning to Mancos to operate Rimrock Outfitters. On trail rides in the La Plata Mountains he sometimes played the washtub, accompanying his wife Lynn Belle Lewis's western songs around the evening campfires. He is survived by his wife Lynne Belle and one son, Perry D. Lewis, in Mancos, as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren from Colorado and Arizona to Texas. He will be remembered as an entertaining and humorous storyteller.

David A. Fulfs (1951– 2026)



David A Fulfs, age 75, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family & dogs on August 6, 2026 in Moscow, ID. Dave previously lived near Thompson Falls, MT & spent the majority of his years in the Pullman/Colfax, WA area. Dave was born in Pullman, grew up on the family farm near Albion, WA, went to school in Colfax & graduated from Colfax High School in 1968. He met Marti Lothspeich while attending EWU in Cheney and they married in 1971. They moved to the family farm where Dave farmed until retiring after his 50th harvest. Dave played County League Basketball, hunted elk, fished, boated, snow skied, motorcycled, attended Pine Grove Grange where he served a term as Master & served on the Board of Directors at the Pullman Grange Supply/Cenex. He had a flock of sheep for many years, snowmobiled for years with neighbors & friends in the Buffalo Hump Country, Blues, Elk River, McCall & Dixie, & enjoyed lots of 4-wheeling trips in Idaho & Montana. He rode horses in the Mallard Larkin Wilderness, Umatilla National Forest, & the Blues with neighbors, rode on the National Bison Range's Annual ride with Marti. He enjoyed cow penning, rounding up cattle on the Snake River Canyons with a good friend, rode horseback with the Wagon Train celebrating Washington's Centennial & even tried his hand at wild cow milking! He had season tickets to WSU Men's Basketball for years and especially enjoyed the George Raveling & Tony Bennett coaching years. He loved his dogs from the smallest "Texas" a Yorkie to the biggest one "Harley" a Lab/Cross. He had 2 special horses over the years, Ferd & Moonshine. He spent many happy (& a few frightening) days and miles as those 2 boys carried him on adventures through many mountains with neighbors & friends. He especially loved his music. Starting with a guitar he purchased as a teen, he was self-taught. He starred in musicals in High School, performed with the ROTC Choir in College and played for weddings, funerals & local events (even for the Governor at the WSU Coliseum) until life got busy & he hung up his guitar for 30 years. His grandson Tanner found it in a closet and off he was on perhaps the happiest time of his life. He joined the Palouse Cowboy Poets (and Singers) and performed with them for many years. There he met JB Barber a poet, and they joined forces to become the "Panhandle Cowboys" blending their talents of music & poetry into a successful team who traveled & performed around the west. Dave wrote & played his own music blended with JB's original poetry. He was especially proud to be a finalist for the 2018 Western Song of the Year at the AWA Awards in Fort Worth, TX that he & JB attended. They recorded 5 CD's as the "Panhandle Cowboys". Dave was a lifetime member of the International Western Music Assoc, a member of the Academy of Western Artists, and a popular member of Cowboy Poets of Idaho for many years. Dave developed great friendships with musicians around the west and enjoyed every minute of it and appreciated having a wife that kept things running smoothly at home. A fun side note: Dave was in Kenny Chesney's 1994 "Me And You" music video, filmed on the Palouse near Colton, WA. Through the highs and lows of life, Dave had a pretty darn good ride.

CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from page 17

KANSAS CHAPTER
President: Martha Farrell
marthasfarrell@gmail.com



The crowd gathered for the KS Chapter Summer Roundup



Patty Clayton is ready to take the stage at the Summer Roundup

Hi friends! The Kansas Chapter premiered a new event in August called "The Summer Roundup". This was the first time since the pandemic we had officially gathered to perform, and it was a hit with both our members and the audience. We held it on a Sunday afternoon at Ron and Chris Wilson's Lazy T Ranch in Manhattan, with an ice cream social followed by 3 hours of entertainment. There were 13 performers. Our featured acts were Patty Clayton and 3 Trails West (Leo and Roger Eilts, along with Jim Winters). They each anchored half of the concert, sprinkled with music from Annie Wilson, Lora McDonald, Jim Mathis, Jeff Davidson and Brad Hamilton; and cowboy poets Ron Wilson, Danny McCurry, Betty Burlingham, and Tim Keane (who swept both categories of the Kansas Cowboy Poetry Contest in July!) IWMA Kansas Chapter President Martha Farrell was the emcee, and about 70 people attended. Some had traveled 2-3 hours to enjoy the concert. A big thanks to our out-of-state chapter members Patty Clayton and Danny McCurry for coming in from Colorado and Missouri to make this an extra special event. We're already planning for next year. Zoom has been great for meetings, but there's nothing like the energy of getting together under the same roof.



Kansas Cowboy Poetry Champ Tim Keane



All of the performers join in to sing Home on the Range at the conclusion of the event

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER
President: Judi Anderson
judianderson@comcast.net



Miska Paget

Our chapter provided music at Albuquerque's 66 Diner on June 6th for the 100th Birthday of Route 66. Austin Van, Kateri Lopez, Doug Figgs and Debbie Minarik were our performers. It was a great opportunity to be able to present western music to those travelling the Mother Road! August 1 we celebrated The NM Day of the Cowgirl at The Best Western Rio Grande in Albuquerque. Our performers were Jenna Thunborg and Beth Crowder, Miska Paget, Debbie Minark and Dawn Tarply and the Westerners! It was a great success with over 130 attending. We also gained one new member who attended! Our Song & Poetry Corral/ Open Mic just gets more and more exciting each month! We are always happy to see our members participate and new performers! We have had many new people come. In May we had 3 new performers. 2 gentlemen were staying at the hotel, borrowed a guitar and played 3 songs. One performer was 16-year-old Levi and he is now a member of the Youth Chapter! This is always our opportunity to introduce Western Music and Poetry to new people. Our musicians continue to be very busy and appear at many venues, house concerts and western radio shows. This year at the NM Music Awards a new award, The Mary Ryland Western Music Award, was won by our very own, Doug Figgs! Congratulations to him and what a nice tribute to Mary to have the award go to a member of our chapter!



Jenna Thunborg



Dawn Tarply

TENNESSEE CHAPTER
President: Aspen Black
aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com

The Tennessee Chapter presented its Day of the Cowboy event at Nashville Coffees, a cute coffee shop and music venue near Opryland, on the afternoon of Saturday, July 25. The show was well attended by fans, friends, and family, and it featured performances by Mark Lynn Young, Claudia Nygaard, Gone with the West, and The Western Troubadours. The Tennessee Chapter is hosting the pre-convention get-together, with music provided largely by Chapter members, at Ponderosa Brewing Company on Tuesday, November 10. (The New Mexico Chapter has passed the reins, and we're happy to take them. Note that, this time, we will not be at the Best Western).



Day of the Cowboy Performers

TEXAS CHAPTER
President: Cary Wiseman
Wisemanranch71@gmail.com

What a great year it has been so far. This summer, the chapter hosted an event for National Day of the Cowboy alongside Cowtown Opry and Y Bar J Music & Poetry Camp. We had amazing performances during the day from many, including Randy Shelly, Kaylea Stafford, Smokey Culver, Ed Meyer, and many others. The day was full of great music and poetry, and we cannot wait to host another event!! Thank y'all to everyone who comes out and supports the wonderful members of the Texas Chapter and see y'all down the road. God Bless and Happy Trails!

UTAH CHAPTER
President: Dale Major
cvcowboyrendezvous@gmail.com

'Bienvenidos' from Utah, the only state where every county contains some National Forest. We've all enjoyed a busy summer with multiple performance opportunities scattered throughout the state as well as welcoming some outstanding performers to local events including (but not limited to) Joel Alden White at the Cache County Fair, Dave Stamey at the Rich County Fair, Mary Kaye Holt performing at Middleton's house concerts, and the upcoming Utah State University's Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art Block Bash,'Wild about the West' with local entertainers Jerye Lee, Ike Bailey, Dale Major, Bob Urry, Brian Arnold, Zach Martinex, Dakota Holdaway, Dave Harston, Russ Westwood, Vanessa Carpenter and featured performer Andy Hedges. Also upcoming events that will feature IWMA members include the Cedar City Livestock Festival with Jerye Lee, Many Strings (Tony and Carol Messerly), Jo Kirkwood, Paul Bliss, Jeff Coates, Royce Hodges, Kelton Iverson, and Saddlestrings all performing. Our summer party with the Cowboy Poets of Utah was enjoyed by all attendees who welcomed community members to a late afternoon show. Our next chapter meeting will be November 9 near St. George with business followed by food and a jam session. Members and non-members alike are invited to visit the website that we share with the CowboyPoetsofUtah.org for chapter updates and upcoming events.

WESTERN WORDSMITHS CHAPTER
President: Ron Wilson
ron@ronscowboypoetry.com

"Rhymin' Notes and Warblin' Throats" was presented by Darrell Arnold on the quarterly Western Wordsmiths member zoom in August. He shared a great message about how poets could work with songwriters to have their poems converted into songs. We were delighted to have two young ladies from the youth camp in Texas join the zoom and join our chapter! Earlier this year, Lindy Simmons and a small group of volunteers launched a Four Corners cowboy gathering in that region. It went very well and they hope to make it an annual event. This is a great example of members taking it upon themselves to promote our work. Mark Munzert has performed at more than 30 senior centers just this year and encourages us to use such venues as potential performance sites. 3 Trails West, Betty Burlingham, Annie Wilson, Jeff Davidson, Danny McCurry, and Ron Wilson were among the Wordsmiths members who performed at the Summer Roundup concert conducted by the Kansas chapter. On October 22, 3 Trails West, Jeff Davidson, and Ron Wilson will perform at the Get Down in Cowtown concert in Sedalia, Missouri in conjunction with the second annual National Cattle Trails Conference. Congratulations to Lindy Simmons whose poem was selected to go with the Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering annual poster. Congratulations to these Western Wordsmiths members who are up for this fall's Will Rogers Medallion Award: KC LaCourse, Mark Munzert, Rik Goodell, and Sherl Cederburg. Chapter webmaster Martha Farrell says that performing members can still have their photo and promotional information posted on the new www.westernwordsmiths.org website. Send information to westernwordsmithsiwma@gmail.com. In many ways, members continue to promote western writing as described in our theme "The Power of Words: Heritage, Creativity, Service."

YOUTH CHAPTER
Committee:
Belinda Gail
belindagail@protonmail.com
LeeLee Robert
Lee@leeleemusic.com
Marsha Short
marsha@westernmusic.org

The IWMA Youth Chapter is looking forward to another exciting year at the Convention. Watch for them everywhere! On Friday, they have a special session planned with KC LaCourse, award-winning poet and motivational speaker. Her presentation on "Find Your Journey" encourages the youth to realize their value. Then a panel of performers will talk about "Lessons Learned Along the Trail." Participating in the panel are Sherl Cederburg, Doug Figgs, and Kerry Grombacher - all seasoned road warriors. We now have 58 Youth Chapter Members. Please encourage the Youth in your area to come to the Convention to learn a lot and have a little fun doing it!





MAILBAG

Just wanted to say I appreciate your concern for AI. I refuse to have anything to do with it. No, I will write using my own words in my own way. This new thing be it friend or foe may have its place in science and medicine but not in literature. Moreover, what has happened is there are books in print today generated entirely from AI and worse, the material of these books are lifted from existing books. I have author friends who are involved in lawsuits against these AI companies. Where will it end? No, I will have nothing to do with AI.

- R. Rideout (CO)

Thank you, Marvin for confronting (celebrity) [Summer 2026] and what it should mean. Have run into this many times in the past. You covered it very well. Thank you.

- A friend, Bill Clark

Thank you for your work on the most recent issue of Western Way. I was at the Kristyn Harris concert in Saddlebrooke and came home to this, then sat down and read it cover to cover… We are so thankful to be a part of western music Association, and for all of the nice people we've met,…for meeting nice people who are helpful to others and not just concerned about their own career…Not sure if I ever shared with you how we got involved. We have always camped as a family,… We were camping where Les Buffham was campground host and he heard her [Maria] fiddling and invited us… he took the time to explain and encourage, etc. He was a wonderful mentor and friend. Again, thank you for what you do to keep this wonderful community going.

- Caroline McArthur (AZ)



Penned by Lantern Light

DakotaWIND

by Duane Nelson

And the wind?

It blows eternal cros't the stark Dakota plains,
O'er sandy hills and sagebrush flats and all the dried up claims
Of the settlers in their soddys, and their fields of withered wheat.
Three crosses on a lonely knoll mark where their children sleep.

Yes the wind, it blows eternal, through winter, spring, and fall.
But the furnace blast of summer can bring winds the worst of all.
As dust seeps everlasting through the windows and the door;
A hundred and sixty acres, doesn't mean that you aren't poor.

That was the government promise, all those acres free and clear,
With just a small fee paid up front, and make it five short years.
Isolation, loneliness: another price to pay,
With labor and sweat equity, each and every day.

And she stands out by the soddy, her baby child in hand.
Praying that this one survives the challenge of this land.
There's two more in the soddy, three up on the hill...
And the wind, it blows eternal, never still, never still...

Once she had such fair, pale skin, and a pretty, youthful smile
Now her face is grim and hard, eyes staring all the while.
They thought their future was this land; it would their dreams fulfill...
But the wind? It blows eternal, never still, never still...

Her baby cries and nudges breast; she has no milk to give.
Starvation land is what they have, there's scarce enough to live.
The milk cow gives but little, and there's other mouths to feed.
She tries to dole it all around, according to the need.

And her husband labors in the field, from dawn until the dark,
To produce a living from this land, but each day leaves a mark
on his soul and on his body as it tries to break his will...
And the wind, it blows eternal, never still and never still.

So she sets down in her rocker, her babe at empty breast.
Her eyes are searching endlessly, her mind is seeking rest,
From the trials and troubles of this land that tries to steal her will...
And the wind? It blows eternal, never still, never still...

And she rocks and hums an endless tune, one note and nothing more.
Her child no longer breathing; she stares out of the door...
And she's back home in New England, a green and gracious land.
No more will she be tortured by this angry land's demand.

Yes, they thought their future was this land; it would their dreams fulfill.
But the wind, it blows eternal, never still, never still...never still...



