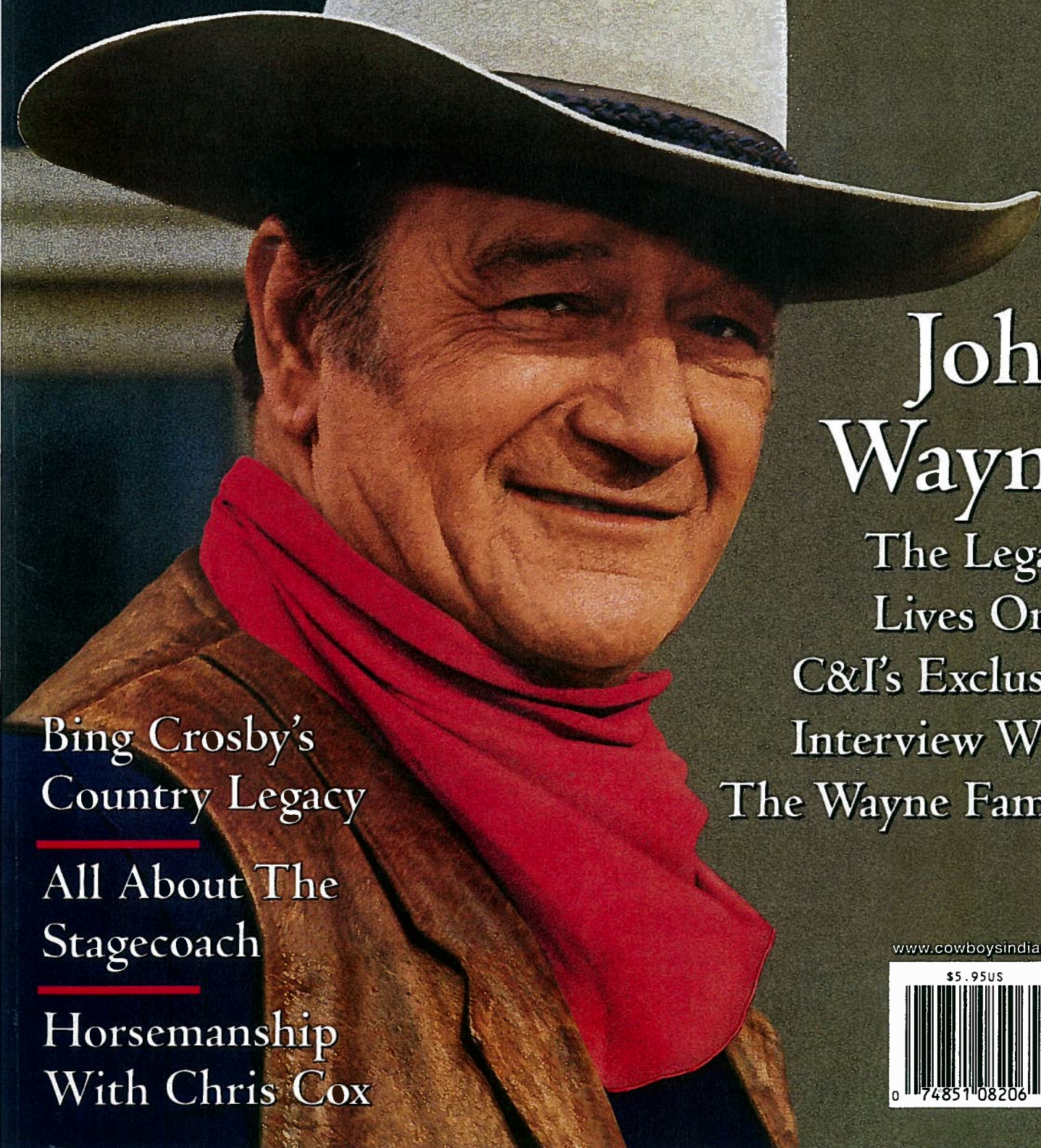


CELEBRATING THE HORSE

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

# COWBOYS & INDIANS

JULY 2009



## John Wayne

The Legacy Lives On—  
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The Wayne Family

