

[REVIEWS Music]



Hot Water

Grand Dame of the Rockies

By Jon Chandler

www.jonchandler.com

A musical storyteller, Jon Chandler conjures up images of Western places and individuals. Whether singing with guitar or backed by top Nashville musicians, the 61-year-old's rich baritone is steady and smooth.

His new release, subtitled *Songs of the Hotel Colorado and the Roaring Fork Valley*, includes songs about, and inspired by, the historic Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs, Colo., and its surroundings.

The song "Linwood" imagines Doc Holliday's last moments and earned Chandler a Spur award from the Western Writers of America. It's a lament that beckons listeners to understand him. Holliday visited the hot springs town of Glenwood Springs in 1887 before the estate-like Colorado Hotel (eventually nicknamed the Grand Dame of the Rockies) was even built. The gun fighter had hoped to find relief for his tuberculosis but died later that year and is believed to be buried in nearby Linwood Cemetery. Holliday's supposed grave marker is engraved with a poker hand and a pistol, naturally.

Chandler says he approaches songwriting as if he's writing a "200-word novel," resulting in songs that are nuanced and complete. Chandler has recorded at least 250 songs over his career and also authored an award-winning historical novel titled *The Spanish Peaks*.

—David Wolfe



Genre Buster

Honkytonks and Heartaches

By Gord Bamford

Royalty Records (2009)

www.gordbamford.com

Gord Bamford's latest album has earned him three Canadian Country Music Awards.

His music may be more coun-

try than western, but Bamford's sound is reminiscent of an early George Strait. Perhaps it's the influence of Bamford's songwriting partner and record producer, Byron Hill, who penned Strait's first number one single, "Fool Hearted Memory."

"Gord's a true country artist," says Hill, who also wrote "This Old Hat" with Bamford for the 2008 Calgary Stampede to commemorate the tradition of the cowboy hat. "He's a very likeable person and will endear himself to even the harshest critics of the genre." —Tracey Feist