Duane began writing and reciting Cowboy Poetry about the turn of the 21st Century and has opened for such performers as Dave Stamey, Juni Fisher, RJ Vandygriff, and Waddie Mitchell, among others. Finished in Second Place at the Kanab Cowboy Poetry Rodeo in the Reciter: Serious, Rising Star Division. Won the Rising Star Division at the 2014 Kamloops Cowboy Festival and was one of the top five finalists for Male Poet of the Year for IWMA in 2016 and 2017. In addition, Duane's CD "Cowboy Lonesome" was nominated for IWMA Cowboy Poetry CD of the Year 2016. Duane continues to recite at numerous Gatherings across the country.



A MUSICAL NOTE AND

REVIEWS

FROM O.J. SIKES



To submit your CD for review, send to: O.J. Sikes, 681 Ellington Road, Ridgewood, NJ 07450
Required: Album cost, S&H cost, Address, Phone Number | **Questions?** You can email O.J. at ojsikes@gmail.com

ANDY PARKER & THE PLAINSMEN

Andy Parker was born near Mangum, Oklahoma on March 17, 1913. He began his radio career at the age of 16 on station KGMP in Elk City, Oklahoma. From 1937 to 1941 he was the singing cowboy on NBC's Death Valley Days.

Parker was a remarkably talented arranger, but he also composed several Western classics, e.g. "Trail Dust," "Call of the Rollin' Plains," "The Rangers Ride Again," "Throw a Saddle on a Star" and "The West is as Wild as Ever." But he is best remembered as the founder of The Plainsmen.

The first incarnation of the Plainsmen was a trio, consisting of Andy (singing tenor and playing rhythm guitar) with lead guitarist (and featured vocal soloist) Charlie Morgan and bassist (and baritone singer) Hank Caldwell. But in 1946, Caldwell was replaced by Paul "Clem" Smith. The same year, accordionist George Bamby and the "legendary" steel guitarist, Joaquin Murphey, left Spade Cooley's band and joined The Plainsmen.

In Southern California, they became popular on radio and found work in a B-Western movie, That Texas Music, starring Ken Curtis at Columbia Pictures. Their work on-screen was well-received and they returned to make three more movies with Curtis in 1946: Singing on the Trail, Cowboy Blues and That Texas Jamboree. Later, the group appeared in several B-Western films with Eddie Dean for the PRC studio: Black Hills and Shadow Valley in 1947, and Check Your Guns, Tornado Range, The Westward Trail and The Tioga Kid in 1948.



Kneeling Charlie Morgan (L) and Andy Parker (R); Standing Clem Smith (L), Leroy Krubel (C), Harry Sims (R)

They began recording for Capitol in 1947. Soon, two other outstanding musicians, fiddler Harry Sims and later, accordionist Leroy Kruble joined the group. Sims, in particular, was to be featured on numerous recordings.

In 1947-48, Andy Parker & the Plainsmen provided the music for the Hawk Larabee radio show, and from 1951-54, they hosted the Here's to Veterans radio series, via transcriptions recorded for Capitol Records. Capitol was their principal record label in those years, but commercial recordings were also made for the Tops and Coast labels, beginning in 1946.

Harry Sims (soon to be the group's full-time fiddler), bassist Hank Caldwell, and fiddlers Billy Hill, Tex Atchison and Slim Duncan occasionally sat in on the Coast recording sessions. Hill was in great demand as a studio musician, as was Sims, whose fiddle tunes made-up a sizeable portion of the recorded transcriptions the group made during this period. In 1954, in addition to numerous tv appearances with artists like Jimmy Durante, the Plainsmen were invited to record the soundtrack for Marilyn Monroe's film, River of No Return.

The Plainsmen also recorded numerous 78rpm discs for Capitol with prominent stars Tex Ritter, Gordon MacRae, Ozie Waters, Billy Williams, organist Buddy Cole, Betsy Gay and orchestra leader Frank DeVol.

Andy Parker died in the fall of 1977, but the music of The Plainsmen lives on through their many recordings, radio shows, and motion pictures. Many of the group's commercial and transcription recordings have been transferred to CDs for the British Archive of Country Music (BACM) online catalogue.



AMELIA EARHART'S LAST FLIGHT
RED RIVER DAVE MCENRY

Dave McEnry (better known as "Red River Dave") was born in San Antonio (and died there in 2002). He only appeared in a couple of Western movies in the 1940s, but he was in 14 "soundies," which is probably where most folks who know of him today have seen/heard his work. As the title of this CD suggests, his song about Amelia Earhart was his first (and most famous), but soon after he recorded it, he found his niche in the Western genre. And as his voice matured, he made some solid Western recordings, although some selections, e.g. Tim Spencer's composition, "Cigareets & Whusky..." were not always the best examples of his potential.

Fortunately, BACM has included some of Dave's finest recorded work in this new collection of 28 titles, with songs like "Cool Water," "Maria Elena," "Sierra Sue," "Stars Over Laredo," "Fiesta in Old San Antone" and "Maria Elena." You can hear samples on the BACM website: https://country-music-archive.com/

ONE LAST RIDE WITH DON
DON EDWARDS AND FRIENDS

Michael Martin Murphey, Red Steagall, Rex Allen, Jr. and others



You may have already read that this new project was in the works. Well, It's here! Orin Friesen and his son, Jesse, a wonderfully talented engineer, found a tape of a Don Edwards concert, performed in 2010, and they re-mastered it, adding the voices of some of Don's closest musician friends to sing along with Don, virtually.

Frankly, old tapes are notoriously hard to work with, so when I first heard about the project, I was a little skeptical. But then, I heard the first track on the final product. It's "The Master's Call," featuring Don with Michael Martin Murphey, and my first thought was "Magnificent!" It's amazing, as is the rest of the album of 14 tracks. The participants make-up a "Who's Who in Western Music."

It's not just nostalgic, but one track that was especially meaningful to me was a duet with Red Steagall. The last time I saw either Don or Red was when the three of us had supper after a concert in Texas, long ago. This album will help some of us re-live those days, but if you missed "being there," it offers a chance to hear the best-of-the-best at work. Very highly recommended!

ON THE ROAD *with* IWMA

The IWMA was well represented at the 2026 Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Lewiston, MT. Brad & Bonnie Exton from the IWMA Black Hills & Beyond Chapter set up an information table. Five IWMA Youth Chapter Members attended and performed: Everett, Clancee Mae, Dynlee & Fynnton Young and Aiden Bailey.



Young Family



Brad Exton at Montana Cowboy Gathering



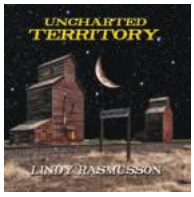
Aiden Bailey

RICK HUFF'S BEST OF THE WEST REVIEWS

Submit CDs (preferred) to Rick Huff, PO Box 8442, Albuquerque, NM, 87198-8442 or DOWNLOADS to bestofthewest@swcp.com. Submitting a CD for review does not guarantee that it will be reviewed or that a review will be published. Finalized CD cover art must accompany the work and be unsigned.

LINDY RASMUSSON

"Uncharted Territory"



The newest album from new IWMA California Chapter member Lindy Rasmusson is called "Uncharted Territory. Particularly in two aspects, it kind of is!

For those who conjure up Cowboy images as they listen, maybe you could picture Rasmusson as the ol' prospector-type who can actually sing! He has a crusty moxie about him. In vocal tone he reminds me a bit of (obscure reference alert) a 60s singer named Joey Levine who handled leads on Buddah Records hits like "Quick Joey Small," "Chewy Chewy" and "1-2-3 Red Light." The other "uncharted" aspect is a different slant in his lyrics. Other positive features include nice acoustic backing and multi-track harmony work by Rasmusson on CD picks like "Good To Me," (Western/Americana), Cowboy Swingers "That's Where I Call Home" and "Moonlit Trail," the saga song "Whiskeytown" and the straight-out Cowboy track "Halfway To Nowhere." C'mon, 'whipper snappers!' Give 'er a try! Eleven tracks, recommended.

KERRY FEARON

"Boots 'n' Roots"



Named for the TV show she hosts, Irish singer Kerry Fearon's nine-song collection follows an impressive debut CD that snagged the AWA's "Pure Country CD Of The Year" award. Her newest is a congenial mix of Country combo stylings with several using Western Swing, Country Swing and Boogie Swing tempos to move things along. One ("Chase Wild Horses") also calls on Western imagery to convey the idea of sewing wild oats. Spoiler: She no longer seeks 'em or sews 'em.

Nice Swingers in the group include "When Bad Men Happen To Good Women," "Maybe They're Really Just Real Good Friends," "Ford Econoline" (all Country Swing specifically) and "Take It All Out On You" (Boogie Swing). Of interest to many will be that she has chosen to cover the infrequently heard Bob Dylan song "Ramona" as well.

Fearon's vocal range allows her to sound youthfully innocent or sufficiently fiery as called upon. Good variety well executed. Recommended.

ED MEYER *"Cowboy Dreams"*



Here's a gentle little album from singer/songwriter Ed Meyer featuring himself on vocals and guitar, Jimmy Carter handling lead guitar and bass duties and Kevin Carter masterfully filling in fiddle. Meyer writes of the creative process "it has taken me mote than a year to write the songs for this CD." The intention is for there to be a light dovetailing of the stories ("Dayworking Cowhand," " Cowboy Dreams") and on to a conceptual wrap-up of achieving those goals ("More Than This Cowboy Could Dream").

Vocally Meyer's tender tenor smacks a bit of Gordon Lightfoot. The songs are mainly narratives as opposed to rhyming verse with music and basically feel like a chronicle of an earlier time. Additional picks include "Forever Home," two songs that celebrate contributions of the frontier wife ("Strong Minded Woman," "Doubts and Fears") and Meyer's and Ric 'Yonder' Goodell's 2025 IWMA Team Penning entry "If We'd Only Had A Rain."

It's a mellow acoustic collection, not earth-shattering in its impact, but does everything need to be? Eleven tracks total, recommended.

TEXAS COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

"Best Country Music Picks Vol. 9"

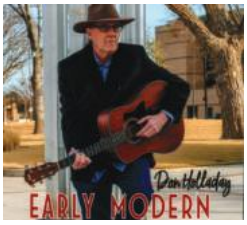


Well, we're back to minimal representation of Western in the TCMA's chosen group, but among the nineteen admittedly fine tracks in their newest collection, at least we do find one with strong Western imagery (used to tell an old story) and one Wills-style Western Swinger. Okay, there's a Honky Tonk Swinger in the bunch, too.

Fleshing out the theme of leaving a bad relationship, "Cowgirl Blues" from Kendall Shaw contains wagon loads of Western wording. "My boots are worn," "campfire's all aglow," "gonna saddle up – it's time to ride," "got my horse and cowgirl hat," "the sun is prairie wide," "a lost and distant trail," "it's time for me to cowgirl up" and more. Even the good old "you're all hat and no cattle" rides in. Whatever the arrangement, it qualifies! Next, Bob Wills would be pleased with Dave Edwards' full-out Western Swing arrangement for "I've Got Nowhere To Go But Crazy" (as we've pointed out in an earlier review). The Honky Tonker is Eric Lee Beddingfield's "Too Much Lonesome."

Hey, Texas?? Yo!! TEXAS!!! You're also producing top quality Western out there in the wilds. The TMCA has Western producers and performers among its members. Next time pick up on more of it!!

DON HOLLADAY *"Early Modern"*



New IWMA member Don Holladay actually released his five-song EP a little while back, so we're catching up to him. Three of the five tracks are set in Western locales.

Holladay's vocal style is direct and unvarnished when he shares details of "real-life stories of made-up people," as he puts it. In one of the songs a story that seems to be from an earlier time plays out in "Hetty's Dark Eyes," wherein a prominent man and a common girl share a history. In "Cardboard Heart" a working cowboy ends his day by going into town to catch his girl as she ends hers at the cafe where she works. They marry, and they keep a souvenir -- a valentine he gave her on that day in Valentine, Texas. "When Chaplin Came To Dallas" (w/"Smile") commemorates The Little Tramp arriving to entertain and promote "Modern Times," the 1936 release containing his famous love theme. This track is a bit more fleshed out instrumentally with fiddle and brass augmentation.

Holladay searches for and finds the heart behind the facts. In coming days it's going to be interesting if Holladay chooses to turn his view more directly toward the West.

RICK KENNERKNECHT

"True Women True West"



I'm reviewing this because it's a deserving, top-quality product. Its songs honor strong women on both sides of the law who helped weave the fabric of The West. In style it's epic and big.

Kennerknecht is a writer/producer, an e-puppeteer, who has slipped the artistic control rings of AI onto every finger. These words and melodies, the singers, players and arrangements exist only because hundreds of specific choices and instructions per song were issued by their "creator." Of the process he writes: "The Old West has had hold of me my whole life (but) there is no musician in me. These stories were looking for a way out of me. Not one living musician lost a session, a gig or a dollar. The alternative to AI was these women's stories going unsung. I don't believe silence serves Western Music better."

The AI medium is Reality. There will be new product, new "voices," in Western Music through it. To ignore material created with its use only further limits our genre's outreach. We're not at a place where that is acceptable. Fourteen tracks, highly recommended.



2- TIME IWMA FEMALE PERFORMER OF THE YEAR

RENDERIN' ORIGINAL AND BORROWED SONGS OF THE WEST'S TODAY AND YESTERYEAR!

