

PROFESSOR SUNSHINE'S
Traveling Post-Apocalyptic
ROCK 'N ROLL REVIVAL

featuring The Sensational Chanteuse...CHEYENNE
Your Host: Professor Sunshine

by Joe Hanrahan

Stage has chair stage right. Two stools scattered.

MUSIC NOTE: Before each song CHEYENNE or THE PROFESSOR will look back at the band, mutter something, or better mime hands and words as in "know this one?"

(The Band filters onstage. Muttering, looking around, shaking heads. Vamp a few notes. Stop. Vamp a few more.)

(CHEYENNE rushes on, she's been running around, looking for the Professor, looks skeptically at The Band.)

CHEYENNE: You the band?

BAND MEMBER: (after a pause) You the show? (He gestures towards the audience.)

(CHEYENNE looks at audience, realizes they're ready for the show. Smiles apologetically.)

CHEYENNE: (stage whispers to The Band) Has the professor been here?

(Band looks at each other - "Who?" - and/or shakes head "No.")

(CHEYENNE smiles again, again apologetically, at audience, rushes offstage. Comes right back.)

CHEYENNE: Well, um, hello. Ah...Welcome. Ladies and Gentlemen. Um...welcome to... um...

I don't usually do this part.

Welcome to...

Professor Sunshine's

ROCK 'N ROLL REVIVAL Show

featuring...

(striking a pose) ...um, Me!...the Sensational...Savory...Sultry... Chanteuse - Cheyenne!

(drops pose, looks around forlornly)

That's me.

And then the Professor would say...(muttering)...where is he?!?

Well, he would say...uh,
In this dread time of, uh, war and treachery...
uh, we come to you with songs and some...salvation...
we come to...you...

Usually, he...
We been on the road for...forever, up and down the wasteland.
He could be...anywhere.

Uh, ok...he would say...
Dear people. I know how hard it's been.
Living in a dying world. But...
(takes one more peek behind the curtain)

CHEYENNE: I guess the show must go on. Too bad we didn't say that same thing
about civilization.

(She glances quickly around house, making sure Professor is not there, murmurs something
to the band, who get ready to play)

CHEYENNE: Hell with it! The Professor never lets me sing this. But...being here...tonight...in
he middle of this oasis in what's left of our once beautiful world...
(to sound booth) How 'bout some lights!!!

LIGHTS UP

CHEYENNE: ...deep in the streets of this fair, deeply divided city...in this...(looks around)...
swanky saloon...looking over this lovely crowd...I just have to sing...what's in my...heart.

(She turns to the Band. Mutters something. They look at each other. "OK.")

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE

LIGHTS DOWN

(After applause for song stops, we hear a lone rhythmic clapping. It is The Professor
in the house. Walking toward the stage, muttering.)

PROFESSOR: Ya gotta get outta this place? Where ya gonna go?
(on stage) This ain't no prison.

CHEYENNE: Feels like it. There's my...(spits out the final word)...contract!

PROFESSOR: Ironclad, darlin'.

CHEYENNE: I could sue. (laughs, knows it's a joke)

PROFESSOR: (laughs) Get in line. Besides, didn't they kill all the lawyers?
Well, the show must go on.

CHEYENNE: What about civilization?

PROFESSOR: Not my problem.

PROFESSOR: (looking over the band) This the band? (Cheyenne nods, PROFESSOR looks skeptical.)

PROFESSOR: Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen, to Professor Sunshine's...

(BAND makes a rude musical response cutting PROFESSOR off)

PROFESSOR: Welcome, Ladies...

CHEYENNE: Already welcomed 'em.

PROFESSOR: (looks at her) In this dread time of war and...

CHEYENNE: Did that.

PROFESSOR: (looks at her) Dear people, I know how hard...

CHEYENNE: And that.

PROFESSOR: Did ya introduce us?

PROFESSOR: Well, better start the show...

CHEYENNE: Where were you?

PROFESSOR: Otherwise Engaged. Showtime!

LIGHTS UP

PROFESSOR: Ladies and Gentlemen, Cheyenne has already taken it into her own hands to get us rolling prematurely, but...we're gonna start this show, official-like. Looking over this lovely crowd...and the wonderful reception you've given us...we're going to do something special tonight. Just for you. We're going to begin this show with a special song...one we don't always do, one close to our hearts...but one we feel...

