

Slow Italian, Fast Learning

Ep.437: The changing face of Australian rodeo culture

Italian	English
Il rodeo, ovvero la monta di animali non addestrati, vanta una lunga tradizione in Australia. (Cowboy del Victoria che si dedica al pericoloso sport della monta dei buoi alla fiera annuale di Melbourne). Con testimonianze di questo sport che risalgono agli anni '50 del XIX secolo, il rodeo veniva utilizzato per sviluppare le abilità che gli allevatori mettevano in pratica nella vita quotidiana, come cavalcare cavalli difficili e controllare il bestiame. ((In questo filmato d'archivio del 1936, alcuni cowboy del Victoria si cimentano nel pericoloso sport della monta del toro.)) "Most of them ride a few yards on the Horned Porterhouse, then fall off and give up the unequal struggle. But there's one bright boy who turns the rodeo into a race. If he doesn't avoid that flying hoof, he'll get a black eye, or something. " Da 67 anni Mount Isa ospita il proprio rodeo annuale, che oggi è la più grande competizione di rodeo dell'emisfero meridionale. L'edizione del 2026 ha visto un numero senza precedenti di gare femminili, delle Prime Nazioni e giovanili con premi in denaro, e ha attirato concorrenti provenienti da ogni Stato e territorio australiano. La monta del toro è la disciplina più popolare e più pericolosa del rodeo.	Rodeo, or rough riding, has a long history in Australia. (Victorian cowboys indulge in the dangerous sport of steer riding at Melbourne's annual show). With records of the sport dating back to the 1850s, rodeo was used to develop skills that stockmen were using in everyday life, such as riding difficult horses and controlling cattle. ((In this archival footage from 1936, cowboys in Victoria take on the dangerous sport of bull riding.)) "Most of them ride a few yards on the Horned Porterhouse, then fall off and give up the unequal struggle. But there's one bright boy who turns the rodeo into a race. If he doesn't avoid that flying hoof, he'll get a black eye, or something. " For 67 years, Mount Isa has hosted their annual rodeo, now the largest rodeo competition in the southern hemisphere. The 2026 event included more women's, First Nations and junior competitions with prize money than ever and saw competitors travel from every Australian state and territory. Bull riding is the most popular and most dangerous event at a rodeo.

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Originario di Cloncurry, nella campagna del Queensland, Darryl Chong è un atleta di protezione il cui compito è quello di fare da guardia del corpo ai cowboy e alle cowgirl affinché possano uscire dall'arena in tutta sicurezza.

Al Mount Isa Rodeo Darryl, cinque volte campione di bull riding, contribuisce a guidare il corso dedicato alle popolazioni indigene per aiutare la prossima generazione ad acquisire fiducia in questo sport.

"Oh yeah, mate. The kids were pumped, eh? And so are we like yeah, nothing better feeling than seeing the kids get out there and have fun and high fiving each other and jumping off with a big smile on their face. That's what it's all about."

Anziché cavalcare un toro adulto, le gare giovanili prevedono solitamente l'uso di quello che viene chiamato "steer", ovvero un giovane manzo castrato in tenera età.

Per prepararli a questa prova, Darryl Chong ha spiegato che i ragazzi si cimentano prima con un "drop barrel", uno strumento di allenamento specializzato che riproduce i movimenti di un toro.

"So what we do just go through the basics of their gear, their equipment, safety equipment. That's our number one priority for the junior generation, and then we put them on the drop barrel. It's just something that we just work at their technique and you know get them comfortable with teaching them their technique. And then we actually took them over to the bucking chutes pretty quickly today, and they all actually got on a bunch of steers. It was absolutely amazing to see. Yeah, there was a couple of kids here. They'd never been on them before, and they rode time. And yeah, it was

From Cloncurry in rural Queensland, Darryl Chong is a protection athlete whose job is to be a bodyguard for the cowboys and cowgirls so that they can get out of the arena safely.

At the Mount Isa Rodeo, the five time bull riding champion helps lead the Indigenous clinic to help the next generation build their confidence in the sport.

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Rather than riding a full sized bull, junior events usually involve what's called a steer - a young male cow that was castrated at a young age.

To prepare them for that, Darryl Chong says they first have a go on a drop barrel - a specialised training tool that mimics the movements of a bull.

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Appuntamenti fondamentali nel calendario sociale delle comunità locali, i più grandi eventi di rodeo del Paese si svolgono spesso proprio nelle città e nei paesi più piccoli.

L'anchorman Aaron Ryan ha detto che l'energia che si respira in occasione di questi eventi è un'esperienza che tutti dovrebbero provare.