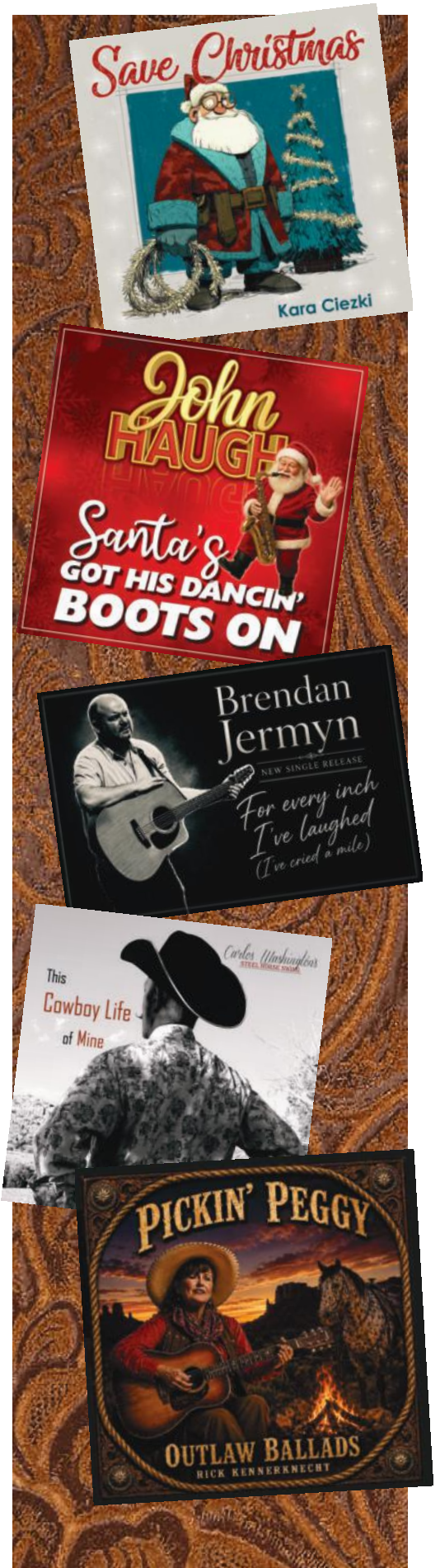
AWARDED GRAND CHAMPION AT THE COLORADO COWBOY GATHERING TALENT COMPETITION AT THE NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW IN DENVER, COLORADO - 2026!

PATTYCLAYTON.COM





RICK HUFF'S SAMPLING THE SINGLES



After years of missing them, I finally thought to hold late Xmas arrivals for "next year!" Australia's **Kara Ciezki** issued the fabulously infectious **Save Christmas** in late 2025. It's a swinging big band novelty wherein St. Nick "nicks" the bad guys. Porch pirates, under-the-tree robbers and other miscreants take heed. There's a new seraph in town!!

Three days before her passing in November 2025 Canada's **Abby Grace** reissued her holiday song **Mama's Merry Christmas**. The styling is Country Swing but, as with all of her releases, she followed the mantra that sustained her. Emmylou Harris advocated "bringing the living room back into music." Grace's fans knew she made it happen.

Irish green meets Xmas red & green. **John Haugh** adds Jitterbug/Jive Swing to the holiday platter with **Santa's Got His Dancin' Boots On**. Since it and the other Xmas releases here are actually late bloomers from last year, a google or two may be required to hunt it/them up unless it/they has/have been re-released now. It/they is/are worth it!

Interestingly within a single year's span a third song has shown up that deals with the cowboy's "digital" realm. **Those Hands** comes to us from **Sarah Pierce**. It's a sweetly mellow portrait of hands as a reflection of all their owner does and is. Rugged, battered, caring, steely, birthing, caressing, steady. Cowboy hands are beautiful treated her way.

Western Swing is King and its famous twin-fiddle effect sits on the throne in a new one from Ireland's **Brendan Jermym**. Originally a wound-licking hit for Doug Stone, the song **For Every Inch I've Laughed (I've Cried A Mile)** has an easy tempo that allows dancers to cool down….or maybe heat up, depending on how they wanta handle things.

Carlos Washington's Steel Horse Swing offers a new song about Carlos' basic history. **This Cowboy Life Of Mine** points out reasons 'pokes couldn't possibly love rodeoing -- except, of course, they do and will continue to. The bucking arts hold a strong lure for its participants. Maybe just consider that a second meaning for "luck of the draw."

Irish lad **Gerald O'Flynn** "sought a haven of rest where the sun sinks finite in the land of the West." He says he "dwelt with the Red Man in green forest bowers and the wild rolling prairies bespangled with flowers," then went north to live with "the wolf and the bear." Now returned to his **Beautiful City (Home By The Lee)**, he's green with ennui.

Okay, folks! Here we go! This one from producer **Rick Kennerknecht** was done with AI. In submitting it to us, even the subject of **Pickin' Peggy** (Western balladeer Peggy Malone) was concerned, but she liked its melody and biographical accuracy. By any measure it's a fine song. It uses 'manipulated' AI. The discussion continues…

East Texas singer/songwriter **Stacey Lowery** reflects that he's long ridden the trail but he's not set for the rocker yet in **Haggard & Worn**. Don't be puttin' him out to pasture. "These boots have seen lots of miles," he admits. "This cowboy's been halfway 'round the world" but "feet off the ground" he'll keep "ridin' into the storm." Thunderation!!

Ernest Tubb's ore has been mined before by artists who are looking for a real Country Swing motherlode. Tubb's hit **Drivin' Nails In My Coffin** does the job quite nicely for Ireland's **Alastair Spence**. In his vocal delivery he produces a mix of Tubb and more than a hint of (believe it or not) Bob Nolan (!) A performance Spence smoothly 'nails.'

The four-part harmony of the ladies who make up **Gone With The West** is intact, warm and embracing as ever, in their newest single release **Heartbreak Moon**. It's an all-acoustic winner. The tempo is intimate, laid-back Cowboy Swing featuring a smooth combo effect common to club Jazz but found less frequently in Western. It's missed.

Here's a nice waltz that tells the old story of a rodeo cowboy driving show-to-show. His lady stays **Somewhere In Montana**, porch light on, waiting for him. But there's a twist in the final verse. The singer, Aussie **Larry Cann**, "realizes" his own pattern of show-to-show isn't different from his subject's. Such songs 'Cann' be telling, can't they?

From Holland, now Germany, comes IWMA Tennessee Chapter artist **John Smyths** and a tale of a retired gun-for-hire in **Now I'm Wiser**. The man still anticipates heading 'up' rather than 'down' when the final tally is made. These days he's free to walk his land with his lady but he is reminiscing a bit as he sits at the bar. Not sadder Budweiser.

It's not often a single arrives from living kings of Western Swing. **Billy Mata & The Texas Tradition** rank as one of the best bands to ever ply the trade. Unarguably they rank among top inheritors of the royal Wills mantle. Their release **Another Day** could have come straight from the Wills bandstand. It only lacks Bob's vocal interjections.

Veteran Irish performer **Dermot O'Hara** has given us a credible cover of one of the most famous hits using Western imagery to tell another story. **Rhinestone Cowboy** chronicles the rugged trail to make it in the music business. Before Glen Campbell found it, the song had been a chart hit for its writer Larry Weiss….in Australia!!

Singer/songwriter **Niamh Strong** (pronounced "nee-iv"….Gaelic, you know) uses Western imagery in her song **Broken**. The man rode off on his "white horse" leaving her behind. Now she advises us when doomed relationships mount up to just let 'em "ride into the sunset." That's doubtlessly preferable to leaving things in a stall!

Grit-voiced balladeer **Randy Palmer** says **It's A Crazy Thing**, this "living in the West!" Can Westerners imagine having to be in some other unfortunate place where you can't reach up, "touch the stars and hold 'em in your hand?!!" It's a romantic portrait, to be sure. Folks have a love affair with the place and wouldn't have it any other way.

Let this one serve as an introduction to another Wild West. From **Terry Lockley** comes **Captain Thunderbolt & Mary Ann Bugg**. It chronicles an escape legend connected with two actual bushrangers from 19th Century Australia. Catch the video of the song. Google it by name, then look up this pair. Hopefully we've put a "Bugg" in your ear.

Family bands are a familiar feature of acoustic music. From Ireland come **The Rosneys**. Daughter Jade handles lead vocal chores on their new Country Swinger **Dance By The Fire**. The song is every bit as warm and crackling a rendering as its title suggests. And a fine fiddle performance figures in prominently. Cozy on up to it. We're family.

Continued on page 31...



HALL OF FAME

2026 INDUCTEES



FRANK SANUCCI

MUSICAL DIRECTOR(MONOGRAM, PATHE, UNIVERSAL, REPUBLIC & GRAND NATIONAL STUDIOS)

Frank Sanucci was born to Italian parents in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1901, and came with his parents to the US as a child. Eventually, he found work as a musical director in Hollywood. His work was largely in B-Westerns for Monogram, Grand National, Republic and Universal Studios, and it became especially recognizable in the films of Tex Ritter, Hoot Gibson, Ken Maynard, Bob Steele, The Three Mesquiteers, Wild Bill Elliott, Johnny Mack Brown, Buster Crabbe (& Al "Fuzzy" St. John), Sunset Carson and later, Jimmy Wakely.

As is evident from this list, which includes a number of early stars who did not sing, Sanucci's compositions were usually the soundtrack music that contributed to the ambience of a film. His work in films directed by Lambert Hillyer and Oliver Drake, two of Hollywood's most prolific B-Western directors, was especially notable. And, over the years, he composed music for over 90 movies!

He also produced some of Tex Ritter's early recordings for Decca, building upon their performance in Tex's first Grand National films, which he had worked on in the late 1930s. Today, Sanucci's work for Grand National, in particular, can be enjoyed in the Ritter films available on YouTube, and in Tex's studio recordings from the late 1930s, re-issued on the Bear Family record label. Sanucci died in 1991.



MISCHA BAKALEINIKOFF

Mischa Bakaleinikoff and his brothers came to the US as refugees from Russia, early in the 20th century, and he quickly established himself as a talented musician (bass and cello). Soon, he also became much in demand as a composer in Hollywood. Beginning with the soundtrack music for the classic B-Western film, Forbidden Trail, starring Buck Jones (1932), he launched a career that spanned decades, scoring the soundtracks of over a dozen B-Western films starring Charles Starrett (especially his very popular Durango Kid series) and Gene Autry, and serving as the Musical Director for most of Autry's films for Columbia Pictures.

His music effectively conveyed the intended atmosphere of those movies, and Gene Autry, for instance, was so happy to have had Bakaleinikoff direct the music for his films (including Autry's 1948 color feature, The Strawberry Roan and 1949's The Big Sombrero) he made a point of letting that fact be known when he was talking with his audience on his Melody Ranch TV show, decades later. The films, themselves, have been considered some of the genre's most memorable, all having been preserved on DVD, many with repeated tv showings to this day. Starrett's Galloping Thunder ('46), Pecos River ('51), Laramie Mountains ('52), and Kid from Amarillo ('51), stand out. The latter included Autry's colleagues, The Cass County Boys, as guest performers. Autry's Last Roundup ('47), Blazing Sun ('50), Blue Canadian Rockies ('52) and several others are also readily available for viewing.

Film buffs will recognize these titles as products of Columbia Pictures. From 1944 until his death in 1960, Bakaleinikoff was Columbia's Musical Director, often collaborating with George Dunning and Morris Stoloff.

SAMPLING THE SINGLES

... continued from page 29

As the winner of Ireland's Cowboys & Heroes Country Star competition, 17-year old **Jesse James** is making his own name for the name! His latest release is the romping contemporary Country Swinger **Where The Sidewalk Ends**. If it seems to you that a lot of Swing is coming out of Ireland….well, you've got the basic swing of it.

The use of a double hokum fiddler provides a twin-fiddle effect for the new Country Swinger from **John Mullan** called **Ain't Love A Lot Like That**. His somewhat John Conlee-esque voice also gives it the classic feel. He's yet another winner of Ireland's big Cowboys & Heroes Country Star Competition. They just keep on O'comin'!

MacKynsie McKedy is back in our list with the Country Swing song **Love Me Out Of Leaving You**. It has all the requisite ingredients….the beat, the angst, the cute twist of words for a title and, of course, its vocalist. Ms. McKedy can almost always be counted on to be very dance-able with her releases. And that's just the way her fans like it!

Anyone who thinks they need a musical explanation of Western Swing can pretty much get it in the new one from **Edward Williams** called **Swing Me Back To Texas**. The reasoning behind it, the continuing need for it and some key performers of it are all touched on across its course. Now try to hold still. We dare you! Just try!!

Don Gibson's famous moneymaker **Just One Time** gets the royal Country Swing treatment in a new Irish single. As a cherry on the float, **Rachel Goode** also brings elements of Folk and Bluegrass to the mix. It's a pleasing effect. Of course you can two-step or shuffle to it, but why the heck waste this "Goode" opportunity to swing??

One newly arrived from **Dave Edwards** at least smacks of Western. Here he lauds the restorative properties of property in **I'll Always Love This Place**. "This place" is in Texas, it's a farm, it's got a windmill and "she" used to be there. Now it's the closest he can get to "her" being with him. Why is it Western?? Location, location, location….

I'm torn. The new one from Ireland's **Josh Giles** is called **The Lone Ranger**. But do I award the term 'Western' to it? It's a drinkin' song so it isn't. It uses Western imagery so it is. "I had more Silver Bullets last night than the Lone Ranger" it says. A mystery lady "rode in to save the day...hi-ho Silver" it says. 'Guess I'll let it wear the mask.

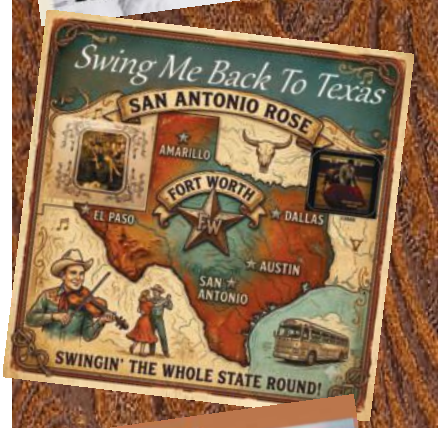
In the Country Swing song **Those Dance Hall Days** singer **Sheila Fitzgerald** reminisces, bemoaning the death of the Irish dance hall culture. She says it gave way to "Disco and Cabaret." Apparently in the old days the girls would stand on one side of the hall as the guys cruised by, scanning sedately. Hm. Texas could've conducted classes.

By virtue of the Texas location described, this one falls into the Western category. In a brave new release Havana-born songwriter **Angel Castillo, Jr.** has relayed the tragic story of the flood at **Camp Mystic** and the irreparable loss of a daughter. Sung by the uncredited Samantha Nichols, it's beautiful, sensitive and memorable in many ways.