CHEYENNE: (to audience, a bit confidentially) We always start the show with this song.

PROFESSOR: Thank you for that, Cheyenne. All right then! Then let's get this show on the road...

(looks at band, band starts song)

PROFESSOR: ...As we stare the salvation of song...with our savage, savory, sultry Chanteuse, Cheyenne, and Professor Sunshine's Rock 'N Roll Revival! Let's Ride!

MUSIC: CHEYENNE Sings MIDNIGHT RIDER

PROFESSOR: That's right! We're gonna run to keep from hidin', we're bound to keep on ridin'. And they're not gonna catch us! Nevah!

Dear people, we've been ridin' to the ends of this forlorn land, and we have come to warn you...

CHEYENNE: Do you have to do that?

LIGHTS DOWN

PROFESSOR: (mutters to her) This is the show.

CHEYENNE: They don't want to be warned.

(Staring match)

PROFESSOR: They should. So what d'ya think they want? I know what they want. What everybody wants, huh?

Our next number, from Cheyenne...

LIGHTS UP

CHEYENNE: No-o-o-o-o....

PROFESSOR: (to audience) So what do ya want? C'mon, what does everybody want?

CHEYENNE: Why?

PROFESSOR: I'm just being honest. And, boy oh boy, do we need honesty now, in this time of far flung mendacity, a time when people feel entitled to lie!

CHEYENNE: OK, OK...

PROFESSOR: Look at this crowd. The caliber of these people. Consider their courage, living through these dangerous days. What do they want?

(mutters to band)

Cheyenne, ya tell 'em what they want!

MUSIC: Band starts and CHEYENNE sings EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

PROFESSOR: (to audience) Wouldn't that be wonderful? If ya could rule the world. What would ya do? If ya ruled, what rules for the world would ya have, huh? We could certainly use some changes in this hellhole of a...

CHEYENNE: I know what I'd do. I'd stop this show. I'd shut it down. I've had enough.

LIGHTS DOWN

PROFESSOR: And then what would ya do?

CHEYENNE: Take a break.

PROFESSOR: There's no breaks. We gotta keep this tour goin'.

CHEYENNE: Keep going to what? Where? We been everywhere. And back. What if we just...stayed some place? Like here.

PROFESSOR: (looking around) Here?

CHEYENNE: For just a while.

PROFESSOR: And do what?

CHEYENNE: Nothing. Just...nothing.

(CHEYENNE sits on a stool. PROFESSOR laughs)

PROFESSOR: What? Give yourself some time to think? Reflect. Away from the whirlwind of the tour.

CHEYENNE: Maybe. Maybe remember.

PROFESSOR: Have it your way. Go on. Remember. You want to risk it, remember. (to audience)
Our next number...(mutters to band)...is Cheyenne presenting...a song you won't forget.

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings THAT'S THE WAY

LIGHTS DOWN

(following muttered to each other, till PROFESSOR addresses audience)

PROFESSOR: Still thinkin' 'bout him?

CHEYENNE: What else? Who else?

PROFESSOR: You should let him go.

CHEYENNE: If I could. I don't know what happened to him. You do, though, don't you. I heard...people say...you were there.

PROFESSOR: (to audience) I been so many places...in my life and times.

CHEYENNE: You WERE there.

PROFESSOR: Here, there, everywhere.

CHEYENNE: You were there. Why didn't you ever tell me? What happened to him?

PROFESSOR: Ya don't want to know.

CHEYENNE: Oh yes, I do. I need to know. (pause) Please.

PROFESSOR: Well. The magic word. (PROFESSOR mutters to band.)

MUSIC Band starts song under intro words

LIGHTS UP

PROFESSOR: This is a true story. The names of some of the people involved have been changed. By some of the people involved. It went like this. (CHEYENNE is wrapt. First time she's heard this story.)

MUSIC: PROFESSOR Performs ROCKY RACCOON.

LIGHTS DOWN

CHEYENNE: So...did...he...pull through?

PROFESSOR: I don't know. I had to get outta that town. Fast.

CHEYENNE: You didn't even stay to see if he..

