

## Tale of two hats - East meets West

By Kristal Homoki



I grew up riding Morgan horses, well known for being a versatile, multi-discipline horse. Because of that I rode quite a few different disciplines in my day from Western pleasure, Western Horsemanship, Hunt seat, Saddle seat, Gymkhana, trail riding and Classical Dressage. With riding all those different disciplines you have, of course, many different outfits along with the proper head attire. So when Western Dressage came onto the scene I was very excited yet a bit confused. I had the outfit but do I wear a helmet or a western hat, or does it matter?

Then while reading about Western dressage on the WDAA website I came across this paragraph. "From the seeds planted by men such as Tom and Bill Dorrance grew new and more humane methods of starting colts and finishing performance horses. Light hands, subtle cues, and an appreciation for the ultimate benefits derived from a true partnership between horse and rider all led to a revolution in Western Horsemanship. It was only natural that at some point on this journey east would meet west, english would meet western, and Classical Dressage would meet the spirit of the western horse. When that day arrived, Western Dressage was born." This paragraph really struck a chord with me. It's a great explanation of What, Why and How Western dressage came about.

Now you may ask, "So what does that have to do with two hats?" Well as it happens I had come across a facebook page telling the story of a woman, Karen Plumlee, whose husband, Mark, created Karen's HellHat Posse® (combining a HELMET with a COWBOY HAT) for her after she had fractured her skull just 5 weeks before the CMSA World competition in October 2013. Karen was wearing her Karen's HellHat Posse® when she won her first World Champion in 2014 as a Senior Lady 2. Karen's HellHat Posse® have made such a big hit that in only a few short years their facebook page has gained over 6,100 followers. And they actually have the name, Karen's HellHat Posse® as a registered trademark. People are now creating and using this remarkable head attire in a multitude of disciplines.

So again "What does that have to do with two hats and western dressage you ask?" Well for me it was like a light bulb went on and now I knew just what head attire I needed for my outfit for western dressage. I needed a combination western hat and a helmet. Karen's HellHat Posse®! And this certainly solves the issue that most shows require all riders to wear an ASTM approved helmet while mounted on the show grounds.

The fun and exciting thing about Karen's HellHat Posse® head attire is they are VERY easy and simple to make. Depending on how fancy and how much bling you want to add you can create yours in about 15 minutes. It will take you longer to pick out your helmet and hat than actually making your one of a kind Karen's HellHat Posse®. And I might add you will spend more time customizing your design than actually piecing the two hats together. Another fun thing about these one of a kind creations you can stay true to your breed in what they like to wear.

Below are step by step instructions on how I make mine. I follow the instructions that can be found on Karen's Hellhat Posse® facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HellHatPosse/> And as a reminder if you

do start making these due to the patent registry you can't sell your creations under the "Karen's HellHat Posse®" name. I will warn you though once you create your first piece of head attire, you will start making more to use in other areas of your riding.

Tips: I would say the biggest thing is start with a helmet the you like and is comfortable AND a western hat that you like that you think looks good on you. If you don't like the brim on the western hat you won't like it on your custom head attire once completed. Also you can buy a western hat a bit larger than what you would wear to help make it fit over your helmet as you lose a small amount of brim size when creating your Karen's HellHat Posse®.

Step 1: Gather your hats and helmets and any ribbon or bling you want to add to your custom head attire. Glues, scissors, box cutters.



Step 2: Cut remove any hat band or brow band from the hat and than cut the brim off of hat. This can be scary but you can do it.



Step 3 : Place your helmet on the brim making sure it is centered or where you want the placement. Draw a line around the helmet leaving the area from the visor blank, you will connect that after you remove the helmet. Do not trim your visor and leave it on the helmet unless it is detachable. The visor will give stability to the brim once it is placed on the helmet.





Step 4 : Now you have a brim with a line around it so connect where the visor was. I have found that it is important to mark the front of the brim in some way. Here I placed a "F" at the front of the brim.



Step 5 : Here is another scary part and that is cutting pie shapes about every inch or so to your line. You can also just make relief cuts if you want. I found that scissors work best for straw brims while a box cutter goes through felt brims much easier.



Step 6: Now slowly work the brims over the helmets. You will need to push hard. With straw brims you can dampen them and I found with the felt brims that making a couple of the pie cuts deeper with a relief cut helps to work them on. Work them all the way on until they are down to the visor. Now **IMPORTANT** information. Once you have the brims on the helmet put on the helmet and go look in the mirror. You will want to adjust the brims to your liking and how it sits on the helmet before you tape it on.



Step 7: Now you just need to secure the brims on using tape. I will add that I trimmed each of my tabs so they are no longer than about 1 inch, just makes for a cleaner appearance. You can use just about any tape. Most people use some form of Duct tape as it comes in a variety of colors and looks (from wood grain, to rope). I suggest that if you use this tape that you cut it down the middle on the roll before using it. I also like to use electrical black tape for black helmets and brims.



Step 8: Basically you are DONE!! Now you just bling it up and customize it to suit you. You can use tape, Ribbon, leather or a combination of them all. When using ribbon and leather you will need to cut a small snip in the top at the ribbon on each side and fold it in on itself as you are working to avoid wrinkles.



Remember to decorate the front and back!

