

SONGS
 **FOR** 
DESERT
RATS

LYRICS AND CHORDS FROM
THE LAND OF SAGE & PINE

CW BAYER



SONGS FOR DESERT RATS

Introduction

“Desert rat” lyric is about and for anyone who goes out there. It includes cowboy and mining song.

As a child I spent much time in the desert, gazing up at castles in the rocks, wandering rabbit trails. I remember my family moving to the desert and experiencing our first desert snowfall during the winter of 1954—how we ran around in wonder throwing snowballs. As a teen, my friends and I called ourselves “desert rats”—not realizing the past to that term. As a young man, I moved to the Nevada desert, resolved to write cowboy songs. For over 40 years, playing music in Nevada, I’ve written desert rat lyrics. I’ve come to see that going out there in Nevada is a perennial quest—based in the landscape and a certain wonder, something one embraces with provisions and a feeling for dust and sunlight.

Along the way, in the wake of researching mining verse, I discovered the history of desert rat lyrics. As I write about in my collection, *“Rhymes From The Silver State—historical lyrics”*, desert rat lyrics flourished in Nevada from about 1905 to about 1932.

Like mining verse, desert rat lyrics are often vernacular—in slang. They arose as mining verse declined. By the 1880s, although they had pioneered American settlement of the far West, miners were being devalued as heroes of the West. Ranchers and later cowboys were coming to the fore as heroes, particularly in the Southwest. Yet, in Nevada—meaning mostly northern Nevada—and in parts of Arizona, rather than cowboy lyrics dominating, desert rat lyrics took hold and talked about a broader experience of living midst sage and pine—beyond just cowboys and miners.

You can listen to recordings of these songs at nevadamusic.com. Also, notice the other collection: “Honky Tonk Songs”. Please feel free to sing any of my songs. Make up desert rat songs of your own!



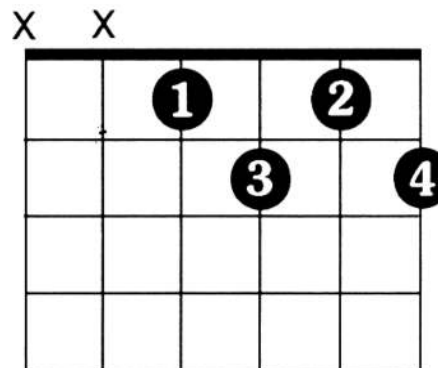
CW Bayer

Carson City, Nevada

About Guitar Chords.

When I play guitar, I use a fair number of bar chords and this form of a diminished chord. My view is that “western” style sometimes requires more percussion and syncopation than open chords provide. I have written in the diminished chords using parenthesis when I thought they might be vital. I name the formation for the note on the first string. So, in this illustration, I would write it as an F#dim.

Listen to recordings of the songs at nevadamusic.com. That will be the best way to get the timing of the words and chords.



Set

DRIFTIN' IN NEVADA SAND	C
GIVE ME STARS IN THE DESERT SKY	Am
WALK THAT WILD DREAM	C
PASSIN' THRU	A
CAMPIN' IN NEVADA TONIGHT	C
RIDIN' THE THUNDERSTORM'S LIGHT	C
GIVE ME BACK NEVADA'S MOON	G
CARSON CITY SERENADE	C
GOT NO LOVIN' NOW	C
DYIN' ON THE BOARDWALK OF THE	D
BLACK POWDER IN THE CROCK	A
THAT COWBOY CAFE	G
AT THE COWCAMP JAMBOREE	C
HAVE YOU SEEN THE DAMSEL WHO STOLE MY	G
LOUIE THE HORSE	C
CUZ THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TURN A	A
PICK AX PETE'S COLLECTORS TRADING POST	A
DESERT DINAH	A
COLONEL BOOKER'S NEW VOLCANIC	A
COWBOY CHRISTMAS HAS COME	C
THE COWTOWN BALL	G
SOMEONE CUT THE SHOE TREE DOWN	Am
ON THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY	Am
THE DESERT LETTER	A

Set

I HAVE TO WALK HOME SIX MILES	E
THOSE WILD WESTERN WOMEN	G
BUDDY WON'T YOU GIVE ME A RIDE	C
HONEY, DON'T YOU MARRY A RAILROAD MAN	C
BOBCAT IN THE BUNCH	C
JACK DONNELL	G
SLUMGULLION HILL	D
TALKIN' THRU YER HAT	G
McGRAW'S GUN	C
THE JOKER AND THE JACK	C
WITH A GAL NAMED JANE	C
WHEN IT'S RAGTIME IN NEVADA	C
SHE AIN'T CALLED SADIE NO MORE	C
I'M GOIN WAY OUT WEST	C
AIN'T NONE OF THEM COPPERHEADS HERE	C
THE SAGE GODDESS WITH HER SWEET	G
DON'T GO DANCIN' SPORTIN' YER SPURS	G
STARS AND SAND	C
HELLO MOON	G
AUNT SALLY TOOK THE MINE TOUR	A
THAT'S WHY I'M WALKIN' DOWN THE ROAD	E

DRIFTIN' IN NEVADA SAND

Key of C

Verse

C A^m C A^m D⁷ G
 The sage and the pine, the beer and the wine, the purty girls who just can't stay.
 E^m C A^m G
 Warm summer nights, desert star light, snow when it's all gone away.
 F F^m C A^m E⁷
 The vision you see, wild and free, of a pardner who takes your hand.
 F F^m C A⁷ (Gdim) D^m G C
 Keep you comin' back to that mountain shack, driftin' in Nevada sand.

Chorus

G⁷ C⁷ G⁷ C⁷
 The rivers that flow far below, call out your name tonight.
 G⁷ C⁷ A⁷ (Gdim) D⁷ G
 Sayin' hey pal, git you a gal, somebody gonna treat you right.
 F F^m C A^m E⁷
 They rush like your heart, far from their start, to the song of a coyote band,
 F F^m C A⁷ (Gdim) D^m G C G⁷
 Make it love you find and peace of mind, driftin' in Nevada sand.

Verse

The great blue sky, the wind rushin' by, the clouds that whisper your dreams.
 Hawks flyin' higher, songs by the fire, a city that ain't what it seems.
 The trail you wind, lost in time, with a story of life in this land,
 They blow like the dust, where you'll never rust, driftin' in Nevada sand.

Verse

You been downtown a foolin' around, still, there ain't nothin' can compare,
 To those pinion peaks your soul seeks, Oh, slay me in that rare desert air.
 Where the jackrabbit run 'neath a blisterin' sun, and the ridges long will stand,
 Your money's all spent but there ain't no rent, driftin' in Nevada sand.

About This Song

Living in Nevada can be bittersweet and this informs how I look at all the "sagebrush and pine"
 sorts of songs that I might write.

GIVE ME STARS IN THE DESERT SKY

Key of Am

Verse

A^m **D^m**
Take me out where the zephyr sings, never mind how the rattler rings,
A^m **E⁷**
Wanna see that hawk fly so high,
A^m **D^m**
'Cross that dotted sagebrush land, dig me deep in endless sand,
E⁷ **A^m**
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Chorus

F **C**
When I die, oh let me ramble,
G **A^m**
Up that rocky trail, by and by.
F **C**
Ain't no use in all your money, honey,
E⁷ **A^m**
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Verse

Tell the Lord that boom and bust, can't compare to blowin' dust,
The bones of ancient lakes gone dry.
Cottonwood by hidden streams, wild women in my dreams,
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Verse

Place me far from city lights, hate the work both day and night,
Want to hear that wild coyote cry.
Out where dust devils dance, pour me one at the Last Chance,
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Verse

By that dry wood pinyon shack, far from the beaten track,
Lay that banjo down by my side.
Tell the tramps and desert rats, love moves like a mountain cat,
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Verse

This guitar pays my coffee bill, wild horses up the hill,
Painted ladies sweet as apple pie.
With Pick Ax Pete and Baldy Green, Comstock Annie makes the scene,
Give me stars in the desert sky.

Verse

Dead men live up in the rocks, old timers wind their clocks,
There's nothin' that money can buy.
I'll live free beneath the moon, hummin' some old western tune,
Give me stars in the desert sky.

About This Song

Really, you can just take my ashes out there and stuff them in a snake hole.

