

GHOST SMOKE

All lyrics and music by Jon Chandler

except

Geronimo's Men, by Ray LeJeune and Jon Chandler

1 THE MUSTANG ROAN (:38) INSTRUMENTAL

A cool harp ditty with the melody line from my children's tune, The Mustang and the Wind.

Jon Chandler, harmonicas.

2 MORNING STAR MOON (5:30)

Dull Knife and his Cheyenne people suffered terribly for their participation in the 7th Cavalry's demise on the Little Big Horn. The Dull Knife Battlefield on Wyoming's Red Fork of the Powder River is a place of sorrow, reverence and beauty.

Jon, vocals, guitars, harmonica. Jeff Graves, Bass, percussion. Ernie Martinez, dobro, mandolin, pedal steel guitar. Dana Vernon, electric guitar.

Morning Star Moon, Wyoming sky
Bittersweet tears from time gone by
Legends in life, lessons in death
Buckskin and sage, winter's cold breath
Medicine pipe lost in the snow
Embers grown cold, no power flows
Ghost smoke ascends to the four winds
The old time is gone, the new time begins
Morning Star Moon

The Cheyenne's home, it fills my soul
With echoes of tunes
Played under Morning Star Moon

There's a wildness in this place:
It's coyote cries, it's yucca spines
It's red dust in the teeth, in the hair in the eyes
It's trout in the creek, it's eagle's wings
It's petroglyphs, carvings and tipi rings

There's serenity in this place:
It's whispering water, it's musical breeze
It's the wind through the willows and cottonwood trees
It's the call of a bay, it's the song of the brook
It's a time-honored tale from a forgotten book

Big Horns are quiet, Red Fork is low
Brilliant blue sky, riders below
Echoes of time from the Red Wall
Hoofbeats convey the spirits' call

Morning Star Moon

The Cheyenne's home it fills my soul
With echoes of tunes
Played under Morning Star Moon

Morning Star Moon
Morning Star Moon

3 LINWOOD (4:28)

Doc Holliday's demise in a dingy hotel room in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, has always been a compelling story. "This is funny," are some fine last words, all right.

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica. Marcy Baruch, vocals. Butch Hause, bass. John Macy, pedal steel guitar. Dave Shapiro, electric guitar. Chris Stongle, drums.

*He'd stand at his second floor window and gaze to the west
Above the wooden false fronts and newly mortared brick and stone buildings on the opposite side of the street
Across the valley to the Red Mountain
And the evergreens would remind him of his boyhood in Georgia
He'd always preferred the fresh scent of pine to the heavy fragrance of magnolia
At the end, his bed was against a wall opposite the window
And he would lay on what passed for a mattress and watch the November clouds pass over the great red slope
The interplay of light and shadow gave him comfort
And he thought himself fortunate to die in such a lovely place
He spoke of a girl he'd known before he was sent to Philadelphia to take up dentistry
His beautiful cousin
And wondered if she still ministered to the poor and sick
Or taught children that would never be her own
He fought back tears for his mother after so many years
And spoke his long-dead brother's name
He woke from dreams of Kate, and Wyatt, and his father
Their faces swirling about in his opiate-laced consciousness
An eye to posterity and bragging rights brought a few acquaintances to his door
But his only regular visitor was the kid who worked at the hotel
The kid who brought him whisky, and laudanum
In his delirium, he was back in the Arizona heat
Trying to stop his finger from pulling the shotgun's trigger
As Tom McLaury screamed, "No!"
His heart beat a little quicker at the thought that he'd soon be able to apologize
He asked the kid about the new boneyard here in Glenwood Springs.*

Did it have a name?

*"Don't know," the kid replied, and left to find out
He returned later with a fresh bottle and said, "Linwood"
"Hmm," Doc mused. "It ends in Linwood"*

I deal myself another hand, the morning sunlight fades
King of Diamonds, Ace of Hearts, dog-eared trey of spades
True companions all, they are my life's only friends
The Queen withholds her judgment, the Jack seeks no amends

Rye whisky burns like hellfire, dulls the deeper pain
Mad dogs needs to feel the flame, or their spirit starts to wane
I traveled down a twisted trail that ends in this cheap room
What went before is dust and rage, what lies ahead is gloom

Thoughts of Kansas swirl around
As I lay here in this mountain town
Soon they'll lay my body down in Linwood