By beat, here's one I might classify as "modified" Western Swing. Ireland's **Ger Long** brings all the Swing elements together in **It's Back Again**. "It" is the weekend. That's the time when everyone can "jive, jive, jive" (dance). The fiddle, the steel and horns (though synthesized) are here. If the spirit's willing the feet will follow, I'm assured.

Once again a happy Country Swing song arrives from Ireland in the person of **Marty Daniels** and his release of the old Brooks & Dunn standard **My Next Broken Heart**. The treatment is faithful to the original. Since the Irish spin on the style holds true to the feel-good Swing tradition, unhappy sentiments still bring on the 'wearin' o' the grin!'











WESTERN MUSIC

Top 15 Western Albums

1. Andy Hedges – The Westerner
2. Aspen Black – Roundin' Up Strays
3. John Lowell – On My Way Home
4. Doug Figgs – Storm on the Mountain
5. Ed Meyer – Cowboy Dreams
6. Birdie Nichols – Western Heritage
7. Chris Guenther – Forces of Nature
8. Mark Lynn Young – A Cowboy By Choice
9. Dan Canyon Band – Hombre
10. Joel White – Roads and Barbwire
11. Larry Cann – Songsmith
12. The Timberline Cowboys – Spirits of the High Desert
13. Brenn Hill – The Western That Money Couldn't Buy
14. RW Hampton – My Country
15. Dave Stamey – Porch Music

Top 15 Western Songs

1. Aspen Black – The E-Town Road
2. Carlos Washington – This Cowboy Life of Mine
3. Carol Markstrom – Juniper and Sage
4. Shaza Leigh – Cowgirl's Heart
5. Bobby Marquez – Cowboy Coffee
6. Larry Cann – Cowboy's Hands
7. Alice Benfer – Saddle Dreaming
8. Kerry Grombacher – Cowboy Heart
9. Anne Fraser – That's Where Billy Lays
10. Joel White – Roads and Barbwire
11. Greg Champion – Les and Buddy
12. Mark Lynn Young – A Cowboy by Choice
13. Jon Chandler – The Western Road
14. John Lowell – The Print Behind the Bar
15. Birdie Nichols – The Last Ranger

Top 10 Western Swing Albums

1. The Arizona Wildflowers – Back Home in the West
2. Phillip Wildman – Songs From the Campfire
3. Kristyn Harris – A Place to Land
4. Carlos Washington's Steel Horse Swing – Little Bit of Texas
5. Carlos Washington – A Little Western, A Little Swing
6. Dave Volk – End of the Trail
7. Cowboy Joe Babcock – Swingtown
8. The Brazos Valley Boys – Turn Us Loose and Let Us Swing
9. Dave Alexander – From the Saddle to Symphony Hall
10. Poi Rogers – Twilight Blues

Top 10 Western Swing Songs

1. Patty Clayton – So Many Cowboys
2. Cowboy Joe Babcock – Swing on Down to Swing Town
3. Kevin Tuckfield (feat. Doug Figgs) – Trust in the Lord But Tie Up Your Horse
4. Dave Volk – Get Your Kicks on Rte. 66
5. Kevin Tuckfield – A Thing About Swing
6. Gone With the West – I'm and Old Cowhand
7. The Brazos Valley Boys – You're Nobody 'til Somebody Loves You
8. Hailey Sandoz – You Don't Know Me
9. Carlos Washington – A Little Western, A Little Swing
10. Andrew Dean – Swingtown

CHARTS

Top 15 Western Artists (Catalog)

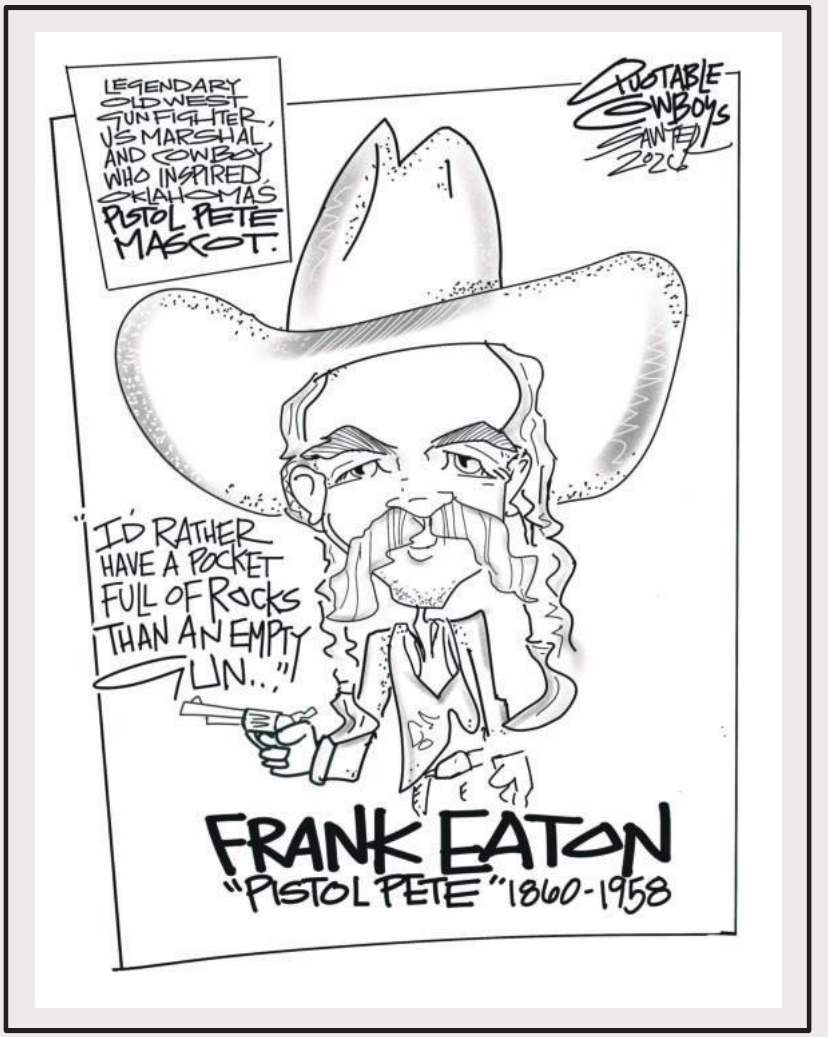
1. Dave Stamey
2. Ron Christopher
3. Jean Prescott
4. Carlos Washington
5. Kristyn Harris
6. Patty Clayton
7. Clint Bradley
8. Allen and Jill Kirkham
9. Jon Chandler
10. R.J. Vandygriff
11. Brenn Hill
12. Marvin O'Dell
13. Red Steagall
14. Randy Huston
15. Doug Figgs

Top 15 Cowboy Poets

1. Sherl Cederburg
2. Mark Munzert
3. KC LaCourse
4. Tom Swearingen
5. Floyd Beard
6. Tom Poley
7. JJ Steele
8. Andy Hedges
9. Duane Nelson
10. Danny McCurry
11. Teresa Burleson
12. Rik Yonder Goodell
13. Lindy Simmons
14. Woody Woodruff
15. Miska Paget

Top 10 Cowboy Poetry Albums

1. Floyd Beard – Horse Tales and Cow Trails
2. Mark Munzert – Pensive and Playful
3. KC LaCourse – Dimestore Cowgirl
4. JJ Steele – Just Passin' Thru
5. Danny McCurry – Thin Clean Air
6. Tom Poley – Cowboy Poetry From Baja Arizona
7. Sherl Cederburg – Wonder of the West
8. Duane Nelson – Cowcamp Serenade
9. Lindy Simmons – Range Rhymes
10. Woody Woodruff – Come Sit a Spell



WESTERN PLAYLIST REPORTERS

HERE ARE THE DJS WHO SUBMITTED THEIR PLAYLISTS THIS QUARTER

Around the Campfire
Marvin O'Dell
Sun City, AZ

Around the Campfire
Eddy Leverett
Cullman, AL

Australian Country Countdown & Oz Radio Gold
Shaza Leigh, Mark Eckel, & Peg Gilchrist
Tamworth, NSW, Australia

Blackdog Indie Country Radio
Phil Kranz
Ringgold, GA

Back at the Ranch
Jarle Kvale
Belcourt, ND

Bus of Real Country
Janice Brooks
Pleasant Gap, PA

Celtic Country
Stewart Fenwick
Glasgow, Scotland

Circuit Rider Roundup
Allen & Jill Kirkham
Custer, SD

Cowboy Corral
JJ Steele
Westcliffe, CO

Cowboy Tracks
Nancy Flagg
Davis, CA

Cowboy Radio Ride
"Tuck" (Kevin Tuckfield)
Mountain View, AR

Cowtrails
Barb Richart
Mancos, CO

Folk Tapestry
Random Routes
Joe Angel
La Grange, TX

Hearts of the West
KC LaCourse
Las Vegas, NV

Keepers of the West
Doug Figgs and Reese Janca
Socorro, NM

Outwest Hour
Roundezvous With a Writer
Bobbi Jean Bell
Placitas, NM

Party Central Radio
Candy Cane
The Netherlands

Paul Hazell's World of Country
Paul Hazell
Uckfield, UK

Rogue Valley Bound
Skip Bessonette & Gene Miles
Medford, OR

Strays at the Gate with Joel at the Reins
American Cowboy Radio
Amarillo TX

Strays at the Gate with Sound Wrangler Ben Parks
American Cowboy Radio
Amarillo TX

The Western Way Hour
Susie Knight
Conifer, CO

Tombstone Every Mile
Ken Ward
Albuquerque, NM

Traditionally Yours
Kent Thompson
Chickasha, OK

Western Air Waves
Aspen Black
Roanoke, VA

Whittler's Corner
Butch & Christina Martin
Grant Pass, OR

Western Music Time
OJ Sikes
Redding, CA

DJ contact information and show times can be found on the DJ tab of the IWMA website at **www.iwestermusic.org**.

ON THE AIR

by Aspen Black



I'm "On the Air" with Shaza Leigh and Mark Eckel, our newest DJ members from Australia, who will be attending the IWMA convention this November. I asked them to give a brief overview of their background as DJ's and how their programs work.

Mark Eckel has been in the music business for over 35 years as a radio personality and manager of artists, clubs, and entertainment, including serving on the committee of the largest independent country music festival in the world at the time. In 2026, Mark was inducted into the Australian Country Music Broadcasters Hall of Fame. His current show, 'Oz Country Breakfast' is simulcast on Oz Radio Gold around the world from New South Wales, Australia.

Shaza Leigh has been a professional singer/songwriter, musician, producer and industry executive for almost 40 years. She owns The Australian Country Music Network, including OZ RADIO GOLD, ALLIED INTERNATIONAL RADIO, TAMWORTH RADIO, and COUNTRY RADIO GOLD. Mark owns OZCMR. All of these air the following shows multiple times a week: "The International Show" (New releases & Artist interviews) with Shaza Leigh & Dr Laura Nichols, "Country Countdown" (Australian Country Chart Top30) with Shaza Leigh +ACMN Team member, "Alternate Music Chart" (Top20) with Shaza Leigh & Mark Eckel, "Oz Trad Country" (Australian Traditional Country Chart Top20) with Shaza Leigh & Barry Cannon, and "Oz Hot Trax Top30" (All genre chart) with Nic Boyd. These programs are also distributed to over 10,000 radio stations worldwide.

Shaza, Mark, and their team of DJ's are open to playing all kinds of western music, however, "due to legal implications, her stations only accept professional digital radio releases from authorized distribution companies including our guaranteed agreement with Star Central as our preferred distribution service. As is a common practice with most stations these days, we don't accept unsolicited material at all." She says one thing that sets her apart from other DJ's is, "I built radio networks and chart systems that ensure that artists achieve results. If an artist is being aired on a chart show, they know they are gaining widespread national and global airplay. We are in the business of creating hit singles and professional artists." Her network is expanding through a Nashville connection dedicated to promoting mostly American artists, replicating the same system in the US that she now has in place in Australia.

Shaza says she lives and breathes music and radio programming 24/7 and loves "seeing artists achieve results beyond their wildest dreams." In her spare time, she enjoys movies, art, sports, travel, and spiritual expansion. Beyond radio, Mark, a champion lawn bowler, enjoys travel and history, and has just returned from a multi-month camping excursion all around Australia, taking his "Oz Breakfast" show on the road from the van via Starlink, with his wife Denise and dog Lulu! Please take a moment to say hello to Mark, Shaza, and their Australian colleagues at the IWMA convention!

Attention Djs! Your contributions to The Western Way charts are welcomed.
Please send your playlist, including the song and the CD on which it appears, to aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com.



Book Nook
Reviews & More

BY KAREN CAMPBELL



If you would like to have your western fiction, nonfiction or poetry book reviewed, send a copy to: Karen Campbell, 1762 County Road 121, Gainsville, TX 76240. Submissions will not be returned.

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE OR WRITING WORKSHOPS

How often have we turned to a trusted friend or colleague when we need advice on how to word something, especially on a sensitive topic, before sending a text or email? How often have we sought the input of friends, family, or even internet strangers about situations we are experiencing? Seeking good advice is a common practice in daily life, and it is also a valuable part of the writing process. The key to doing it well is avoiding two common pitfalls: asking the wrong people and becoming an "ask hole."

Many writers informally "workshop" their writing by seeking feedback from people they know. There is nothing wrong with that approach, but the quality of the feedback depends heavily on whom is asked. Friendly audiences can be encouraging, but they can also be limiting. When the people we ask have relatively little knowledge about the type of writing we are doing (or about what makes writing effective in general) we are more likely to receive a "yes man" response than useful criticism.

People also tend to avoid confrontation. A friend may recognize that something isn't working but hesitate to say so because they don't want to sound rude or hurt the writer's feelings. Others simply may not know enough about writing to explain why something does or doesn't work. "I like it" feels good, but it doesn't give a writer much direction for revision.

For that reason, it is often better to find fellow writers to workshop your writing with. Better still, find writers who are continually working to develop their craft and educate themselves. Writers who actively seek improvement are more likely to appreciate genuine feedback and more willing to give it in return. Someone with whom writers have a professional or collegial relationship may even be a better workshop partner than a close friend. Writers may be less likely to take their criticism personally and more likely to recognize it as objective and constructive. Friends and family sometimes give us a friendly pat on the back when what we really need is a rhetorical kick in the pants.

