

# COWBOY BALLADS

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Houston, Cisco  
Cowboy Ballads



sung by CISCO HOUSTON with guitar  
CHISOLM TRAIL • RIDING OLD PAINT • DIAMOND JOE  
TYING A KNOT ON THE DEVIL'S TAIL • STEWBALL • LITTLE  
JOE THE WRANGLER • BETSY FROM PIKE • TROUBLE IN MIND

Folkways Records FA 2022



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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET





# COWBOY BALLADS

sung by Cisco Houston

## Introduction by J.D. ROBB

Collectors have unearthed folk music from every continent and well-nigh every section of every continent. Thousands of folksongs have been collected. They are found in every state from the complete and beautiful versions, which sometimes reach the listener at concerts or through recordings, to the fragmentary or incoherent versions which the collector often encounters. Their profusion is well-nigh incredible. One 81-year old New Mexico resident sang for me from memory, in two afternoons, ninety-six different folksongs in Spanish, some of them very long, and including a wide range of subject matter and musical style: political ballads, historical ballads, love songs, religious decimas, patriotic songs, animal songs, humorous songs, songs of homesickness, etc. If music is a universal language, as is sometimes said, this is so largely because of the apparently universal distribution and appreciation of folk music.

There have been many definitions of folk music. The best definition seems to be one of the broadest, namely: simple, usually unwritten music transmitted by ear from person to person, which is accepted by a group of people as expressing their way of life and which is meanwhile undergoing the resultant process of change in which a number of people usually participate. Being ordinarily unwritten, it can rarely be surely traced back to its original form. Folk music virtually always goes forward into a future of new and changing forms. Furthermore, it is primarily rural in its distribution.

It is easily distinguished from learned music. The latter is written music. It changes very little and as a result of the existence of the written manuscript is constantly being maintained in or brought back to its original form. Learned music is usually the work of one man whose identity is known. It is, as a rule, more complicated, at least harmonically, than folk music. It consequently has a smaller number of practitioners and commands a smaller and more sophisticated audience. It is more static than folk music. Unlike popular music and folk music, it is rarely topical in subject matter; that is to say, it relatively rarely deals with recent or current events.

Popular music is an intermediate type. It is, like learned music, written music though in practice it often is characterized by improvisation. It emanates usually from cities and is ordinarily traceable to a known author. Popular music is, like learned music, subject to correction by reference to the original manuscript.

Any of the above three types may from time to time pass the border line into the territory of one of the others. Thus, a folksong may be incorporated into a symphonic work (e.g. Roy Harris's "Johnny Comes Marching Home"), or become the theme of a popular song (e.g. "Home On The Range"). A popular song such as Stephen Foster's "Suzanna" may come into circulation in the manner of a folksong and come to display many characteristics of folksong or it may be incorporated into a serious work of, say, the type known as symphonic jazz; a symphonic theme may be transmuted into a popular or folk song.

The works of Chopin and Tschaikowsky and others have been a happy hunting ground for popular song writers, one of whom wrote a song called "Everybody's Making Money But Tschaikowsky".

Cowboy ballads may be popular music or folksongs. "Don't Fence Me In" is a published popular song by a known composer who was by no means a cowboy or a member of the cowboy set but attempted to catch the atmosphere of the cowboy song.

Essentially the thing that makes a folksong what it is eludes definition. It is a quality which somehow is a portrait of an aspect not of an individual but of a people.

Now having tried to draw a line of demarcation between folk music and other types of music, let us consider the nature of the evolution and development of folk music.

Folk music is closely related to life. As new elements appear in the life of a people, new types of folksong emerge. Most, if not all, important changes in living are reflected in the multitudes of folksongs which are constantly coming into being. Folksongs in general are frequently functional. That is they serve the practical purpose of accompanying social functions such as dancing or love making.