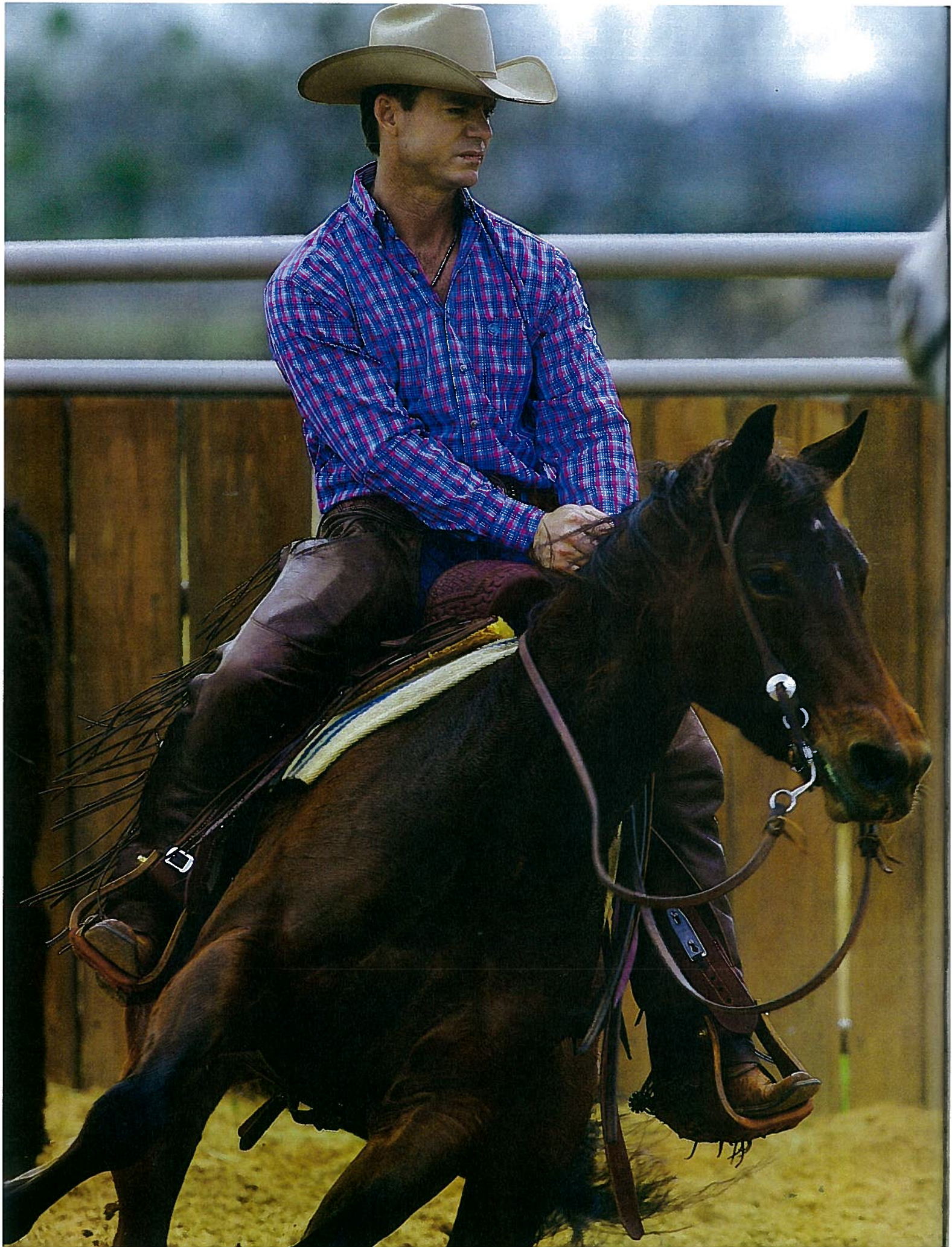
Bing Crosby's  
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All About The  
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Horsemanship  
With Chris Cox

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# Chris Cox

“HORSEMANSHIP IS A JOURNEY,” SAYS THIS RENOWNED CLINICIAN WHOSE NEW BOOK, TV SHOW, AND CLINICS TEACH HORSE OWNERS THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING.