People can be remarkably sensitive about their writing, which makes finding a good workshop partner both difficult and invaluable. Look for someone who can be honest without being brutal. At the same time, make sure to provide an equitable trade: offer thoughtful feedback on their writing and develop a tough enough skin to receive honest criticism as well. Sometimes that criticism may be, "Scrap it and try again." As painful as that advice can be, sometimes it is the very best advice someone can give.

The alternative to asking the wrong person is asking too many people or becoming an "ask hole." Writers usually do this in one of two ways. The first is seeking advice from so many people that they become overwhelmed by conflicting opinions and no longer know which advice to trust. The second is repeatedly asking people for feedback and then never taking any of it. Both habits can wear out readers and prevent writers from developing the kind of long-term workshop relationships that can improve any writing over time.

Instead, identify a small group, usually two to four people, whose judgment can be trusted and who know what they are doing. Keep most of serious advice-seeking within this circle. When they offer suggestions, take a reasonable portion of that feedback seriously. Writers certainly don't have to accept every recommendation or make every suggested change, but they should have a good reason for rejecting it. If three trusted readers stumble over the same stanza, for example, it probably deserves another look.

Finally, it is sometimes worth investing time and money in professional feedback. Take a creative writing course. Attend a writing conference. Sign up for a workshop led by an experienced writer or editor. Professional instruction can expose weaknesses we didn't recognize while also giving us new strategies for solving them. A surprising amount can be accomplished during a dedicated weekend of writing, workshopping, and revision.

Writing may ultimately happen between one writer and the page, but becoming a better writer rarely happens entirely alone. Find a few people willing to sit around the proverbial campfire with you, listen carefully when they speak, and be willing to return the favor.

CAMPFIRES & COWPUNCHERS

CREEPY & COMICAL COWBOY POEMS FOR THE CAMPFIRE.

Wiswell, Scott L.

2026
Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing
Paperback:$15.00 Kindle eBook: $5
157 pp

Paperback available on Amazon

Scott L. Wiswell's most recent collection, Campfires & Cowpunchers, contains 49 poems divided into three sections that will suit readers looking for a fall-themed read with a Western twist. The first section focuses on "creepy" poems, the second on the "creepy and comical," and the final section on "poems with a purpose." Aside from the cover, no artwork is included, though the collection features a foreword by Dan Dillon and an afterword by Pastor Andrew Schwarz.

The "creepy" focus is refreshing, taking cowboy poetry into territory not often explored in the genre. Several poems also serve as effective homages to earlier writers of spooky tales and verse. Most use four-line stanzas, though line lengths vary, and Wiswell experiments with half rhyme and other variations. The collection starts particularly strong with "The Demon," an homage to Edgar Allan Poe that captures Poe's distinctive meter, rhyme, and ominous atmosphere remarkably well. Other noteworthy poems include "The Coin," "The Crossing," "The Gunman," "Four Horsemen," and "The Warning."

The second section shifts toward humor while continuing the collection's creepy theme. Several poems are quite amusing, although the humor can get a bit "up close and personal," making this section better suited to an adult audience. Standouts include "The Haunted Privy," "The Debate," "Halloween Rodeo," and "Terror."

Wiswell shifts gears again with his "poems with a purpose," which tackle heavier subjects such as suicide, Native American issues, veterans, and abuse. Several are followed by commentary or helpful information related to their subject matter, emphasizing Wiswell's desire to use poetry for more than entertainment.

Overall, Campfires & Cowpunchers is a hard-hitting themed collection that should appeal to readers looking for cowboy poetry that ventures beyond familiar Western subjects. Many of the poems should also work particularly well in performance, especially for fall or Halloween programs. It is not, however, a collection for young readers or the faint of heart: Wiswell can be fairly explicit in both his horror imagery and bodily humor. For readers who like their cowboy poetry darker, stranger, and occasionally raunchier, Campfires & Cowpunchers offers a memorable ride around the campfire.

KAREN GRACE BROWN CAMPBELL has been writing, reading, and performing primarily western and Christian poetry for over 25 years. She is also a wife and a mother of a wonderful little girl. She breeds horses and runs barrels as well as serving as an Associate Dean and English Professor at Grayson College and has taught at other colleges and universities. She has her PhD from Texas Tech and an MA from Baylor University in Literature, specifically medieval literature (cowboys and knights have a lot in common). You may contact Karen at CampbellK@grayson.edu.





by Marvin O'Dell

… **Ernie Martinez** was inducted into the Colorado Country Music Hall of Fame on August 23. Ernie is a multi-genre, multi-instrumentalist and a staple of the Colorado Music scene. He started playing Country Music in the mid-1970's and is currently playing country music with Dustin Devine. This band received the 2023 Band of the Year award from the Colorado Country Music Association. Ernie was also inducted into the Colorado Bluegrass Hall of Fame in 2011.

… Cowboy poet **Floyd Beard** writes a monthly column titled "The Short Grass Philosopher." It has exceeded three million potential readers bringing Cowboy poetry and snippets of western life to a whole new audience every month. If you would like a copy or have a potential local publication for Floyd to contact, let Floyd know at febeard@yahoo.com. He can also be contacted at Floyd Beard, 7500 county road 193.7, Kim, CO 81049 or you can email Floyd at febeard@yahoo.com. He can also be reached at 719-740-1000, voice or text.

… The feature film Under the Western Skies (formerly called A Ranch Musical), in which **Kristyn Harris** starred and sang her own songs, had its World Premiere in Burbank, CA in August. It was also awarded Best Feature Film by the Western Heritage & Film Festival in Payson, AZ and held its Texas premiere in September. Kristyn released her long-awaited gospel album, Give Me Jesus, in June, produced by her husband Aarom Meador and Jake Hooker. She is now in preproduction for her next western album of original songs.

… **Rik Goodell** enjoyed the distinct honor of, along with **Kyle Shobe**, opening for **Dave Stamey** at the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Lewistown, MT. He performed three poems to a house of nearly 900 folks.

… **Juni Fisher** retired from touring and playing music, but it didn't slow her down much. She's been on the road, showing her cutting horses at both National Cutting Horse Association shows and Quarter Horse shows and recently won the AQHA Amateur Cutting Circuit Championship on her gelding "Johnny" as well as the Select Amateur Cutting Circuit Championships on her gelding "Vinnie" at a show in Watsonville, CA. She and Johnny are now qualified to compete in the Amateur division at the World Championships in Oklahoma City, and her trainer, two-million-dollar Hall of Fame rider Rock Hedlund, qualified Johnny to show in the open division.

… **Patty Clayton** states that she is honored and wants to thank the IWMA and **Tom Swearingen** for featuring her in the summer issue of The Western Way. This summer's travels included a week of performing in Medora, ND and a visit to the new Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, plus a trip to Manhattan, KS where she was a featured performer at the IWMA Kansas Chapter's Summer Roundup. She's also been working on recording a new original single.

… In central Oregon, **Sydney Pierce** gives fiddle lessons and has openings for new students (any age!). She is also looking forward to releasing a relative's autobiography which will be available for purchase, hopefully, by end of year! Being a cowboy through and through, his story is packed full of adventures from across the western states.

… Continuing to be recognized for her work in western music, **Phoebe White** was recently awarded the 2026 Youth Achievement Award from the Tennessee Songwriters Association International.

… The western swing band, **The Brazos Valley Boys**, recently had a full house at the Turkey TX Hotel concert stage. Turkey, TX is the center of western swing music and is the home of western swing great **Bob Wills**. The event had a wonderful crowd of old fans and now some new ones who shared their wonderful Texas hospitality and appreciation of western swing music.

… *A Driftin' Cowboy*, the new album from Yampa Valley Steve Jones, was released in August. Steve's website is www.yampasteve.com.

… Almost finished is a new album from **Randy Palmer** titled Cowboys. The work is produced by **Merel Bregante**. Merel also lets us know that a new single by **Sarah Pierce** will be released soon. The song is titled "Those Hands."

… Ande D. Williams, the daughter of **Allen and Jill Kirkham**, is an international award-winning film maker. She wrote, directed, and finished filming a new movie this summer in the Adirondak Mountains. Jill did all graphic arts for promotion, and Allen is co-writing and performing duo music for the soundtrack with Kylie McNeil of New York. Watch for Everything in the Woods coming soon!

… **Mike Mahaney** is adding some traditional American folk songs and country music to his show. He will still include the Classic Western favorites and some western swing and will occasionally recite a poem or spoken word to his sets.

… In July, **The Kristyn Harris Trio** (featuring Kristyn, Matthew Walton, and Leah Sawyer) played for the 80th birthday party of Annie Denver (former wife of John Denver) in Paonia, CO. Annie was a rapt and enthusiastic audience member throughout the entire show.

… Oregon Cowboy poet **Tom Swearingen** and children's book author wife **Carla Swearingen** continued their travel adventures with a September Alaska cruise. Carla is at work on her fifth book and Tom's new album project with the quartet **Cowboy Jazz** is recorded, mixed, and awaiting mastering. Expect an early 2027 release.

… **Peggy Malone** has had a song written about her life by Rick Kennerknecht of OutlawBallads.com. The song has been made into a video on YouTube. To find it, just type in "Pickin' Peggy" on the YouTube search bar. Peggy is currently working on a benefit for Our Fallen Firefighters Memorial Monument to be erected at Fruita Visitor Center while gearing up for the 11th year of the Western States Cowboy Gathering in Grand Junction, CO to be held Nov. 6-7.

… **Lori Nelson**, of the Black Hills Chapter, has released her first book of Cowboy Poetry. RANCH MAMA is named for a poem on the subject, but it truly contains something for everyone from stories of brave men facing daunting hardships to humorous observations to snapshots of her real life on a ranch in Montana. The book is available by mail from Lori or through Amazon.

… Co-founder of the long-running Katy Creek Band, **Nancy Elliott**, returns to the IWMA bringing her first novel, Autumn's on its Way (inspired by her song of the same title) and *The Heart of it All*, her uniquely curated story and song concert. She is also in the planning stages of re-establishing the Maricopa-Butterfield Stage house concert series and regular song circle gatherings (www.NancyElliottMusic.com)

… Cowboy poets **Dennis Russell** and **JJ Steele** produced their 5th Annual Day of the Cowboy Celebration in Westcliffe, CO. A very receptive audience was enamored with authentic and heartfelt performances by the cast and crew: **Bill Patterson**, headliner **Joel Alden White**, emcee **Terry Nash**, greenroom and top hand **Ranger Jane Veatch**, construction supervisor and poetic advisor **Dale Page**, the essential **Valerie Beard**, show opener **Pickin' Peggy Malone**, the **Russellers' Beverly Gray Russell**, and guest poet **Floyd Beard**.

… **Kerry Grombacher** served on a panel for the South Dakota Arts Council in early summer, evaluating project completion grant applications and making recommendations to the SDAC to fund certain projects. In addition, Kerry and **Aspen Black** (The Western Troubadours) recorded a new, original swing tune in Nashville, just before the Tennessee Chapter's Day of the Cowboy event. Tennessee Chapter and **Gone with the West** member Merna "The Barefoot Fiddler" Lewis played on the track. They plan to release the new song in late fall.

… J. Michael Mullins and Geary Parsons, **The Timberline Cowboys**, are coming out of a busy summer and right into an equally hectic fall. Both have re-joined the Board of Directors for the Durango Cowboy Gathering. After a visit to perform on Colorado's front range, they intend to pop into the studio to turn out a Christmas single just in time for the holidays.

… **E. Joe Brown** completed a full summer as a featured artist on the Day of the Cowboy at the Chisolm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan, OK. He will be featured in October at the Ozark Creative Writers Conference in Eureka Springs, AR followed by events in Davis, Atoka, and Ardmore in Oklahoma.

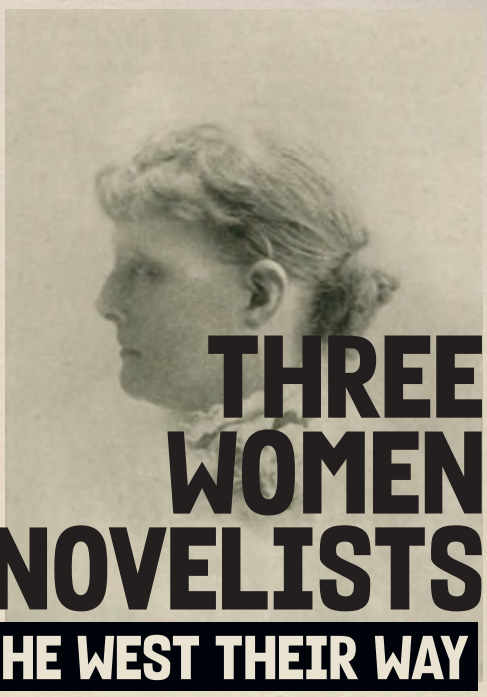




BM Bower



Dorothy Scarborough



Mollie Evelyn Moore Davis

THREE WOMEN NOVELISTS WHO DEFINED THE WEST THEIR WAY

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

BY JOHNNY D. BOGGS

Last time out, I explained why Owen Wister is considered the father of Western fiction – thanks to The Virginian, his 1902 novel that sold more than 300,000 copies in its first year and some 2 million in its first century.

Without The Virginian, would we have had Frank H. Spearman's Whispering Smith (1906), Zane Grey's Riders of the Purple Sage (1912) or Emerson Hough's The Covered Wagon (1922)? How about Ernest Haycox's short story "Stage to Lordsburg" (1937), which gave us John Wayne's star-making turn in Stagecoach two years later? Or John W. Cunningham's short story "The Tin Star" (1947), which gave us High Noon in 1952? What about Alan LeMay's The Searchers (1954), Louis L'Amour's The Daybreakers (1960) and Elmer Kelton's The Day the Cowboys Quit (1971)? Or even Larry McMurtry's Lonesome Dove (1985)?

We certainly wouldn't have had Andy Adams's classic The Log of a Cowboy (1903), which he admitted was his rebuttal to the romanticized chivalry depicted in Wister's bestseller.

Adams's novel was so authentic even today some readers think it's nonfiction.

As Adams noted: "My insight into cattle life was not obtained from the window of a Pullman car, but close to the soil and from the hurricane deck of a Texas horse. Even to-day I am a better cowman than author, for I can still rope and tie down a steer with any of the boys, while in my writing the loop of the rope may settle on the wrong foot of the rhetoric."