Some folksongs are factual, embodying reports of interesting happenings with dates, names and places. Others are exceedingly introspective and intangible. While they are constantly being



created, the type does not tend to change rapidly as long as social conditions are relatively stable. When the rate of social change is suddenly accelerated, as when migrations occur and groups of people find themselves in new environments, the sudden impact of new conditions creates just as sudden a change of musical type.

It was such a change that brought into existence the cowboy ballad. The ballads of the cowboys are one of the results of the movement of American civilization westward from the Mississippi river. This movement occupied the period from about the time of the bloodless conquest of New Mexico in 1848 and the gold rush in 1849 to about 1900. But the cowboy ballads are not the only type of song resulting from this migration. At least three rather distinct types of western folksongs emerged from this period.

First come the songs of the frontiersmen which describe the incidents of the invasion of the west and the thoughts and moods of the men engaged in that invasion.

Second, come the cowboy ballads. The American invaders went into the business of raising cattle first on the unfenced range and later on the privately acquired ranches which were gradually fenced in, and the cowboy song is the result. It is rather interesting to note (parenthetically) that many of the most beautiful songs sung by the native Spanish people of the west were shepherds' songs, for they it was who spent the long months with the flocks of sheep. The American, however, rarely sang songs of this type for he was concerned with raising cattle.

Third, come the songs of the settlers or Nesters. As the cowboy represents a continuance of the nomadic tradition, the Nester represents the agricultural tradition. As the land was opened up to settlement many pioneers interested in farming rather than livestock squatted on and fenced off whatever land they dared take and later others took out claims to land opened for settlement by the Federal Government. The Nesters produced a type of song of their own, much like the cowboy ballad, in which they sang sometimes in a humorous vein of the trials and tribulations of their lives. The well-known "Hurrah For Greer County" and "My Little Old Sod Shanty On My Claim" are typical of this type.

The cowboy, as the very term implies, was usually if not a mere boy, at least young and unmarried, and employed in the business of raising and caring for cattle on the ranches and on the famous trails. The term rancher, or boss, was reserved for the owner of the ranch, usually an older, married man who lived in the ranch headquarters with his family. Between them stood the foreman whose duty it was to see that the cowboys carried out the wishes of the rancher. The cowboy lived in the bunkhouse on the ranch or

in one of the cattle camps or at times in a tent or on the ground beneath the sky. He was least temporarily homeless and saw little of women, a fact which invested home and womanhood with glamor and romance. His life was a hard one. The bunkhouse, or shack, in which he lived had only such things as he could carry in his bedroll. His working hours were long and irregular, the pay small and the work dangerous.

Only one who has lived under such conditions of isolation can realize what occasional luxuries such as music or a trip to town or some measure of social intercourse meant to the cowboy.

The cowboy song reflects the emotional states which this sort of life engendered for, while the words of the cowboy songs may deal with many factual situations, the inspiration for the songs were emotional. Perhaps the most frequent theme of cowboy folksongs and frontier songs in general had to do with the virtue of courage. Others may have been born out of the agony and loneliness which the cowboys sometimes felt. At other times the songs were designed to make light of the typical sins of the cowboy who, arriving in town after lonely weeks on the range, could not resist the temptations of the town: drink, gambling and women. There are songs of love, of home, of loneliness, impending death, of love for his faithful horse, or his little dogies, or a brave and true pal, religious allegories, songs about dudes and new-fangled things like the bicycle, songs dealing with the supernatural, and narratives of various sorts. There seem to be no real work songs, an omission surprising at first for they are found in so many places elsewhere. Perhaps cowboy work songs may still be discovered. On the other hand, there was no such close association in group labor as that which gives rise to the work song. The cowboy sang of his work but not true work songs.<sup>1</sup>

1) see notes on FOLKWAYS ALBUM #19  
"LOGGERS and SEA SHANTIES"

Most cowboy songs are in the traditional major keys and scales, although occasionally one is found in the minor mode and more rarely still one encounters a modal melody. They are almost invariably regular in meter, that is, one can beat time in groups of two or three beats throughout the entire piece, the first beat of each group being accented.

