



Left: Kenda shows French spectators the sport of mounted shooting; Top from left to right: Chris Medigo, David Sauvat, Kenda Lenseigne, Lauriane Erard, Marc Edde and Billy Jammes; Bottom from left to right: William Coulomb of Will Roping Ranch, Benjamin Duverger, Doc, Kenda, Marie Mura and Christelle Duverger.

A Lesson In French

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion
Photos by Julie Plas and Diamond SP Photography

I hear the sound of the chutes being loaded, the distant echo of protesting livestock and the rustle of the crowd as the jam-packed house shuffles to their feet while Old Glory floats in aboard a dark grey mare and 'Oh Say Can You See' begins to reverberate through the speakers by the beautiful live singing voice of Texas' own Tessy Lou Williams.

It's just another typical scene in one of America's grass roots outdoor rodeos; with a sea of boots and hats and the kids in tow to watch the country's best cowboys and cowgirls ride their way to victory.

Only I'm not in Anywhere, USA. I'm in France and sitting atop a loudly colored American Paint Horse in the middle of the arena watching the stars and stripes circle the white sandy ground. With each pass I feel my patriotic goose bumps rise, my teeth dry from a ridiculous perma-grin and a wash of honor and gratitude surge through my veins because I am representing my USA in all of its guns and glory in the heart of Europe.

Nestled on a hilltop of the Rhône Alpes in a small village called Saint Agrève, the 16th annual Equibluets Western Festival is kicked off with a bang; the single action .45 variety bang that is.

It's a festival of rodeo and country music and although the town is small, Equibluets is not. Over 25,000 people passed through over the 5-day event with folks traveling from all parts of Europe and South America to enjoy the entertainment.

Neighboring fields were dotted with tents and campers as far as the eye could see and vendors selling everything from native American and old west goods to Cinch and Cruel Girl apparel gave a constant reminder that.... this feels a little like home.

It was an opportunity of a lifetime, to be the first to showcase mounted shooting in France and represent my sport and country in a moment in time that I will not soon forget.

The process started many months before I boarded the plane to Paris. After all, there were hoops to jump through to make it even possible to shoot a gun in France as most are illegal to possess, and cartridge ammunition follows a challenging suit.

This presented a significant hurdle and the call on many favors from various contacts, but a Cowgirl's will to travel abroad shall have its way and so it will be.

Thanks to my great friends and sponsors at Cimarron and Uberti Firearms, who graciously supported my efforts and exported a set



Left: Kenda and Doc visit with French children;
Right, top to bottom: Overall Cowboy winner
David Sauvat; Overall Cowgirl Lauriane Erard;
Stars and Stripes on a French spectator.



of KL signature Cimarron Thunderstorm guns to an importer in France, which took a matter of months for the paperwork to approve with the authorities.

I called on another sponsor, Safariland and French company Rivolier.com, who provided 300 rounds of crimped blank ammunition for me to shoot.

That took care of the guns and ammo. The next looming question: "What are you going to ride?"

I was skeptically asked and with an unsure confidence I answered, "I don't know but I don't care because I am going regardless, I'll make it work." You can imagine my relief when I met my trusty mount, a Paint horse named Doc, provided by Will Roping Ranch.

With the help of Philippe LaFont, the head honcho

at Equiblu, we organized two shooting clinics prior to the commencement of the festival. Thankfully I was provided an interpreter and eager participants. I've seen many great riders in my years, and these hold their place amongst the best.

Rodeo slack included a 3-stage match, where my clinic participants competed in their newly acquired sport. The Overall Cowboy winner was David Sauvat and the Overall Cowgirl was Lauriane Erard.

What I found most interesting at the Equiblu festival was the amount of American flags spotted around every corner, high and low; Old Glory can be found worn on t-shirts, saddle blankets, adorned on painted fingernails and all the way down to a slick pair of cowboy boots. My only reminder that I was not on American soil was the echo of the French language all around me.

I ran 2 stages per rodeo performance over the course of 5 days. It was exciting to ride in front of a packed audience and to have such an overwhelming response from the crowd.

Mounted shooting in France was a hit!

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