WALK THAT WILD DREAM

Key of C

Verse

C
Hear the clouds call across the flat,
F
Go and roam you desert rat,
C **G**
Out where the winds at midnight scream.
C
Where rivers run beneath the ground,
F
And memories of home abound,
C **G** **C**
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Chorus

A^m **C**
Walk that wild dream, walk that wild dream,
G **C**
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

Those pioneers took this trail,
Hobos who rode the rail,
Far from mankind's moneyed scheme.
As their blue stars shine above,
We'll strike a tune fer love,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

We shot the gap at Devil's Gate,
With Whiskey Bob who met his fate,
Ridin' cross the desert with his team.
God reached down to dig potholes,
Now he's got Bob's old soul,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

We tramped all night in frozen rain,
Swore someday we'd meet again,
Gambled till we saw the dealer gleam.
We crossed the rocks at Ragin' Creek,
Thar we heard the devil speak,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

In a ghost saloon lost and loud,
I'll recall this gentle crowd,
Smoke always finds itself a stream.
Our old songs'll sweep the floor,
With dancin' girls I'll weep no more,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

Comes the mornin', no partin' long,
Flapjacks and coffee strong,
Boil it up an' I don't need no cream.
I'm headin' down this desert road,
You have helped to share my load,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

Verse

See the moon rise o're the hill,
Who needs that whiskey still,
We'll be ridin' on that beam
By a campfire burnin' bright,
Sing yer troubles to the night,
Stranger, walk that wild dream.

About This Song

You meet desert rats in the desert as your paths cross. And then they are pulled away by the wild dream.

PASSIN' THRU

Key of A

Verse

A **D**
A purple shard bathed in sunlight, serenaded by the western wind,
A **E**
An old bottle from an old saloon where the dance came to an end,
D **A**
Hit the lips of a salt-flat maid who bought it in nineteen two,
E **A E⁷** **A**
You can toss it hand to hand, passin' thru.

Chorus

D **A**
Passin' thru, passin' thru,
B⁷ **E⁷**
The silver's gone with the ragtime songs, buddy, what'll ya do.
D **A**
Passin' thru, passin' thru,
E⁷ **A E⁷** **A**
We're all alike lookin' for a strike, passin' thru.

Verse

Each evenin' she would walk the sage, a vision in a flowered frock,
By cottonwood where the head-frame stood and her Bill drilled in the rock.
The whiskey gave her one fine jolt and washed away the blues,
'Till she threw it in the road, passin' thru.

Verse

A crust of sand on the edge of glass at the end of camp,
Held her final fallen tear as she cursed that mining scamp.
Soon the desert moon would rise and show he'd no more crew,
Just a dream of dry romance, passin' thru.

About This Song

After the economic collapse of 2008 I got to thinking how Nevada can teach the nation a lot about cities and towns that disappear. Place names sprinkle the desert map, places that have come and gone, leaving only tin cans that struggle to rust. As a kid I used to go out and find tin cans and bottles from their old dumps, bring them home and arrange them on the mantel.

CAMPIN' IN NEVADA TONIGHT

Key of C

Verse

C **G** **A^m**
It's not hard to dream of stars when you're campin' out,
F **D**
On the emigrant route where the coyote shout,
G **F** **E^m**
And the satellites whiz by till the bright mornin' sky,
A^m **D⁷** **G⁷**
Shines with the desert sun.
C **G** **A^m**
It's a land made of sand and of ancient hope,
F **D**
Full of rocky slopes where wild horses lope,
G **F** **E^m**
And a wind across space that runs a race,
A^m **D⁷** **G**
With things yet to be done.

Chorus

F **E⁷**
By a flickerin' flame wild and tame,
C **A^m** **G**
You sleep with the scent of the sage.
F **F^m** **A^m** **F^(Adim)**
And a call from the hills that adds to the chills,
C **G** **C**
Campin' in Nevada tonight.

Verse

When you reach that far beach by the alkali flat,
Wear a tight wide hat, make the desert your mat,
And leaving all talk, dream of the hawk,
High and on the run.
You can hear far and near all the echoes long,
Of the pow wow song and the Chinese gong,
As the ranch hands dance and the show girls prance,
Workin' for work and fun.

Verse

See the graves by the trail that the tumbleweed cloak,
And the old wooden spoke where the wagon wheel broke,
Hear the prayer that goes on from evening till dawn,
Fired from an old rusty gun.

About This Song

I once received a couple dollars award from an organization for writing this song. I've camped out in the desert all my life. For out in the desert, far from city lights, you can see the satellites going across the sky at night.

RIDIN' THE THUNDERSTORM'S LIGHT

Key of C

Verse

C **F** **C** **F** **C**
My pickup truck got stuck in the muck, just this side of Elko.
F **C** **D** **G**
I tightened my boots and stepped in the soup, and fell in up to my elbow,
F **C** **F** **G**
Swam fer the jack where I keep it in back, as the roof disappeared in goo.
C **F** **C** **G** **C**
Cryin' "I'm cooked", upward I looked, and a cow on the bank said, "moo".

Chorus

F **C** **F** **C** **F** **G**
'Cross Nevada I floated, weeks I noted, singing with coyotes at night.
C **F** **C** **G** **C**
Becomin' dissheveled I danced with the devil, ridin' the thunderstorm's light.

Verse

In a torrent I swirled and I thought about my girl, she was waitin' at home for the beer.
I clutched in my hand one aluminum can 'till a rock tried to lodge in my ear,
Grabbed a power pole, but it slipped from its hole, blacking out half of the state.
Miles downstream I straddled this beam, fishing with buttons for bait.

Verse

About to expire I spied some barbed wire and snagged my cap on a splinter.
A Basque unstuck me sayin', "How lucky, you didn't fall in last winter."
He said with a sigh, "Our desert is dry, but the weather nobody knows."
Still I dream chocolate ice cream running between my toes.

About This Song

I got hired to play at a mine opening. They said, go east from Battle Mountain about twenty miles and look for the rag tied to a post. Then go north 20 miles on a dirt road.

GIVE ME BACK NEVADA'S MOON

Key of G

Verse

G **A^m** **G** **A^m** **C** **D⁷** **G**
Down in the great big city, people rushin by,
D^m **A⁷(Gdim)** **F** **F^m** **A⁷** **D⁷**
Everybody in hurry, and I don't know why.
E^m **B^m** **A^m** **D⁷**
There aint nothin' for me, I'm here but I could die,
D^m **A⁷(Gdim)** **F** **F^m** **A⁷** **D⁷**
And everynight when I walk out, I look up and cry.

Chorus

G **A⁷(Gdim)** **D** **C** **D** **G** **D**
Give me back Nevada's moon, up in a western sky,
G **A⁷(Gdim)** **D** **A⁷** **D**
I wanna hear those coyotes croon, feel the wind rushin' by.
E^m **B^m** **A^m** **D**
I wanna smell the sagebrush after the rain fall,
G **A⁷(Gdim)** **D** **C** **D** **G**
Give me back Nevada's moon and I'll be happy after all.

Verse

Back home I had a sweetheart and boys I loved her true,
But she only wanted money so it's money now that I do.
She had some other feller's baby so now I play the game,
Gals got up in rhinestones, every one the same.

Verse

Someday when I'm sick and dyin', don't you worry 'bout me,
Just send me some old pickup truck, a driver fast and free.
Take me down some desert road far from these walls of sin,
So I can tell St. Peter as I come roarin' in.

About This Song

Having lived in the desert with much innocence and then viewed life in Nevada cities, the contrast merits some comment.

CARSON CITY SERENADE

Key of C

Verse

C **F**
In the shadow of sage and pine by that silver dome flag flying,
G **C** **D⁷** **G**
I hear that train whistle sighin', Carson City serenade.
C **F**
Where Chinese laid the rails and Nevada tells her tales,
G **C** **F** **C**
I dream of long square nails, Carson City serenade.

Chorus

F **F^m** **C** **E^m** **A^m**
By an old house in the shade of cottonwood where fences fade,
D^m **G** **G⁷**
Tahoe blows down the glade, Carson City serenade.
C **F**
Where the western desert starts and the highways meet to part,
G **C** **F** **C**
I take the bluebird to my heart, Carson City serenade.

Verse

As gas lamps light the night, on the hill our C shines bright,
And these wild words I write, Carson City serenade.
Like a pioneer I talk, to ghosts on wayward walks,
Of pogonip on trees and rocks, Carson City serenade.

Verse

Ten million cars whiz by and never note that border sky
Or the zephyr's lonesome cry, Carson City serenade.
Then the big clock sings a song, Cactus Jack waves along,
Every tumbleweed belongs, Carson City serenade.

Verse

For that western theater cast, creaky wagons still run past,
Summer comes but does not last, Carson City serenade.
In the garden deer get fat, Ormsby's ghost tips his hat,
That's the life of desert rats, Carson City serenade.