There are other types of folksong, for instance the Spanish folksongs of the southwest, which are characterized by metric irregularity, syncopation and other rhythmic complexities not often found in the cowboy songs.

The basic pattern of the cowboy song is the stanza consisting of four verses of four measures each, or occasionally two verses. Virtually all cowboy songs may

be considered as based on this pattern. However, this regular formal pattern does not usually appear in this bald form. Sometimes it is varied by inserting an extra measure or two or three for the guitar between stanzas (or at a pause during the stanza) or by means of a retard or slowing up of the tempo at the end or elsewhere. In other instances the basic pattern is radically changed by altering the length of the verses themselves. This is brought about by holding certain notes for up to as much as several measures. The form varies from verse to verse and becomes intriguingly asymmetrical.

Old cowhands have told me that instruments were rare on the range and the songs were usually sung without accompaniment, although occasionally a guitar or harmonica was available.

Nevertheless, the cowboy song seems to have been conceived in harmonic terms for it has neither the degree of rhythmic or formal irregularity which is found in so much of the music traditionally sung without accompaniment. It is only when two or more singers, or a singer with one or more accompanying instruments supplying the harmonies, sing and play together that the need for metric and formal regularity becomes urgent for the very simple reason that otherwise it is difficult for the musicians to keep together.

Many of the cowboy tunes can be traced back to the east or even more remote sources; whereas the words are new. Sometimes an old tune has several successive sets of new words provided for it. The old gospel hymn "Belah Land" has served successively as a setting for different words in "Maryland, My Maryland" and in the frontier ballad, "Dakota Land". It has even bobbed up in a fourth version, a satiric song called "New Mexico" with the following words:

There is a land of dusty roads  
And weeds and snakes and horned toads.  
It never rains, it never snows.  
The dusty wind it always blows  
And how we live God only knows,  
New Mexico, New Mexico.

This freedom of treatment expresses itself likewise in variations of the tunes or words as they travel from singer to singer.

What were some of the elements that contributed to the cowboy ballads? As the western movement pushed into a new country, the folksongs naturally began to incorporate regional geographical names such as Santa Fe, Wyoming, Chisholm Trail, Rio Grande, Dodge City.

The Spanish settlers in the southwest had developed both agricultural and agrarian ways of livelihood. Many of their sons became cowboys and this led to the incorporation into the cowboy speech and songs words derived from the Spanish language



such as lariat, rodeo, corral, chaps, remuda, arroyo, hombre, coyote, chili and gringo.

Cattle raising gave rise to such words as chuck-box, round-up, doggies, range, dally welters, and various brand names such as Lazy A, Flying U, Four X, and Cross B.

Dialectical mannerisms such as had me (for had), hoss (for horse), gitar or geetar (for guitar), feller (for fellow), git (for get), cuss (for curse), mail (for mail train), riding herd (for herding), settin (for sitting), come (for came), head (for head off), rustler (for thief), and pack (for carry) likewise crept into the cowboy song.

Characteristic english language usages such as shot (for a drink of liquor), brand (for cattle marking), dude (for city fellow), dough (for money), argue (for talk), and outfit (for cowboy dress) added their part to the mosaic.

Characteristic song refrains developed such as whoopee ti yi; cow, cow, yicki, yicki, yay; and come a ti, yi, yippee, yippee, yay.

When these and many other factors arising from the movement of a whole people into a new environment converged upon the cowboys and combined with the universal urge to sing, it is natural that a type of song which was not the product of one man but of a people and a time and a place emerged.

While the open unfenced range has become a rarity, there are still vast ranches in the west, for instance in Texas and New Mexico, which comprise hundreds of thousands of acres and in which a pasture will ordinarily include about 50,000 acres. On these ranches the life of the cowboy still approximates that of the older days. The roundup still involves use of the chuckwagon, sleeping on the ground and many miles of horseback travel daily. Separating out the dry cows and bulls, roping the calves to be branded, flanking or throwing the powerful young animals, and branding them requires a high degree of the old skills.