Ten cent novel's out of reach, dropped down to the floor
It says that I killed 40 men and shot as many more
Somewhere some kid's reading these tall tales of gun and knife
I pray he never has the chance to take another's life

I traveled to these mountains in hopes of hanging on
But time now has no meaning, anticipation's gone
So I try to conjure places, let my memory travel time
Familiar, long gone faces, and a church bell's distant chime

Ban this devil from my soul
Maybe death will make me whole
They'll lay me in a six-foot hole in Linwood

My boots sit on the roughhewn floor
My pistol hangs behind the door
I guess they'll even up the score in Linwood

4 RIDE THE RED WALL (4:32) INSTRUMENTAL

Wyoming's Great Red Wall is huge, humbling, and primeval; awe-inspiring and stunningly beautiful.

Jon, acoustic guitars. Jeff Graves, bass. Ernie Martinez, pedal steel guitar. Dana Vernon, electric guitars.

5 EL POSO CREEK (2:51)

I wish my father and brother could have fished El Poso Creek with me. I'm sometimes sure I see them readying their lines at the big hole below our cabin.

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica. Ernie Martinez, mandolin, dobro, acoustic guitar, bass, high string guitar.

Tall grass at the water's edge
Slippery rocks and a flagstone ledge
Willows stoop to a surface pool
Fat trout rise when the evening's cool

Mayflies dance on rippling waves
Oxbow snags what the current saves
Nine-foot pole and a wicker creel
Perfect cast from my grandpa's reel

El Poso Creek
High up in the Rockies where the cool breeze through the aspen seems to speak
El Poso Creek
Rollin' down the great divide, running bitter cold and smooth and sleek
You will always find just what you seek
On El Poso Creek

Ooh, ooh, the fresh morning dew
Wildflowers far as you can see
My, my, the brilliant blue sky
There's no place in the world I'd rather be...than El Poso Creek

Hot sun melts the winter's snow
Drop by drop it starts to flow
A tiny brook, then a rolling stream
Grows into this angler's dream

Fool's Gold in the sparkling sand
Fool steps in to try his hand
A flash of color, a light-quick yank
A legend's born on this sandy bank

El Poso Creek
High up in the Rockies where the cool breeze through the aspen seems to speak
El Poso Creek
Rollin' down the great divide, running bitter cold and smooth and sleek
You will always find just what you seek
On El Poso Creek/On El Poso Creek/On El Poso Creek

6 SPIRIT OF THE WATER (2:52)

The hot springs at Glenwood Springs, Colorado are truly miraculous. Yampah...Big Medicine!

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica. Butch Hause, bass. Ernie Martinez, acoustic guitar, mandolin. Chris Stongle, drums. Hank Singer, fiddle.

The people knew of the springs forever
Big Medicine, they were called
Sharing the earth's warmth
Curing illness, comforting the sick

The healing waters bubbled up through the sandstone of the mountain
And pooled in the caverns
Where the two great rivers met
In the land of the Utes

The steam above the water reaches toward the heavens
And spreads the smell of the world below through the valley
The springs are proud, and give life to the land
They are Yampah...Big Medicine

Oh, the Spirit Flies
Oh, the Spirit Sings
Oh, the Spirit Warms
Oh, the Spirit Heals

When imagination and reality are indistinguishable
And the Earth's forces accepted as life's guardians
The spirit can be seen, benevolent, mysterious
Yampah...Big Medicine

Oh, the Spirit Flies
Oh, the Spirit Sings
Oh, the Spirit Warms
Oh, the Spirit Heals

Oh, the Spirit Flies
Oh, the Spirit Sings
Oh, the Spirit Warms
Oh, the Spirit Heals

7 NEVER (6:37)

There's often something deep and reflective inside those stereotypical, mysterious, quiet men of the West. An extra verse showed up as I finished writing Never, and a quiet ukelele strum seemed in order.

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitars, harmonicas. Ernie Martinez, acoustic guitar, bass, pedal steel guitar, mandolin, ukelele.