Adams based his novel on a five-month, 3,500-mile drive of 3,000 cattle from the Mexican border to Montana.

But before The Macmillan Company published Wister's bestseller, Houghton, Mifflin and Company released, in 1899, an authentic novel of the West, M.E.M. Davis's The Wire Cutters.

Mollie Evelyn Moore Davis was Southern-born, but the family moved to Texas when she was a child and soon she was writing newspaper articles, then novels. What she wrote was far from romantic. She stressed realism, and based The Wire-Cutters on the fence-cutting wars that plagued Texas in the 1880s.

"The theme is unhackneyed and the author has told the story with vigor and a full grasp of the picturesque possibilities," The Brooklyn (New York) Daily Times observed. The Houston Post said Davis "has taken a theme that is startling in its originality."

B.M. Bower also took exception to Wister's depiction of the West and its Western heroes. A Minnesotan by birth, Bertha Muzzy moved with her family to Montana when she was 17, where she taught school around Great Falls.

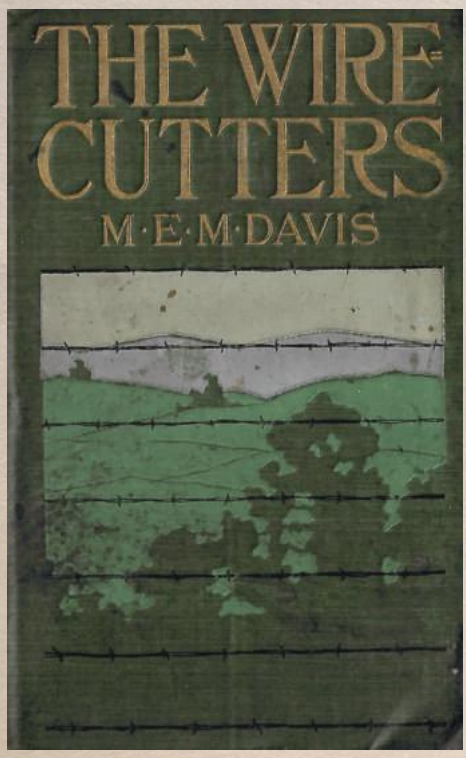
"She came to Montana just in time to personally witness the swift, dramatic change from the wild, free open range of the 1880s to 20th Century cultivated fields, farms and ranches girdled with barb wire," Kate Baird Anderson, Bower's granddaughter, wrote in 1997. "She understood and wrote about both lifestyles and viewpoints from the inside."

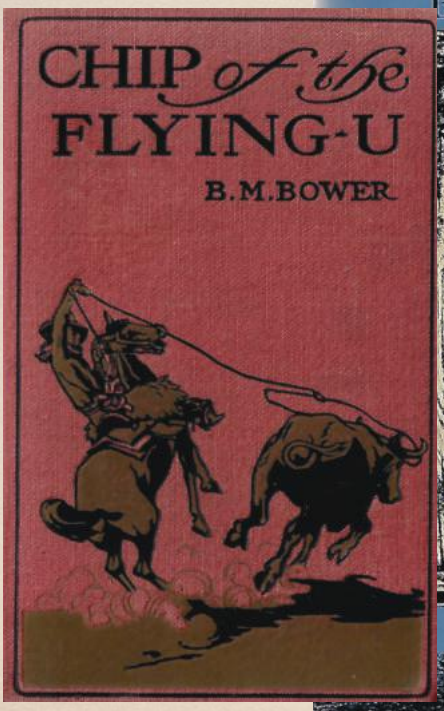
Best known for her 1906 novel Chip of the Flying U, published by Grosset & Dunlap (and including illustrations by Charles M. Russell), Bower wrote 68 novels – by her estimation, 5 million-plus words – including Rowdy of the Cross L, The Lonesome Trail and The Range Dwellers.

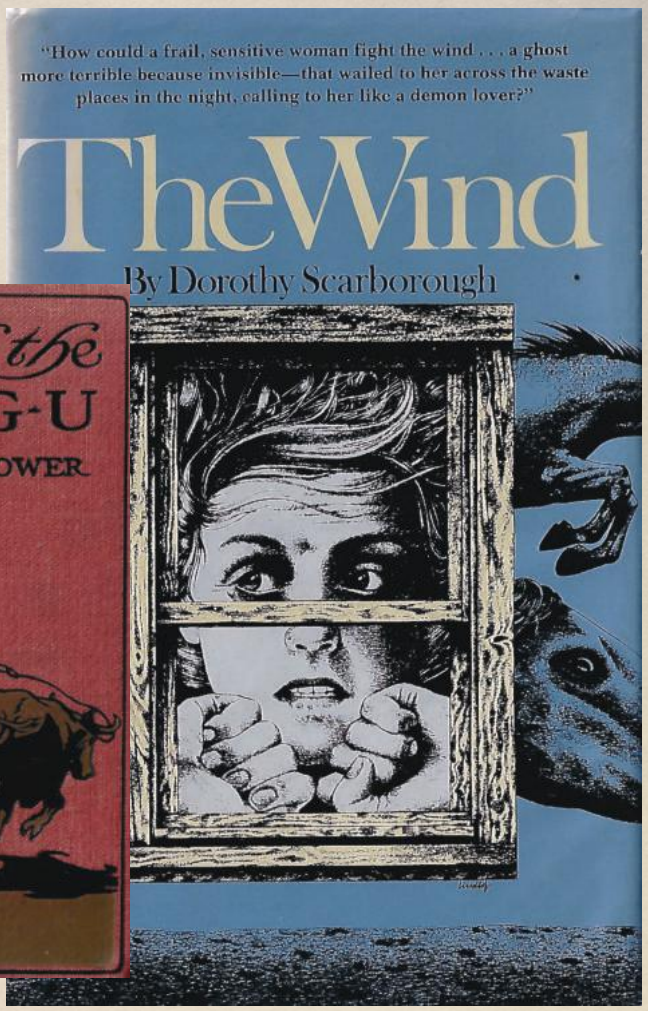
Not that she got to bask in her success. A 1931 short in The Sacramento Union noted that "Those who have a love for the old west when cowboys wore chaps and talked in a drawl will be glad to learn that B.M. Bower has added another book to his list of yarns."

His?

Well, with a few exceptions (Willa Cather, Helen Hunt Jackson, Dorothy M. Johnson), women Western writers often had to use male pennames or their initials.







When Harper released The Wind in 1925, author Dorothy Scarborough's name wasn't even mentioned. That stark, dark novel about an Eastern woman who moves to West Texas in the 1880s and is driven insane by the wind was first published anonymously.

The novel opens:

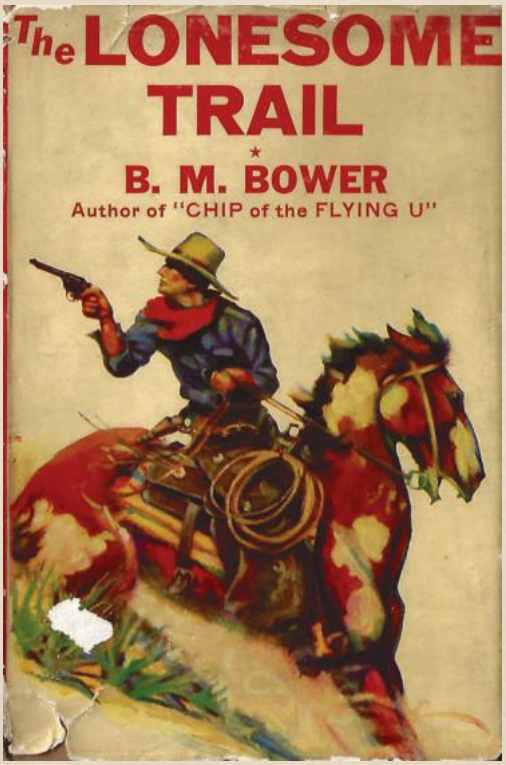
"The wind was the cause of it all. The sand, too, had a share in it, and human beings were involved, but the wind was the primal force, and but for it the whole series of events would not have happened."

As The New York Times noted: "The grim inevitability of the whole thing runs through each chapter."

In 1928, Lillian Gish starred in a film version, written by Frances Marion – who would become the first woman to win an Academy Award for screenwriting (1930's The Big House) – John Colton and Scarborough, but the novel's bleak ending was replaced with a happier version.

Davis, Bower and Scarborough helped pave the way for women who wanted to write about the West, whether they used their own names or pennames.

And if you ask me, The Wire-Cutters, Chip of the Flying U and The Wind hold up much better than The Virginian.





JOHNNY D. BOGGS, a native of South Carolina and former newspaper journalist, is a Western novelist/historian, film scholar, photographer and sometimes lyricist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has won a record ten Spur Awards from Western Writers of America for his fiction and writes for several magazines. His website is **www.JohnnyDBoggs.com.**

ARE YOU CONFUSED?

There are 2 opportunities to let readers know of highlights from your personal or performance endeavors. Read the two descriptions below and submit your remarks for the appropriate column.

Marvin O'Dell should receive submissions to the **"In the Spotlight"** column. These should be no more than three sentences about items of interest pertaining to your family or career that you would like to share, such as news about anniversaries, births and deaths, and updates on your recent recording and touring successes or your plans for the near future. You may send the information directly to Marvin at **meoteo@aol.com**.

Carol Markstrom is writing a regular column **"The 'International' of IWMA."** Submit your news about your activities **outside of the U.S.**, such as performances/touring outside of the U.S., international awards, news from international members, your songs ranked on international charts, and similar items. Send your news directly to Carol at **carol@carolmarkstrommusic.com**.

Congratulations to the 2026 Spur Award winner and finalists for Best Western Song.

Winner: "Roads and Barbwire"
by Joel White

Finalist: "Cowboy's Legacy"
by Doug Figgs and Floyd Beard

Finalist: "Somewhere Green"
by Jim Jones and Deanna Dickinson McCall

2027 Spur Awards submissions are available at **WesternWriters.org** after August 1, 2026.

Awards are for Western-themed songs, poems, books, articles, etc., first published/released in 2026.

Western Writers Of America
"Literature of the West for the World" ®

Founded in the 1950s by a handful of fiction writers, **Western Writers of America** has grown into an international organization of writers, editors, publishers, publicists and agents of fiction, nonfiction, songs, poems, plays and film.



Join us today. The Spur Award competition is open to members and nonmembers.

www.WesternWriters.org

Join WWA!

THE WESTERN WORLD TOUR

by Rick Huff



Here's Part Two of a disturbing discovery about AI. First more "Sightings" that hopefully prove Western is playing nationally. Western Music can, too. A TV ad for Dior's Sauvage Elixir cologne shows a rough-looking cowboy atop a bluff and smelling, we'll assume, thoroughly entrancing. Or is he just 'bluffing?!!' It's nice to see Boot Barn strongly embracing Cowboy reality in promoting. It's progenitor Western Warehouse couldn't be bothered. The discount market chain Aldi uses a cowboy in its ads. 'Makes sense. Their home base is Cowboy-crazed Germany. In a commercial for the online resale site Vinted a teen girl sells unused clothes earning bucks to now be cool dancing in Cowboy boots! A TV ad for the psoriasis med Rinvoq puts skin in the game showing a hatter shaping Cowboy headgear. In other ads two cowboys drink Cokes, a cowboy line dancer quaffs Metameucil and a lady rancher downs Boost. Then, in a true case of East meets West, a Nudie suit-wearing Travis Yee sings the praises of Panda Express. Is 'bok choy' actually 'Cowboy' in Cantonese??

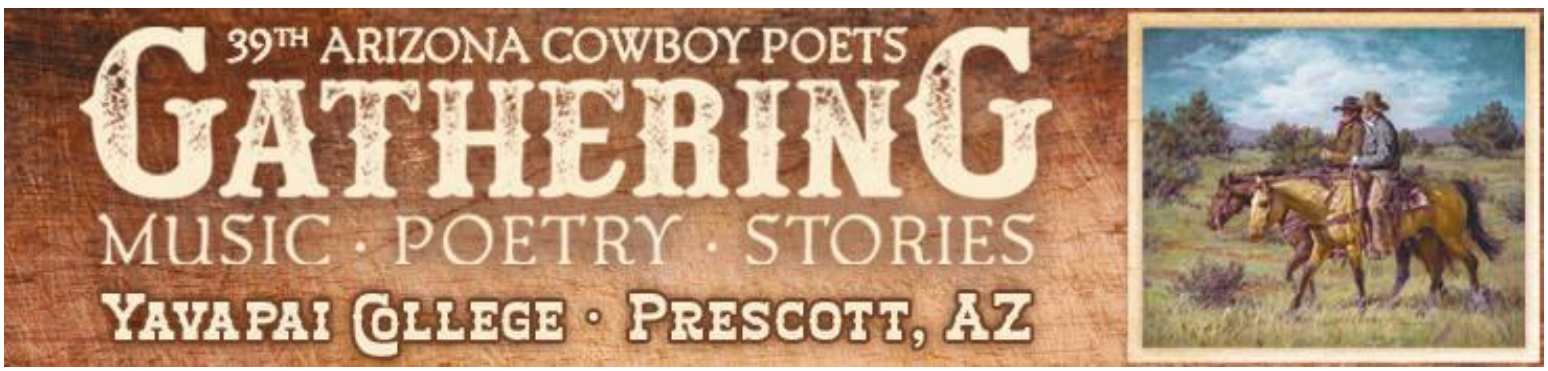
* * *

Warning, Western performers! You're being reviewed!! I don't mean the ones I write. AI is posting its own assessments of you. If you're sick of hearing talking heads talk about AI, you'd better not tune it out. In the last column we took a little dive into those waters to see if AI had learned anything about us. It had. It pretty much understands what 'Western Music' and 'Cowboy Poetry' are but, in the case of the music in particular, not so much about which artists perform it. That's trouble! Regularly Country and Americana/Folk performers are inaccurately lumped in. The perpetrators of AI tell us the thing must be "taught." If not given a recipe, AI quickly bakes its own cake. Indie Folk artist Kelsey Lopez released a song about that called "A.N.S.H." (meaning "AI Needs Some Help"). Check this out. For grins, I googled 'Rick Huff's Best Of The West Reviews' in a general search. Topping the list the was a computer-written profile of what I do. Frankly I was pleased with its content. It cited review examples, wrote of advice offered to performers, it fairly described my style of reviewing and even interpreted my intentions. But later I went back and googled the same thing. This time a totally different AI write-up appeared. That one incorrectly pooled data about the reviews, my time working with Hi Busse & The Frontiersmen, an early publication idea called "The Best Of The West Digest" my partner Mary Ryland and I registered but never produced and more, stirring them into a stew of off-kilter babble. When other AI engines pick up on it, those mistakes could live forever. AI assembles fresh data from wherever each time!! I didn't put the full list of errors into print here for fear of further enabling the sour stream. Let my example serve as an advisory. Performers!!! You need to google, then re-google and possibly even re-re-google your name in general searches to see if you recognize yourself online. You may be in for a maddening surprise. Yes, I knew you'd ask how to correct erroneous AI reporting. So I asked it how to fix itself. MIT Management, for one, offers "When AI Gets It Wrong: Addressing AI Hallucinations and Bias." It includes classes and personal consultations. If I'm reading this one right, ChatGPT wants to let us submit corrections. I still suspect it takes an expert to make sure such input lands correctly. What doesn't take an expert is realizing there are obvious AI death traps threatening the promotion of Western Music. Chief among them may be continuing to push the muddying, crushing concept that Western Music is somehow 'the same' as Americana or Folk. By subject it's not!! If we don't clearly and specifically distinguish it, neither will AI. It's time to officially adopt the solid definition of the genre (created with thoughtful input from a dozen-plus IWMA members) and place those good words into wide….printed….circulation through social media, on the website and elsewhere:

"Western Music is most often acoustic in its core instrumentation. It's lyrics are typically about the lives, loves, lore, locales, legends and legacy of the old and new West, its peoples or Cowboying worldwide."

