

The Sloop Clearwater
Words and Music by Bud Foote
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I was sitting on my front porch as I watched the river rot,
thinking about the sturgeon that are gone but not forgot
and the buffalo an restless underneath the prairie sod
and the smoke stacked up to heaven sos it hid the face of God

There were soldiers marching by my door and a tap upon my phone
and a freeway inching toward me that would someday eat my home
and the smokestacks hid a sunset that would never come again
when they brought the Sloop Clearwater a-sailing round the bend.

The captain had a mustache that was fourteen inches long
and the shanty master paced the deck a-roaring out a song
and the man who held the tiller wore his hair down to his knees
and a hundred tons of canvas billowed out into the breeze.

But Redwood trees are crashing down out on the Western coast
and an angry shadowy army follows Crazy Horses ghost
and the eagles nests as barren as the mountain lions den
on the day the Sloop Clearwater came sailing round the bend.

The ship cut through the sewage lying on the rivers face
and the sloop docked in the garbage that was all around the place
and the crew struck up a hornpipe and the boots rang on the wood
and the sound fell on the river and the river found it good.

But theres lightening in the Asian sky and thunder in the slums
you can hear the Indians tuning up their long forgotten drums
children clap their hands and laugh as men are killing men
on the day the Sloop Clearwater came a-sailing round the bend.

I said you people all are fools to laugh and sing and shout
when your ships so deep in liquid shit it never will get out
when children cry from hunger and grown men get mean from shame
and a war rages in every heart and the very grounds in flame.

You sail your dirty river and you sing your little songs
you dance your pretty dances and recite your petty wrongs
dont you know that Abiyoyos making footprints in the fen
while you bring your Sloop Clearwater a-sailing round the bend.

The crew just laughed and danced some more and the beads began to fling
and beards were lifted to the skies as the crew began to sing
a black man rose upon the deck and he preached a sermon there
and a crewman capered on the mast like a dancing grizzly bear.

I said you people all are fools but I guess I am one too
and it seems the guns went quiet then and the river all was new
the smoke clouds cleared and I almost wept to see the skies again
as they brought that Sloop Clearwater a-sailing round the bend.

The mountains rang as children laughed and women raised a song
the bison thundered down the plains a hundred thousand strong
the Ghost Dance tent was raised again and the Lion wandered free
and the rivers ran like silver from the mountains to the sea.

There was love and joy and brotherhood and peace the world around
there was life and paint and energy and trees and taste and sound
and Abiyoyo danced a solemn waltz out in the fen
when they brought the Sloop Clearwater a-sailing round the bend.

Now the sloop is gone and once again I watch the river rot
and someone feels the skyfire and another hugs the shot
and the heart of man is angry and the land of man is mad

and the air of man chokes on itself and the rivers all are sad.

We war against each other and we fight with our own souls
and weve killed off every river and our blood is icy cold
but a spark of joy jumps in my breast as I remember when
they brought that Sloop Clearwater a-sailing round the bend.