

Fashion Sense

HAD YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to spend some time around our offices in late July and early August, you would have been convinced we were opening an equine retail operation.

Twice a year, we produce a gigantic fashion shoot and ask companies near and far to send us the best they have available, in this case, items that will be out in Spring '06.

Each day as the packages arrive, it's like Christmas in July. Some of the products submitted amaze and astound us; some leave us wondering who exactly will be buying the product in question, but there's never a dull moment.



During the runup to this year's shoot, it became clear that the emphasis we saw last spring on bright colors and dazzling adornments had given way to a much more muted palate and less "bling-bling."

Instead, the emphasis for next spring appears to be superior design and functionality. Many companies have taken time-tested products and added a twist to come up with something even better.

Personally, I was beginning to wonder if lime green boas and orange Western boots were going to be the fashion forever. Apparently, the answer is "no."

There is always a good deal of discussion about fashion as it pertains to the equine trade industry.

The English manufacturers and retailers are always looking for something cutting edge, something that's comfortable yet looks smart and trim.

Western folks seem to want something that's distinctively Western but not so Western that it would turn off a mainstream buyer. Comfort and fit are important, but the look needs to be unique and distinctive.

Tracking and anticipating apparel trends has to be one of the most nebulous tasks anyone in our industry could undertake. No matter how you approach it, there's always that chance someone is going to come up with a sleeper product that doesn't fit any mold but sells like the proverbial hot-cakes.

The best most manufacturers can hope for is that the line of apparel they produce will have a good number of very hot items and broad appeal for the remainder of the line.

It wasn't that long ago that manufacturers in our industry were taking orders and manufacturing whatever was pre-selling. There are a few companies out there that still operate that way.

That's probably a lot more safe financially, but it's also a lot slower and in today's fashion world, when a look is hot, you have to be right in the middle of the fire, not sitting and waiting until there's nothing but embers remaining.

We hope you enjoy this year's Spring Fashion preview beginning on page 10 as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you. ☺

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