About This Song

In the absence of government action, I had to do double-duty--not only write the song but also personally issue the proclamation declaring this Carson City's theme song. I'm particularly happy I worked in allusion to our interesting sidewalks.

GOT NO LOVIN' NOW

Key of C

Verse

Got no lovin' now, got no lovin' now,
Headin' down the road, feelin' low,
Got no lovin' now.
See you in my dreams, see you in my dreams,
Weary and worn till the morn,
See you in my dreams.

Chorus

Out where the zephyr roars across the flat,
I ruined my boots, lost my cowboy hat.
Feelin' kinda lonesome, tell ya anyhow,
Tryin' to smile, all the while, got no lovin' now.
Got no lovin' now, got no lovin' now,
Headin' down the road, feelin' low,
Got no lovin' now.

Verse

Tie yer whiskey down, tie yer whiskey down,
Pour me a shot, make it hot,
Tie yer whiskey down.
Take tomorrow back, take tomorrow back,
Put it in the box, turn the locks,
Take tomorrow back.

Verse

Wake me in the grave, wake me in the grave,
Honey when you're done havin' fun,
Wake me in the grave.
Where the river ends, where the river ends,
Sinkin' in the dirt, all my hurt,
Where the river ends.

About This Song

This song came out of a guitar lick that popped into my head after five hours playing at the Ponderosa saloon.

DYIN' ON THE BOARDWALK OF THE BLUE SALOON

Key of D

Verse

D **G** **B^m** **G**
Tell me lies 'bout the good old days, let me drift in a mystic haze,
E^m **A⁷**
Gazin' up at the desert moon,
D **G** **B^m** **G**
I didn't seem to have a care, ladies saw me lyin' there,
E^m **G** **D**
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.
D **G** **B^m** **G**
What I remember of that night, I got into an awful fight,
E^m **A⁷**
The band playin' loud and out of tune,
D **G** **B^m** **G**
I felt just like an unmade bed, and then I shot some feller dead,
E^m **G** **D**
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.

Chorus

B^m **A⁷** **F^{#7}** **E⁷**
The blue, the blue, the blue, the blue
E^m **G** **D**
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.

Verse

The sheriff came and knocked me down, I didn't think to stand my ground,
I heard gentle friends and lovers croon.
Damn, I think I dropped my beer, and all my pals let out a cheer,
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.
I thought about my Pappy's crimes, my heart broken four five times,
The rent comin' due tomorrow noon.
It washed me o're but not so bad, the simple life is what I had,
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.

Verse

I shoulda run but where'd I go, once loved a gal who lay me low,
Stole my knife, wanted a silver spoon,
The tales that she used to spin, left no doubt the fact of sin,
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.
These days I sit here in my cell, and all these stories I can tell,
Talkin' to the wall, a crazy loon,
The friggin' lot was better then, rats were rats and men were men,
Dyin' on the boardwalk of the blue saloon.

About This Song

I have often played in Virginia City. I wrote this song after reading the account of banjoist Dick Sheppard shooting Ben Ballou in the forehead with his derringer at the Capitol Saloon during 1866.

BLACK POWDER IN THE CROCK

Key of A

Verse

A **E** **D** **A**
Late one night at Rendezvous I took some apple pie,
D **A** **E**
From Rattlesnake McGee sayin', "here's mud in yer eye."
A **E** **D** **A**
I tilted back the jug, boys, and got the tallest shock,
D **A** **E** **A**
To find he had included black powder in the crock.

Chorus

D **A**
I soared across the heavens and past a thousand stars,
D **A** **E**
I tipped my hat at Jupiter and Mars.
A **E** **D** **A**
Flying past the moon, I chipped a bit of rock,
D **A** **E** **A**
Glint to act as flint for black powder in the crock.

Verse

'Twould not've been so special if I didn't smoke a pipe,
Exhalin' apple vapors the potion set alight.
Soon I left the ground and I joined a feathered flock,
Dancin' and a singin' of black powder in the crock."

Verse

Renegades and Injuns, scouts and trappers too,
Possum, fox and beaver in the smoky blue.
Squirrel, rabbit, coon, the animals could talk,
Dancin' round the fire for black powder in the crock.

Verse

"What goes up must come down", the mountain men declare,
Next day I dug up Rattlesnake, asked him how he faired.
"I'm makin apple pie, twill be my private stock.
Tis me mither's recipe, black powder in the crock."

About This Song

For about twenty years, this was the song I sang each season with Cryer and the Mountain Men at the local Rendezvous. I had a power cord, some hay bale seats and a small stage between the Mountain Men and the Civil War Volunteers. Cryer would wave before they fired the cannon and I paused my music for the shot. The song got written after the liars contest one night.

THAT COWBOY CAFE

Key of G

Verse

G **C**
I'm drivin down a road where the pickup trucks are slow,
D **G**
Far from that big highway.
G **C**
I'm searchin for a sign, sayin, "breakfast ninety nine",
G
Lookin' for that Cowboy Cafe

Chorus

D **G**
That Cowboy Cafe, that little greasy spoon,
A⁷ **D⁷**
That Cowboy Cafe, let the jukebox whine a tune.
G **C**
The waitress she ain't spoiled and the coffee's always boiled,
D⁷ **G**
Lookin' for that Cowboy Cafe.

Verse

The notice on the door says, "lunch from ten to four",
And "soup is the special of the day."
There's always ham and peas, no substitutions please,
Lookin' for that Cowboy Cafe.

Verse

I'm thinkin' way ahead, hopin I'll get fed
Flapjacks a fallin' off my plate,
A slice of apple pie and a side of fries,
Lookin' for that Cowboy Cafe.

Verse

With a checkered table cloth and the crackers always soft,
They don't mind if you spend the day.
You can while away the hours tryin' to smell the plastic flowers,
Lookin' for that Cowboy Cafe.

About This Song

I love driving the desert. It always seems as if there is a place up ahead from another time, back in the '50s when the sky was bluer, the air cleaner, the people friendlier.

AT THE COWCAMP JAMBOREE

Key of C

Verse

C **D**
Well I happened to stand on the corner today, when I heard a song on the radio play,
F **C** **A⁷** **D** **G⁷**
Broken hearted, singin' the blues, much too sad for a buckaroo.
C **D**
Give me ropin' and ridin' and tossin' big bales, to horses you hear of in all of our tales,
F **C** **A⁷** **D⁷** **G⁷** **C**
I'm leavin' town, you'll find me down, at the cowcamp jamboree.

Chorus

G **C** **G** **C**
There'll be dust a risin' and folks collidin', cowboys singin' in harmony,
G **C** **A⁷** **D⁷** **G⁷**
Down the middle to that ragtime fiddle, hear my yo de oh lay dee hee.
C **D**
You' find me laggin' 'round that old chuck wagon, bowl of beans sittin' on my knee,
F **C** **A⁷** **D⁷** **G⁷** **C**
When day is done, I'm havin fun, at the cowcamp jamboree.

Verse

Take me back to that shack with my good time pals, camp fire singin' round the ole corral,
Ragtime fiddle and a shoe string bow, washtub bass and that old banjo.
Cowpokes pickin' on their old guitars, night wind risin' from the western stars,
Blue desert moon, everyone's in tune, at the cowcamp jamboree.

Verse

When I get there you bet there'll be dancin' round, eatin' mountain oysters and whoopin' up a
sound,
Two steppin' my cotton eyed cutie, purty little pigtailed bullridin' beauty.
Hey Mr. DJ play me a song, coyotes callin' all night long,
Way out west, land that I love best, at the cowcamp jamboree.

About This Song

I played fiddle at local dances for about twenty five years. The experienced dancers always had it under control. The new dancers might go wild about the floor and watching them proved lots of fun--for me, not so much for the old guard.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE DAMSEL WHO STOLE MY CHECKERED PANTS

Key of G

Verse

G **C** **G**
Have you seen the damsel who stole my checkered pants?
C **G** **A⁷** **D**
She traveled to Nevada all the way from Paris France.
C **G** **C**
I gave her twenty dollars and I never acted rough.
G **D** **G**
She stole my checked pants and left me standin' in the buff.
C **G** **C** **G**
Standin' in the buff, standin' in the buff.
C **G** **D** **G**
She stole my checkered pants and left me standin' in the buff.

Verse

I met her over whiskey in a friendly sort of place.
She wore a red carnation and a smile upon her face.
If I hadn't a seen her twinkle I mighta turned right then,
And saved my checkered pants from all the dreadful ways of men.
The dreadful ways of men, the dreadful ways of me,
And saved my checkered pants from all the dreadful ways of men.

