

## Thunder Road

(Bruce Springsteen)

The screen door slams  
Mary's dress waves  
Like a vision she dances across the porch  
As the radio plays  
Roy Orbison singing for the lonely  
Hey that's me and I want you only  
Don't turn me home again  
I just can't face myself alone again  
Don't run back inside  
Darling you know just what I'm here for  
So you're scared and you're thinking  
That maybe we ain't that young anymore  
Show a little faith there's magic in the night  
You ain't a beauty but hey you're alright  
Oh and that's alright with me

You can hide 'neath your covers  
And study your pain  
Make crosses from your lovers  
Throw roses in the rain  
Waste your summer praying in vain  
For a saviour to rise from these streets  
Well now I'm no hero  
That's understood  
All the redemption I can offer girl  
Is beneath this dirty hood  
With a chance to make it good somehow  
Hey what else can we do now?  
Except roll down the window  
And let the wind blow  
Back your hair  
Well the night's busting open  
These two lanes will take us anywhere  
We got one last chance to make it real  
To trade in these wings on some wheels  
Climb in back  
Heaven's waiting on down the tracks

Oh-oh come take my hand  
We're riding out tonight to case the  
promised land  
Oh-oh Thunder Road oh Thunder Road oh  
Thunder Road  
Lying out there like a killer in the sun  
Hey I know it's late we can make it if we  
run  
Oh Thunder Road sit tight take hold  
Thunder Road

Well I got this guitar  
And I learned how to make it talk  
And my car's out back  
If you're ready to take that long walk  
From your front porch to my front seat  
The door's open but the ride it ain't free  
And I know you're lonely  
For words that I ain't spoken  
But tonight we'll be free  
All the promises'll be broken  
There were ghosts in the eyes  
Of all the boys you sent away  
They haunt this dusty beach road  
In the skeleton frames of burned out  
Chevrolets

They scream your name at night in the  
street  
Your graduation gown lies in rags at their  
feet  
And in the lonely cool before dawn  
You hear their engines roaring on  
But when you get to the porch they're gone  
On the wind so Mary climb in  
It's a town full of losers  
And I'm pulling out of here to win

"Thunder Road" was written and performed by Bruce Springsteen, and is the opening track on his 1975 breakthrough album *Born to Run*. It is ranked as one of Springsteen's greatest songs, and often appears on lists of the top rock songs of all time. *Rolling Stone* magazine placed it as #86 on its "500 Greatest Songs of All Time."

The lyric to "Thunder Road" describes a young woman named Mary, her boyfriend, and their "one last chance to make it real."

Musically, the song opens with a quiet piano (Roy Bittan) and harmonica (Springsteen) introduction, meant, as Springsteen said years later in the *Wings For Wheels* documentary, as a "welcoming" to both the track and the album, a signifier that something was about to happen. Eschewing a traditional verse-and-chorus structure, the song's arrangement gradually ramps up in instrumentation, tempo and intensity. The title phrase is not used until the middle section of the song, where it is recited three times in one line, and twice more in another, and is not used again. Finally, after the closing line there is a tenor saxophone and Fender Rhodes duet played by Clarence Clemons and Bittan respectively in the instrumental coda.

In this song, Springsteen mentions Roy Orbison "singing for the lonely" on the radio. Orbison, one of whose best-known songs is "Only the Lonely", was a huge influence on Springsteen.

The song's title comes from the Robert Mitchum film *Thunder Road*. Springsteen declared that he was somehow inspired by the movie despite not having seen it. As he says: "I never saw the movie, I only saw the poster in the lobby of the theater."

In 2004, it was ranked #1 on the list of the "885 All-Time Greatest Songs" compiled by WXPB (the University of Pennsylvania's public radio station). *Rolling Stone* magazine placed it as #86 on its "500 Greatest Songs of All Time." The song came in at #226 in *Q* magazine's list of the "1001 Greatest Songs Ever" in 2003, in which they described the song as "best for pleading on the porch." Julia Roberts, when asked which song lyric described her most accurately, chose "Thunder Road"'s "You ain't a beauty, but hey, you're alright." The song is featured in the book *31 Songs* by British author Nick Hornby. "Thunder Road" has also been ranked as the 95th best song of all time, as well as the #3 song of 1975, in an aggregation of critics' lists at [acclaimedmusic.net](http://acclaimedmusic.net). In 2010, American radio personality Joe Votruba ranked it as #2 on *Rock-U's* (Goom Radio) Top 500 Songs of All Time.