

The locals call someone who moves to Cape Cod but was not born there a Washshore. In Texas, a young girl barrel-raced on Pleasant Valley Ranch and had never seen the ocean. So when Monica Rizzio crossed over the iconic bridges of Cape Cod in 2004, she instantly became the Washshore Cowgirl.

The former Tripping Lily front woman has left behind the acoustic, condenser mic style and has brought her East Texas roots up North for her debut LP fittingly named, "Washshore Cowgirl". After leaving the band in 2013, she purchased a 1956 Martin O-18, named it Bo, and plugged in. For the next few years she started playing with a bunch of salty, accomplished Cape Cod musicians who helped bring back the cowgirl attitude and inspired her to write about her sometimes humorous, sometimes tear-jerking journey from Texas, love, and heartache.

Much of the album is like a stiff cocktail, deeply auto-biographical and mixed with a hint of fiction. Rizzio wanted to write a song about one of her musical idols and penned "Willie Nelson" while being snowed in during a Nor'Easter. After channeling her inner-willie for a couple of days, she found herself in a love affair with an older man, in a tale of two cities, with forgotten yesterdays. This ode to Willie Nelson won finalist in the 31st annual Songwriters of Washington (SAW) competition.

A song that never was meant to be recorded was actually a wedding gift to her husband called "Luckier Than You" which she played at their reception. It is an ironic song, because her husband is definitely the lucky one, yet it bravely shares an intimate part of her life. This theme of being transparent through her songwriting was natural, therapeutic, and long overdue.

The title track, "Washshore Cowgirl" is the culmination of growing up with a mullet in the bible-heavy plains of Quitman, Texas and somehow winding up on the same shores as the Pilgrims. Rizzio enjoys juxtaposing literary references with her own journeys, especially in "Buttercups," where a modern day woman shares some of the characteristics of Hester Prynne. "You and Me", bluntly put, is a song about getting cheated on, delivered in a light, fun way, almost John Prine-esque.

Produced at Brick Hill Studios, with Jon Evans (Tori Amos) over the past 18 months, Monica & Jon have sculpted her songs in what she likes to call AmeriCountryGrass, and that basically sums up her style. Several of Rizzio's friends jumped at the chance to play on the recordings, Sierra Hull (Mandolin), Abbie Gardner (Red Molly/Dobro), Charlie Rose (pedal steel), Laney Jones (Banjo/vocals) Justin Moses (Ricky Skaggs/Sierra Hull/Banjo/Dobro) Mark Erelli (vocals) Brittany Hass (Crooked Still/Fiddle) and Jake Hill (Billington Sea/vocals).

Monica has become one of the most reliable supporting acts as well, having shared the stage with Chris Botti, Boz Scaggs, Diana Krall, Joan Osborne, and Slaid Cleaves this past year. She has played the Main Stage at Strawberry Park Bluegrass festival the past two years and is a frequent collaborator with the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra. In December of 2014, she performed as part of Tom Rush's band at his annual show at Symphony Hall in Boston. She played fiddle, guitar and sang backups as well as performing her originals "Luckier Than You" & "Willie Nelson" with Red Molly backing her up.

Rizzio is a founder and co-owner of the roots-based music school, West Bend Music, providing all-ages private instruction. In 2014 she founded and launched Vinegrass, a non-profit music production company, that raises money for scholarships, instruments, and grants through concerts and an annual roots-music festival.

"It's time that I saddle on again and hit the road sharing my crazy washshore cowgirl story," says Rizzio, who is probably most at home when she is on stage sharing her songs.