

MUSICAL LORE

Story by Vanessa Hastings
Photos by Todd Huff

Customers pack downtown Casper's Wonder Bar every Wednesday night, seeking the mid-week mood boost that one-man-band Chad Lore never fails to provide.

At seven o'clock big sound starts to emanate from a small corner of the bar: Dressed in jeans, a black vest over a white shirt, and an outback hat, Chad tap dances as he sings, plays the guitar, wails on the harmonica, and jokes with the crowd. His cover tunes range from Neil Young's "Heart of Gold" to the Oscar Meyer bologna theme song.

On a recent spring night Chad pauses. "We'd like to do this next song for our bartenders back there." He sets down an empty beer bottle on a nearby speaker and starts strumming the seventies tune "A Horse With No Name" as he slowly taps along. He sings with exaggerated emotion:

*On the first part of the journey
(His voice trails off weakly)
I was looking at all the life
(He coughs pathetically as though he hasn't had
a drop to drink in days)
There were plants and birds and rocks and
things*

A waiter, getting the hint, hurries toward the musician with a fresh bottle of beer in hand. Chad's eyes brighten, and he picks up the beat as he heads into the chorus:

*I've been through the desert on a horse with
no name
It felt good to be out of the rain*



The crowd laughs, and Chad pauses again to praise the Wonder Bar staff. Then, switching gears, he places a small overturned bucket on his head in honor of eighties band Devo, and in a nerdy voice belts out a jazzy rendition of "Whip It."

Jason Beck, manager of the Wonder Bar and All That Jazz, another of Chad's Casper venues, appreciates the musician's abilities. "There are not too many people I've come across who can tap dance, play the guitar and harmonica, and sing all at the same time," says Jason, who first hired Chad about three years ago.

Chad's endless energy makes his four-hour performances look so easy that many patrons, caught up in having a good time, seem to take for granted the talent and wit required to pull off a

One-man-band Chad Lore's antics keep Wonder Bar patrons on their toes.



Casper's one-man band
offers more than laughs

one-man show. Many of them do not realize Chad has recorded two CDs.

On his latest album, *Birds on the ground*, Chad wrote each song and played every instrument but one. A complete departure from his bar music, this collection of sounds from around the world reveals the true depth of this one-man band's expertise.

In his blood

Music has played a role in Chad's family for generations. His maternal grandparents were singers, and his parents, Jack and Sara Lore, took advantage of the educational opportunities school and church offered in music as they grew up in Douglas.

The couple eventually moved to Casper, where Jack co-founded and directed Oil City Slickers, a barbershop group that still exists today. The shows provided young Chad with early inspiration; he admired his father's stage presence and enjoyed opportunities to participate in the ensemble's elaborate performances.

Jack and Sara began channeling their son's energy when he entered the third grade. Realizing that studying piano would provide Chad with a solid basis for learning the language of music, they offered him an incentive to fully absorb his lessons: a drum set.

During the next few years, he started playing acoustic bass in the school orchestra, singing in Casper Children's Chorale, and taking drum lessons. "It was music every night of the week," Chad says.

Wayne McIntire, a former Natrona County High School music instructor, recalls the drive his student displayed during rehearsals with singing and instrumental jazz groups. "Certain people in any ensemble are what I would call spark plugs. He brought out the best in everybody around him. He made other students want to pitch in and have a good time."

With formal training under his belt, Chad left Wyoming to explore the world, and real-life experience broadened his musical horizons.

Travelin' man

"I didn't really learn how to do what I'm doing now until I hit the road over in Europe," Chad says. "That I just learned from playing with the street bums."

Chad's taste for travel developed when his older sister, Marcy, headed to Finland as an exchange student. The stories she shared about her experience excited him, and he decided he would someday visit Europe, too.

His first trip failed to satiate him, and he returned several times. "The second time I went over I was playing as a drummer in a rock band called The Slow Children," Chad says. "We were touring Germany and East Germany, and we were actually getting a really good following. Like many bands do, we just kind of went sour and broke up."

A penniless Chad set out with a few friends for Italy, where they went their separate ways. "They chipped in and bought me some sandals and a hundred-dollar Italian classical guitar. That's when

I decided 'Well, I can hit the road by myself and do this.'"

