

What is the Best Right Hat?

By VERN ELLIOTT

Through history the cowboy hat has evolved from a useful piece of equipment to an item that not only serves a purpose but also identifies the individual lifestyle and personality. Our research shows that hat body manufacturing techniques were developed and refined as early as the 14th century and surprisingly enough have not changed substantially since. Every hat has



Majority of hat designs start from a 6" open crown and 4" flat brim.



The square top is a well accepted crease that tends to stay on well.

its place in the market based on consumer requirements and expectations. Regardless of quality a hat will require attention from time to time, similar to starching and pressing your shirts and jeans.

Individualized Custom Creases

Every aspect of the western industry generally has its own specific style or design that is acceptable in their own category.

By initially using an open crown and flat brim hat, it can be designed to suit the individuals features based on the wearers appearance plus the hat can be creased



straight on the wearers face. It is not uncommon to find an individuals facial features to be 1 to 2 inches off center. In today's market hats are available in several different crown heights and brim sizes. The majority of hats

we do today are designed from a 6" open crown and 4" flat brim. The styles that working ranch cowboys use will often be completely different from what a rodeo cowboy will use, to be even more specific rodeo cowboys will require a style that is generally specific to their event. A hat style is a very personalized characteristic. Cowboys generally focus a great amount of attention to the condition and appearance of their hat. Keeping in mind that your hat is the first impressionable trait that is noticed whether it be at the rodeo or in an interview.

Material and Quality

The hat industry is very interesting and detailed, which may be subsequently confusing to the consumer or retailer. Basically because there are so many different materials, quality rating and constructions on the market.

Our experience proves that some hats do renovate better than others, the more you invest in a hat does not necessarily make it a tougher or easier hat to work on. In today's finishing process, some hats require special

powders and greases to give the new hat a fine finish. Bleeding and slight discoloration after use in some cases is unavoidable.

The "X" quality in hat bodies originally identified the quality and material in that particular hat body, although there are several conflicting theories on where the "X" marking originated. The most believable one is simply that most

factory workers in the 1700s and 1800s were illiterate and bundles of fur were marked with an "X" or "X's" based on fineness, much the same as coffee or flour.

Felt hat bodies today can be made from Cashmere, Beaver, Hare, Rabbit



(above) Reed on sweatband should roll outside edge so leather sits against forehead.

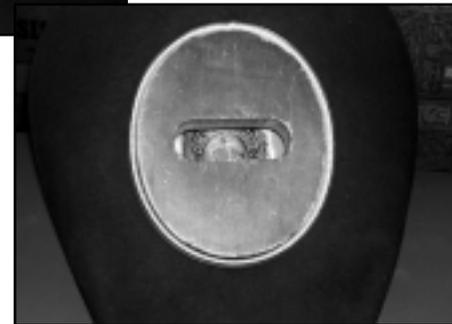
and Wool or any combination of the above. It is fact that beaver content in a hat body will give you better serviceability and that "X's" by number signifies a better hat, but it is also fact that companies use their own standards for "X" quality. This result's in a 20X hat from one company can, and most likely is, different than a 20X hat from another company. In truth beaver quality does not necessarily mean that the hat body has any actual beaver in it. Realizing this is confusing to the consumer one must understand that today "X" quality is a marketing term and that companies rate their own hats to their own standards.

The sweatband is another component that is critical in the serviceability of a hat. There are a countless number of different sweatbands being used today, materials from leather to nylon, to cotton. There again the consumer's purpose and expectations will determine what type of



sweatband is right for them. Sheepskin is considered to be the best-accepted material used. The installation of the sweatband is

(below) A wooden band flange is a useful tool for sizing and fitting.



very important, the rounded edge on the bottom side of the sweatband is referred to as the "reed". Ideally the sweatband should be sewn in from the inside and the reed rolled around the outside edge, if this is correct the skin on the forehead sits against the leather not the

reed. If the sweat is installed and the reed sits too far up into the crown this stitching will sit against the skin, this will cause the sweatband to deteriorate faster and prove to be uncomfortable. Ideally the sweatband should be cut slightly smaller than the hat

body itself. This will allow the wearer's head to fit the band opposed to the hat; the type of stitching will also determine how well the hat will conform.

Fit

The finished hat ideally needs to fit the wearer's head with contact evenly front to back



Standard wooden hat block used in manufacturing and repairing hats.

and side to side just above the ears even though a quality hat with a leather sweat will conform as the individual wears it. The initial fit needs to be close. Choosing a shelf or finished hat in the correct oval is important. Shelf hats are available in Extra-Long Oval, Long Oval, and Round Oval.

Every individual has a slightly unique shape to their head. For example a person with a round oval head will have problems with a long oval hat, even though the hat may be tight side to side if there is no contact from front to back this hat will not stay on. Forcing it on will cause the brim to wrap and the hat will squeeze off the wearer's head.

The bottom line is when we invest in a hat we obviously want it to stand up to our expectations. Surely the information in this article will be of some assistance in choosing the right hat for you.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding a hat that you already own or a future purchase feel free to call me at 1-888-440-HATS and I will try my personal best to answer your questions.

Vern Elliott
The Cowboys Choice



Thank you to all the CPRA contestants for your support in 2004.
Seasons Greetings to all of you and your families.
From: Vern, Mona, Ty and Clay Elliott and all the staff at
The Cowboys Choice - Vernon.



Some people were meant to ride bulls, some were meant to rope—I think I was meant to work on hats.



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