

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*. In 2010, American radio personality Joe Votruba ranked it as #2 on *Rock-U's* (Goom Radio) Top 500 Songs of All Time.