Verse

Next morn as I walked down the street, I's feelin quite a breeze.
And everyone I happened on remarked upon my knees.
When my mind began to clear my nose began to run.
There's ears to hold my hat up but no holster for my gun.
Holster fer ma gun, holster fer ma gun,
There's ears to hold my hat up but no holster fer ma gun.

Verse

She's stolen pants in Mexico and on the northern coast.
So, when you go a sportin' tie yer britches to the post.
And if you see a gal in red suspenders, well, they're mine.
Oh, the dollars in those checkered pants should total forty nine.
Total forty nine, total forty nine,
The dollars in those checkered pants should total forty nine.

About This Song

I got hired to play a folk festival in California and thought I'd offer this up as a sing-a-long. The repeats do nicely for that. Not many people smiled. I realized that what seems everyday in Nevada may not be so typical elsewhere.

LOUIE THE HORSE

Key of C

Verse

C Well, I went to see my old friend Slim, he had a horse called Lou looked just like him. **G**
He lit up a smoke, he told an old joke, he said, "You ought to give Louie a spin." **C**
Threw on the saddle and reins, shoulda requested new brains, **F**
Put one foot in, took off like the wind, learnin' that Louie ain't lame. **C G C**

Chorus

F You need a bald faced bay with the right appeal, lots of chrome and four good wheels, **C F C**
F Slip the clutch and it's the real feel, Louie the horse was a real steal, **C G**
Yippee tie yi yippee tie yay. **C**

Verse

Lou knew the way to a bar, we made money on racin the hot rod cars.
Roundin' near, folks threw me beers and I felt like a shootin star.
Lou knew the way to a ranch, heavens, how that horse he could dance.
Jumpin' over the barn I waved my arm and wripped a hole in my pants.

Verse

Headed down under the hill, crossin' the place of shotgun Bill.
Did a double loop, hit the chicken coop, and came up a running still,
Joined a parade in town, all the ladies was agathered round.
I tipped my hat and kicked his fat, Lou said, "shoo", and lay down.

Verse

They offered me fifty bucks, sayin', "Git that derved cayuse unstuck.
He's in the way of the band, the nine foot man, and the antique fire trucks."
Movin' Lou wouldn't do 'till I waved a bottle of glue.
He took off in a sweat with a majorette, I gave Slim a dollar or two.

About This Song

You can raise a horse from scratch, breaking the horse etc.. A lot of folks forgo that chore and deal with a used-horse dealer, like Slim. His horses were only the best.

CUZ THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TURN A BUCKAROO BLUE

Key of A

Verse

A

Used to be a cowpoke ridin' around,

A⁷

Out where nothin' but the coyotes sound.

D

A

Now I'm driftin' like the hobos do ,

E⁷

D⁷

A

'Cuz the bright lights turn a buckaroo blue .

Chorus

D

D^m

A

(F^{#m})

Midnight, star bright, don't seem to show.

B⁷

E⁷/

Reno town, foolin round, big neon glow.

A

High desert moon, rodeo queen,

A⁷

Fill my cup with a western dream.

D

A

Tell me stories, make em wild and true,

E⁷

D⁷

A

E⁷

'Cuz the bright lights turn a buckaroo blue.

Verse

Sittin on a stoop and the car horns blow,

Stop sign's red and the gamblers slow.

I'm lookin for that pebble in my shoe,

'Cuz the bright lights turn a buckaroo blue.

Verse

Had me a shack in cottonwood shade,

Jackrabbit dancin' as the sunset fades.

Now I'm workin' at a job that's new,

'Cuz the bright lights turn a buckaroo blue.

Verse

One armed bandit shakin' my right,

Jukebox, whiskey and a two-bit fight.

Get me goin', call the jailhouse crew,

'Cuz the bright lights turn a buckaroo blue.

About This Song

After years shoveling corrals out in the desert I moved into town. I was living in a small house next to a casino parking garage where, at night, the local teenagers would hold road races up and down the ramp.

PICK AX PETE'S COLLECTORS TRADING POST

Key of A, Capo 2

Verse

G C G E^m C D
I've seen the Luxor temple and the wild pirate ship,
G D C G E^m D
That sails out from the Circus 'long Las Vegas stylish strip.
E^m C G C G E^m D
I've seen the naked ladies dance and heard the marble ghost,
G C G E^m D G
But they're incomplete 'side Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.

Verse

Old bar room sets with tattered nets that fade out in the sun,
Coffee pots and wire in knots, machines that used to run.
They fill my dream, a reckless team, oh who might keep that host,
No one can beat old Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.

Verse

There's a cow out on the desert hills where buckaroos explore,
And an artist in the mining town, a serpent on his door.
When the moon is full he'll paint a skull for tourists from the coast,
They find this treat at Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.
There's a tractor with a broken block, her wanderings untold,
Her rust now drops where last she stopped, she's waiting to be sold.
And long now has she waited thar, her tires gone for toast,
Try her seat at Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.

Verse

With crimson eyes and leather skin, Pete laughs without a care,
"I've plundered half the trailer trash from here to anywhere.
But you might find jest what you need, what do you need the most?
Well, it ain't so neat at Pick Ax Pete's Collectors Trading Post"

Verse

A whistling wind the warehouse winds, open on three sides,
The news plays on the radio for lizards and for flies.
But I'm in search of a bottle blue for this candle that I boast,
On the step we meet at Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.

Verse

Old bar room sets with tattered nets that fade out in the sun,
Coffee pots and wire in knots, machines that used to run.
They fill my dream, a reckless team, oh who might keep that host,
No one can beat old Pick Ax Pete's Collector's Trading Post.

About This Song

The dusty desert junk store provides a welcome stop during drives along the empty highway. It's almost as if you have arrived somewhere.

DESERT DINAH

Key of A

Verse

A

I first saw Desert Dinah late at night outside of Mina,

D

We was herdin' dogies thru the night.

B⁷

Old Tex he had the lead and he took a mighty bead,

E

Sayin', "boys I gander up some candle light."

A

Dinah stood before her winder and my heart was near to tinder,

D

As she combed her tresses to her side.

B⁷

All the buckaroos did yip as she set to dip her slip,

E⁷

You could hear 'em callin; cross the desert wide.

Chorus

D

A

Yippee tie yie yay, oh de lee de lo de lay he aye,

E

A

oh de lay dee ah de oo, oh de lay dee ah dee oo.

Verse

Dinah didn't cotton callin' and rocks a started fallin',

Buckaroos skeedaddled cross the range.

Conjunctions she unloosed may be ordinary use,

But to cowpokes profanity is strange.

I was staggerin' down the street one Sunday in the heat,

Dinah crossed my path upon the way.

Freshly outa church, she made my heart to lurch,

Till the only thing that I could think to say, was....

Verse

It musta been my singin' set her arms a swingin',

I fell into her clutches there and then.

Dinah bandaged up my head, I asked her if she'd wed,

And every night I ask her once again.

My life'd me more certain if she'd only buy a curtain,

Or put her candle further down the hall.

In her parlor smokin' stogies, still I'm smellin' dogies,

And I dream that I can hear the desert call...

About This Song

I played fiddle for some hippies living in an isolated house up in a pine-nut mountain shack. On the way home, for some reason, while bouncing down the canyon road in the truck, I wrote this cowboy love song.

COLONEL BOOKER'S NEW VOLCANIC BRASS CALLIOPE

Key of A, Capo 2

Verse

G **C** **G**
Come all you jolly cowpokes, a story I will wail,
A⁷ **D**
'Bout some wild buckaroos out lonesome on the trail,
G **C** **G**
Who purchased from a catalog, collectin' up the fee,
C **G** **D** **G**
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope.

Verse

"Best be no slow waltzes," cried Cookie with his knife,
"They might make me lonesome for some doilies and a wife.
Want nothin' but the polka, that's what they said it'd be,
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope".

Verse

The parcel 'rived that winter and the waddies lay entranced,
"Boys, we need a whoop-tee-doo just like in Paris, France.
Stow that old time fiddle, got some private orchestra,
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope".

Verse

Cookie wound the iron crank and threw the fatal switch,
We hid behind the water trough as gizmos set to twitch.
It bucked about the old corral till Midnight had to flee,
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope.

Verse

Tin can whistles split the air, belts and wheels moaned,
Inside a captive banjolin gave out a torrid tone.
Smoke shot hot from tambourines, mercy what a spree,
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope.

Verse

Now there's leavers in the hayloft and cogs upon the fence,
Those rounders say the whoop-tee-doo just knocked 'em full of sense.
The drum still spun on upward, last anyone could see,
Colonel Booker's New Volcanic Brass Calliope.

