

The Western World Tour



by Rick Huff

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

Tips? Comments? Ideas for the column, send to: Rick Huff, P.O. Box 8442, Albuquerque, NM 87198-8442 or bestofthewest@swcp.com



Back in 2016, possibly in atonement for his ludicrous 2015 flick “A Million Ways To Die In The West,” Seth (“Family Guy”) MacFarlane offered up “The Cowboy.” It’s two episodes were “Movies That Shaped America’s Myth” and “Hollywood vs. History” featuring clips with commentary from film folk on the marketing and social legacies of The Western. Then he flew off into space (“The Orville”). Contrast it with the multi-season commitment of documentarian/singer-guitarist and cowboy-in-the-genes Mark Bedor. His is a horse of a different color. Or make that a horse of a different camera.

As part of his series “Today’s Wild West,” Bedor employs a handheld high definition camera to put us into the saddle with him on roundups and trail rides across Arizona, California, Montana, Nevada and Idaho among others. He has also taken us to visit locations as varied as Western Music festivals (Monterrey, Santa Clarita, the Red Ants Pants Music Festival), saddlery shops, milliners and the workshop of a peace pipe maker! Even a Cowboy cereal maker! He has profiled performers such as Wylie Gustafsen, The Quebe Sisters, Brenn Hill, Dave Stamey and more. His creation has gained a wide audience airing on PBS affiliates in thirty-two states...a whopping 91 markets...and, so far, has garnered one regional Emmy nomination and two coveted Western Heritage Awards. “That’s the one I really wanted to win,”

Bedor happily admits. As he recalls “I had worked in front of the camera in Chico and DesMoines (as an anchor and elsewhere behind the scenes as a news writer) and I got an idea. I combined my TV experience with my passion for all things Western and created “Today’s Wild West!” But his baby turned out to be anything but an easy sale. Undeterred, Mark Bedor proved to be the embodiment of sweat equity. He hosted, filmed and personally edited a complete 13-week package of thirty-minute shows before getting his first ‘Yes’!! But such is the fervor of a true believer. Whether it’s the art of Charlie Russell and the wonders of the Autry Museum or Montana’s National Museum of the West, the dust and grit of the open range or a quiet moment of

reflection before the majesty of a Western sunset, Mark Bedor is intent on palpably infecting his audience through putting them there.

That pesky Western Bug first bit Mark Bedor as a youth in Minnesota. That’s where he saw, in glorious Cinerama, the movie “How The West Was Won.” Along the way, he began singing and playing the guitar which further locked it in. An



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interview with Rich O'Brien at a Heber City Cowboy Poetry Gathering guitar clinic resulted in O'Brien encouraging Bedor to come to Fort Worth to record an album, which he did in 2010. "My travel guitar is my Taylor," he notes. "I never leave home without it. I've spent many evenings singing and playing around the campfire at dude ranches and on horse trips." Following production on his newest installment of programs, Bedor intends to rework the album or possibly record a new one. And he further muses about creating a live stage presentation that would involve his music and footage from "Today's Wild West."

Mark Bedor's labor of love creation is now attracting a far wider following even beyond its loyal PBS audience, thanks to online assistance. "Today's Wild West" is now found on the Heartland Network at watchheartlandtv.com, a new steaming service yourhometv.com and his own YouTube channel at [youtubetv/@TodaysWildWest/featured/](https://www.youtube.com/@TodaysWildWest/featured/) so it appears people are saying they can't get enough. You can also find information on his coffee table books through his website todayswildwest.com/books/. All of it proves one man's basic contention that the cowboy is still out there...and, if you "can't see him from the road," as the song says, "Today's Wild West" lets us find him on our TV screens. All the while he has continued to write articles with photo spreads for leading Western magazines. And why not?? As Mark Bedor puts it, "it's the coolest stuff there is!!" 🐾



Chapter Update

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Colorado sharing session at 2022 IWMA Convention.

IWMA-CO Sharing Session is IWMA-CO Vice President, Geary Parsons. Questions? You can reach out to him at gearyparsons@outlook.com. Our Business Member, the Western

Slope Cowboy Gathering, (Grand Junction, CO) will be happening November 3-4, 2023. Visit westernslopecowboygathering.com for information. Several IWMA-

CO Members are performing this year! Our other Business Member, the Colorado Cowboy Gathering, is hosting its Summer Concert featuring acclaimed western star, Gary McMahan, on Saturday, August 5 at 2:00 p.m. at the Maple Grove Grange, 3130 Youngfield, Wheat Ridge, CO. Tickets at the door are \$15.00. The Colorado Cowboy Gathering is moving the event in January to the fabulous Buffalo Rose Event Center located at 12th and Washington in Golden, Colorado. More information about the 2024 gathering will be on the website: www.coloradocowboygathering.org.

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