



Up Front

Digi or didgeridoo?
By C.J. Hadley

A didgeridoo is a five-foot-long wind instrument made from eucalyptus and played with vibrating lips to produce a continuous drone while using a special breathing technique. Developed by Aborigines in Arnhem Land in northern Australia at least a thousand years ago, its sound is haunting.

After a depressing news night I looked at the 385 pounds of hounds sleeping on my bed and smiled thinking, with an extraordinary sound like that and three dogs, there's still a lot right with the world. It reminded me of George Gomes, former executive director of California Farm Bureau, who asked our subscribers decades ago to pitch in \$5 extra when renewing to help *RANGE*. We got a huge number of fms thanks to George but now I have had to raise the subscriber rate by close to \$5. It's the first change since 1992—which has to be some unenlightened publisher record—so I hope you will carry on with this wild American ride on a bronc whose cinch strap is obviously pulled too tight.

This reminded me to ask for your help. I love being editor and am not ready to quit but there are far better, younger and brighter publishers, marketers, publicists, promoters and administrators than me—so if you want to rock, email cj@rangemagazine.com and take *RANGE* on the ride it deserves.

In the Summer issue, I asked if you would like a digital edition and there was an avalanche of letters. A whopping 89 percent said no, but the other 11 percent made some good points: “An advantage to digital would be to forward them on far and wide to nonsubscribers to get the word out to the uninformed. Also, it would be easier to research prior articles,” said Andy Smith of Elkton, Ore. “It's sad that some people have a hard time unless a screen is in their face all day,” offered Steve Love of Newhall, Calif. And Paul Schroer of Sheridan, Mont., said: “Do what you feel is best. Modernize if you must but keep it in print.”

I have been loitering on the fringes of publishing since 1963, as a secretary with *Electronic Design*, managing editor of *Car & Driver*, and freelancer for some big boys like *Sports Illustrated*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Western Airlines*, *Air Canada*, *AutoWeek*, *Motorland*, and publisher

and editor of *Nevada Magazine* for 10 years for a few governors. I learned from them all and was inspired by most. I knew that I would *never* abandon print, but do pay attention to advice that might just be good for this rag: “You will find a younger button-pushing audience”; “You will get a broader reach”; “You will reach people you can't with the print edition”; and “You might start breaking even.”

There were other opinions: “Please do what you gotta to stay viable. If you go digital, I'll find you. You and your crew are too important to lose,” wrote Vern Kays of Spokane County, Wash. “Stay with print,” said Lauri Olson of Cooperstown, N.D. “It's okay to draw a line in the sand once in a while. You'll notice this note is handwritten using a pen and paper. This is still America; if you don't want to go digital, don't.” Then she added in beautiful cursive, “By the way, when I told Troy about the request for digital *RANGE*, his fair and balanced side said, ‘Digital would reach more people with an important message.’” And Linda Smith from Incline Village, Nev., offered: “Please keep the hard-copy format. I need the tactile reassurance that some things are still right in this world.”

My bronc's cinch strap is obviously pulled too tight.

To date, *RANGE* has published 19 hardback books that shared words and photos by our amazing contributors, including two by Buffalo Bill bronc rider Harry Webb, and “The Magnificent American West,” using words by Mark Twain and Teddy Roosevelt. Other *RANGE* books won a Wrangler from the old Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City and eight Will Rogers Gold Medallions in Fort Worth. All are printed on slick paper.

James O. Hawley of Grand Forks, N.D., wrote: “Never give in to the confines of the digital world so prevalent in our society! Digital is ‘cold’ and will just put you more in front of all the idiotic anti-agriculture folks who know nothing but negativity. ‘Clic clic’ will make one sick.” And from Thomas M. Reese in Baker City, Ore.: “Getting by with quarterly versions is extremely difficult. Those rare lucky days I find a new edition in my mailbox are always a special surprise and I am tempted to devour the entire thing in one sitting, only to realize I will need to wait three more months for another. Like many, I hoard all my back issues and when I'm hit by severe withdrawal symptoms, can pull out years-old issues to enjoy again.”

In my decades in publishing I have never met a kinder group than *RANGE* readers, so I promise to always stick to print. But for the young button pushers, a digital *RANGE* flip-book is now available at rangemagazine.com.

For me, digital or didgeridoo? I'll take the slice of eucalypt, but you have a choice. ■