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Review of *Cowgirls: Commemorating the Women of the West* Photography by David R. Stoecklein

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are posed provocatively, nude or semi-nude, in the water or a-horseback. Other shots feature close-ups of shapely hips accented by jeans and chaps. Even the images of working cowgirls exude earthiness. The majority of the photographs are of Idaho cowgirls, not surprisingly since the author lives there and runs a publishing company producing calendars, prints, and cards.

Stoecklein has wisely given some substance to the book by including essays or commentary, although none defines cowgirl, nor is there any need to in light of recent scholarship. Sue Wallis, a writer of skill who knows the territory, speaks of the history of women's roles through the ages and the conditions on the cattle frontier that provided opportunities for women to partake of the horse culture: "Cowgirls are proud of what they can do and terribly proud of the horses they ride."

A recollection by one of the early rodeo greats, Fanny Sperry Steele, words from Pat Riley, Executive Director of the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, a cowgirl point of view by Rhonda Sears, comments about what cowgirls like about cowboys, and clips from the women whose photos appear all provide a narrative of sorts.

This volume would have been labeled a "Pin-Up" book had it appeared in the forties, but the comparison implies no criticism. In looking back over a personal collection of images of cowgirls of the past in photography, magazine illustration, advertisement, art, and film, I am reminded that cowgirls, for better or worse, have been more often than not depicted as bold, independent, capable, not in awe of men or other types of women, and, yes, sometimes sexy.

A modern epitaph by Margot Liberty expresses a current view of cowgirls: "She never shook the stars / from their appointed courses, / But she loved good men / and she rode good horses."

Cowgirls: Commemorating the Women of the West. Photography by David R. Stoecklein. Ketchum, ID: Stoecklein Publishing, 1999. Photographs, photographer's notes, technical notes, bibliography, suggested reading. 237 pp. \$60.00.

A cowgirl, her face and form obscured in work garb, is featured on the jacket of a book of lavish photography about the modern cowgirl. Nothing, however, is concealed between the covers. Cowgirls, mostly young, fairly blaze across the pages. If all, in reality, are not glamorous, the photographer's art makes them appear so. Fine horses accompany every cowgirl. One token male appears on the last page.

The author says his intent is to tell some of the story of the modern West through his photography. The photos themselves are often filtered through ethereal dust. Some cowgirls

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