

Scottish Readers Remember Westerns



Oh yes, I mean some of my early books were the Roy Rogers Annuals and the Gene Autry Annual. I even had a cowboy outfit as a gift once at one point so I was very much into that sort of thing.

Margot Alexander

Wild West stories took off in the early twentieth century, and such well-known authors as Zane Grey rapidly became world-wide publishing sensations. In Scotland, Westerns were especially popular with young men and could be bought cheaply in local newsagents.

The dominance of cinema saw Western novels being made into films, which increased the popularity of the genre. Real-life legends like Buffalo Bill as well as fictional heroes such as the Lone Ranger and Hopalong Cassidy appeared in comic books and Saturday morning entertainments at the picture house.

Set in a frontier land of goodies and baddies, gunfighters and gamblers, the appeal of these stories is that they are morality tales of heroism and triumph over adversity. The books have given rise to many iconic images



that have infiltrated other areas of popular culture, like music, food and clothing. And Scotland has its own satirical Western heroes in the form of Bud Neill's cartoon cowboy Lobey Dossier, and of course, Desperate Dan! The stories made an easy transition to TV in programmes like *Bonanza*, the popularity of which probably caused a decline in book sales, although authors such as Louis L'Amour continue to have a strong following, particularly in libraries.