The life of the cowboy today revolves around the care of cattle. He must ride the fences to see that they are kept in repair. In the summer when the cattle roam under permits in the unfenced national forests he must ride sometimes thirty or forty miles a day to keep track of them and so that cattle thieves (who still ply their nefarious trade) may be frightened off. He must keep count of the herd and of the number of new calves. He must see that the bulls are admitted to the company of the cows at the appropriate time. At roundup time in July he must ride hard to assemble the cattle at the nearest corral, cut out the dry cows and bulls and see that the calves to be branded, castrated and inoculated do not get away. This necessitates much

hard and dangerous riding after refractory animals who delight in charging into almost impenetrable oak brush. The chapereras that the cowboy wears and his big hat, though sometimes showy are functional. They guard his legs and his eyes from the tearing branches and even the barbed wire close to which he must sometimes ride often at high speed. Then there is the breaking of horses to do and of course the cowboy is expected to do some riding in the rodeos and to show and to perfect his skill in roping calves, a skill which he will need badly when the time comes to ride in among the cows at branding time and rope by the left hind foot the calves that are to be branded. Then there are the rare visits to town for the rodeos or cattlemen's meetings or just for a change. And then there is chuck time and night time on the prairie at roundup time or in the bunkhouse. A song is very welcome then and the morale of an outfit is much better if there is a good singer or gee-tar player among them. So the cowboy ballad is still very much alive.

RECORDED, EDITED AND PRODUCED  
BY MOSES, ASCH

MANY OF THESE SONGS CAN BE FOUND IN  
COWBOY SONGS COLLECTED BY JOHN LOMAX  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1910  
COWBOY SONGS AND OTHER FRONTIER BALLADS  
COLLECTED BY JOHN A. AND ALAN LOMAX  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1948  
TERMS AND MEANINGS GLEANED FROM  
WESTERN WORDS, A DICTIONARY BY  
RAMON F. ADAMS, UNIVERSITY OF  
OKLAHOMA PRESS, 1944.

#### THE CHISOLM TRAIL

Foot in the stirrup and my hand on the  
horn,  
I'm the best darn cowboy ever was born.

CHORUS:  
Ki yi yippee yippee yi yippee  
Ki yi yippee yippee yay.

I started up the trail October twenty-  
third,  
Started up the trail with the 2-U herd.

(CHORUS)

Up every morning 'fore daylight,  
And before I sleep the moon shines  
bright.

(CHORUS)

With a ten-dollar horse and a forty-  
dollar saddle,  
I'm going down to Texas for to punch  
them.

(CHORUS)

Old Ben Bolt was a fine old boss,  
And he went to see his gal on a sore-  
back hoss.

(CHORUS)

There's a stray in the herd and the boss  
said kill it,  
So I shot him in the rump with the handle  
of a skillet.

(CHORUS)

I went to the boss to draw my roll,  
And he had me figured out nine dollars  
in the hole.

(CHORUS)

Ropin' and a-tyin' and a-brandin' all day,  
I'm a-workin' mighty hard for a-mighty  
little pay.

(CHORUS)

I went to the boss and we had a little  
chat,  
And I hit him in the face with my old  
slouch hat.

(CHORUS)

With my foot in the stirrup and my hand on  
the horn,  
I'm the best dang'd cowboy ever was born.

(CHORUS)

Well, I'm gonna get married just as quick  
as I can,  
And I won't punch cattle for no darn man.

#### DIAMOND JOE

There is a man you'll hear about  
Most every place you go;  
And his holdings are in Texas,  
And his name is Diamond Joe.

Well, he carries all his money  
In his diamond studded jaw;  
And he never was much bothered,  
By the process of the law.

Well I hired to Diamond Joe, boys,  
I did offer him my hand;  
And he gave me a string of horses  
So old they could not stand.