I never met my heroes/that's probably for the best
I don't handle disappointment well, don't fit with all the rest
Ah, but I knew Luther Wilkins, the finest farrier alive
My heroes should have met him 'fore he died at 55

I never kept my trophies, didn't put them on the wall
I wear this silver buckle that was a gift, that's all
And it gives me pause to think of Mollie Weatherby's sad smile
My trophies all are worthless, this buckle is worthwhile

I never knew
What I meant to you

Every now and then I'll pull my hat down low
I'll block the morning sun, and hide the face below
I'll ride the water's edge, oh like we used to
I questioned everything in life, but I never doubted you

I never found the treasure I kept searching for
It was hidden in the sunset, behind an unlocked door
But I loved Susan Lambert, even though she never knew
My treasure is the memory that only I can view

I never told my father I wanted to be him
I tried a thousand times or more, guess I thought it was a whim
He wept for Loren Carter when he thought no one could hear
I never told my father that I see him in the mirror

I never knew
What would come of you

Every now and then I'll pull my hat down low
I'll block the morning sun, and hide the face below
I'll ride the canyon's rim, like we used to do
I questioned everything in life, but I never doubted you

I never built the temple I had planned to raise
I was caught up in the living, the passing of the days
But I prayed with Pastor Quincy, oh, the tears streamed down my face
I never built a temple, but I surely felt God's grace

8 THE PLAIN OF ILIUM (4:37)

I've met hundreds of ranchers, farmers, cowboys, and rural personalities over the past decades. They're cantankerous, literate, human and humane.

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica. Jim Fletcher, bass. Dennis Holt, drums. Hank Singer, fiddle, mandolin.

He called his daughter twice the day he died
The first to say how much he loved her, the second just to cry
Then he sat on his old sofa, mapped the rivers of his life

'til he drifted off to sleep in the twilight

He dreamed he fought on the Plain of Ilium
His spear sharp as any razor, armor gleaming in the sun
And faced immortal Achilles, before he was struck down
And he woke up on a different battleground

His boots are by the bed, his hat hangs on the wall
And the .45's in the closet down the hall
His vision's almost gone, but his mind is filled with hues
That took over 90 years to learn to use

He sees the main street in an Arizona town
His father on the boardwalk with his hat held by the crown
His mother's voice comes floating on the pinon-scented breeze
And his brother smiles and finds some girls to tease
He remembers how the desert bloomed at dawn
The dusty smell of horses, well, it's now all dead and gone
He fears that he's gone crazy, wondering how time came undone
So now he dreams about the Plain of Ilium

He refused to move from the house out on the ranch
Said retirement's not for cowboys, that life's a game of chance
So, he sits with his old books, leather bindings cracked with age
Dreams of ancient heroes fill his days

His boots are by the bed, his hat hangs on the wall
And the .45's in the closet down the hall
His vision's almost gone, but his mind is filled with hues
That took over 90 years to learn to use

He sees the main street in an Arizona town
His father on the boardwalk with his hat held by the crown
His mother's laugh comes floating from inside the country store
And it seems so real it makes his spirit soar
He remembers how the desert bloomed at dawn
The dusty smell of horses, well, it's now all dead and gone
He knows it's time to move on now that time has come undone
So he dreams about the Plain of Ilium
Yes, he walks on toward the Plain of Ilium

9 ON PEG LEG'S TRAIL (4:47)

Two-great grandpa Frank Ownbey was a tough customer. A Georgia boy who made his bones on the Colorado frontier following the Civil War, his adventures remain thrilling.

Jon, narration, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonicas. Ernie Martinez, acoustic guitar, pedal steel guitar, bass, dobro.

They found it in among Tom Horn's things/a folded envelope with a postmark from Loveland, Colorado
Inside was a faded note from a friend/And a rumbled newspaper story clipped from the *Rocky Mountain News*

Dear Tom:

I hope this letter finds you/in fair to middlin' spirits
That Cheyenne jail's a rough one/you know I won't go near it
This story says they're going to hang you/for shooting some young kid
I know you didn't do it/'cause you'd tell me if you did
A man of moral certitude/a man of your conviction
Just couldn't kill an unarmed boy/it's penny dreadful fiction
Them boys that's vowed to stretch your neck/have set you up, old friend
'Cause cattle run Wyomin'/And it's cattle will be your end
Anyhow, I remember well, our time out on the range
When we chased down the men who robbed the Cotopaxi Train

Southern Colorado, I don't recall the year
The telegraph was clackin' the code was loud and clear
The Pinkerton's were comin' headin' down the Arkansas
Doc Shores was gonna meet 'em here and chase some bad outlaws
The boys came down and found me, Tom Horn was thereabouts
I pulled on my boot and screamed 'cause I was sufferin' from the gout
Tom met me at the jailhouse where hysteria reigned
'Cause Peg Leg robbed the payroll from the Cotopaxi Train

