

# Western artist to hold show in Sisters

By Craig Rullman  
Correspondent

A living buckaroo legend — and accomplished artist — Len Babb will host a show in Sisters, August 5 and 6, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., at the Sisters Fire Hall Community Room. The show will feature Len's original oil paintings, watercolors, pen-and-ink drawings and sculptures.

Len's art has been favorably compared to Western artist Charles Russell, and it is a comparison Len embraces. Babb told *The Nugget*: "Russell once said that big hats and high-heeled boots don't make cowboys, but bib overalls and muley cattle don't make pictures. And Russell's wife was pretty protective of him. She said that 'If it isn't like Russell, it's wrong.'"

The comparison to Russell's work is probably inevitable, but Len Babb's art is entirely his own.

Working out of his hand-built log-cabin studio on a sagebrush hill overlooking Paisley, Babb brings vivid buckaroo images to life in celebrated works such as "Running Iron." His studio

is packed with memorabilia from a lifetime spent in the saddle, as a working cowboy, buckaroo — and together with one of his sons — as an accomplished and much-sought-after saddlemaker. From early childhood, Len has worked on cow outfits large and small, famous and infamous, from Wyoming to Oregon.

Speaking of his paintings, which depict working cowboys in the age before automobiles, Babb said: "My paintings were never inspired by my work. Buckarooing is just something a guy likes. The rest of the world wouldn't even understand it. It ain't romantic at all. You gotta like horses, that's the main thing."

"Since I was a little bitty kid I liked to draw," Babb said. "I remember being awfully frustrated because my dad, why, he'd take a pencil and just draw a horse, and never take his pencil off the paper. My mother was artistic too. I remember fighting trying to draw them horses. But Russell inspired me, and that's where it all came about."

One of his favorite Russell

paintings was "Call of the Law," Len said. "I just fell in love with it. I remember laying on the floor (as a young boy) looking at it. And I wanted to be able to draw like that one day. So I pushed all my life. And I got to where I really enjoyed it."

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Babb, who first came to the world's attention as a subject of noted Texas photographer Bank Langmore's famous 1970s-era study of working American cowboys in the book "The Cowboy," is as authentic an artist of



PHOTO BY BANK LANGMORE — COURTESY JOHN LANGMORE

Buckaroo and Western artist Len Babb — shown here circa 1970s — will show his work at the Sisters Fire Hall Community Room on August 5 and 6.

Western and buckaroo life as one is likely to find.

Lance Richardson, Babb's nephew, who along with wife Rebecca has been instrumental in helping bring Len's work to a Sisters audience, told *The Nugget*: "He is a walking encyclopedia of the historic things of this country. He is passionate about the

buckaroo, and the cowboy way, in a bygone era. Len's work is very unique and special. I've seen him go through the stages of life. He used to ride all of the rough horses, and now he'll tell me, 'I'm a little bit scared of that one.' It is an incredible honor to be a part of bringing his passion out into the public."

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