* * *

Finally, news about the "Welcome Night" we conduct on Tuesday to greet early IWMA Convention arrivals ahead of the Wednesday opening. We've held those events at the Rio Grande Inn north of Hotel Albuquerque. This year it'll happen at Ponderosa Brewing Company, so cart right over! 'Couldn't resist. "Ponderosa?" Head east down the street past Hotel Chaco and the Sawmill Market to 1761 Bellamah Ave., NW. Entertaining us royally will be performers from the IWMA Tennessee Chapter. Lotsa food, lotsa fun!



THE INTERNATIONAL IN IWMA

by Carol Markstrom

Western music and poetry are truly international as shown in the recognitions of IWMA members. It is through the dedication of DJs that IWMA artists are heard worldwide. Most recently, **Bobbie Jean Bell** featured two playlists on the "WWW World Wide West" with the "Story Spinner" airing on the OUTWEST HOUR. The first playlist featured songs from performers from the British Isles, songs and poetry from Canada, and songs from Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand. The second playlist featured artists from the U.S., Australia, and Ireland encompassing common themes of lawmen/outlaws, rodeo, the cowboy and his horse, the landscape, trucks, and love.

Kevin Tuckfield's "Cowboy Radio Ride" is reaching a growing international audience. His program can now be heard on Australian Country Music Radio with DJ **Mark Eckel** and Ireland Country Radio with DJ **GER O'Brien**. Most recently, "Cowboy Radio Ride" joined South Africa Radio on GOfm with DJ **Hun Ter Leite**. Also watch for the program coming from the Netherlands with Party Central Radio.

IWMA is happy to welcome international members to its upcoming Convention in November in Albuquerque. From Australia, **Larry Cann** will be performing; as well as members of **The Butler Band** including Australians **Shaza Leigh** and **Peggy Gilchrist**. Be sure to hear Australia Country Music Hall of Fame DJ **Mark Eckel** of Oz Country Music Radio at "Coffee with the DJs" and attend his session and "Learn how to get your product streaming through the Australian Country Network & beyond."



The Butler Band

Relative to international touring, Birdie Nichols and The Butler Band have been making tracks in Australia across Queensland and New South Wales. They are carving out their place in the music landscape with truth, grit, and redemption. The band is spear-headed by hitmaking singer-songwriters, Shaza Leigh OWB (Bass & Rhythm Guitar) and rising star Birdie Nichols (Mandolin, Viola & Guitar) with Lachlan Butler (Drums & Percussion) and Peggy Gilchrist "The Queen of Country Piano" (Piano and Strings). In other touring news, in January, KC LaCourse will perform Western poetry on the "Boulevard of Dreams" at the Tamworth Country Music Festival, Australia's "Country Music Capital" in New South Wales. Clint Bradley has been touring with his band in Scandinavia, and they will soon be performing shows in Switzerland. He is working toward a tour in the U.S. which his fans eagerly await.



Clint Bradley in Finland



18th June 2026

Several IWMA members appeared on international music charts from Australia and here are some of the highest rankings of artist and song from this Summer. Aspen Black's "E-Town Road" reached #4 on the Country Chart, #6 on Oz Hot Trax Top 30, and #14 on the Alternate Chart from Star Central. Ron Christopher's "Dakota" is steadily rising on charts in Australia, most recently reaching #4 on the Alternate Chart, #5 on the Country Chart, and #6 on Oz Hot Trax. Carol Markstrom's "Una Buena Vida" has been riding high reaching #2 on both the Country Chart and the Alternate Chart, and #4 on Oz Hot Trax. Patty Clayton's "Wolf Moon" hit #1 on both the Alternate and Inspirational Charts in June and is still sitting in the Top 5 on the Inspirational Chart.

From Australia, Shaza Leigh's "Cowgirls Heart" had an incredible ride reaching #1 on the Country Chart, Airplay Express Chart, Traditional Country Chart, and Oz Hot Trax; as well as #6 on the Tasmanian & Oz CMR Chart and #18 on the Country Songs Chart.

Shaza also wrote three #1 hit songs for other artists, including "Waltz With Me" for Peggy Gilchrist, "Rough Diamonds" for Ashley Cook, and "Mount Scoria" for Anthony Baxter and Lindsay Butler. Birdie Nichols had #1 hits in Australia with "The Cowboy Code" on the Country Chart, and Birdie Nichol's and The Butler Band's "The Last Ranger Live" reaching #1 on both the Country Chart and Oz Hot Trax.

Additional chart activity comes from Europe. Texas singer-songwriter Randy Palmer reported that the single "Cowboy," a co-write with Oregon poet Tom Swearingen, debuted at #20 on the MKB Indie Radio chart in Belgium. Mark Lynn Young's "Ride It Out" is climbing and current at #4 on the European Academy of Country Music Chart (EACM). Additionally, his songs are being played by Country Time Radio in Germany and Radio Indie International Network in Italy.

This quarter several IWMA artists appeared on the Joyce Ramgatie Top-200 Artists and Top-40 Singles Charts from the Netherlands, including Aspen Black, Mark Lynn Young, Carol Markstrom, Larry Cann, Dave Volk, Birdie Nichols, Shaza Leigh, Peggy Gilchrist, and Birdie Nichols and The Butler Band. It is noteworthy that IWMA Hall of Fame Inductees regularly appear on the Ramgatie charts, including Johnny Cash, Red Steagall, and Lynn Anderson.

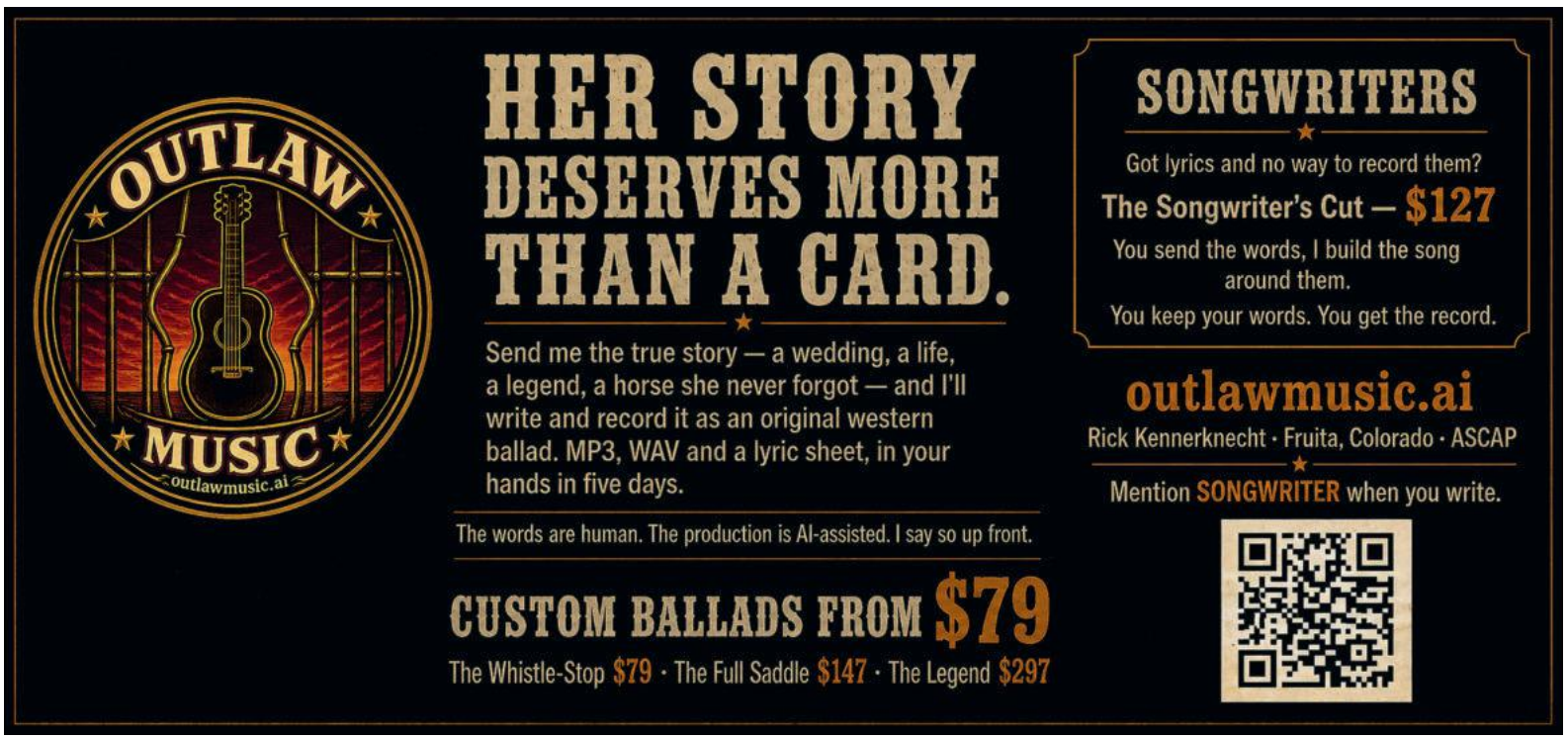
Congratulations to Birdie Nichols who was a finalist for six awards from the International Singer-Songwriters Association and was also nominated for a Josie Music Award for Album of the Year for "Western Heritage." From Indie Country Music Australia, The Butler Band was nominated for ICMAs for Best Australian Country Band and Best Live Performance. Congratulation also to Shaza Leigh for seven ICMA nominations spanning her many roles as an artist, music producer, and radio presenter, as well as for Country Album and Country Single.



This column ends with sad news of Gaby Agrikola's recent passing away. Gaby, along with her husband Peter Agrikola, were the driving forces behind the Red Carpet Award Show in Europe, where several IWMA musicians, poets, and DJs have won awards and some had the honor of meeting Gaby at the award show in the Netherlands. This loss is felt by many worldwide.



"American folk music washes gently against Americana" is how multi-award-winning singer-songwriter Carol Markstrom's style of Western music is described by Country Music People Magazine. Audiences from across the U.S. to Alaska and also in Europe have been entertained by Carol's clear, emotion-filled vocals and songs that transport across places, times, and people, including Indigenous cultures. Her songs have been included in films and are played by DJs worldwide. Carol serves as a Director on the IWMA Board.





IWMA CONVENTION 2026

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, November 11	
10:00 am–8:00 pm	**Member Registration & Ticket Sales**
12:00-1:30 pm	**Opening Lunch with Special Guest Speaker Orin Friesen**
12:00-5:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Boutique Check-in**
2:00-5:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Sales**
1:45-5:00 pm	**Showcase Performances** Cisco Jim, Grace Clark, Steve Cormier, Dennis Jay, Jim Mathis, Ed Meyer, LeeLee Robert, The Roswells
7:00-10:00 pm	**Swing Dance with Syd Masters & The Swing Riders**
10:30 pm	**AFTER HOURS MUSIC** Fireplace Jam

THURSDAY, November 12

8:00 am–7:00 pm	**Member Registration & Ticket Sales**
9:00 am-5:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Boutique/Vendor Area**
8:00-9:30am	**Educational Sessions** **Coffee with the DJs** *Sponsored by Mark Eckel*
9:45-10:45 am	**Polish Your On-Stage Poetry Performance - Floyd Beard** *Sponsored by Susie Knight*
11:00am-12:00pm	**The GOOD, the BAD and the UGLY (of AI)!** (Part I) - **Bill Lindsay, Hamblen Music Co.**
11:30am-1:00pm	**A Brief History of Western Music - Dan McCorison**
1:15-2:15pm	**Western Music Artists & Industry Hear from "Australian Country Music Hall of Fame DJ" Mark Eckel**
1:30-3:00 pm	**The GOOD, the BAD and the UGLY (of AI)!** (Part II) - **Bill Lindsay, Hamblen Music Co.**
3:00-4:00pm	**Novelty Tales & Tunes of Tin Pan Alley - Michael & Judy Muldawer** *Sponsored by Bonnie Rutherford*
10:00 am-5:00 pm	**Showcase Performances** Aspen Black, Mike Booth, Marci Broyhill, Jeff Davidson, DoubleTake, Miki Fuhrman, Kailer Hedden & Kira Vettenurg, Merna Lewis, Tecia McKenna, Claudia Nygaard, Randy Palmer, Sarah Pierce, Ramblin' Rangers, George Ray Russell & Bruce Johnson, The Timberline Cowboys, Ron Wilson
11:00 am-4:00 pm	**IWMA New Mexico Chapter Hosted Jam** Contact Vivienne VanLandingham vivienne445@gmail.com
6:30-9:00 pm	**IWMA Benefit Dinner & Concert** – Alvarado Ballroom *Sponsored by Michael & Judy Muldawer*
9:30 pm	**AFTER HOURS MUSIC** Fireplace Jam

