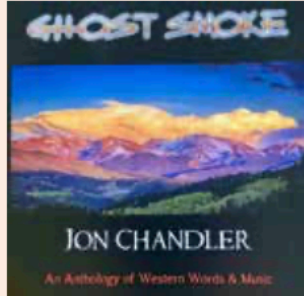


WESTERN MUSIC



JON CHANDLER

Ghost Smoke: An Anthology of Western Words & Music

Raven Records
CD \$20, Download \$18; available on streaming platforms.
JonChandler.com

I'm Jim Jones, and beginning with this issue, I'll be taking over this music column

from my esteemed colleague, the late Ollie Reed Jr. Ollie, *Roundup's* Western music reviewer since mid-2013, decided before his unexpected death in November that it was time for a new voice for this column.



Those are some tough boots to fill. Ollie consistently combined his analytic skills as a seasoned journalist with his appreciation and passion for music to give you his informed opinion about what was the "good stuff" in contemporary Western music. I will do my best to

follow in his footsteps in that regard.

In addition to reviewing music, it's likely that from time to time, I will comment on the state of the music business, Western and otherwise, to help you get some perspective on what the trends are. I'm looking forward to sharing my thoughts with you on what I believe is the best of Western music.

I couldn't believe my good fortune when I found out the first album I got to review was Jon Chandler's latest, *Ghost Smoke: An Anthology of Western Words & Music*. There are 19 tracks, 14 of which were previously recorded – including 12 songs and two scored poems, and five previously unreleased songs.

Jon writes "mini-operas"; every song is like a little movie. It is far too easy to fall under the spell of his brilliant baritone voice and fail to appreciate the exceptional quality of his storytelling, the beauty of his melodies and the complexity of his chord structures.

On top of that, the production, ably handled by legendary producer, Jim Ratts of Colorado, includes some of the finest musicians around. I intended to pick a few favorites and discovered that I couldn't. When my list had grown from three to 12 songs, I gave up.

It's no wonder Jon has won so many awards as a songwriter and a performer. He is a master storyteller – his songs compel you to listen and pay attention. The good news is that there's no test at the end; you just savor it and then listen to it again ... and again. Buy this record.

Jim Jones is a three-time Spur Award-winning songwriter. E-mail him at ajamojo@gmail.com.