After a plantation owner near Avignon, France, rejected Chad as a grape picker, the wanderer's confidence began to wane. "I hitchhiked back into town with the courage to play my one Neil Young song that I knew, and I was so nervous that I paced around town. I had enough money left for a couple beers. I went and had those by the bridge of Avignon. That's when I saw Magic Tim."

When Magic Tim—who Chad refers to as "the king of the street bums"—finished performing, he approached the downtrodden American. "He said, 'You look lost.' I became his money-maker the next day. He'd play, and I'd collect the money."

Chad worked as Magic Tim's apprentice for an entire summer. The street bum taught him how to play Grateful Dead and Pink Floyd

songs on the guitar and revealed the secrets of working a crowd.

"I remember thinking, 'There is no way I will ever do anything else in my life, except just live day by day and play,'" Chad says wistfully. But the lifestyle started to wear on him, and he decided to leave.

During a mountain-biking trip with English friends from Amsterdam to Athens, Chad, in an effort to make more money, added the harmonica to his act. He soon realized similar musicians permeated the cities of Europe, but he found a way to draw his audiences away from the competition.

The birth of a one-man band

Chad tacked Italian coins to the bottom of his shoes one day and started tapping as he played and sang. "It more than doubled my money instantly just by stopping people long enough to have them look at me and go, 'That guy's crazy! Where's that sound coming from?'" When he ran out of coins, he substituted gum and bottle caps. The makeshift tap shoes chipped away at the cobblestone in some towns, allowing Chad to leave a permanent mark.

Wyoming had left its own indelible impression on Chad, and despite his love of travel, homesickness brought him back to Casper periodically. During one of his hometown rest stops, Chad discovered a new incentive to embark on another overseas jaunt. He arrived at a friend's party, where Spanish exchange student Guadalupe Jimenez mesmerized him. The two spent the next month getting to know each other and kept in touch after she returned to Spain. Chad soon followed her to propose.

Guadalupe accepted, and after a

traditional Catholic wedding ceremony, the couple moved to Casper. Chad gave up his traveling lifestyle and focused on finding his musical niche in Wyoming. "Now I'm married, got a kid, got a house, got digital cable. But I'm still having fun."

Home sweet home

"I don't think the so-called 'making it big' is important to him as long as he's working with a live audience," says Jack, who understands the financial difficulties his son faces as a working musician in the union's least populated state.

People who watch Chad perform often try to persuade him to pursue grander venues such as Nashville, but he refuses to give up Wyoming's quality of life and his family's proximity. "I don't have that capitalist instinct to just go make money. For me it's really more about having people hear the music, having a good time, touching their hearts."

Over the past few years, Chad has landed one-man gigs not only in Casper, but also at the Paisley Shawl in Glenrock and Laramie's Buckhorn Bar. "I don't know how many times I've seen him, but I still like watching him," says Jason, who admits Chad's presence increases the Wonder Bar's revenue. "I'm pretty comfortable with having him play for pretty much anybody. He can play the room."

Beyond his regular bar show, Chad takes on a variety of other gigs. Casper resident Justin Smith has hired the musician for two parties and highly recommends him. "If you want to have a good time, hire Chad," he says. "It's actually kind of fun to watch somebody who hasn't seen Chad before. It's almost like they're surprised to be laughing so hard."

The musician also performs for more formal occasions. "He definitely gets the crowd going."



One-man band Chad Lore performs at various Casper area venues, where he sells studio albums *New Year's Tea* and *Birds on the ground* as well as live recordings of previous shows. His CDs are also available at Sonic Rainbow and Platte River Music Company.

The Lores plan to spend several weeks in Spain during the summer but will return by August. Catch Chad's performance at the Paisley Shawl in Glenrock during Deer Creek Days August 1-3.

For more information about Chad and his albums, call 237-5329.

He just lights up the room and gets everybody into a good mood," says Douglas dentist Kate Murphy. She and husband Mark Murphy, a physician at Memorial Hospital of Converse County, have worked with boards in hiring the one-man band for benefits.

While Chad enjoys entertaining audiences, his commitment to the music itself runs deep. "You can't take yourself seriously at the bar, not for a second. Sometimes I wish could: I have a ton of serious songs, but at the bar, they don't want to hear it. They want to hear either something rockin' or something funny."

An outlet

Chad has found ways to satisfy his serious side. As an occasional drummer for the Casper Civic Chorale, he works with Wayne, his former high school music instructor. The conductor has noticed Chad's growth as a musician and appreciates his style. "I've worked with a lot of drummers, and he has what I've described as a good time beat. The way he drums always lifts the beat. It doesn't just keep the beat, it energizes the beat."

