



ELIZA GILKYSON

Notes on *Songs From the River Wind*

“George Moore said ‘a man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.’ The same can be said for this woman, a wanderer who loved the road and the music life but who was always hoping to find that true home in the world. This record is the story of that quest, the lives and loves, the people and places in my beloved West, and the river of longing that brought me to the place where I could finally hang up my spurs, rest my bones and feel with certainty that I was home.” - Eliza Gilkyson 7/21

“Wanderin”

This is my adaptation of an old Irish ballad that my dad’s band “Terry Gilkyson and The Easy Riders” recorded in 1958. ([Link to YouTube version of Terry Gilkyson and the Easy Riders version of “Wanderin”](#)) I always loved this song, especially my dad’s version, but I wanted to re-write it from a woman’s perspective. We women like to wander too, but you rarely hear about that in those early folk songs.

“Buffalo Gals”

Another song I adapted from an old Western tune to suit a woman’s perspective. I spent a lot of time in Wyoming and New Mexico when I was growing up, and I knew and loved all those old western folksongs, and my Dad Terry Gilkyson recorded a number of them. I re-wrote this one years ago on my way up to Dubois Wyoming to visit friends and kick up a little dust, maybe a little trouble.

“Farthest End”

An iconic cowboy friend told me some of his backstory while we were riding in the foothills of the Wind Rivers one afternoon long ago and this song was born out of that.

“Charlie Moore”

An influential character, bigger than life, a Wyoming legend, family friend, and a young girl’s heroic archetype.

“Wind River and You”

There has always been a part of me that just wanted to live out the romantic notion of being a western ranch girl, but that was never going to be my life. I had to learn that lesson the hard way more than once.

“Colorado Trail”

Another old western tune I adapted to my own story. I wrote it after a show late one night driving the back roads of Colorado heading to the next gig. Empty road, big sky filled with stars, broken white line, broken heart. I got the last verse off of an old “Sons of the Pioneers” recording which just slays me.

“The Hill Behind This Town”

My first rental (if you can call it that) when I left home was an old wooden boxcar that sat up on cinderblocks beside the railroad tracks in Lamy, New Mexico. It had two good size rooms with beadboard walls and ceilings and two holes in the roof for a wood cook stove and a regular wood stove for heat. It was cozy and all mine, \$15 a month, rattled like crazy when the trains thundered by just feet away. If you climbed up the hill out back you could watch the sun set.

“Bristlecone Pine”

First heard this out my hotel room window in Red River, New Mexico, rising up from the Motherlode Bar next door. It was my first real contact with the “Rifters” band. I felt like they were personally serenading me up on the balcony with their beautiful voices delivering this exquisite song by Hugh Prestwood. They have since become my good friends and musical partners on this record.

“Before the Great River Was Tamed”

A beautiful moving song written by the “Rifters”. How many times have I said of the Old West “I wish I could have seen it”? The Rio Grande, that beautiful iconic wild river, now so severely reduced and controlled, how I wish I could have been there to witness its untamed glory.

“At the Foot of The Mountain”

Written not long ago when I started to sink roots in Taos after many years living in Texas. It was intoxicating to come back and plunge myself into the western landscape and unearth my memories, a joyful full circle homecoming for me. I sent the lyrics to my friend John Gorka and he sent me back the music that same day.

“Don’t Stop Loving Me”

Settling down in the West after a long hiatus, my heart is full and my spirit soars like a hawk—it feels like I’m suspended in a beautiful dream.

“Taosena Lullaby”

This beautiful song was written by one of my songwriter workshop attendees in Taos, Heather McRae, and it perfectly describes how I feel about coming home to Taos.

“CM Schottische”

A fragment of a Wyoming memory from childhood, a long lost square dance/Schottische tune—have not been able to find the name of the song, but this version Don Richmond created for me after I hummed it to him off the top of my head takes me right back to the edge of the dance floor in 1956 and a shy little girl watching the cowboys stomp, whoop and flirt.

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