It's hi-yo boys cinch them nags up tight
We're off across the prairie with the Spanish Peaks in sight
It's on toward Oklahoma in the wind and sleet and rain
Cause Peg Leg's robbed the payroll from the Cotopaxi train
We'll chase down that one-legged bastard 'for does it all again

Set out the next morning, our mounts was stepping' light
Tom 'n Doc 'n me, with ol' Ed Kelly on our right
No one knew that Ed was kin to our one-legged wanted man
And he planned a little goose-chase out where the pronghorn ran
I guess I got suspicious, cause Ed kept to the side
He answered when I asked if he knew why we took this ride
"Cause they'd robbed the train up somewhere with a real god-awful name
Um, someone's took the payroll from the D&RG train"

It's hi-yo boys cinch them nags up tight
We're off across the prairie with the Spanish Peaks in sight
It's on toward Oklahoma in the wind and sleet and rain
Cause Peg Leg and his boys have robbed the Cotopaxi train
We'll chase down them sons a bitches 'fore they do it all again

Well, Tom, you remember how the whole thing turned out
You and Doc had savvied that old Ed was a lyin' lout
You scared his mortal soul and had me take him back to jail
While you and Doc stayed on and followed Peg Leg Watson's trail
You ran down them boys in Washita, took 'em with no fight
And brought 'em back to pay for leavin' the railroad's strongbox light
And now you're jailed in Cheyenne, a man once with the law
Who helped us Colorado boys down on the Arkansas

Anyways, I remember well, our time out on the range
When we chased down the men who robbed the Cotopaxi Train

It's hi-yo boys cinch them nags up tight
We're off across the prairie with the Spanish Peaks in sight
It's on toward Oklahoma in the wind and sleet and rain
Cause Peg Leg and his boys have robbed the Cotopaxi train
We'll chase down them sons a bitches 'fore they do it all again

10 FOREVERMORE (5:34)

My grandfather died in 1973. He shows up in the middle of the night now and again to talk about hooking that big brown on the Boulder River near Big Timber, Montana.

Jon, vocals, acoustic guitars, harmonica. Butch Hause, bass. Dennis Holt, drums. John Macy, pedal steel guitar.

I had a dream, we stood at the riverside
The water flows, the water flows
It was the stream we fished just before you died
The river flows, oh, the river flows

I had a dream, we walked at timberline
The stars above, the stars above
I was 15, you were as old as time
The moon above, oh, the moon above

I hear your voice in the wind
I know I'll see you again

A whole lifetime
Since we cast out our lines
Into the old Yellowstone
Now and again
I'll walk the St. Vrain
And shuffle the memories I own

I had a dream, we drove with the windows down
Five hundred miles, five hundred miles
We were last seen in some small Montana town
A thousand miles, oh, a thousand miles

I had a dream, you stared in a mirror of time
Forever young, forever young
Strange as it seems, the face that looked back was mine
Forevermore, forevermore

I hear your voice in the wind
I know I'll see you again

11 SONG FOR JULIA (4:03)

A million questions and observations well up when I stand before my great grandmother Julia Verdon Chandler's grave in a forgotten cemetery overlooking Nebraska's beautiful Republican River Valley.

Jon Chandler, vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica. Ernie Martinez, mandolin. John Magnie, accordion, keyboards. Anne McClain, vocals. Jim Ratts, vocals.

Looking south from this lonely little hill
The far horizon calls
Red tailed hawk and a pair of whippoorwills
Overhead, catching currents in the wind
If I could fly so high
Wonder if I'd see my home again
Back in Ireland

Rolling sea, gray-green water without end
On to New York town
Filthy port and a swarming tenement
Brother's gone, and I nurse the soldiers' wounds
Today I soothe this man
Knowing he will be my husband soon
In America

Oh, I sleep with my son at my side
Forgotten as yesterday's pride
Anonymous, fleeting and utterly still
Serenity's promise, I've yet to fulfill

Looking glass in an ivory-handled frame
Reflected high cheek bones
Violet eyes that betray a Frenchman's claim
To my ma, who with tears had kissed my cheek
As we stood by the tracks
That would take me to this winding creek
In the Heartland

Rolling plains that I learned to call my own
Dust storms and bright blue days
Tiny town that will never be full grown
Sunrise blooms with a fire that fills the sky
Oh, I swear by those flames
I would once again say my goodbyes
To my family

Oh, I lay with my son at my side
Forgotten as barrister's pride
Anonymous, fleeting and utterly still
Serenity's promise, I've yet to fulfill

12 MIDNIGHT ON POKER CREEK (1:44)

There are few things as profound and humbling as reflecting on life's vagaries out in the Great Alone. I wrote this free verse after our wrangler John Christian told me a couple of coyotes were sitting outside the campfire's ring of light enjoying the singing.

