

## Retail Analysis: *Felt Hat Trends*



**6X Texan from the Larry Mahan collection by Milano Hat Co. has silver buckle set and comes in black, chocolate brown, belly and platinum.**



**100 percent pure beaver 500X Milano Especial from the Larry Mahan collection has 4-inch brim and comes in black, belly and natural. Gold buckle set with red stones.**



**20X Pinnacle from the Larry Mahan collection by Milano Hat Co. has New Suede Finish. Available in black and chocolate brown.**

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Denver.” The company’s lines include the Larry Mahan hat collection, which is manufactured in the U.S., Justin Authentic Western Headwear, an import line, and the Milano Hat label.

Bailey Hat Company, maker of Bailey Western and Renegade hats, won’t have any new lines in Denver, but will be introducing new crossover styles in the Renegade line.

“Crossover styles include the Palisade and Gunnison, both with intricate leather trim,” said Katie A. Westhoff, designer in the Western division at Bailey. “They will appeal to both men and women in the mainstream and Western markets.”

Several trends have emerged in felts recently with regard to color and shape.

“Low crowns and all shades of gray have been doing very well lately,” said Westhoff.

“Chocolate brown is definitely the new black,” said Redding. “Actually at Resistol, we call it Fenway. You will see that really take front stage at the NFR coming up. The top 15 cowboys at NFR generally have some form of Resistol contract, and they all asked for Fenway. Bound edge brims are back from the ’50s and strong as ever. Bigger brims are trending with your core ranch cowboys. There’s been a gigantic increase in open crowns over last year. These are crowns that have never been creased. A lot of that’s coming from the kids. They’re doing funky creases and trying to make their hat look different than everyone else’s.”

Milano said that most of his company’s hats are still going to have cattleman creases with four-inch brims. “But we offer more silhouettes in body and brim,” he said. “That means that we have to commit more to stock to the retailer.”

Trims have new looks as well.

“Thinner bands, smaller buckle sets,” said Redding. “We’re using a product called Drilex on our sweat bands. Lots of new materials in sweat bands with really

one intent: to make that hat stick to your head and not blow off.”

“Bailey trims are more tailored than in previous seasons and reflect trends in the mainstream market, such as patent and distressed leather,” Westhoff said.

The X markings that are found in Western hats have been a source of confusion to customers and under-trained retail staff for many years. Most hat makers agree that the use of X markings has gotten even more out of hand recently. Since there is no industry-wide standard for the markings, retailers need to educate themselves about each company’s system.

“I make a straw hat that sells for \$75 retail that has 30 X’s in it, and another manufacturer makes a hat that sells for \$75 and might have a thousand X’s in it,” Milano said. “The perception is that hat is somehow better. But it’s really not because it should correlate to price.” Milano suggested that if retailers put pressure on manufacturers to standardize the X markings by price points, forcing them to create a governing body of hat manufacturers where members would conform to the same standards and use hang tags on their products that say their hats conform to those standards, it would take much of the mystery out of X

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