

Adam Jahiel's 'The Last Cowboy' Captures The American Cowboys Of The Western Great Basin (PHOTOS)

The Huffington Post | By [Hallie Sekoff](#) Posted: 08/28/2012 9:49 am Updated: 08/28/2012 12:44 pm



For 22 years, Adam Jahiel has documented the cowboys of the Great Basin area in the western United States. It would be a lie to say that his photographs do not evoke an atmosphere that resembles mythic notions of the cowboy as a lone ranger. Yet these stark and stunning images reach beyond fantasies of a simpler life, showing these men as complex beings in a complex landscape.

Jahiel's process of photographing these cowboys was ethnographic in nature, he told The Huffington Post in an e-mail interview: "I basically move in and live with them for short periods of time. I become a part of the crew, part of the family. We ride together, eat together, camp together, and move together." He continued, "Much of the time that I spend photographing is when the cowboys are 'out on the wagon.' This refers to the old chuck-wagons, which have mostly disappeared. During the spring and fall especially, the cowboys set up camps for days or weeks at a time, round-up and brand calves, then move on to a different spot."



The iconic American cowboy represents a fabricated dream of America's past -- cue the Marlboro man leaning on a post, cupping a flame for his cigarette as tumbleweeds pass by. Rugged and chiseled, the image of the lone cowboy serves as a placeholder for a mythic, simpler time. A life on the range with open skies and plain talk; a frontier where a "man's gotta do what a man's gotta do." Jahiel's series, "[The Last Cowboy](#)," captures another side of the American cowboy, one not immune to the changing currents of the contemporary United States. Rugged and chiseled they remain, but devoid of the artificiality of [Wayne McLaren](#)'s tobacco cowboy.

The nomadic life fascinates Jahiel, and the cowboys of his photographs keep alive this sense of spontaneity while defying any sense of rootedness to a particular spot of land. Unsurprisingly, his favorite photographers include Dorothea Lange, Jean Vachon, and Russell Lee. Jahiel's images are meticulous, intense, and intimate, showing an insider's view of a phenomenon. Life on the Great Basin appears timeless, yet here appearance again becomes a mask, because all things eventually change. As Jahiel notes, "It is a culture that has dwindled and almost disappeared through the years right in front of my camera."