Jon, narration, acoustic guitars. Jeff Graves, bass, acoustic bass. Ernie Martinez, pedal steel guitar.

A paradox
How the soul captures insignificance
And omnipotence conjointly
Through the simple act of engaging the constellations' density
As the moon rises from behind the murky rimrock
How reflection and philosophy
Hold no meaning in the blunt, twin aspects of pure sensation
And palpable experience
That serve to silence arrogance
How the senses struggle to contain/absorb/consume
The vastness of the Great Alone
And fail
Leaving only worshipful wonder
How rules and boundaries are both compromised and expanded
Through the soft, low call of a bay to its companions
And the rustle of the yard-wide creek
Through its rust-red banks
How the absence of sound
Contributes to a symphony of sight;
Sight that allows the essence of a billion perpetual stars
To enter the blood and race through mortal veins

13 GERONIMO'S MEN (4:20)

Ray LeJeune picked up Sandra Day O'Connor's biography and was struck by the notion of her grandfather dealing with Apaches who stole his horses. We wrote a tune and polished it up 'til it shines like a new penny. Ernie and Butch were awe-inspiring during the recording of this live cut.

Jon, vocal, acoustic guitar. Butch Hause, bass. Ernie Martinez, mandolin. Live at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

I lost 45 horses to Geronimo's men
They caught me sleeping when they snuck in
It's gonna be hard to explain this one
All I can say is the Apache won

Running ponies make a cloud of dust
They lit out for the border Mexico or bust
Singing victory songs in the pale moonlight
If I had me a horse, I could give 'em a fight

I lost 45 horses to Geronimo's men
The boss of this spread is as mean as sin
All I can do to make amends
Is find 45 horses...and Geronimo's men
(And Geronimo's men...and Geronimo's men)

Hit the trail when the sun came up
Crawling on my belly like a young wolf pup
Three days later had their camp in sight
When I caught a flicker from the corner of my eye

Bullets started kicking up that desert sand
No use running, I could only stand
Slipped my lasso 'round a pony, pulled up the slack
Pulled down that corral and stole those horses back

I stole 45 horses from Geronimo's men
The boss of this spread is as mean as sin
All I could do to make amends
Was find 45 horses...and Geronimo's men
(And Geronimo's men...and Geronimo's men)
(And Geronimo's men...and Geronimo's men...and Geronimo's men)

14 TEXAS 1968/1983/1998 (2:45)

Peeking into people's lives overturns some remarkable stones.

Jon, narration, guitar.

Opal became pregnant with Daryl Horn's child
the night she turned fifteen
She doesn't remember much; a little pain, a little blood,
the odor of Daryl's old man's English Leather and cigarettes
And the way the shadows cast by headlights played across the soft,
synthetic fabric of the old Ford's ceiling liner as car after car,
oblivious to the goings on shielded by the cottonwoods at the far edge of the adjacent wheat field,
drove down County Road Five and turned at Bender's Corner
Toward the fair in Thompson
The same fair Opal would attend the following year
carrying her infant daughter
And see Daryl in his crisp uniform hand in hand with Carol Anne Conway
Two days before he shipped out
Disappearing like the ghost he would become at Long Binh

Opal was arrested by Deputy Sheriff Harold Osborn
the night she turned 30
She doesn't remember much; no real pain, just bad blood,

the reek of Darlene's boyfriend's beer breath and cigarettes
And the way the shadows cast from the streetlight played across the soft,
sobbing face of her daughter as car after car,
oblivious to the goings on beside the battered mobile home set on cinderblocks at the two-mile corner,
drove down County Road Five on past Sanders Bridge
Toward the tent revival outside Lawson
The same revival Opal would attend the following year
carrying her infant granddaughter
And see Darlene hand in hand with a boy who thought the baby was her sister
Two days before he found out
Disappearing like the smoke from an extinguished candle in a sanctuary