About This Song

This song has always been useful when children grab the shakers at the saloon or the Farmer's Market. I give them a "break" so that they can shine as I play the chords stop-time. Their joyous mayhem captures the song.

COWBOY CHRISTMAS HAS COME

Key of C

Verse

C **G**
Snow falls white on the bunkhouse tonight, hear how the buckaroos sing,
C
They're deckin' the halls with old cattle calls and makin' their banjers ring. **F**
The cook he's a croonin', the fiddler's tunin', the tenderfoot thinks he can hum,
C **G** **C**
They reckon pert near it's costin' em dear, cowboy Christmas has come.

Chorus

F **C**
They dance man to man, beatin' the pan, and swingin' an old cow bell,
G **C**
Professin' their faith with bowlegged grace, and usin' the buckaroo yell. (Ah ha!)
C **F**
The boss starts to ropin' the ones who're mopin', and stringin' 'em up by their thumbs.
C **G** **C**
They reckon pert near it's costin' em dear, cowboy Christmas has come .

Verse

Thick as a stick, a yodelin Nick, comes boostin' up cowpoke morale,
His reindeer they seem alot like the team, of mules from out in the corral.
He's tossin' new rags from out of his bags, and sippin' on cocoa and rum,
They reckon pert near it's costin' em dear, cowboy Christmas has come.

Verse

Dawn sets to break but nobody's awake, except for the tenderfoot kid,
A barn full of plugs holler and slug, the buckaroos tighten their lids.
A star on the sly travels the sky, a maverick that's never been run,
They reckon pert near it's costin' em dear, cowboy Christmas has come.

THE COWTOWN BALL

Key of G

Verse

G
Last Saturday night all them rounders squared up,
A⁷
Those barndoor belles was a cuttin up a rug.
D⁷
Long Tall Lucy said, "don't you wanna go?
G D G
Kick them cowpies off of your toes".

Chorus

C G
Let me be a cowpoke out on the western range,
A⁷ D⁷
Chase them dogies cause my heart is strange,
G C
Pillow my head where the coyotes call,
G D⁷ G
Leave them sweet peas at the Cowtown Ball.

Verse

Satin dresses and bales from the barn,
Every time I turned somebody grabbed my arm,
Lost my right and left, nearly lost my mind,
Had more partners than I ever wanna find.

Verse

Kamikaze polka and shuffle 'cross the floor,
Mountain two-step and hollerin' for more.
That's when Lucy met ole Handsome Jack,
He swung her cross the floor and he ain't never brung her back.

About This Song

I played fiddle at dances for twenty-five years. The wild dancing of couples who had no idea how to dance always proved the most fun.

SOMEONE CUT THE SHOE TREE DOWN

Key of Am

Verse

A^m **E⁷**
If the Ormsby house's never done I'm ok,
A^m
They've leveled the round house an' hauled it away.
A^m **E⁷** **A^m** **D^m**
But Sheriff on the highway far from town,
A^m **E⁷** **A^m**
Someone cut the shoe tree down.
For decades it was standin' there,
Collectin' pairs of foot wear in the air.
How I'm gonna miss that lost and found,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.

Chorus

C **A^m**
A sad murder ballad, it looked like salad,
B⁷ **E⁷**
Lying on the ground.
A^m **E⁷** **A^m** **D^m**
Sunburned soles, laces falling out of holes,
A^m **E⁷** **A^m**
Someone cut the shoe tree down.

Verse

Aliens from mars danced there at night,
Buckaroo boots on the branches to the right.
The tallest cottonwood for miles around,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.
Some hobo needed tennies, short on cash,
Or the green weenies abhorred the trash.
The Feds are on the case, they're dressed in brown,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.

Verse

If they skin that varmit we'll all say thanks,
We held a service and we cried with angst.
The trunk hit the snow without a sound,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.
They call it the site of some love nest,
A broken heart, you guess the rest.
Midnight, a chainsaw, a tragic clown,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.

Verse

This act was a sign of the gathering gloom,
Mankind's final and impending doom.
I heard it on the radio, sitting in my room,
Someone cut the shoe tree down.

About This Song

I heard this news while at a coffee shop listening to some musician friends. The tree has been replanted, I hear.

ON THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY

Key of Am

Verse

On The Extraterrestrial Highway we were drivin' along in my Ford,
When I saw a light from skyway shinin' in the eyes of my adored.
Could it be some new family casino or an alien from deep outer space,
Perhaps the Department of Energy, disposing of nuclear waste.

Chorus

Will they put us in a sequel to The Misfits, are they looking for fans of The King,
Perhaps they are hiring extras left over from filming The Thing.
Should they put us in a twelve step program for lovers out on a lark?
If they give us a ride where can we hide, will my sweetheart glow in the dark?

Verse

On The Extraterrestrial Highway they stopped me for going to fast.
I said I was doing it "my way" 'cuz nothin' in this life is gonna last.
I just wanna be radioactive, I just wanna wear diamonds and gold,
Drinkin' beer in a bar on some exploding star where love can not grow cold.

Verse

On The Extraterrestrial Highway I put my foot through the floor.
And got stopped by a cop, oh he got me to hop, but he wanted to see more.
I just showed him my secret decoder, I just pointed at the Milky Way,
I grabbed my girl, we set to whirl and rode off on a ray.

About This Song

As a kid I used to come home from school and watch science fiction movies--B movies about creatures destroying cities despite the valiant efforts of army men in jeeps. We did "drop drills" and played nuclear war. Meanwhile, H bombs went off at the test site.

THE DESERT LETTER

Key of A, Capo 2

Verse

G **C**
Just off an old road where grasses grow tall,
G **D**
Down where cottonwood yellow every fall,
C
Sittin' by a fence post on a spot of green,
G **D** **G**
I'm writin' you this letter, feet stuck in the stream.

Verse

Crickets fiddle and jump, the water's high this year,
Spring came late, we'll lose one hay I fear.
Friday at a party, I drank a bit too much.
You left no address and I miss your touch.

Verse

Did I tell you 'bout the time, I ran away from home,
Lit out for the coastland, bound to be alone.
All my hopes got foggy and hid there in the trees,
I'm sendin' you this letter on a desert breeze.

Verse

Mama says your grand-dad came here long ago,
Drivin' covered wagon, searchin' for gold.
Could it be his bloodline bleached out in the sun.
No, don't say that small towns never are much fun.

Verse

Think about this desert where lost coyotes sing,
Where high beneath the rock rattlers hide their sting,
Where curlin' from the sun you watch hawks entrance a jack.
I saw your eyes wander as we danced round and back.

Verse

Just off an old road where grasses grow tall,
Down where cottonwood yellow every fall,
Sittin' by a fence post on a spot of green,
I'm writin' you this letter, feet stuck in the stream.

About This Song

Living in the desert sometimes meant people coming and going, while you just stayed put. When new people show up, you wonder how long they will last.

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I HAVE TO WALK HOME SIX MILES

Key of E

Verse

E
At the hometown casino out in windy town,
E⁷
The pit boss Billy says, lay your money down,
A **E**
And sweet lovin' Alice, she just likes to smile,
B⁷ **A⁷** **E** **B⁷**
Every time I go there, I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

I'm late to the crossroad, the devil is waitin',
He asks me, "buddy why you hesitatin'?"
Cuz I've been walkin', down the road in style,
Sportin' two dollar shoes, I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

I met my little sweetie in the alley one night,
I knew it was love when she turned out the light.
I got to dreamin' money had gone out of style,
When she sends me packin', I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

I get to my door, my sweet mama is yellin',
"You can write the letters but you just ain't spellin'".
The moral of the story hits me after a while,
To get an education, I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

I filled out an application to get myself a job,
I told 'em all the banks I have tried to rob.
But nobody wants me, still my cards on file,
Left holdin' the bag, I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

It ain't the way the moon seems be cryin',
It ain't the way my stars are always lyin'.
It's sleepin' in the rain, and knowin' I'm goin' to smile.
So happy go lucky, I have to walk home six miles.

Verse

At the hometown casino out in windy town,
The pit boss Billy says, lay your money down.
And sweet lovin' Alice, she just likes to smile,
Every time I go there, I have to walk home six miles.

About This Song

Everybody can sing the last line together.

THOSE WILD WESTERN WOMEN

Key of G

Verse

G

Grandpa ran a dude ranch, ridin' on a horse,

G⁷

Livin' off them women out to get divorced.

Chorus

C

G

Way out in Reno, where they party all the time,

D⁷

C

G

D⁷

And those wild western women give you a nickle for a dime.

Verse

Grandma rode the rodeo, goin' town to town,

Lookin' for some cattleman to lay that dollar down.

