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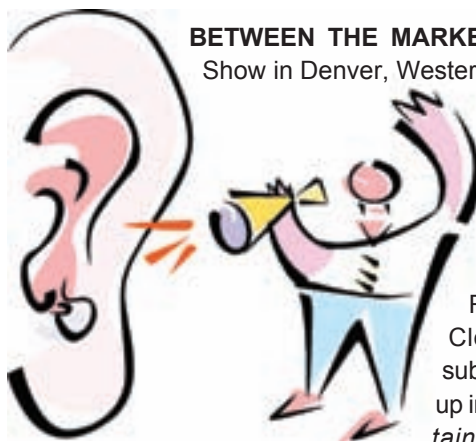
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INDUSTRY INSIDER

THE DENVER MARKET was massive and certainly provided The Insider with plenty of opportunity to learn new things. The uptrend at the Denver Market continues unabated. What's causing it? No one seems to know for sure. Will it last? Probably not, but those of us in the industry are accustomed to boom and bust cycles. The important thing is to make hay while the sun shines. A number of retailers The Insider met at Denver hadn't attended in several years because "they didn't have to." The continued white-hot interest in all things Western appears to have brought them out of the woodwork.



BETWEEN THE MARKET and the Stock Show in Denver, Western received a lot of mention in the daily newspapers that serve the community. Ron Schmitz and his company, Rocky Mountain Clothing, were the subject of a nifty write-up in the *Rocky Mountain News*. Schmitz

used the platform to announce his company's sponsorship of the National Western Stock Show and also the introduction of a new brand, Southern Thread. If you read the piece you know something about Ron most of us didn't know before ... he wanted to be a fighter pilot but didn't have the perfect eyesight required for flying. It appears his eyesight and insight into the Western apparel business probably have taken him as far as any airplane might have. *The Denver Post* chimed in with a story on Western fashion, which quoted former *Tack 'n Togs* editor Dan DeWeese, as well as Cathy Hagerty Soden from Rocky Mountain Clothing and Steve Weil of Rockmount Ranch Wear. The story also talked about the rise in popularity of Western clothing in Europe, a trend The Insider can attest to personally. The writer's concluding statement: "Love it or loathe it, Western is here to stay." Well, for now anyway.

THE WESTERN INDUSTRY'S tie to PBR was quite evident at the market. The Insider spotted two-time world champion Chris Shivers and offered him directions through the maze of the Merchandise Mart. A number of his sponsors were vendors at the market. Tuff Hedeman was also lurking about the fourth floor of the market near the showroom of Panhandle Slim, which makes a shirt bearing his name. Hedeman also has a hat line produced by Milano, now Dorfman Pacific. Hedeman has severed his ties with the PBR for the most part, but his status as a legend remains. Double H Boot and American Hat are also huge sponsors of riders in the PBR, as are Wrangler and Resistol. There doesn't seem to be an end to enticement of fans that the PBR has enjoyed over the past few years.