Opal seemed quiet to her husband Tommy
The night she turned 45
She doesn't remember much; there was pain, but no blood,
the aroma from the kitchen at the steak house in Sinclair
And the way the shadows cast by the flickering candle played across the soft,
flocked red wallpaper of the booth as car after car,
oblivious to the goings on across the scarred pine table in section four of the Black Angus,
drove down Houston Street to the intersection of Main
Toward the dance at the old Liederkrantz Ballroom
The same dance Opal would attend the following year
With her new husband, John
And see Tommy slip a half-pint bottle of Jim Beam from his boot and pour it down
Two days before he held his .44 magnum and made a decision
Disappearing like a dream that's only recalled on the cusp of sleep

15 OUT WEST OF LARAMIE (3:44)

The West is a beautiful yet lonesome land that can often inject itself into the psyche of those who love it.

Jon, vocals, harmonica. Ken Andrus, vocals. John Macy, pedal steel guitar. Ernie Martinez, mandolin. Mark Oblinger, vocals. Randy Rigby, acoustic and electric guitars. Michael Rhodes, bass. Pete Wasner, piano.

Heaven help you when you close your eyes
And let your mind drift in dreams
You just might see her face big as life
Those haunting eyes, sparkling green
You'll remember things she whispered low
For you to know, only you
And you'll see yourself in her embrace
Face to face, fresh as dew
Then you'll wake up all alone
In your heart's place she's left a stone

Out west of Laramie
The wind helps me forget
Though she stopped wanting me

Her memory hasn't yet

There's a storm up near the timberline
Lighting strikes, thunder peals
There's a storm that rages in my heart
Just as dark, just as real
O, the burning pain I know
Will melt this deep Wyoming snow

Out west of Laramie
The wind helps me forget
Though she stopped wanting me
Her memory hasn't yet

Out west of Laramie
The wind helps me forget
Though she stopped wanting me
Her memory hasn't yet
Oh, her memory's not through yet

16 CRAZY WOMAN CREEK (4:43)

Most frontier women's lives were hard and heartbreaking. Some modern women feel the same.

Jon, vocals, guitars. Pat Mendoza, Native American flute and drum. Hank Singer, fiddle.

Moon on the horizon, catfish in the water
Kansas territory is no place for a preacher's daughter
Sod house on the prairie, her man tried to farm
Her fifth child in six long years lay crying in her arms

All she heard was the wind
And the wind would never end

She remembered Richmond, the sane, sweet world she left
Now all she knew was loneliness, voices in her head
First she shot her husband, shot her baby girl
Walked down to the creek and cut her last tie to this world

Her screams were savage sounds with no one there to hear them
Her children gathered 'round, she screamed more to be near them
She walked the water 'til she grew too weak
And the Pawnee named it Crazy Woman Creek

Quarter moon at midnight, bridge over the water
Rear view mirror reflects the frantic eyes of someone's daughter

Married out of high school, he had a handsome face
Fifteen years of pure regret, brought her to this place

All she heard was the wind
And the wind would never end

Water roils and rumbles from storms off to the west
The current carries loneliness, puts voices in her head
She thinks if she had courage, and jumped into the flow
Her body would wash its way down to the Gulf of Mexico

Her screams of pure despair echo 'cross the plains
It seems they're answered there by a woman gone insane
She lays down when she finally feels too weak
On the muddy banks of Crazy Woman Creek
She says a prayer before she drifts to sleep
On the muddy banks of Crazy Woman Creek

17 RED TAIL (5:06)

Hawks are mysterious and remarkable raptors, and the Red Tail evokes the deepest appreciation of earth, wind and sky.

Jon, vocals, harmonica. Dennis Holt, drums. Celeste Krenz, harmony vocals. Chris Leuzinger, acoustic and electric guitars. Mark Oblinger, harmony vocals. Randy Rigby, electric guitar. Pete Wasner, piano. Bob Wray, bass. Sally Van Meter, Weissenborn slide guitar.