Verse

They met in the casino, spinnin that roulette,

He said, I like your boots, she replied, you bet.

Verse

They went out honky tonkin to a cowbilly band,

Stomping boogie woogie on a one night stand.

Verse

They hitched up at the chapel, the cowpokes came to sing,

He dived into the Truckee and fished her out a ring.

Verse

She liked to dance the two step, rockin' to and fro,

Scratchin' like a chicken, kickin' up her toe.

Verse

He liked to drink his whiskey up in the mountain air,

Talkin' to the coyotes and sleepin' with the bear.

Verse

They're buried back of the barn and written on the stone,

Biscuits in your saddle pack, you'll never be alone.

About This Song

They've torn down most of Reno's old divorce motels. A few linger along the old Highway 40.

BUDDY WON'T YOU GIVE ME A RIDE

Key of C

Verse

F **C**
My truck is rustin' in the dust out on the desert dry,
F **C**
I've been diggin' out all day beneath the western sky.
F **A^{dim}** **C** **A⁷**
A few more miles to Carson where I can drink a beer,
D⁷ **G⁷**
That's the promised land but I'm in the sand out here.
F **C**
Jackrabbits and the coyotes, all seem to know my name,
F **C**
I changed it back in '99, I can change it once again.
F **A^{dim}** **C** **A⁷**
The boss thinks I'm a loser, my gal thinks I'm a bum,
D⁷ **G⁷**
I just broke my shovel, guess I'll use my thumb.

Chorus

F **G⁷** **C**
Buddy won't you give me a ride,
F **G⁷** **C**
Buddy won't you give me a ride.
F **A^{dim}** **C** **A⁷**
There's a cold one up ahead, don't you leave me here for dead,
D⁷ **G⁷** **C**
Buddy won't you give me a ride.

Verse

I headed for the sagebrush bound to be alone,
Where cars are far-between and the breezes seem to moan.
Tellin' me to turn off on that dusty road,
And suddenly I'm slippin' down into this hole.
Dust devils 'cross the flat keep callin' me to dance,
That hawk circlin' overhead ain't lookin for romance.
I dream I'm squeezin' Sally down at the corner bar,
This lager taste like alkali, wait I see a car.

Verse

The tie rod is busted and the battery won't crank,
I'd like to help mankind, maybe rob a bank.
Drop me at the corner by the coffee shop,
I'll tell 'em all the tale, how somebody stopped.
Somewhere there's blue skies a hundred miles wide,
An old box canyon where an outlaw can hide.
Here's five for gas and thanks for what ya done,
Someday I'll get this dern truck to run.

About This Song

Carson City lies at the crossroad of two very old routes, now highways. Sometimes called The Loneliest Road In America, the Highway 50 road runs East-West and began as the "Carson Route" or trail during the gold-rush to California. East of Carson, it crosses endless miles of sagebrush, winding through valleys between mountain ranges--where, when one turns off into the desert, dramatic episodes like this occur.

BOBCAT IN THE BUNCH

Key of C

Verse

C

Bobcat in the bunch and I ain't got one hunch,

G

Where those poor dogies aim to go.

C

I'll run 'em up and down, head 'em back and chase 'em 'round,

G

C

This must be the way to Mexico.

Chorus

F

C

To Mexico, (to Mexico)

G

This must be the way to Mexico.

C

I'll run 'em up and down, head 'em back and chase 'em round,

G

C

This must be the way to Mexico.

Verse

There's a lady in Juarez dotes on every word I says,

When she do the polka I'm aglow.

After all that lah dee dah, her baby calls me pa,

This must be the way to Mexico.

Verse

Cowpie in my eye and my whiskers full of flies,

All I really wants a little dough.

After sleepin; on this nag I'll sidle like a rag,

This must be the way to Mexico.

About This Song

I call this kind of song a "barn burner"--a real foot-stompin go-ahead sweep the floor turd smasher.

JACK DONNELL

Key of G

Verse

G **C** **D** **G**
He came out west from Ireland, Jack Donnell was his name,
G **C** **D** **G**
He came to work the railway and play the miner's game.
G **C** **D** **G**
He fell in love with a Paiute girl which was against the rules,
G **C** **D** **G**
And fought a man in Reno town who called him a darn fool.

Verse

He broke out of the county jail and vowed that he'd be free,
Up in Virginia City, Jack set out on a spree.
In a rush to make his pile Jack robbed a monte bank,
But spent it all on whiskey his friends all promptly drank.

Verse

Far out on the rocky road Jack robbed the evenin' stage,
And thar he met the novelist who wrote The Western Sage.
Says he, "Now Jack you strike me as a fairly clever lad,
Let's head down to Carson town and we'll put on the cad."

Verse

Soon Jack wrote home to his ma in dear old Ireland,
"I've got a silver headed cane, no pocket full of sand.
I never curse, I never swear. The gals I know are fine.
My bhoys out on the corner put down all sorts of crime."

Verse

Late one night while gambling, Jack drew a royal flush,
He nearly fell out of his chair, he could not help but blush.
He glanced o're at his Rosy and panic filled his face,
Jack saw that he had tipped his hand, informin' the whole place.

Verse

Jack drew his pistol from his waist but pulled too hard too soon.
The echo from that awful blast rattled round the room.
Jack lay dieing on the floor, wonder in his eyes.
The final words our hero spoke, "Sure, I am surprised!"

Verse

He came out west from Ireland, Jack Donnell was his name,
He came to work the railway and play the miner's game.
He fell in love with a Paiute girl which was against the rules,
And fought a man in Reno town who called him a damn fool.

About This Song

Poor Jack, the perpetual anti-hero and fool. Ballads about mining era characters feel so right in northern Nevada.

SLUMGULLION HILL

Key of D

Verse

D **G**
When we cranked up Flapjack his right leg wasn't workin,
A⁷ **G** **D**
His left eye wobbled funny like, his arms they made a jerkin'.
G
He'd fallin' from the mine lift cuz he went and fell asleep,
D A D
And we found him at the bottom, lyin' in a heap.

Verse

Flapjack muttered not a word fer his distant mother dear,
He hollered, "boys its whiskey helps to bring a tear.
Raise a round fer Scotland aye it's tough to fade away,
Without one last fandango where the bagpipes play."

Verse

A **G** **D**
"Oh to hear the warpipe and see the laddies turn,
G **D** **A**
The canyon ring fair Fair Jenny as campfires burn.
D **G**
The dream of gold goes dancin and gives a mystic thrill,
D A⁷ D
But oh to hear the warpipe o'er Slumgullion hill."

Verse

The boys tied up a flour sack, sizin it with gum,
They rigged a reed in the neck of a bottle meant fer rum.
Nevermind the notes jest let the sucker drone,
We lassoed Flapjack to a chair and set to pipe him home.
The ladies at the Orpheum came out fer the parade,
Drunkards, dolts and deadmen woke up in the shade.
The mayor beat his bucket with a gray and tattered broom,
And in the din cried Flapjack, "the devil's makin' room."

Verse

"Aye, tis brittle brattle till me hairt gaes sair,
I chase this caprin' rattle but to be spared be mair."
Then with a final groan, Flapjack gave a desperate wheeze,
And we fixed him in the graveyard underneath the trees.
Hornpipes, jigs and marches now make their restless sign,
Tunes Flapjack whistled while diggin' in the mine.
The bosses bought a lift gate but Flapjack's gone fer mulch.
And the band now plays fer plunder in the dives of Windy Gulch.

About This Song

Massed bagpipe bands marched around the rodeo ground one day and I wrote this song.

TALKIN' THRU YER HAT

Key of G

Verse

G **D**
Down in Reno town as you ramble 'round, havin' a mighty fine time,
They take you at poker and they take you with a joker and leave you with one last dime. **G**
Then some purty little gal up and up and calls you pal, and that's when you're busted flat, **C**
But don't you worry son, it's all in good fun, talkin' through your hat. **A⁷(Gdim) G E⁷ A⁷ D⁷ G**

Verse

She tells you that your sweet, you think she's kinda neat, the place is goin' wild,
Those rooty toot tooters, real straight shooters, and pit bosses puttin' on the style.
Big Joe from Abilene and some Dude make the scene, and that's when she purrs like a cat,
You're both feelin' nice, you negotiate the price, talkin' through your hat.

Verse

Mornin' rolls around and your wallet can't be found, but the sentimental memories endure,
Down Commercial Row you stagger and you throw, and bum a cup of coffee for a cure.
At the mission they got soup and you join that happy troop, singin' songs and gettin' fat,
Pawn your phone for a loan, hop the greyhound home, talkin' through your hat.