Wayne also values the drummer's ability to anticipate direction. "If I want a fill or a zing or something like that, he senses what the needs of the music are, and that's nice. Part of improvisation is curiosity and creativity, and he isn't afraid to explore."

That fearlessness comes through on the second album Chad recorded in his basement. While his first CD, *New Year's Tea*, includes bar songs, *Birds on the ground* moves in an entirely different direction. Although Chad lists Johnny Cash, Phil Harris, Bob Dylan, and local musicians among his influences, his travels have clearly had the most effect on this compilation's outcome.

"What I wanted to do is make kind of an album from around the world," he says. "There are Indian influences on there, definitely Irish, definitely Spanish, not too much rock n' roll, even a little bit of Russian with the first song, *Sibiriani*."

The album's third song justly deserves its role as title track. The tune opens with slow and dramatic guitar strumming over the deep sound of a didgeridoo, leading to a heavy pause. Then the guitar moves the piece forward with a repeating riff, and the bongos join in, creating an East Indian sound. The song's instrumental work nearly overwhelms the environmental message its lyrics convey and might prove dangerous to daydreaming-prone drivers.

Records of records

Although he knows how to read music, Chad relies on his own unorthodox method to put his ideas down on paper. "If I get an idea that kind of sounds flamenco, and I was having a hamburger when the idea came by, and it was a Tuesday, I end up writing down on a matchbook or something, 'flamenco hamburger Tuesday.' Later on, I can look at that, and that will register that lick."

When it comes to creating an album like *Birds on the ground*, Chad spends a lot of time sorting licks into categories: blues, country, world, and Irish, among others. "Basically it's like putting together a puzzle. I'll take three or four ideas, find out if they're in the same key, and then throw them together and eventually come up with a good song or something that ends up on one of those tapes that's never heard."

The versatile musician played nearly every instrument on *Birds on the ground*. He recorded and mixed down each track in his basement



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and then took his work to Larry Burger, director of operations for Vid-A-Com, a video, audio, and multimedia production company in Casper.

"He's my final ear," Chad says. "After I've finally gone insane and I don't trust my friends anymore because I think they're just being nice, I can go to him. He listens, and he tells me what he thinks. Maybe I disagree with him, but maybe I don't." Once Chad makes final changes based on his consultation with Larry, Vid-A-Com masters the songs and duplicates the CDs for market.

"We deal with musicians and artists all the time," Larry says. "Chad stands out as a songwriter/artist. He'll try all types of music and styles and arrangements. At least listen to one of his CDs, and give him a chance to woo your heart and catch your imagination."

A balancing act

So far, Chad has had no problem captivating the many people who see his performances, but family members remain his biggest fans. He enjoys their support. "If I had a gig in the Mexican desert somewhere at three o'clock in the morning for some Indians doing peyote, my parents would be there."

His marriage continues to withstand the strain his lifestyle sometimes imposes on it. Chad plays in the evening, and Guadalupe works days as a Spanish teacher for Park Elementary School. Although she spends many nights and weekends alone, she understands her husband's need to pursue his dream. "I think he would be miserable if he didn't do this. If he had a day job, I could not stand him, so I think it's worth it. It's what he's always wanted to do."

Guadalupe helps her husband by researching tunes and compiling extensive songbooks. "He got the right girl," Chad's mother Sara says. "If she wasn't willing to do what she does, he wouldn't be able to do this."

Chad worries that the energy he expends during his performances prevents him from paying adequate attention to Guadalupe and his twenty-month-old daughter Elena. "I really have no choice because it's really all I know how to do, and I have a blast doing it."

His occupation makes it that much easier to continue the family tradition of passing on a love of music. Friends who visit the Lore household will most likely catch little Elena grooving to a boom box. "She's already drumming like

CD's



Buddy Rich," says Chad, who claims he doesn't want to force music on his daughter. "But we will make her take piano."

Aspirations

Supporting his family remains a priority, and Chad hopes to arrange more gigs around Wyoming. He also wants to tackle the pile of notes sitting in his basement: He believes he has enough material for four or five more CDs. "The people who enjoy them really do enjoy them for what they are. There's no better feeling for me, at least musically, than to have someone come up and say, 'What the hell was that? That was a good song. That was cool.'"