By Elizabeth Kaye McCall

**W**HEN CHRIS COX WAS 18 MONTHS OLD, his father packed up the family from his birthplace in Kissimmee, Florida, and moved the whole crew, including a 96-year-old great-grandmother, to a 100-square-mile island off the coast of Australia. “He bought the island for near nothing. The gentleman who’d owned it became part of the family and lived with us. It was a unique experience. It was very primitive. We had cattle and horses and ranched there for years,” says Cox, who returned to America at 18. “The experience I got on the back of the horse while I was living there was immeasurable.” It set the course for his future.

Now among the horse world elite, the clinician, author, and TV personality can be seen at appearances across the country in his touring horsemanship clinic, *Ride the Journey*. A two-time Road to the Horse champion, Cox won back-to-back victories in the colt-starting event in 2007 and 2008. He also competes at the highest levels of cutting-horse competition when time permits.

Known for his common sense and straightforward approach, Cox is both a skilled horseman and a prolific entrepreneur. His half-hour *Chris Cox Horsemanship* show airs three times a week on RFD-TV. In addition to *Ride the Journey*, Cox holds clinics throughout the year at his 175-acre training facility, the Diamond Double C Ranch near Mineral Wells, Texas. And his book *Ride the Journey* came out last year (read a sample chapter on his website, [www.chris-cox.com](http://www.chris-cox.com)). *Cowboys & Indians* recently caught up with Cox to talk about his clinics, horsemanship, and horses.

*Cowboys & Indians: What question do you get asked most at your horsemanship clinics?*

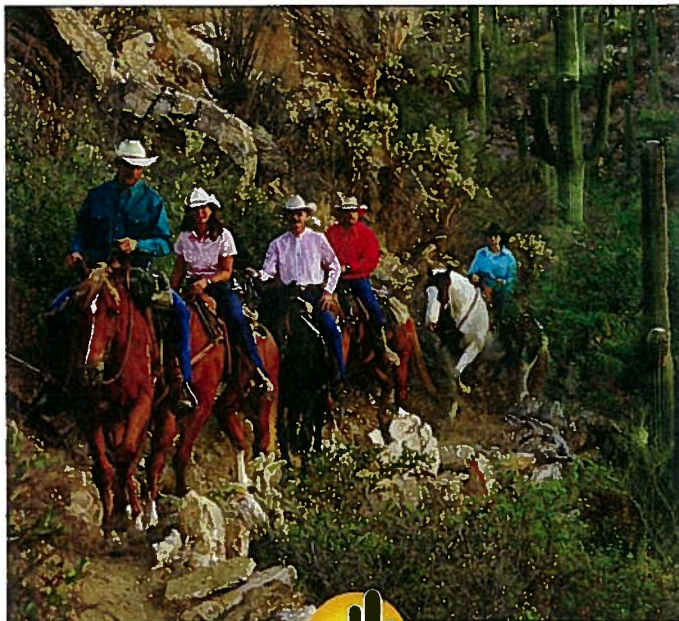
**Cox:** The most common is, “How do I get control of my horse?” What I preach is you have to have a program, a system. Owning a horse is like going to college and becoming a doctor or whatever you want to become. You have to learn how to do those tasks, those techniques. One of the greatest things about owning a horse is that you’ll never master horsemanship, but you will get better and better. Horsemanship is a journey. It’s ongoing. It’s an adventure of finding out more about yourself—your strengths and your weaknesses—and about being consistent, because the horse is a mirror of our image.

*C&I: What’s the typical person like who attends your clinics?*

**Cox:** Strangely enough, it changes a little bit depending on the part of the country I’m in. On average, it’s probably 60 percent women and 40 percent men. The clinic I did last weekend, for instance, was a three-day clinic and you had to be intermediate or advanced. We had a lady there who was trying for the Olympics for dressage and we had somebody there who was just a trail rider. Because I do ranch work and cattle, I’m getting a lot of the bigger ranches wanting me to come do clinics and work with their hands. I’m pretty diverse in the clientele that I have—English, Western, ranch cowboys, competition, performance horse people—it just all depends. I think at the end of the day, horsemanship is just horsemanship.

