



PHOTO: ERIC BIRK ECKHART

Gone are the days when horses moved so slowly that they lost their natural gaits and riders were afraid to pass. Today, forward rhythm, true gaits, and prompt transitions are important.

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clients have opted for the "all-around" route. Classes offered at stock horse shows include English divisions, showmanship, Western riding, trail, and horsemanship. In pattern events, a horse that lacks the quality movement or compact stride of a pleasure horse can still be competitive.

However, Western pleasure remains one of the more popular events at most shows.

The pace of the Novice Western pleasure tends to be more up-tempo, and some riders make their debuts in this class, where there's no pattern to memorize and they don't have to be alone in the spotlight.

Kris Simpson said, "It's a good starter class for beginning horses and riders with no patterns or obstacles."

Breeder Christine Little stated, "Maintaining this same entry level perspective, we see those that may not be the most talented Western pleasure horses still competing in these classes to gain experience in the pen. I believe it is also a way for people to promote their horses to horsemen who may watch a pleasure class to pick out the prospects — those horses who may not win the pleasure but look like they will be excellent horsemanship, trail, Western riding, or all-around horses."

At the big shows, it's still Western pleasure



Hortons Triple Skip
aka Ori: 1997, 16.1 HH.

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Northwind Eco Breeze:
1998, 16'1 HH.

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Northwind Tea Kettle:
13 years old, 15.3 HH.

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Western Pleasure has remained one of the most popular classes among stock horse breeds.

that draws the crowd.

Suzanne Pickard observed, "With several purses of over \$100,000 to the winner per year, people want to participate, whether it is buying, owning, showing, or spectating. It's something to get involved in. It's entertainment! And that is a key factor in making something popular. It has to be entertaining."

"These bigger shows are changing the horse world. They are trying to make it fun and drawing spectators and exhibitors through novelty events and games that are played after classes, with prizes given away. Evenings are filled with high dollar slot classes, auctions, and fundraisers."

Looking Ahead

Much has changed since those early days when this English rider scratched her head and wondered, "What could be so pleasurable about this class?"

Jamie Simpson observed that, "The Western pleasure class has been through some major changes since the 80s. Gone are the days of four beating and skinny horses. We see the pleasure horse continuing to move in a more natural way. With the inhumane treatment rules that the associations have implemented, much of the abuse is being kept away from the show ring and trainers are being reported for what they do at home. Trainers are having to use new and improved training methods to

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The AQHA has recently taken steps towards reminding judges to follow their rulebook, and has given many conferences showing the difference between incorrect and correct Western pleasure horse movement.

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prepare these horses for competition."

Jamie's wife, Kris, added, "The Western pleasure industry has taken hits from outside our industry that aren't warranted. Issues develop in all aspects of the horse industry but they are not at the forefront like Western

pleasure, therefore I think we get picked on more often. Not everyone should be a trainer. One bad display hurts the entire industry. There have definitely been things to criticize, but the industry is improving. When someone is trying to change it takes time — it can't be immediate." 

In over 20 years as a professional coach and trainer, Lindsay Grice's students have won at major shows in the United States and Canada. She continues to actively compete and win in both English and



PHOTO: RIVER BEND DESIGNS

Western events, specializing in the American Quarter Horse Association circuit.

Lindsay judges horse shows and teaches her popular horsemanship clinics throughout Canada and into the United States, creating thinking horsemen of her students by teaching the "hows" and "whys" of riding. Lindsay has often been a guest lecturer for the University of Guelph's Equine Behaviour programs and regularly teaches weekend clinics for local breed associations and A-H clubs.

Lindsay draws regularly on the sports psychology training she gained through coaching education. She is a certified Equine Canada coach as well as a NCCP (multi sport) coach. "Handling show nerves, distractions, and disappointments is as much a part of success as technical riding skills," she says.

When asked what she loves about her job, Lindsay responds, "I love putting complex principles of riding into a language that riders can understand."

For more information, visit her site www.lgrice.com.



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