

# Town & Country

## Queensland

# Rush of a horse legend

By JANE MILBURN

**A**FTER four decades of riding and showing performance horses, Californian Les Vogt has learnt a lot about what does and doesn't work and he's bringing that knowledge to Australia for the first time this year.

At three exclusive horsemanship clinics in Queensland and New South Wales in April, Les will pass on skills that won him 15 American Quarter Horse Association and National Reined Cow Horse Association world championships and established him as a world-class trainer, teacher and competitor.

"After almost 40 years' working with horses, I've figured out a few things. I try and help riders start off at least 20 years ahead of me, because it took me that long to figure out a lot of the methods and approaches that have consistently given me the best results with my horses," Les said.

"As with humans, every interaction with a horse is a negotiation, if you learn to negotiate, you'll get more done with less effort - I can't make a horse or person do anything but I can sure make them wish they had. And, like people, horses do best what they do easiest.

"Life is much more pleasant when I remember that horses and people are after the same things - good food, good times, a meaningful job, and comfortable companions."

Les runs clinics extensively in the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Europe, using a combination of lecture, demonstration, and practice drills that are tailored for participants both professional and non-professional riders.

His wide repertoire and expansive knowledge has made Les a performance expert with a variety of special clinic topics covered worldwide including: horsemanship, reining, showmanship, working horses and young horses/young riders.

Les is coming to Australia this year at the instigation of Andrew Macarthur of Plasvacc, who, during regular visits to the United States setting up the animal plasma products company Plasvacc US, noted that Les has skills that could benefit local performance riders and camp-drafters.

"I've got to know Les because he



Californian Les Vogt will be bringing his skills to Australia and holding a number of clinics.

works on a property Rancho Arroyo Grande which is down the road from us at Paso Roble in central California," Mr Macarthur said.

"They work cattle on their property on horseback just like we do, which is not the case all through America. Les's technique and style appeals to me because there's a bit of Aussie about him, he's unpretentious, genuine and a really hard worker.

"On the training facility at Rancho Arroyo Grande, I see Les and his colleagues practicing every day and their dedication is impressive. Horse

sport in America is terribly competitive and they practice as well as doing their ranch work, which is very much like the Aussie style. Being a Californian cowboy, Les believes a horse can be trained and nurtured all its life, rather than just in its early years."

The Les Vogt Australian clinics will be held on April 17-19 at Paradise Lagoons, Rockhampton, Queensland; April 21-23 at the Australian Equine and Livestock Event Centre, Tamworth, New South Wales and April 25-27 at Royal

Toowoomba Showgrounds, Toowoomba, Queensland.

The clinics are limited to 20 riders who will be working cattle during the three days of interactive tuition, which costs a total of \$800 (which includes smokos and lunches). Non-riders are able to attend at a cost of \$100/day.

"I don't mind what kind of horses people bring, or what they want to do with them - the goal is better performance and understanding of horses in a universal sense", Les said.

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"If we can teach a horse to go anywhere at any speed, with no apparent effort on the part of the rider and no more resistance from the horse than it takes to snap a single hair from his mane, we've achieved an ideal of horsemanship that I used to see every day in the cowboys and horses that worked the California ranches.

"I fell in love with western horses watching John La Mothe, a cowboy and horse trainer who worked with my Dad. John's horses were so soft, so confident in their work. I still remember how tall and proud he rode, and I knew that I was seeing my destiny.

"Running wide open at thirty or thirty-five miles an hour, hearing yourself breathe and feeling your horse's heart beat between your legs and knowing your horse is going to gather, stop, turn the cow, and be galloping in the opposite direction in three seconds flat is an unparalleled rush.

"Once you ride a cow horse, you're hooked forever trying to recapture that feeling of speed suspended, of time stopped for an instant then resumed fast-forward.

"Western performance horses - cutters, reiners, ropers, cow horses - are all evolving quickly right now towards an ideal western horse that's light, responsive, balanced, athletic, and fun to ride. The horses and the methods are changing, yet I see more horsemen rediscovering value in some of the traditional training and tools."

♦ To book for Les's Australian clinics, email [vogtclinic@yahoo.com.au](mailto:vogtclinic@yahoo.com.au), or call Deirdre Ryan on 0450 301 533 or Andrew Macarthur on 0408 767 069.

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