I "liked" to died of hunger  
'Cause he did mistreat me so;  
I never earned a dollar,  
In the pay of Diamond Joe.

Well, his bread it was corn-dodger,  
And his meat I could not chaw;  
And he drove me near distracted  
With the waggin' of his jaw.

While he tellin' of his story,  
And I mean to let you know;  
There never was a rounder  
That lied like Diamond Joe.

Well I tried three times to quit him,  
boys,  
But he did argue so;  
That I still am punching cattle  
In the pay of Diamond Joe.

And when I'm called to Heaven,  
Last thing before I go;  
Give my blankets to my buddies,  
And give the fleas to Diamond Joe.



## I RIDE AN OLD PAINT

I ride an old paint, lead an old dam,  
Goin' to Montana to throw the houlihan.  
Feed 'em in the coulees, and water in  
the draw,  
Tails are all matted, and their backs  
are all raw.

### CHORUS:

Ride around little dogies, ride around  
'em slow,  
They're fiery and snuffy and rarin'  
to go.

Old Bill Jones had two daughters and a  
song,  
One went to college, and the other  
went wrong.  
His wife got killed in a free for all  
fight,  
Still he keeps singing from morning  
till night.

### (CHORUS)

I've worked in your town, I've worked on  
your farm,  
And all I got to show is the muscle in  
my arm.  
Blisters on my feet, and the callous on  
my hand  
I'm goin' to Montan-y, to throw the  
houlihan.

### (CHORUS)

When I die take my saddle from the wall,  
Put it on my pony, lead him out of his  
stall.  
Tie my bones to his back, turn our faces  
to the west,  
We'll ride the prairie that we love the  
best.

### (CHORUS)

Coulee - a dry creek, ravine  
Draw - shallow drain for rainfall

## LITTLE JOE, THE WRANGLER

He was little Joe, the wrangler, he'll  
wrangle never more,  
His days with the remuda they are o'er;  
It was a year ago last April that he rode  
into our camp,  
Just a little Texas stray and all alone.

His saddle was a Texas "kack" made many  
years ago,  
With an O.K. spur on the foot lightly  
slung;  
His bedroll in the cotton sack was loosely  
tied behind,  
And his canteen o'er his saddle-horn was  
hung.

He said if we would give him work, he'd  
do the best he could,  
Though he didn't know straight up about  
a cow;  
So the boss he cut him out a mount and he  
kindly put him on,  
'Cause he sorta liked this little kid  
somehow.

He learned to wrangle horses and know 'em  
all by name,  
And get them in by daybreak if he could;  
To follow the chuck-wagon and always hitch  
the team,  
And help the cocinero rustle wood.

We had driven down to Pecos, the weather  
being fine;  
We camped on the south side in a bend;  
When a norther started blowin' and we  
called out every man,  
For it taken all us hands to hold 'em in.

Little Joe, the wrangler, was called out  
with the rest;  
Although the kid had scarcely reached the  
herd,  
When the cattle they stampeded, like a  
hailstorm long they fled,  
And we was all a-ridin' for the lead.

Midst the streaks of lightnin' a rider we  
could see,  
It was little Joe, the wrangler, in the  
lead;  
He was riding old blue rocket with a  
slicker o'er his head,  
A-tryin' to check the cattle in their  
speed.

At last we got them illing and kind-a  
quieted down,  
And the extra guard back to the wagon  
went;  
But there was one a-missin' and we knew  
it at a glance,  
'Twas our little Texas stray, poor  
wrangling Joe.

Next morning just at daybreak we found  
where rocket fell,  
In a washout twenty feet below;  
And beneath his horse, mashed to a pulp,  
his spur had rung the knell,  
Was our little Texas stray, poor wrangling  
Joe.