**“A horse can teach so much to humans about themselves, about responsibility, about consistency,” Cox says.**

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**C&I:** *Tell us about your ranch in Mineral Wells, Texas.*

**Cox:** The ranch is about 45 minutes to an hour west of Fort Worth, right on the edge of Weatherford, Texas, the cutting-horse capital of the world. It's a great location. I'm far enough away from town that I have peace on the ranch but close enough to drive and be at an airport in an hour and 15 minutes. It's a wonderful place to live.

**C&I:** *And you hold clinics at the ranch?*

**Cox:** Yes. I have one of the few facilities in the country where people can come with their horse for one price. We have lodging at the ranch and a stall and shavings for the horse. We also have dining.

## Design-A-Saddle

**I**t's not every day you can collaborate on a saddle design with the likes of Chris Cox. Or so you might think. Check out the "Design-A-Saddle" section on Cox's website ([www.chris-cox.com](http://www.chris-cox.com)) and you'll find ample opportunities to add your creativity and personal preferences to his Signature Series saddle.



Handmade by master craftsmen from top-quality Hermann Oak leathers, saddles are available in light or dark oil colors. Custom options include a choice of saddle horns, fender lengths, tooling and stamping patterns, and skirt types (square or round) to make the saddle uniquely yours. Standard features include pre-turned fenders for rider comfort, fender cutouts for closer contact, and numbered stirrup leathers with a patented low-profile stirrup adjustment. Saddles are embossed with Cox's Diamond Double C logo.

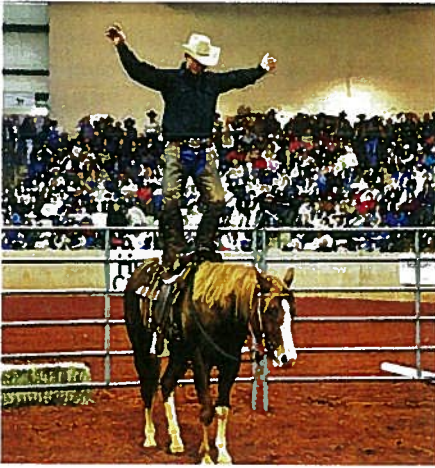
"Our saddles are made in the U.S.A., in Texas. We're proud of that," Cox says. "We really work hard on getting a saddle that doesn't inhibit your way of riding and fits your horse—and you don't have to go spend \$8,000 or \$10,000." Actual saddle cost ranges from \$2,350 to \$3,750 depending on the options selected. "It's customized, but it's affordable. I personally inspect each one," notes Cox. "We've got what we call a center-ride seat, meaning the center of balance is through the middle of the seat, and I've designed a tree that I think fits about 95 percent of horses. You can never fit 100 percent."

Developed by Cox after years of research, the fiberglass-strengthened wood tree allows for better saddle fit and added strength, and it frees shoulder movement. "We feel like it's the greatest saddle for the money, and we guarantee them," Cox says. "They're saddles that I ride in."

—EKM

## The Newest Filly In Cox's Corral

WE GOT CHRIS OFF HIS HORSE LONG ENOUGH TO TALK ABOUT FATHERHOOD, TEACHING CHILDREN TO RIDE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THEM SAFE.



It's a one-stop shop. You don't have to go to town to a restaurant, you don't have to go to a motel, your horse is right there. Everything gets taken care of. We have people come from all over the United States and different parts of the world. And if they can't bring their own horse, we have horses on the ranch they can rent.

**C&I:** *How's the food?*

**Cox:** We actually have a gourmet cook. She's wonderful. She can arrange anything from Spanish style to California cuisine and Australian to Italian. It changes all the time. We have a Texas barbecue and some entertainment at times, too.