PROFESSOR: Couldn't. There were...riders. Two, maybe more. Barely escaped with my life.

CHEYENNE: You didn't hear anyth...

PROFESSOR: Hasn't been anything out of that part of the country for a long time.

CHEYENNE: So, he could be still be...

PROFESSOR: I don't...I don't know. I do know, not many people survived that time. In that town. Darkness was comin'. I had to find...some kind of way out of there...You heard. (Nods to band)

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

LIGHTS DOWN

CHEYENNE: So Rocky...the LOVE OF MY LIFE...didn't make it?

PROFESSOR: He did have a bible.

CHEYENNE: But what was Rocky...that BASTARD...doing with that Megill woman?

PROFESSOR: Didn't mean anythin'.

CHEYENNE: Then...why didn't he just let Dan take...(hmp) Nancy... away?

PROFESSOR: Pride.

CHEYENNE: She wasn't worth it.

PROFESSOR: Nah. She was just a thing, a fling. Like the other women...

CHEYENNE: (glaring) How many were there? You might as well tell me. I know about some of them.

PROFESSOR: Aah...there was...that lovely...Rita. (CHEYENNE nods). Then, course... Pam. Polythene Pam. (CHEYENNE nods.) And that dear girl, dear Prudence...

CHEYENNE: Prudence? I didn't know about her. I do need to let him go...dead or alive. I'm never going to get over it. But I guess I have to live with it.

PROFESSOR: Now folks, we can't just dwell on the sad times. Or the losses. So many losses. We have to remember the good times. And move on.

CHEYENNE: (rising) Listen to Professor Sunshine. Move on. That's all we do. Move on. And on. And on.

PROFESSOR: Remember the good times. Remember...the day ya met him. That crumblin', little town. We were in the forbidden zone, no less. 'member.

(CHEYENNE stops short. Looks up.)

PROFESSOR: A rare day. Sun was shinin', for one of the very last times I recall. An outdoor, pavilion, in ruins. Full house of an enthusiastic, if unwashed, crowd. And then he rode up...right through the audience. With eyes only for you.

CHEYENNE: Tall in the saddle. Wearing a Ranger Stetson.

PROFESSOR: And on his belt?

CHEYENNE: A pair of Peacemakers.

PROFESSOR: Bandana for the dessert dust. And when he removed it...

CHEYENNE: The most glorious smile. Like the sun.

PROFESSOR: And then he introduced himself...

CHEYENNE: "Hey there, dessert flower. I'm Rocky."

(they both laugh, CHEYENNE mutters to band)

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings I CALL YOUR NAME Beatles/Mommas & Poppas mashup.

LIGHTS DOWN

PROFESSOR: Sounds like a match made in...somewhere or other.

CHEYENNE: It was good. For a time.

PROFESSOR: What happened?

CHEYENNE: He was a drifter. High plains, low plains. Wherever the wind took him.

PROFESSOR: And you...we...were always, somewhere else on the circuit.

CHEYENNE: Stolen moments. Brief assignations. On whatever backstreets in whatever empty towns we could meet.

And then...and then when we were apart...the other women...

PROFESSOR: Sexy Sadie...Lady Madonna...

CHEYENNE: Enough. They couldn't keep their hands off him.

PROFESSOR: Who could blame 'em?

I know, Cheyenne. I know how hard it is. How hard it can be.

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings CRYING

PROFESSOR: Feel any better.

CHEYENNE: Not much. Now I'm mad! (mutters to band)

PROFESSOR: Yes M'am! That's the spirit! You go...to town...Cheyenne girl.

MUSIC: CHEYENNE Sings 96 TEARS

LIGHTS DOWN

CHEYENNE: I can't do this anymore.

PROFESSOR: Sure you can. Ya made it this far.

CHEYENNE: By the skin of my...whatever.

PROFESSOR: You have carried on.
Entertaining the masses...well, a few people.
I know, I know...this tour has felt like...eternity. No end in sight.
Every night...singin' your heart out on the outskirts
of these wretched little burls...
ya made it this far.

CHEYENNE: No thanks to you. Thanks to...friends. I made friends. I had friends.

PROFESSOR: Friends? In these wretched little burls.
Friends...? People still do that?

CHEYENNE: I do. I make some friends. We...meet...talk...drink, sing. That helps me. And then I move on.