Verse

Well, Mama I been gone, but I ain't been gone so long, cuz the world is a very funny place,
There's those midnight janglers and those neon wranglers, and the smile upon their face.
There's the misses that you met and the kisses that you get, and the hand you should'a stood pat,
The lesson in the end, watch what you spend, talkin' through your hat.

About This Song

This one of several songs I've written about getting rolled in Reno. The experience may not be as much fun as this song.

McGRAW'S GUN

Key of C

Verse

C **A^m**
Bright lights flash, jackpots ring and that smell is old ash trays,
C **G** **G⁷**
In the casino at Wild Jack's Hotel open 24 hours a day.
F **C** **A^m**
Crystal flashes her hometown smile and deals out twenty one,
D^m **G⁷**
Near the wagon wheel chandelier where they've mounted McGraw's gun.

Chorus

A^m **C**
The antlers in the coffee shop come from McGraw's ranch,
A^m **G** **G⁷**
And that's a piece of the famous rope and that's a piece of the branch.
F **C** **A^m**
They say he's buried under the bank where the old calaboose stood,
D^m **G⁷** **C**
And that's the plaque with his final words, "I ain't never been good."

Verse

Signed pictures of The Hot Spots fade over the cashier's cage,
The jukebox cranks out love songs but Crystal ain't tellin her age.
She rakes the chips and chatters 'bout the zephyr runnin' its course
And brags on the tale of Jack McGraw, hung for stealin' a horse.

Verse

Crystal gets off 'bout midnight boys and then it's home to little May,
Whose Pa ran off with a waitress, so who needs him anyway.
Sometimes she dreams of Jack McGraw, that moustache and those eyes,
Now they're ridin' high on mustangs 'cross the desert bout sunrise.

Verse

Crystal spies the hard rock men, all that whiskey and dust,
She hands out dollar coupons with eyes that you can trust.
They like to be around her and they tell her stories of gold,
She takes their piles, they holler and smile, "McGraw's still livin bold!"

About This Song

I wrote this out in Ely after dining at the local, small town casino. The western look that once permeated Nevada still survives in such places.

THE JOKER AND THE JACK

Key of C

Intro

A^m E⁷ A^m E⁷
At a hot spot in Reno near the casino,
D^m E⁷ A^m E⁷
A sugar daddy sat talkin' to his sweetie pie,
A^m E⁷ A^m E⁷
He'd lost all their money so he had to tell his honey,
D⁷ G⁷
The reason why.

Verse

C A^m
Blue poker chips touched by red ruby lips,
F D G
My poor heart skips, honey that's my kick.
C A^m
So throw it all away until the break of day,
F D G
Can we make it pay, hear me when I say.

Chorus

F C
It's the money on the table, it's the bright lights,
D G G⁷
Those ringin' bells, cigar smells, the cowboy lost at night.
F C
It's that old cadellac, with your kisses in back,
G C
Holdin' you near, drinkin' a beer, the joker and the jack.

Verse

Downtown dreams and wild midnight schemes,
Make those neon streams shine like moon beams.
If I'm busted flat and talkin' thru my hat,
You dig some other cat, oh you dirty rat.

Verse

Keep me hot and spot those easy slots,
I'll roll those magic dots, hit that golden pot.
I'll burn in burlesque fire, lit by luck's desire,
You can get me higher, I just can't retire.

About This Song

Life for the sugar daddy and his moll at the tables leads to some discussion over drinks when the luck runs out.

WITH A GAL NAMED JANE

Key of C

Intro

F **D^m** **F** **D^m** **G** **C⁷**
 Way out west my mama pined, “Watch yer step when yer love light shines,
B **A⁷** **D⁷** **G⁷**
 Look for a sweetheart, oh so refined,” but mama can’t help me now...

Verse

C⁷ **F**
 I gotta cowgirl likes to drink whiskey, tell dirty jokes, act real frisky,
C⁷ **F**
 Go out shootin’ my forty four, don’t mind me hangin’ round by her door.
D⁷ **G⁷**
 A few good teeth and a couple of curves, kicks me in the rear when I get nerves,
C⁷ **F** **C⁷** **F**
 Yes sir, boys, I’m satisfied, with a gal named Jane ridin’ by my side .

Verse

We hit the lights on a reg’lar spree, rollin’ the dice like a spellin’ the bee,
 Huggin’ an a kissin’ till the cows come home, won’t somebody answer the phone.
 Wake up in a pile at the edge of town, don’t tell mama just what I found,
 Yes sir, boys, I’m satisfied, with a gal named Jane ridin’ by my side.

Verse

I bought her a horse with four left feet, I painted the barn but it wanted to eat,
 She likes my truck one fender gone, we sit ‘round singin’ honky tonk songs.
 She flirts with the mayor but that won’t last, who needs a future when you’ve got a past,
 Yes sir, boys, I’m satisfied, with a gal named Jane ridin’ by my side.

Verse

Out to the roadhouse I took her dancin’, in her fancy boots, boys, she’s prancin’,
 The whole gang's tossin’ dollar bills, I'm throwin punches and out to kill.
 Now I play guitar, a singin' this song, the bums in jail all hummin’ along,
 Yes sir, boys, I’m satisfied, with a gal named Jane ridin’ by my side.

Verse

Repeat first verse.

Verse

C⁷ **D⁷**
 Yes sir, boys, I’m satisfied, hallelujah, fit to be tied,
G⁷ **C⁷** **F** **B** **B^b** **F**
 With a gal named Jane ridin by my side.

SHE AIN'T CALLED SADIE NO MORE

Key of C

Verse

She'll drive your car, down to the bar,
Tell you who you are, when you shout whoopee. (whoopee!)
She'll leave you thin, drinkin' cemetery gin,
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

Chorus

In a big hotel, ringin' the bell last night,
Entranced by her dance it was such romance I shot out the light.
She winked her eye, I started to cry,
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

Verse

She's got the touch, she knows too much,
You'll need your crutch, she runs the store.
Knew her way back when, had to see her again,
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

Verse

Knew her brother Bob, he liked to ramble and rob,
Eat corn on the cob, sleep on my floor,
They was just plain folks, it was all a hoax.
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

Verse

I wrote her a note, love your rhinestone coat,
I'm slidin the slope, since the time we tore
Oh ancient age, now on the stage,
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

Verse

So if you're broken, she'll smile for a token,
Few words spoken, click yer picks by the score.
Tell the troubled cop, she'll never stop
Wearin' diamonds and pearls, that ten foot showgirl,
She ain't called Sadie no more.

About This Song

I stood beside a showgirl once. She stood about ten feet tall, wore half-inch thick flesh colored body armor and smiled down at me. This song is about the show girls on Fremont Street in Vegas who pose for pictures with tourists.

I'M GOIN WAY OUT WEST

Key of C

Verse

I'm goin' way out west where those hobos sing,
And you sleep out every night.

I'm goin' way out west where the gamblers ring,
Those slot machines 'till the mornin' light.

Now listen here people while I tell my tale,
I hang my Stetson hat on an old square nail.

I'm goin' way out west, that's the land that's best,
Where good luck's gonna treat me right.

Chorus

I'm goin' way out west, yes, I'm gonna have some fun.
I'm goin' way out west, boys, I'm gonna git it done.
Spare me your thanks, I'm robbin' banks, cuz I've flown the nest,
Boom or bust, eat my dust, I'm goin' way out west.

Verse

I'm goin' way out west where those dance hall gals,
Go doowah shimmy shimmy shake.
I'm goin' way out west, make some brand new pals,
Watch the trail for those rattlesnakes.
And when I get to heaven up in that piñon shack,
You can tell the Sheriff I ain't ne'er goin' back.
I'm goin way out west, yes I can attest,
I'll wander till I'm cured of these aches.

Verse

I'm goin' way out west cuz my feet must roam,
And the highway calls to me.
I'm goin' way out west, leave my happy home,
Gonna cross that sagebrush sea.
And when I meet that buckarettie, honey, I'm your man,
All the way from Frisco out to the desert sand.
I'm goin' way out way west, cuz I've seen the rest,
Gimme a life that's wild and free.

AIN'T NONE OF THEM COPPERHEADS HERE

Key of C

Verse

C **F** **G** **C**
Under the hill, Virginia City, Kelly worked down in the mine,
F **C** **A^m** **D^m** **G**
Diggin' fer silver, diggin' fer gold, hotter 'an hell all the time.
A^m **E⁷** **D^m** **G**
Then under the moon he'd hit the saloon and call for a bucket of beer,
C **F** **G** **C**
Sayin' boys let's drink to the bosses, ain't none of them copperheads here.