Wrangler - herder of saddle horses,  
trainee, most menial worker  
Remuda - extra mounts for cowboys  
Stray - visitor, stranger  
Kack - slang for saddle  
Texas kack-as different from California  
type  
Cocinero - from Spanish for cook slang  
"coosie"  
Pecos - Pecos River  
Milling - marching of cattle in a  
compact circle

## THE DYING COWBOY

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie."  
These words came low and mournfully  
From the parted lips of a youth who lay  
On his dying bed at the close of day.

"Oh bury me not on the lone prairie  
Where the coyote howls and the wind  
blows free,  
In a narrow grave just six by three.  
"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie."

"It matters not, I've oft been told,  
Where the body lies when the heart grows  
cold;  
Yet grant, oh, grant this wish to me:  
"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie."

He wailed in pain and o'er his brow  
Death's shadows fast were gathering now;  
He thought of his friends and his home  
but high  
As the cowboys gathered to see him die.

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie,"  
These words came low and mournfully,  
From the parted lips of the youth who lay  
On his dying bed at the close of day.

We took no heed to his dying prayer;  
In a narrow grave we buried him there,  
In a narrow grave just six by three  
We buried him there on the lone prairie.

## STEWBALL

Stewball was a good horse, and he held a  
high head,  
And the mane on his foretop was fine as  
silk thread.

I rode him in England, I rode him in Spain,  
And I never did lose boys, I always did  
gain.

So come all of you gamblers, from near and  
from far,  
Don't bet your gold dollar on that little  
gray mare.

Most likely she'll stumble, most likely  
she'll fall,  
But you never will lose on my noble  
Stewball.

Sit tight in your saddle, let slack on your  
rein,  
And you never will lose boys, you always  
will gain.

As they were riding 'bout half way 'round,  
That gray mare she stumbled and fell to  
the ground.

And away out yonder, ahead of them all,  
Came dancing and prancing my noble  
Stewball.

Stewball was a good horse, and he held a  
high head,  
And the mane on his foretop was fine as  
silk thread.

I rode him in England, and I rode him in  
Spain,  
And I never did lose boys, I always did  
gain.

## TROUBLE IN MIND

Trouble in mind, I'm blue,  
But I won't be blue always,  
'Cause the sun gonna shine  
in my back door someday.



I'm going down to the river,  
Take along my rockin' chair,  
And if the blues don't leave me  
I'll rock on away from there.

I'll lay my head  
On that lonesome railroad line,  
I'll let the ten-nineteen  
Pacify my worried mind.

Look a-here sweet mamma  
See what you have done done,  
Why you made me love you,  
Now your reg'lar man done come.

Well, trouble, oh trouble,  
Trouble on my worried mind;  
When you see me laughin', I'm laughin'  
Just to keep from cryin'.

I'm gonna lay my head  
On that lonesome railroad line,  
I'll let the ten-nineteen  
Pacify my worried mind.

#### SWEET BETSY FROM PIKE

O, don't you remember sweet Betsy from  
Pike,  
Crossed the tall mountains with her  
lover Ike,  
Two yoke of oxen and one spotted hog,  
A tall shanghai rooster and a big yellow  
dog.

#### REFRAIN:

Hoodle dang fol dee di do  
Hoddle dang fol dee day

They soon reached the desert where Betsy  
give out,  
And down on the sand she lay rolling  
about.  
And Ike he gazed at her with sobs and  
with sighs,  
Quoth he, "get up Betsy you'll get sand  
in your eyes."

#### (REFRAIN)

The shanghai ran off and the oxen all  
died,  
And the last piece of bacon that morning  
was fried;  
And Ike got discouraged and Betsy got  
mad.  
And the dog wagged his tail and looked  
wonderful sad.

#### (REFRAIN)

Long Ike and sweet Betsy attended a dance,  
And Ike wore a pair of his Pike county  
pants,  
And Betsy come dressed up in ribbons and  
rings  
Quoth Ike, "you're an angel, but where  
are your wings?"

A miner stepped up said: "will you dance  
with me?"

"I will you old hoss if you don't make  
too free,  
I'll tell you the reason, do you want to  
know why,  
Doggone you I'm chuck full of strong  
alkali."

