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# He Has Horses Down to a Fine Art

Mark Maggiori is an amateur rider. He'd like to get in the saddle more often, but for now, his focus is on painting horses. Not riding them. He paints cowboys, too. And the broad landscapes of the Southwest.

He's not the first to do so, but his artwork, which ranges from photorealism to expressionism, is unmatched among his peers, and it's inspiring a resurrection of Western art in popular culture.

**BY KELLY VAUGHN**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOUGLAS MERRIAM

**N**EAR THE END OF THE MUSIC VIDEO for *L'instinct et l'envie*, Mark Maggiori carries a red suitcase and a shovel into the desert. He's wearing jeans, a blue T-shirt and green sneakers.

He digs a hole.

As Maggiori holds a long, high note and the beat of the drums intensifies, his hair falls into his face. He buries the suitcase, abandons the shovel upright in the dirt and walks away. The song, performed by Maggiori's band, Pleymo, fades out as the screen goes dark.

The last verse of *L'instinct et l'envie* translates this way: "Eyes toward the sky, my soul in the sun / I am sure to be alive / I have two feet on the ground / My soul in the sun, I have instinct and desire."

"Soul in the sun" stands out. Because more than a decade after the song was released and the video produced in the desert, Maggiori often finds himself in the sun — literally and figuratively — as one of the finest Western painters of his generation.

Born in Fontainebleau, France, in 1977, Maggiori showed an early proclivity for art. And for the American West. "My grandparents were Italian," he says. "And the Western films were pretty big in Italy. My grandmother always called me 'Little Cowboy,' and my grandfather would create games for me with cowboys and Indians. And, you know, I think it's just little things like that that just kind of mark you for the rest of your life."

His first trip to the United States, at the age of 15, left a lasting mark on him, too. Nearly three decades later, he remembers watching the American

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Artist Mark Maggiori followed a winding path from his native France to Taos, New Mexico, where he lives and works today.