"A Friday night crowd here, a Saturday night, a Saturday afternoon crowd. It's just electric in this stadium. You feel the energy, and of course, I feel the riders lift. Not only us as announcers, we lift as well, because just that vibe, that whole vibe. The towns are buzzing this weekend. It's massive for the town. It's massive for the community. It's on pretty much every tourist person's bucket list to be here. And if it isn't, I suggest you put it on there because there's nothing quite like it else in Australia."

Le competizioni di rodeo comprendono una serie di prove diverse, suddivise in due categorie principali: le prove con animali selvaggi e le prove a tempo.

Le prove con animali selvaggi includono la monta del toro, la monta del cavallo selvaggio con sella e la monta del cavallo selvaggio a pelo, senza sella.

Queste prove richiedono ai concorrenti di rimanere in sella all'animale per almeno otto secondi e vengono valutate sia in base alla forza con cui l'animale scalcia sia al controllo esercitato dal cavaliere.

Le gare a tempo comprendono il team roping, lo steer wrestling e la barrel racing, che mettono alla prova la velocità, l'agilità e la coordinazione dei concorrenti.

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A major markers in the social calendar for regional communities, the largest rodeo events in the country often happen in the smallest towns and cities.

Rodeo announcer Aaron Ryan says the energy at these events is something everyone should experience.

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Rodeo competitions consist of a number of different events, made up of two main categories: roughstock events and timed events.

Roughstock events include bullriding, saddle bronc riding and bareback riding.

These require contestants to stay atop the animal for at least eight seconds and are judged on both the animal's bucking effort and the rider's control.

Timed events include team roping, steer wrestling and barrel racing, testing the competitors' speed, agility, and coordination.



A gareggiare nelle prove di team roping e steer wrestling c'è il campione Tom Willoughby, che ha viaggiato per settimane da Benalla insieme alla figlia Lottie.

"Yeah, it's a big haul from Victoria. It's about just under 4,000ks round trip. It's one of the best rodeos going in the country. The last 2 years, I think, has been amazing. The prize money and the atmosphere and the vibe that Mount Isa's created again is absolutely incredible. And to be able to travel the country and do it with my eldest daughter is absolutely amazing."

Seguendo una tradizione di famiglia, anche il nonno di Tom – che si chiamava anch'egli Tom – era un campione di rodeo.

"And there's plenty of other families like ourselves that travel around, and Lottie's got some great friends that they all get to hang out together, ride their horses together. And it's just a great atmosphere to be around, camping, and then to get to come up here. And that stadium talks for itself, doesn't it? When you have a look here and you walk around, you ride your horse around here, and you realise you're at something special."

Un'altra disciplina del rodeo è il trick riding.

Questa disciplina, molto impegnativa dal punto di vista fisico, vede i cavalieri eseguire acrobazie a cavallo e richiede un enorme equilibrio e una grande forza.

"My name is Dayna Bradshaw, and I'm the owner of Cowgirls with Wings Trick Riding. I stand up and hang upside down on horses while they're galloping. This is my first time at Mount Isa, and I am beyond excited. So you guys are going to see me standing up, hang upside down, pretty much gymnastics"

Competing in the team roping and steer wrestling events is champion Tom Willoughby, who travelled for weeks from Benalla with his daughter Lottie.

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Following a family tradition, Tom's grandfather - also named Tom - was a rodeo champion too.

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Another event at the rodeo is trick riding.

This physically demanding event sees riders perform stunts on horseback and requires an enormous amount of balance and strength.

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on horseback. That's what trick riding is all about." Sebbene il volto del rodeo sia cambiato nel corso del tempo, la portata di eventi come quello di Mount Isa dimostra che l'importanza di questo sport nella cultura australiana rimane più forte che mai. ((*Qui, filmati d'archivio del 1948 a Moree, nel NSW, in quello che un tempo era uno dei più grandi eventi di rodeo dell'Australia.)) "City slickers arrive by car, but at Rodeo time, the boys prefer to get about the hard way. One minute you're up, the next you're down, the goings rough for the boys who are really down, down under."	on horseback. That's what trick riding is all about." While the faces of rodeo have changed over time, the sheer scale of events like Mount Isa show the significance of the sport in Australian culture remains as strong as ever. ((*Here, archival footage from 1948 in Moree, New South Wales, at what was once was of Australia's largest rodeo events.)) "City slickers arrive by car, but at Rodeo time, the boys prefer to get about the hard way. One minute you're up, the next you're down, the goings rough for the boys who are really down, down under."
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Report by Sydney Lang for SBS News.

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