



Legend has it that a mid-nineteenth century cowboy priest named Saint Belmondo roamed the dusty terrain of Texas near the Mexican border, spreading his own peculiar New World Gospel. He was distinguished by his commanding presence, profound empathy, and elegant style, especially the way he customized his boots and jeans.

He usually wore lizard skin cowboy boots embellished in the manner of stained glass, with wildly colorful scenarios like the Crucifixion and Bosch-like infernos. His jeans were decorated with dried desert flowers, crosses made of cow bone, and strips of ornately symbolic leather. Saint Belmondo took standard issue cowboy garb and made it hum with style and personality. His look retained the gritty frontier spirit, but also conveyed his essence as a spiritual and innovative thinker steeped in worldly ways.

Saint Belmondo was a patron of the night and accomplished most of his good works after sundown. He wasn't anchored to a pulpit or beholden to any Sunday morning rituals. This was quite practical, considering the nature of the times.

Nineteenth century nightlife was fraught with tumult and unpredictability. Surly, armed-and-dangerous thugs prowled the roadhouses and gin mills of this region, carousing with abandon and issuing life-or-death challenges on the slightest pretense, or merely for amusement. Wayward slatterns sold their love for a song, with barely a thought of the next day. Civil, legal, and moral codes were ill-formed or nonexistent, and a sense of improvisation prevailed as rules were made up on the fly.

Saint Belmondo sought to temper this cauldron of wanton cruelty and passion by creating a realistic framework that allowed the restless, undeniable pursuit of pleasure to thrive without the excess and abuse that was the norm. He was extraordinarily successful in this mission because he was respected as a thoughtful man of God, and a mesmerizing creature of style. The most degenerate barroom brawler would immediately abandon his chair or broken bottle at the calm behest of Saint Belmondo. Hardened prostitutes, normally oblivious to anything but cheap finery and their own roiled loins, would listen raptly to his eloquent and powerful words.

Saint Belmondo also distinguished himself as one of the first environmentally conscious thinkers. He learned about the earth's intricate dynamics from a renegade tribe of Indians he had lived with when he was barely a teenager. He took their lessons to heart and was later known to take action against ignorant and indifferent befoulers of the environment, this at a time when such ideas were barely voiced, let alone understood.

In one famous incident, the cowboy priest ventured to El Paso to settle a long simmering land dispute between a homesteader family and the local authorities. The family was putting the land to good use and had respect for their surroundings, while the town's wealthiest investor wanted to use their untitled property for a shooting range and garbage dump. Accounts of violence and intimidation found their way to Saint Belmondo, who decided that his intervention was necessary to prevent an already nasty and divisive situation from escalating.

When Saint Belmondo rode into town, the divided camps had turned the whole area into a virtual war zone. Compromise and sanity were distant possibilities as each side was unyielding in its vision of the "right" direction for the town's future.

*To be continued . . .*

## Why Saint Belmondo? Elli Dayan's Flair for Creative Jeans Marketing

A lot of people have been asking me how I came up with the idea of Saint Belmondo, and why I decided to use this unorthodox approach—a faux Wild West legend—for marketing jeans. Well, marketing is a process of creating excitement about a product and fitting vaguely defined consumer items with their own character and history. That goes without saying.

But the legend of Saint Belmondo was a strong concept in my mind even before we created the specific jeans to match the story and imagery. I thought: why not approach this product's identity as if I were creating a song, or an album, and all that connotes, such as the presence of a strong narrative thread.

We, by which I mean our marketing and design team, decided to clothe Saint Belmondo jeans in legend, and clothe the legend in our perception of what these jeans are: rugged, durable, and sensual. These are qualities we often associate with the *Wild West* and with quality jeans.

Saint Belmondo jeans embody the character of the Wild West, so we decided to create an incarnation of the jeans as a character of mythic proportions. Of course, we had to reinvent Wild West mythology. That's how we came up with the legend of Saint Belmondo: a uniquely stylish, original-thinking cowboy priest.

Saint Belmondo jeans are true to the spirit of the Wild West, but in a thoroughly modern fashion. We tried to incorporate this paradox into both the myth and the marketing campaign. In a sense, this concept reflects the paradoxes involved in the fashion industry as a whole, where everything is a product of the collision between old and new.

There's so much talk about "classics" and timelessness, yet there's always a voracious appetite for novelty, which nowadays translates into rehashing old fashion and pretending it's the hottest new thing. What item of clothing is more classic than jeans? But jeans are as susceptible to trendiness as *anything*. Saint Belmondo jeans, like the cowboy priest legend, represent a new version of an old story.

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