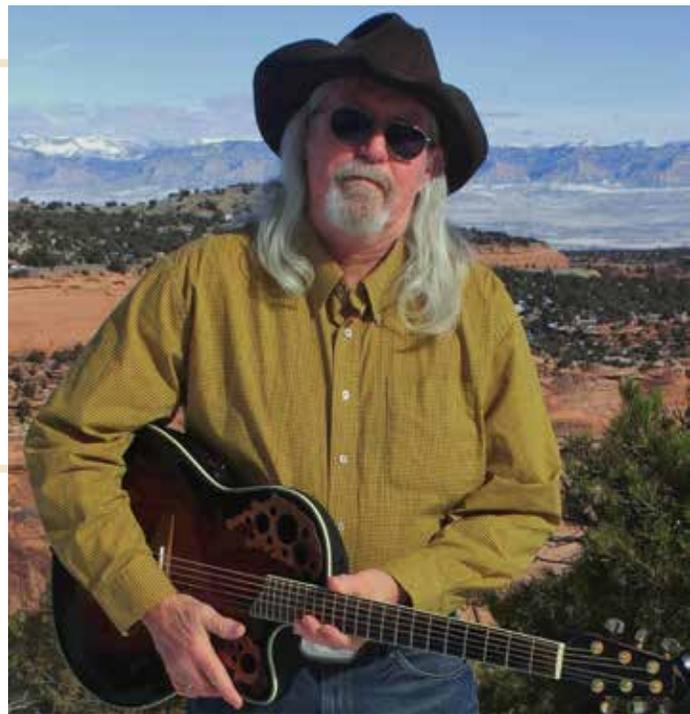


Western Singer/Songwriter JIM HAWKINS

A STORYTELLER OF THE OLD AND NEW WEST

ARTICLE NICOLETTE TOUSSAINT | PHOTOGRAPHY SHARILL HAWKINS



Probably the most notable song Jim Hawkins has written is a tribute to the 14 firefighters who were killed battling the 1994 Storm King Mountain fire. Subtitled “When Hell’s Fire Broke Through,” the song and video has garnered more 10,000 views on YouTube and was shown on the fire’s 20th anniversary at Carbondale’s Crystal Theatre.

Storm King Mountain has its roots in Hawkins’ own background; he worked as Denver firefighter and medic and served on an Arizona “hotshot” crew.

“By the time Storm King occurred, I was a veteran firefighter in Denver,” Hawkins recalls. “But the instant we learned about it, I was flooded with memories of those days and some near-misses our hotshot crew experienced. I hesitated to write about Storm King, but in the end, I felt my experiences would help me write a song that honored their spirit without it becoming a ‘Hollywood, heroes and glory’ type song.”

Hawkins and his friend Fred Hamilton, of Gainesville, Florida, record as the Ute City Rangers. They have collaborated on three CDs of original songs and are working on a fourth with the working title of *Dirt Roads and Angels*. Hawkins’ songs tell of the new and old West, and the lyrics draw on his experiences growing up in Wyoming, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado.

Hawkins calls his style New Western Folk and says, “I am really a storyteller hiding behind a guitar.” Of his song *Two Moons on the Nickel*, for example, he says he found it ironic that the buffalo nickel’s front face shows the image of a native American.

“We have a Roosevelt dime, a Jefferson nickel and a Lincoln penny, but when we gave a nod to the people we had beat down, we referred to the image on the back side of the coin – a buffalo,” he muses. “I researched and found that the model was a Cheyenne warrior named Two Moons. He had fought in the Battle of the Greasy Grass (the Lakota name for Custer’s Battle of Little Big Horn).”

Jim and his wife Sharill have run the Four Mile Creek Bed & Breakfast near Glenwood Springs for the past 18 years, and the historical red barn on the property frequently serves as a summer music hall. Although running a B & B generally doesn’t inspire Hawkins’ songwriting muse, he says, “We are located on Four Mile Road, exactly five miles up that road. Many guests have asked how we could be ‘five miles up Four Mile Road,’ so I wrote a tune using that phrase.” *Five Miles up Four Mile Creek* became the title of the Ute City Rangers’ second CD.

While many of Hawkins’ songs are historical and heartfelt, some are ironic and funny. Hawkins says that after his son Clay declared that he was writing too many serious songs, he dashed off a little ditty called *Aspen Gal*.

“The verses are snapshot descriptions of people you might see around the Roaring Fork Valley,” Jim explains. “I have had a lot of fun with it. I often tell the audience that they may have seen these characters or they may even *be* these people!”

CDs of Jim Hawkins’ music are available at the Four Mile Creek Bed & Breakfast and at UteCityRangers.com.

ASPEN GAL

Aspen Gal with a cowboy hat
Fur coat, jeans and a Persian cat
Decaf coffee and low-fat milk
Wonderin’ when deer turn to elk
Good lookin’ guy, belt to his knees
Prettiest boxers you’ll ever see
Flat-billed cap turned to the side
Walks with his legs real wide
Vato man with his car all jumpin’
Never understood all that bumpin’
Shiny chrome and lots of wax
Cool ride and that’s a fact
Nice big Stetson and a pickup truck
Lookin’ for cowgirls outta luck
Doin’ the Texas two-step now
Think he’s all hat but no cows
(Chorus)
So don’t worry now
We’re all strange somehow
We shouldn’t stare and be unkind
Just get along and we’ll be fine
