

Western Boots As Wearable Art

Express yourself in style, from functional work horse wear to custom creations.

Chances are you've worn a pair of western boots. You might even have a pair—or two or three—in your closet right now. Thanks to the popularity of western riding and the re-emergence of cowboy chic in fashion circles, there's a pair of boots for everyone's budget.

Know up front that any exotic leathers, technologically advanced soles and decorative designs on the boot's upper shaft will add to the sticker shock. Plain boots that are more work horse than show horse are usually the most affordable. Other footwear bargains are boots that are discontinued styles or last year's trend. However, if you suffer from any sort of foot malady or if you're on your feet as much as you're in the saddle, you'd be wise not to pass up boots that offer orthopedic support even if they cost a few more dollars. Any large tack store or western wear catalog company has a bevy of boots to choose from that won't bust your budget.

But if you're the type of person who must have a pair of boots unlike any other, and the sky's the limit financially, then there are also custom boot makers who handcraft made to order boots based on your artistic whims.

One such person is Lisa Sorrell. A former clothing designer, she began creating custom western boots in 1990. From her boutique shop in Oklahoma City, she works alone from start to finish on each pair of boots. The turnaround time for a pair of handmade boots from Lisa is over a year. But they're worth the wait, providing you can pony up a minimum of \$3,500 for a pair. Additional add-ons, like initials, ranch brands or genuine crocodile leather, are extra.

When asked to describe her typical client, Lisa Sorrell hesitated. She remarked that she's made boots for everyone from celebrities to wealthy gentleman ranchers and fashion divas. "But I suppose my typical client is the businessman."

Yes, that's right. Beneath that expensive tropical weight wool suit and tie, apparently some businessmen are wearing a pair of very, very high priced cowboy boots. But what's the point if the uniquely inspired designs Lisa so lovingly places on the boot's upper shaft are hidden by the wearer's pant leg?

"I think it's like a woman wearing expensive lingerie," she said. "No one else can see it, but she knows she's wearing it, and that makes her feel special."

If you'd like to ooh and ah at some of the custom boots Lisa has designed for her client list of cowboys and cowgirls, visit www.sorrellcustomboots.com and browse through her gallery. These definitely are not boots you'd wear to muck a stall or bathe a horse. But they do allow you to appreciate of the western boot as a work of wearable art.