High above the Heartland...high
Red Tail rides the currents of the sky
Scans the earth below with weathered eye
Red Tail flies
Red Tail flies

Glides on through the heavens...glides
To the far horizon...dips and slides
Searching out the prey that seeks to hide
Red Tail flies
Red Tail flies

Power rises from the land below
From its contours breezes blow
And in some small way the Red Tail knows
It defines the Heartland's soul

Flies above the wetland...flies
Man looks upward and he shades his eyes
Forgets the work ahead for a short time
Red Tail flies
Red Tail flies

Free to soar the heavens...free
Red Tail drifts above the land's bounty
Takes its rest in an old maple tree
Red Tail's free
Red Tail's free

Red Tail oversees the land below
Fallow fields and contoured rows
And in some small way the Red Tail knows
It defines the country's soul

High above its domain...high
Razor talons and a light-quick dive
Takes its place in nature's grand design
Red Tail flies, Red Tail flies, Red Tail flies

18 BACK TO CHEYENNE (3:52)

I love the first verse of this song. It captures the longing and loss felt by those who leave the West, only to spend their lives planning to return.

Jon, vocals. Marcy Baruch, vocals. Chris Engleman, bass. Chris Leuzinger, guitars. John Macy, pedal steel guitar. Hank Singer, fiddle. Christian Teele, drums.

Late last night I felt the call
Leaned against the bedroom wall
Swore I heard the prairie wind... blowing...blowing...
Went outside to sniff the air
Couldn't smell Wyoming there
Wiped away a lonesome tear
And thought about Cheyenne

Shining stars, high lonesome plains
Coyote cries and distant trains
Everything that's in my heart is calling ...calling...
Downtown streets and country lanes
Feelings too hard to explain
I need my home on the range
I'm headed to Cheyenne

Oh, the breeze blows a prairie symphony
One that feels like it's written just for me
With a melody that leads....

Back to Cheyenne
The one place in the world that suits me best
Back to Cheyenne
Legendary crossroads of the West
Like some pioneer from way back when
The road leads to Wyoming once again
Back to Cheyenne

Indian lore and western art
Leave a brand burned on my heart
Bronze patina warms my soul
Gleaming...gleaming
Pronghorn on the open range
Watching as the seasons change
Christmas lights and summer rains
I'm almost to Cheyenne

Rodeo and grandstand lights
Daddy of 'em All tonight
Celebrates the Western way
Charming...charming
Firm handshake, the cowboy's creed
Only contract that you need
Don't believe I'll ever leave
I'm back home in Cheyenne

Oh, the breeze blows a prairie symphony
One that feels like it's written just for me
With a melody that leads...

Back to Cheyenne
The one place in the world that suits me best
Back to Cheyenne
Legendary crossroads of the West
Like some pioneer from way back when
The road leads to Wyoming once again (once again)
Back to Cheyenne
Back to Cheyenne
Oh, back to Cheyenne

19 NIOBRARA (RUNNING WATER) (3:45)

Nebraska's Sand Hills sing to the senses, and Mari Sandoz wrote their story with skill and love.

Jon, vocals, narration, acoustic guitar. Butch Hause, bass. Ernie Martinez, dobro, mandolin.

There is a symphony in the sandhills – a masterpiece so grand, so expansive, it overwhelms the senses.

The timeless Nebraska breeze uses the prairie as its instrument, blowing through countless reeds of coarse grass with perfect pitch and pressure as it constantly reshapes the land...rising, swelling before diminishing to a whisper that serves to soothe the soul.

The land. It compels. It enriches. It teaches.

Young Mari was its prize student. An intuitive observer who saw in the land's harshness...singular beauty; who saw in the sunlight reflecting from the Niobrara...the face of God; who listened to the Sandhills' song, and turned its essence into the purest poetry.

Niobrara, Running Water of life
Swirls and eddies, a blue blade sharp as a knife
Cuts the sandhills, land of buffalo and Sioux
And Mari dreams of the things she will do

Jules traveled to this place of wind and sand
And was captured by the strength of this new land
Urgent letters, "Come, free yourselves from fear
The honey's free, but the milk will cost you dear"

Niobrara, Running Water
The Lifeblood of Old Jules' daughter
Wild frontiers and helping hands
Niobrara, heaven's borderland

In the quiet, through the cries of wild things
You can listen to the song the river sings
In a language Mari knew from the start
She kept the key to old Nebraska's heart

Niobrara, Running Water
The lifeblood of Old Jules' daughter
Wild frontiers and helping hands
Niobrara, heaven's borderland

Niobrara, Running Water
The lifeblood of Mary's daughter
Wild frontiers and hills of sand
Niobrara, heaven's borderland
Niobrara, heaven's borderland