FRIDAY, November 13

7:30 am–6:00 pm	**Member Registration & Ticket Sales**
9:00 am-5:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Boutique, Vendor Area**
8:00 am-9:30 am	**IWMA Chapter Officers Breakfast**

8:15 am-4:00 pm	**IWMA Youth Chapter Meeting & Workshop**
9:45 am-3:45 pm	**Campfire Stage Hosted by Aspen Black** *Sponsored by IWMA Kansas Chapter* Marci Broyhill, Larry Cann, TJ Casey, Ron Christopher, Jeff Davidson, Kerry Grombacher, Chri Guenther, Kailer Hedden & Kira Vettenburg, Kacey & Jenna, KC LaCourse, John & Joanne Lowell, Jim Mathis, Tecia McKenna, Duane Nelson, Cam Pierce, Sarah Pierce, Lindy Simmons, Ramblin' Rangers, The Timberline Cowboys. Jessie Veeder, Phillip Wildman, Ron Wilson, Mark Lynn Young
3:45 pm-5:00 pm	**Open Mic Hosted by Aspen Black** *Sponsored by IWMA Colorado Chapter*)
10:00 am-5:00 pm	**Showcase Performances** *Sponsored by IWMA Patron Members* Lori Beth Brooke, Larry Cann, TJ Casey, Jon Chandler, Sherl Cederburg, Patty Clayton Trio, Doug Figgs, Rik "Yonder" Goodell, Chris Guenther, Kacey & Jenna, Carol Markstrom, Ernie Martinez, Mark Munzert, Duane Nelson, Prairie Moon, Yampa Valley Steve
11:00 am-4:00 pm	**IWMA New Mexico Chapter Hosted Jam**
9:00 am-12:00 noon	**Educational Sessions** **Songwriting Workshop – John Lowell** *Sponsored by Frank & Linda Achary*
1:30-2:30 pm	**Using One Mic - Roger Eilts, Leo Eilts & Syd Masters**
7:00-9:00 pm	**IWMA Friday Night Opry – Hosted by Roger & Leo Eilts** 3 Trails West, Floyd Beard, Valerie Beard, Lori Beth Brooke, The Butler Band with Shaza Leigh & Birdie Nichols, Larry Cann, Sherl Cederburg, Jon Chandler, Ron Christopher, Doug Figgs, Gone With The West, Rik "Yonder" Goodell, Chris Guenther, Kristyn Harris, KG & The Ranger Trio, Kacey & Jenna, John & Joanne Lowell, Ed Meyer, Miss Devon & The Outlaw, Glenn Moreland, Mark Munzert, Claudia Nygaard, Randy Palmer, Prairie Moon, Ramblin' Rangers, LeeLee Robert, Tom Swearingen, The Timberline Cowboys, Western Troubadours, Jessie Veeder, Mark Lee Young
9:30 pm-??	**AFTER HOURS MUSIC** Fireplace Jam, IWMA Colorado Chapter Jam

SATURDAY, November 14

7:00-8:30 am	**Veterans Appreciation Breakfast –Hosted by Jerry Hall** *(Sponsored by Butch & Karen Killion and Tex & Patti Hamel)* Floyd Beard, Aspen Black, Mike Booth, TJ Casey, Sherl Cederburg, Jon Chandler, Grace Clark, Jeff Davidson, Rik "Yonder" Goodell, Kristyn Harris, Ernie Martinez, Miss Devon & The Outlaw, Mark Munzert, Sonja Oliver, Ranger Jane, Lindy Simmons, The Timberline Cowboys, Yampa Valley Steve, Mark Lynn Young
8:45-9:45 am	**IWMA Membership Meeting** *Open to all current and future IWMA members*
10:00 am-5:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Boutique, Vendor Area**

10:30 am-12:00 noon	**DJ to DJ Session – Hosted by Aspen Black**
10:30 am-1:00 pm	**Poetry Contest** *Contest sponsored by Floyd & Valerie Beard* *Buckle sponsored by Mark Munzert & Kathleen Kelley)* Mike Booth, Marci Broyhill, T.J. Casey, Sherl Cederburg, Jeff Davidson, Rik "Yonder" Goodell, KC LaCourse, William "Dub" Lloyd, A.K. Moss, Duane Nelson, Francine Robison, George Russell, Lindy Simmons, Phillip Wildman, Scott Wiswell
12:10 pm-1:10 pm	**Youth Chapter Showcase**
1:00 – 5:00 pm	**Performer Showcases** 3 Trails West, The Butler Band, Miss Devon & The Outlaw, Gone With The West, Kristyn Harris, KG & The Ranger, John & Joanne Lowell, Tom Swearingen, Mark Lynn Young
1:15-2:30 pm	**Team Penning Contest** Tom Swearingen & Randy Palmer, Steve Jones & Vic Anderson, Lindy Simmons & Michael J. Mullins, Jeff Davidson & Ron Wilson, Doug Figgs & Floyd Beard, Phillip Wildman & Lori Nelson, KC LaCourse & Larry Cann
2:45-3:45 pm	**Harmony Contest** *Sponsored by 3 Trails West* DoubleTake, Gone With The West, KG & The Ranger Trio, John & Joanne Lowell, Miss Devon & The Outlaw, Prairie Moon
2:30-4:00 pm	**Giving Back Foundation Songwriting Contest – Hosted by TJ Casey**
4:00-5:00 pm	**Cal Farley Boys Ranch Poets**
6:30-7:00 pm	**Awards Pre-Show – The Patty Clayton Trio**
7:00-10:00 pm	**IWMA Awards Show**
10:30 pm	**AFTER HOURS MUSIC** Fireplace Jam

SUNDAY, November 15

8:00 am-12:00 pm	**Music & Merchandise Boutique, Vendor Area**
9:00-11:00 am	**Sunday Morning Gospel Concert** Hosted by Belinda Gail

NOTE: Performers and times may be subject to change.

For up-to-the-minute changes, hotel reservations, and more details, check the IWMA website! Reservations can also be made by calling the hotel at 866-505-7829 and using code 2611IWMAGRP. Reservations must be made by October 21 for the group rate of $179.

IWMA2026 TICKET PRE-ORDER & MEMBER REGISTRATION

November 11-15 – Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town

Return to: IWMA ♪ P. O. Box 648 ♪ Coppell, TX 75019 - email marsha@westernmusic.org - call 505-563-0673

Some space is limited so order tickets early! Cancellations after October 31, 2026 cannot be refunded.

Name _____

Spouse or Guest Name(s) if attending _____

Company or Group Name (*if applicable*) _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____Country_____

Phone _____ Email _____

IWMA MEMBERS ONLY ☐ **Check if this is your first time to attend!**

		Members	Non-Members
☐ **Basic Package** *(includes ALL workshops and daily showcases; does NOT include ticketed events)*		$100/person	$125/person
☐ **Sidekick Package** *(includes workshops, showcases and ticketed events)*		$295/person $550/couple	$345/person $650/couple
☐ **Silver Spur VIP Package** *(includes workshops, showcases and reserved seating for all ticketed events)*		$495/person $750/couple	$595/person $850/couple
WEDNESDAY			
☐ **Opening Lunch**	# of tickets ____	$55/person	$65/person
ANY DIETARY RESTRICTIONS? _____			
☐ **Swing Dance**	# of tickets ____	$25/person	$25/person
THURSDAY			
Educational Sessions (Included in all packages; please indicate which you will attend)			
☐ Coffee with the DJs	# attending ____		
☐ Polish Your On-Stage Poetry Performance	# attending ____		
☐ The Good, The Bad & The Ugly (of AI!)	# attending ____		
☐ Australian Hall of Fame DJ	# attending ____		
☐ A Brief History of Western Music	# attending ____		
☐ Novelty Tales & Tunes of Tin Pan Alley	# attending ____		
☐ **IWMA Benefit Dinner & Concert**	# of tickets ____	$75/person	$85/person
ANY DIETARY RESTRICTIONS? _____			
☐ **IWMA Benefit Concert ONLY**	# of tickets ____	$50/person	$50/person
FRIDAY			
Educational Sessions (Included in all packages; please indicate which you will attend)			
☐ Songwriting Workshop	# attending ____		
☐ Using One Mic	# attending ____		
☐ DJ to DJ (DJs Only)	# attending ____		
☐ **IWMA Friday Night Opry**	# of tickets ____	$25person	$25/person
SATURDAY			
☐ **Veterans Appreciation Breakfast & Program**	# of tickets ____	$50/person	$60/person
☐ **Check here if you are a veteran….there's no charge for your ticket!**			
ANY DIETARY RESTRICTIONS? _____			
☐ **IWMA Awards Show**	# of tickets ____	$45/person	$55/person

TOTAL DUE $ _____

☐ Check/Money Order enclosed ☐ Credit Card ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover

Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Name on Credit Card _____Billing ZIP Code _____

International Western Music Association

PATRON* MEMBERS

American Cowboy Radio	Amarillo, TX
Ken Bucy	Mesa, AZ
Vickie J. Dunning	Englewood, CO
Rick Flory	Jackson, WY
Bob Harris	Aurora, OH
Richard Heldmann	Arvada, CO
Robert Herrington	Plano, TX
Catherine Higdon	Show Low, AZ
Judy James	Weatherford, TX
Bruce Johnson	Berthoud, CO
Jeffrey Johnson	Albuquerque, NM
Rosemary Johnson	Conrath, WI
Donna King	Granbury, TX
Katie Koran	Helper, UT
KC LaCourse	Las Vegas, NV
Valerie Lassiter	Kingman, AZ
Chuck Learn	Calimesa, CA
Ernie Martinez	Lakewood, CO
Melissa & Michael Murphy	Albuquerque, NM
Scott & Diana Overcash	Santo, TX
Fred & Dianne Powell	Denver, CO
Allen Reel	Portland, OR
LeeLee Robert	Jackson, WY
Tom Swearingen	Tualatin, OR
Jay Veach	Burlingame, CA
Jerry West	Waxahachie, TX
Phoebe White	London, KY
Larry Wildeboer	Shell Rock, IA
Kaysie Young	Lebanon, TN
Katherine Zellerbach	Hereford, AZ

*The Patron Member group in the IWMA is comprised of an elite group of people who pay $100 annually for IWMA membership. For their generosity, they get nothing more than general members and they expect nothing in return. They simply believe in the cause and the mission of IWMA and go a little above in supporting it. They are unsung, behind the scene folks. We sincerely appreciate their support and take this time to say a public "Thank You!" for your unwavering support. You, too, can be a Patron Member with your $100+ donation. Contact Marsha Short, marsha@westernmusic.org

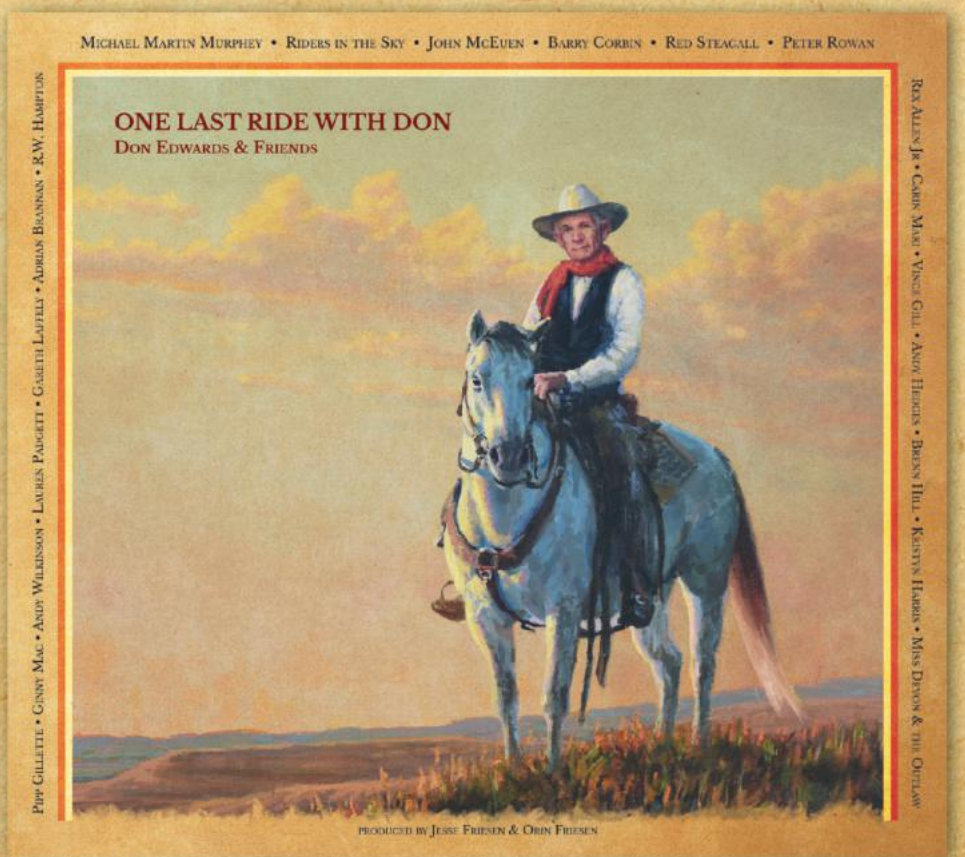
Become a PATRON MEMBER today!

INTERNATIONAL WESTERN MUSIC ASSOCIATION
IWESTERNMUSIC.ORG
P.O. BOX 648
COPPELL, TX 75019

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
JEFFERSON CITY, MO
PERMIT# 210

SOME VOICES NEVER FADE

DON EDWARDS
RIDES AGAIN



Featuring Don's original vocals, recorded during a LIVE performance but never released.
Joined by friends and family he worked with and loved, creating an original recording of Don like you've never heard before.

Honoring a legacy.
Celebrating a voice.
Keeping Don's music and memories alive.

OCTOBER 23

AVAILABLE ON CD AND STREAMING PLATFORMS
DONEDWARDS.MUSIC