**C&I:** *Any Australian foods you get a taste for?*

**Cox:** A meat pie.

**C&I:** *Do you have an all-time favorite horse?*

**Cox:** I'm real careful to answer that. It's kind of like saying, Who's your favorite child? A lot of horses have made an impact on my life. I can probably think of three, maybe four, horses that had a huge impact. One of the first horses I ever owned was raised on the island, a Brumby by the name of Major that lived to be 30 years old and gave me the passion for what I'm doing today. He looked after me. I'd fall asleep on him and he'd go under the tree and wake me up. He was hard to catch, but that made me better at knowing how to catch horses. He didn't like to leave the house, but once we got out he'd find the way back if I ever got lost on the island. He was just a special

**C&I:** *You and your wife Barbara had a baby girl last October [2008]. What's it like becoming a father? Any surprises?*

**Cox:** It's overwhelming. I waited until I was in my forties to have my first child. It's a lot more meaningful I think. Loving a small child like that, an infant, and seeing her grow—there's something different every day. You understand that there is a God who does things like that. It doesn't just happen: It's a miracle.

**C&I:** *Has she been on a horse yet?*

**Cox:** Oh yes. She was about a month old the first time. I just sat her on and rode around with her a little bit. She enjoys them and gets excited being around them. They seem to like her too; she smiles and pulls on their noses and rubs on them. She's also traveled. She was on four or five planes by the time she was five months old. My daughter's name is Charlie Renee [Cox]. It's a family name. Right now she has light reddish hair, but I think she's going to be blonde.

**C&I:** *Do you have any tips for parents on introducing kids to horses?*

**Cox:** I think it's like everything else—the earlier you introduce it to them the better, but you've got to have safety precautions. You have to make it fun for them. Lead them around, get them comfortable with a horse, build their confidence. But also teach them safety. They've got to understand that it's dangerous. I'm going to have my daughter wear a helmet when she rides while she's young.

**C&I:** *Do you think children should start on ponies or horses?*

**Cox:** I don't think it makes any difference. I don't have ponies. She's going to have her own horses—horses that are proven. Horses that we know, no matter what happens, will stop and wait on her. That's very important.

**C&I:** *You teach confidence-building clinics to adults who've had bad experiences with horses. Doesn't starting kids off right put things on track from the get go?*

**Cox:** Yes. The thing with kids is you've got to make it fun. If it's all instruction, they don't want to do it. If you make it fun, it's more meaningful.

**C&I:** *What could a parent do to make it fun?*

**Cox:** Turn it into exercises like maybe going on a treasure hunt. For Easter you might have eggs hidden in trees, so the children have to ride around and find the eggs while keeping track of their horse. Set it up to where they have to maneuver in and out of different places and different areas to teach them how to handle their horses and to be fun. Of course, if they see other children involved, the peer pressure automatically helps as well.

**C&I:** *So it's something they share with friends...*

**Cox:** Exactly. My biggest memories of building a relationship with horses were earlier on in my childhood, and that won't ever leave your heart. You've always got that in you.

**C&I:** *Do you have clinics for kids?*

**Cox:** I leased a place in Colorado and we are setting up a program to help children with horsemanship. Part of our goal for our business is to accommodate children.

**C&I:** *By the way, does your wife Barbara ride?*

**Cox:** Yes, she's a very good horsewoman. She worked for me for a couple of years before we got married. She's from California and ropes a lot. She's very competitive in that area; she grew up with horses. We met at a horse expo in Sacramento, California.

**C&I:** *Any suggestions for children of parents without horses?*

**Cox:** Riding lessons, but make sure you've got the right horse to build the confidence in the child. You don't want the child to get scared or hurt early on because it will have an impact in their life. Make sure they follow a program. It should be educational, but fun, so that you start horsemanship off right.

—E.K.M.



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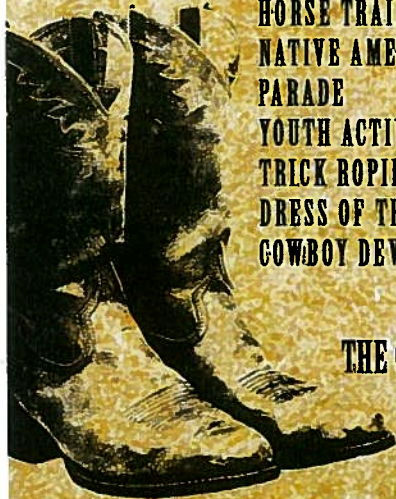
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horse. I [subsequently] developed relationships with other horses. My connections with horses were unusual 35 years ago. It was something that was hardly talked about. Of course, there are some horses I've used for demonstrations: Pepper, Stinger, and the horse that I demonstrate on now, Pepto. On the other side, I've had horses that I compete on that are very special to me. They've all made a big difference in my life.

