

ROOTED IN THE WEST



Matt McClain © The Rocky

The Western singer

He owes a lot to Hopalong Cassidy and Gene Autry – more The Singing Cow-boy-Autry than the Autry who bought and owned the California Angels.

Bill Barwick marines in their legacy as singing cowboys. On his Web site, [bill barwick.com](http://billbarwick.com), is a photo that looks part Sam Elliot – aka *The Stranger in The Big Lebowski* – and all Western dude.

He is a Western music singer – performing regularly at the Buckhorn Exchange – amid mounted moose heads and display rifles. Songs he's written ooze the culture he embraces. *Wide Open Range* and *Sons of the Tumbleweed* are part of the regular rotation.

Barwick has been singing for decades. And he believes the tradition

will endure, no matter what is going on in the rest of the country.

"The West is still alive and there are people who still honor the West," Barwick said by phone en route to Denver from New Mexico. "People still love to come to hear it. It lets them know there is a basis in our traditions and that some things don't change."

He thinks that constant is what has kept the tradition alive for so long and will allow it to continue to thrive for another 150 years – even if he's not around to sing it then.

"There are still cows, and as long as there are still cows, there are still cowboys," he said. "As long as there are cowboys, there is a Western tradition. And as long as there is Western tradition, there will be Western music."

Bill Barwick performs a vintage cowboy song as bassist Steve McCartney plays along. Barwick also lends his voice to introduce Encore's Western Channel movies.

By Matt McClain & David Montero, Rocky Mountain News

Read the whole article at www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2009/feb/16/effects-of-time-on-the-job/