

Buckle up with Cowboy Gear

This subtle cowboy trend is picking up and spreading.

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So much for shiny silver bridle buckles. Although the bling bonanza continues in the western pleasure show pen, the working cowboy look is finding its way into everyday tack for recreational riders and those who compete in performance events, where crystal embellishments and pastel-colored leather are met with disdain.

"The working cowboy or rodeo look is getting more into the mainstream," says Cody Scott, a sales rep from Dutton Bits located in Los Lunas, N.M. He gestures to a wall of bits and bridles, all created with an antiqued, brown-matte finish accented with demure silver-toned designs. "The finish is 'blued' like a gun barrel," he explains.

The designs themselves are endless, and include crosses, cacti, Texan stars, feminine hearts, lucky clovers and suits of cards. The buckle motif, according to Scott, reflects the distinct personality of the person holding the reins. But don't think that it's only cowboys and their wannabe fans who are buying into this trend. While Scott reveals that they sell quite a lot to the rodeo crowd, they also have a following on the American Quarter Horse Association show circuit.

"This look is definitely the most popular trend," he says. An actual cowboy himself, Scott agrees that a headstall quietly decorated with 'blued' buckles, a coordinating bit and a pair of split reins adorned with rawhide may indeed be a refreshing turn away from all the glitz.