**C&I:** *You've got a new book out called Ride the Journey.*

**Cox:** It came out last year. I had a wonderful editor named Cynthia McFarland, out of Ocala, Florida. We've known each other about 18 years and she's written articles about me, so when we put the book together, she really put it in perspective. It's not only for the beginner, but for advanced riders as well.

**C&I:** *In the book you mentioned some of your early mentors. You said the first master horseman who impacted your life was Lee Reborse.*

**Cox:** Yes. He came from Nevada and worked on the same ranch that Tom and Bill Dorrance and Ray Hunt did. Lee was very practical, a great cattleman and a great horseman. He won several bridle-horse events and snaffle-bit events. Then he went to Australia and bought a ranch in the early '70s and did some horsemanship clinics in Australia. He impacted Australian horsemanship probably more than anybody ever has.

**C&I:** *You have a crazy, busy schedule, but still find time to compete in top cutting-horse events. Why do it all?*

**Cox:** I think it's important to be able to take my techniques to the show ring. We can talk about how good we are, or what's been done, but at the end of the day, I think you have to go show it. You can be your own king in your own arena, but I think that a challenge in competition is good.

**C&I:** *What qualities do you look for in the competition horses you choose for cutting?*

**Cox:** The same as I look for in any horse. They've got to have a good mind, be a good athlete, be strong, be able to withstand the training.... It's been proven that bloodlines do carry through, most of the time. There are a lot of variables within all that, but it's a very expensive sport so we've got to try to cut down as many odds as we can.

**C&I:** *Do you believe horses will still be relevant to people in years to come?*

**Cox:** We wouldn't be where we are today without the horse. The horse has been an unbelievable partner and tool. A lot of great horses died in the wars and battles. They transported us, carried the mail, did a lot of courageous things. They are a symbol of this country.

A horse can teach so much to humans about themselves, about responsibility, about consistency. A horse seeks the weakness of the human. If you put somebody on a horse and they get to messing around with him, that horse can find their weaknesses in some area. A horse can help build your confidence. It's an animal that helps

you to be realistic. It just brings you down to earth. I tell people all the time, we wouldn't have as many psychiatrists in this country if everybody owned a horse. They are a lot like people. They all have different personalities. But they also need to have leadership. You've got to have leadership skills and an understanding of how to direct the horse's thoughts and body for them to accomplish what we ask of them.

The horse has a great message, even more so today. After 9/11, my business actually doubled. People lost their effectiveness at being happy, so they went and bought a few acres and all of a sudden remembered riding on their grandfather's farm or their uncle's and the feeling it gave them. We've got a new generation of people getting involved with horses and it's just fantastic. The more complicated this world gets, the more people will be drawn to land and animals and horses.

## Clinics With Cox

**"I** f you don't have a plan for your horse, he'll have a plan for you. And his plan may not be the same as yours," says Chris Cox, whose popular three- and six-day clinics aim to make sure you're the one with the plan. "My philosophy is that a horse trainer trains a horse. A horseman trains himself. To get better, you need to be a horseman. That's an exciting journey."

Cox offers three-day clinics nationwide covering the same basic horsemanship techniques found on his instructional DVDs, with the obvious added element—his presence. Meanwhile, at his Diamond Double C Ranch near Mineral Wells, Texas, Cox holds progressive six-day horsemanship clinics throughout the year. There

are five levels of horsemanship training; each must be successfully completed to move on. Although a beginner's course is not on the current agenda, Cox's six-day Building Riders' Confidence clinic is specifically geared to people who have suffered bad horseback

experiences and lack of confidence. Offered only at his ranch, the clinic matches riders with the right horse for rebuilding confidence physically, mentally, and emotionally.

"I've been doing clinics for 22 years," says Cox, who limits participants to 20 people. "I was doing them before *The Horse Whisperer* movie came out. A lot of my skills are practical—they are based on getting a job done but at the same time looking after your horse."

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—E.K.M.




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