Jennifer June, a custom cowboy boot maker, takes the reader through the diverse history of the boot, from the early days prior to 1930 to the modern twists on traditional styles popular a century down the line. She looks in detail at the motifs and metaphors that ornament the cowboy boot, from the artistic traditions of Texas boot makers to the symbolism in stitchings of flora and fauna, and examines the different styles, shapes, and materials of boots through the ages. Featuring insights and testimonials from custom cowboy boot makers and obsessive buyers alike, the book also features a section on how to design your own individual boot. Cowboy boots are the most emblematic of American fashion icons, repositories of western tradition and symbols of the strength and endurance of true American style. In recent times, cowboy boots have become permanent fixtures of the fashion world and of Hollywood westerns. Beautifully illustrated with photographs of boots, boot makers, and cowboy fashionistas, this book presents the definitive perspective on the changing roles and various styles of the most enduring American footwear.
Though they may have had a utilitarian start, cowboy boots have almost always been a canvas on which to display the skill of the bootmaker and the personality of the owner. "Cowboy Boots: The Art & Sole" by Jennifer June captures this spirit wonderfully, with rich photos and knowledgeable writing. Like many of the bootmakers and boot-wearers quoted in her text, June is a devotee of the boot and her passion for her subject comes through in these pages.

As diverse as the people who wear them, the boots featured here are not easily classified. Some are classic designs while others are quite modern. Some are understated designs of exceptional craftsmanship, while others are over-the-top in colors and stitching ... but equally fine handiwork. Many of these boots (again, like the people who wear them?) have never been near ranch or range in their lives, but actual workin' cowboy boots worn by actual workin' cowboys show up as well. In all, it makes for entertaining browsing as well as informative reading.

Perhaps best of all, though, June includes a section of "Resources" that allow the reader to investigate owning some quality boots of her own. Maybe we can't all afford the exotic leathers or extremes of design, but a solidly-constructed boot from a good designer is still within reach. I can attest to the satisfaction that comes from owning a good pair of cowboy boots, and it was a joy to discover many other people who share that feeling, and the artists who make it possible, in this spirited and entertaining book.

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