PROFESSOR: Road goes on forever...I never see ya with any friends...

CHEYENNE: You're never around.

PROFESSOR: I'm never around other people.

CHEYENNE: Maybe you can live without people. I can't.
(mutters to band)

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: CHEYENNE sings CORNFLAKE GIRLS

LIGHTS DOWN

PROFESSOR: So, not all of the friends ya meet are...friends, huh? There's those, uh...
cornflake girls? Whoa, I've known a few of those. But you prefer...raisin girls?
I like them. Raising girls. Yeah.

CHEYENNE: So what about you? No friends? Anywhere?

PROFESSOR: I roam the earth alone.

CHEYENNE: In all your travels...you never made any friends?

PROFESSOR: I carry very little baggage.

CHEYENNE: Wasn't there...one...somebody...back there in...back then...I heard about...I heard you talkin'...late one night...after you had a few...somebody back there...in the Delta?

(A long pause)

PROFESSOR: That was a long, long time ago. (shakes head)

CHEYENNE: So it was true. Her. And you.

PROFESSOR: Lies! Conjecture!

CHEYENNE: People talk. Stories travel. Just like us.

PROFESSOR: Gossip! That's all people live on anymore.

CHEYENNE: Some stories...never go away. You said...that night...admittedly in a drunken stupor of a state of...that she was the love...of your life.

PROFESSOR: Nah. Maybe.
But that was the whiskey talkin'. Maybe.

CHEYENNE: Maybe.

(CHEYENNE mutters to band)

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: PROFESSOR performs SONG FOR YOU

LIGHTS DOWN

CHEYENNE: (after a short silence) We're quite a pair, aren't we?

PROFESSOR: There's no people like show people.

CHEYENNE: How do you keep doing this? During this awful time. Going from town to town to what's left of a town.

PROFESSOR: In all these towns, there are still...stages...standin', somehow. Sometimes they're the last thing standin'. And people keep comin'...to see somethin'...somethin' happenin' on those stages.

CHEYENNE: What are they looking for?

PROFESSOR: Bit of song. Charmin' word or two. And just a pinch of salvation. And maybe sometimes that can come for somebody...just by hearin' a certain song.

CHEYENNE: What is it for you? The applause? Certainly not the money.

PROFESSOR: True. So true., ma dear.

CHEYENNE: Every day, we just...head out...towards the next abandoned town...the next threadbare stage.

PROFESSOR: Days are hard...

CHEYENNE: Unendurable.

PROFESSOR: But then...thankfully...the night comes. With the silken, forgivin' darkness. And here we be...so lucky to be able to show up and stand up and perform before a forgivin' audience. (to audience) You are forgivin', yes?

(CHEYENNE mutters to band)

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: first piano notes of BECAUSE THE NIGHT begin

PROFESSOR: The troubles of the day wash away, in a profound display of sacred song and simple salvation...

We celebrate our lives...and fearlessly face the future.

And we own the night.

MUSIC: CHEYENNE Sings BECAUSE THE NIGHT

LIGHTS STAY UP

PROFESSOR: Ladies and Gentlemen...Let's hear it for our Chanteuse...Cheyenne!

CHEYENNE: The sensational...savory...sultry...Chanteuse!

PROFESSOR: Cheyenne! Bravely singin' into the night. Ready to take on whatever life throws at her next.

So, Chanteuse. So. You goin' to be...gettin' outta this place?

CHEYENNE: No. Not yet. I'm ready. Where we goin' next?

PROFESSOR: That's my girl! Cheyenne! You're not stopping! No!!! You're just getting started!
(PROFESSOR mutters to band)

MUSIC: CHEYENNE Sings I WON'T BACK DOWN

PROFESSOR: And there you have it, folks! Professor Sunshine's Traveling Post-Apocalyptic Rock 'N Roll Revival.

CHEYENNE: We won't back down. We may be hurting, we may be battered by the ebbs and flows of this tired existence, but we are still here.

PROFESSOR: And we are still somewhat hardy, and we hope - with all good fortune - to ramble on down the dusty trail, and see you again, right here, next year!!!

Hit it, boys!

MUSIC: CHEYENNE Sings RAMBLE ON

END