#### (REFRAIN)

Long Ike and sweet Betsy got married of  
course,  
But Ike getting jealous obtained a  
divorce,  
And Betsy well satisfied said with a  
shout;  
"Good-bye you big lummux I'm glad you  
backed out."

#### (REFRAIN)

#### TYING A KNOT IN THE DEVIL'S TAIL

Way high up in the sierra peaks  
Where the yellow pines grow tall,  
Sandy Bob and Buster Jiggs  
Had a round-up camp last Fall.

They took their horses and their runnin'  
irons  
And maybe a dog or two,  
And they 'lowed they'd brand all the  
long-eared calves  
That came within their view.

Well, many a long-eared doggie  
That didn't hush up by day,  
Had his long ears whittled and his old  
hide scorched  
In a most artistic way.

Then one fine day said Buster Jiggs  
As he throw'd his cigo down;  
"I'm tired of cow biography  
And I 'lows I'm goin' to town."

They saddles up and they hits them a  
lope  
Fer it wa'nt no sight of a ride,  
An' them was the days when an old cow  
hand  
Could oil up his old insides.

They starts her out at the kentucky  
bar  
At the head of the whiskev row.  
And they winds her up at the depot  
house  
Some forty drinks below.

They sets her up and turns her around  
And goes her the other way,  
And to tell you the Lord foresaken  
truth  
Them boys got drunk that day.

Well, as they was a-headin' back to  
camp  
And packin' a pretty good load,  
Who should they meet but the devil  
himself  
Come prancin' down the road.

Now the devil he said: "you cowboy  
skunks  
You better go hunt your hole,  
'Cause I come up from the hell's  
rim-rock  
To gather in your souls."

Said Buster Jiggs: "now we're just from  
town  
An' feelin' kind o' tight,  
And you ain't gonna get no cowboy souls  
Without some kind of a fight."

So he punched a hole in his old throw-  
rope  
And he slings her straight and true,  
And he roped the devil right around the  
horns  
He takes his dallies true.

Old Sandy Bob was a reata-man  
With his rope all coiled up neat,  
But he shakes her around and he builds  
him a loop  
And he ropes the devil's hind feet.

They threw him down on the desert ground  
While the irons was a-gettin' hot,  
They cropped and swallow-forked his ears  
And branded him up a lot.

They pruned him up with a dehorning saw  
And knotted his tail for a joke,  
Rode off and left him bellowing there,  
Knecked up to a lilac-jack oak.

Well, if you ever travel in the sierra  
peaks  
And you hear one awful wail,  
You'll know it's nothin' but the devil  
himself  
Raisin' hell about the knots in his tail.

Running iron - old style branding iron  
Dogie - "a calf that lost its mammy and  
whose daddy has run off with  
another cow"

Scorched - slang for branded  
Round-up camp - the gathering of cattle  
Sling - lash panniers on a packsaddle  
Dally - to take a half-hitch around the  
saddle horn, Spanish-darla  
vuelta

Reata - a rope made from leather, raw-  
hide

Swallow - forked - earmark made by  
hollowing ear lengthwise,  
notched







**FOLKWAYS Records**

AND SERVICE CORP., 117 W. 46 St., N.Y.C.  
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

**COWBOY BALLADS**

Sung by Cisco Houston with Guitar

SIDE 1

FA 2022 A

Band 1. CHISHOLM TRAIL  
Band 2. DIAMOND JOE  
Band 3. I RIDE AN OLD PAINT  
Band 4. LITTLE JOE, THE WRANGLER  
Band 5. THE DYING COWBOY

Recorded by Moses Asch

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**COWBOY BALLADS**  
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FA 2022 B

SIDE 2

- Band 1. STEWBALL
- Band 2. TROUBLE IN MIND
- Band 3. SWEET BETSY FROM PIKE
- Band 4. TYING A KNOT IN THE DEVIL'S TAIL

Recorded by Moses Asch  
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