Verse

They're dinin' on caviar way out in Frisco, I reckon they've got Rose Malone,
When Flapjack fell down the mine shaft she quit writin' letters back home.
There ain't no shame in these Fenian games when you've got your fist so near,
That's why I still muck for the drill, ain't none of them copperheads here.

Verse

One Sunday mornin' after the service, the Union boys standin' 'round,
Kelly goes white and he staggers as a top hat moves from the crowd.
Next moment he spies Lord Reginald Fry callin' some Spanish gal dear,
And O'Donnel laughs right in Kelly's face, ain't none of them copperheads here.

Verse

Monday mornin's a man for breakfast, shot dead cold on the street,
We know right away it's Kelly himself, they say Mr. Fry's off his feet.
The rumors abound they went 15 rounds and Kelly walked home full of cheer,
The Sheriff declared of the murder, ain't none of them copperheads here.

Verse

Some love the ground a thousand foot down, some just call it a job,
Some sell tobacco or whiskey, some riot, ramble and rob.
Some lie awake nights with talk of their rights, some rule with a pistol and fear,
And some make this toast to Kelly's ghost, ain't none of them copperheads here.

A "copperhead" was a northerner who sympathized with the South during the Civil War--a snake. In Virginia City, a number of mine owners were copperheads. They often lived in San Francisco.

THE SAGE GODDESS WITH HER SWEET DUSTY CRIES

Key of G

Verse

G **D**
The moon's o're the silver state, with warm and golden glow,
G
Like a fish the Sierra Wave hovers in the flow.
C **G** **B^m**
Downtown gals go strollin' and old men tell lies,
D **G**
I crave the Sage Goddess with her sweet dusty cries.

Chorus

C **G**
Some loves want freedom while hidin' in a cave,
D **G**
Some head to Burning Man to roast and to rave.
C **G** **B^m**
Some right their wrongs with anger, some murmur weary sighs,
D **G**
I dream the Sage Goddess with her sweet dusty cries.

Verse

She enters the saloon in a dress long and sheer,
While I sing bloody rivers for an Irish man with beer.
And when she glances at me with her deep bedroom eyes,
I catch the Sage Goddess with her sweet dusty cries.

Verse

The clock stops upon the wall, traffic leaves the street,
Words depart from tunes, I forget I might eat.
The road goes on forever, the night gets weak and wise,
I see the Sage Goddess with her sweet dusty cries.

Verse

I've wandered wide a desert rat for just a sandy bed,
Made a dollar here and there, old lyrics in my head.
Why do I part from careless fun, toss out this glad disguise,
I want the Sage Goddess with her sweet dusty cries.

About This Song

Every landscape hosts a muse. I think I've seen her a couple times, usually while caught up in some barn burner for the crowd.

DON'T GO DANCIN' SPORTIN' YER SPURS

Key of G

Verse

G
You got your ten gallon hat, got your pointy pointy boots,
D
Got your fringy jacket, got your rooty toot toot.
G
Got your line about Texas but I wanna tell you sir,
D **G**
Don't go dancin' sportin' your spurs.

Chorus

C **G**
Don't go dancin sportin your spurs,
A⁷ **D**
That ringle jingle jangle ain't my kind of words.
G
Wanna get close, make the cowgirls purr,
D **G**
Don't go dancin' sportin' your spurs.

Verse

You got your four wheel truck, got your gun up on the rack,
Got your silver buckle, got your tools in back.
Got your six pack partner, easy on the curves,
Don't go dancin' sportin' your spurs.

Verse

You got your big bay horse, got your saddle in the barn,
Got that old lariat, got me hangin on your arm.
Got your yippeeodelayeeay, save it for the herd,
Don't go dancin' sportin' your spurs.

About This Song

Good advice for cowhands at the rodeo, I think. Wrote this during the “urban cowboy” craze.

STARS AND SAND

Key of C

Verse

C

Way down town bright lights shine,

G

Crowds go by and sirens whine

I get away from there sometimes,

C

I like stars and sand

Chorus

F

C

Stars and sand, desert land,

G

C

Out where the air is free.

F

C

I fill my socks full of rocks,

G

C

I like stars and sand.

Verse

My neighbor Joe has got a dog,

Barks all day sittin' on a log.

He could try to tame a frog,

I like stars and sand.

Verse

Junkyards full of rusty wrecks,

Bank don't want to take my checks,

All I needs those little flecks,

I like stars and sand.

Verse

I take my stick, hike the trails,

Out where miners left their tails.

Up and down the hills and dales,

I like stars and sand.

About This Song

A song from The Coyote Puppet Theater, a series of literacy based CDs for children with stories and activity booklets created through grants from the Nevada State Library and Archives, years ago. See coyoteandhisfriends.com

HELLO MOON

Key of G, Capo 5

Verse

G D
Hello moon,
E^m A⁷
Hello moon,
G A⁷ D G A⁷ B^m
How have you been ever since when,
G D E⁷ A⁷
It's a pleasure from the desert to look up at you again.

Bridge

B^m G
When the western wind blows free, you know I gotta call,
C A⁷
A coyote wants to see, your silvery beams and all,
B^m G
Nevermind the stars, nevermind the sun
C A⁷
For a lonesome coyote, there is only one.

Verse

Hello moon,
Hello moon,
What's going on evening till dawn,
Over the sage you turn the page and I'll come along.

Verse

Hello moon,
Hello moon,
Let's have a little chat, if you're round or fat,
Glad you're there, bright and fair, cause you are where it's at.

Bridge 2

In the dark of the night, or in the bright of the day,
You help a lonesome coyote, find the words to say,
And as the echoes spin across the dusty plain
You always understand, no need to explain.

Ending

Hello moon,
Hello moon,
Hello moon.

About This Song

A song from The Coyote Puppet Theater, a series of literacy based CDs with stories and activity booklets for children created through grants from the Nevada State Library and Archives, years ago. See coyoteandhisfriends.com

AUNT SALLY TOOK THE MINE TOUR

Key of A

Verse

A Aunt Sally took the mine tour at the rear of the saloon,
E She ain't never comin' back, it's a tale of rack and ruin.

D The tour guide told them to turn left, Aunt Sally took a right,
E While she's wanderin' the shaft, we're drinkin' beer all night.

Verse

We'll drink here till December and then we'll head on home,
We'll have to tell our Uncle Jack, Aunt Sally's not alone.
She's probably met some Irish crew, diggin' gold below,
She'll learn 'em how to knit and lay the neatest row.

Verse

The Sheriff sent a rescue squad, they've disappeared now too,
A thousand miles of tunnel, there's nothin' we can do.
Uncle Jack'll build a monument or maybe he'll just fish,
He'll think about her casserole, that was his favorite dish.

Verse

Raftin' 'neath the desert upon the hidden streams,
Aunt Sally shines her pocket light and the gravel gleams.
With pirates she plays poker on their buried ship,
Her postcard home declares, "oh what a lovely trip."

Verse

So if you take the mine tour, be sure and look around,
Aunt Sally wears a flowered frock, she smiles and never frowns.
Her singin' makes one queasy though she's anythin' but frail,
She can yodel like a buckaroo, listen for that wail.

Verse

Ghost hunters will be searchin' with ethereal machines,
We'll sell the movie rights and an active figurine.
Aunt Sally's tragic tale is a lesson you should learn,
Don't worry 'bout the mine tour, most of the folks return.

About This Song

At the rear of the Ponderosa Saloon in Virginia City, there's a mine tour. Folks line up and go down. I watch from the stage and most return, I think.

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THAT'S WHY I'M WALKIN' DOWN THE ROAD

Key of E

Verse

E **A**
Come all you desert rounders standin' in line,
B⁷ **E**
Listen to my troubles in the sage and pine.

A
When I left for town, mama wished me good luck,
B⁷ **E**
Packed me up a sandwich and fifteen bucks.

Chorus

B⁷ **E**
That's why I'm walkin' down the road,
B⁷ **E**
That's why I'm movin' kinda slow.
C# **F#⁷**
Movin' kinda slow, don't know where I'll go,
B⁷ **E**
That's a why I'm walkin' down the road.

Verse

I hit the poker table, they give you whiskey cheap,
I woke up in an alley back where the fellers sleep.
The sheriff knocked me down, said I smell all wrong,
I took out this guitar and I sang him this song.

Verse

I fell for a waitress, she treated me real nice,
Love's a wheel of fortune, boys you roll the dice.
Bought her a big diamond an' a dress bright red,
She ran off with a pit boss, so I shot him dead.

Verse

A doctor told me son, cure in some new clime,
It's either relocation or work out in a mine.
I found an old truck out behind the motel,
I drove it in the river, now it don't run so well.