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**MODERN PIONEER:**  
the magnificent  
Lohnro is the  
first Australian  
Champion Stallion  
to shuttle to  
North America.

**A**

long Bowman Mill Road in Kentucky's famous bluegrass, Jonabell Farm is home to 17 Darley stallions. There are the superstar sires you would expect to find there—Street Cry, Bernadini and the impressive Medaglia d'Oro. But there is also a lone gunman, a southern hemisphere stallion of incredible repute. It is Lohnro, Australia's reigning champion stallion.

"We didn't have any real opposition from the Americans when it was decided to send Lohnro up there," reflects Henry Plumptre, general manager of Darley Australia. It was decided to shuttle the son of Octagonal to the US for the 2012 northern breeding season. "There was the odd comment about the difference between turf and dirt sires, and a few that he was a bit short-coupled, but we've been bringing American stallions down here for years. There was no reason to think it wouldn't work the other way."

In October 2011, when Darley announced that Lohnro would shuttle to Jonabell, online forums came alive. He was, after all, the first champion Australian stallion to reverse-shuttle to America, and the second to shuttle after Arrowfield's aptly named All American (by Red Ransom from the American-bred Strawberry Road mare, Milva) made history to stand at Darby Dan Farm in less heralded circumstances in 2011.

Whereas Lohnro offers the Americans a complete outcross—the Sir Ivor sire line is non-existent outside Australia and New Zealand—All American was as his name suggests. Darby Dan's owner John Phillips said All American would appeal to Americans because of his Roberto (sire of Red Ransom) sire line. "As a sire and sire line, Roberto has

paid incredible dividends for us," he said.

Phillips cited the recently deceased Dynaformer (sire of Barbaro and Americain) and Silver Hawk (sire of 14 G1 winners) as two Roberto sons to have a huge influence on racing in North America.

On Lohnro, the US-based *The Bloodhorse* ran a story titled "So Just Who is Lohnro?" It incited 45 comments from around the world, including: "Be wary of the hype as this horse has all turf form," and, "He is a bit of a bulldog". On the flip side, there was: "He is a proven sire in a top racing jurisdiction. Thirty-five starts, 26 wins, 11 Group 1s, and an established sire to boot." It seemed like the Americans just couldn't make up their minds. Who was this Australian horse arriving to their shores?

"Lohnro had had multiple Group 1 winners by the time he went up there," says Plumptre. "He'd had Denman, Beaded and Benfica, and then when Pierro came along, he became the first Lohnro Group 1-Stakes winner outside the Darley system, and that really put the icing on the cake for Lohnro. We felt that it was a good time to send the horse overseas, but we left the decision as to where he was best placed to our northern hemisphere team. They thought the American market was the best market for him."

Plumptre says there were specific reasons behind this. Lohnro's sire Octagonal had shuttled to Europe in his early sire days but had not been popular. As a result, the Darley team predicted that the European response to Lohnro might be negative. "We thought there was a possibility that the market in Europe might say, 'well, we had his father here and he was no good, so why would his son be any good?'" Plumptre adds that it seemed like Lohnro would simply have more appeal in America. He was right.

Before Lohnro even stepped off a plane, his book was full. He covered 100 mares in his first US stint (40 belonged to Sheikh Mohammed), and among those were the Australian-bred Group

1 winners Assertive Lass and Danelagh (dam of Vengeance Of Rain and Dizelle), along with Juddmonte Farm's Kentucky Oaks winner Flute, and Sky Song, a relative of Pierro and the dam of Octagonal's French Group 1 winner Laverock.

"As it turned out, he could have covered three or four times the mares he did," Plumptre reflects (at US\$30,000, the horse was around \$80,000 cheaper than his Australian fee).

Lohnro and All American are flag-bearers in the current Australia industry, but they are by no means the first Australian horses to ply their trade in the US. One must climb back to the 1940s to see the first stream of local stallions sold to US stud interests. It began with Beau Pere, a champion sire in Australian and New Zealand before he was exported to California in 1947 where he sired 21 Stakes winners, and was quickly followed by Ajax,

★ The studs that are doing it are really cherry-picking the horses they send. ★

MICHAEL FORD

Reading, Bernborough, Shannon and Royal Gem. In later years there were Noholme, Pago Pago, Daryl's Joy, Tobin Bronze and Strawberry Road. These horses stood in Kentucky, Arkansas, Florida and California. They threw winners of claiming races to a Kentucky Derby winner. But, unlike Lohnro, they were US based. The shuttle phenomenon was decades away.

Michael Ford is the Keeper of the Australian Stud Book, and he believes that reverse-shuttling, or sending an Australian-based stallion up to the northern hemisphere season, is still a long way off being a fashionable practice. "The studs that are doing it are really cherry-picking the horses they

send," he said.

Outside of Lohnro, stablemate Exceed And Excel (by Danehill) is another Darley sire that has been burning the seasons at both ends. In his ninth year of reverse-shuttling to Dalham Hall, Newmarket, Exceed And Excel is a poster-boy for Ford's philosophy—that the measure of a successful sire overseas is the number of Stakes winners he can produce, and the number of Group 1 winners among them. In the case of Exceed And Excel, he ranks

17<sup>th</sup> overall on the current list of top Flat sires in England. On Australian Stud Book figures, he has produced 25 international Stakes winners for 40 Stakes wins. His high-profile Ballydoyle son, Excelebration, has recently energised his European presence.

Ford believes the fact that Exceed And Excel is a son of Danehill is a key to his success in Europe. "A quarter of all stallions at stud trace to Danehill," he said. "That line will survive a long time, and it seems to be important to the success of Australian horses in Europe."

Ford's theory is interesting, and can perhaps be exemplified by the case of Encosta De Lago. In 2007, Coolmore elected to reverse-shuttle that horse to their Irish operation—he filled in for the loss of Mozart, who died after one season. At the time, Encosta De Lago sat second on the Australian leading-sire table (behind only Redoute's Choice). He had high fertility figures and a talent for upgrading even pedestrian mares, not to mention a long scroll of top winners in Australia. It was surprising, therefore, that he made little impact in Europe. "Encosta De Lago doesn't descend from Danehill," said Ford, "and his sire, Fairy King, is not a strong line. It might be simply that Encosta interacts better with southern hemisphere mares, perhaps from lines like Sir Tristram that are dominant down here."

Coolmore will be hoping that Fastnet Rock will fare better with his European efforts. The high-profile son of Danehill, ▶

# UNCLE SAM WANTS US

Lohnro and All American have been on the shuttle train as it "reverses" to North America, but JESSICA OWERS has found that our pioneer exported stallions from the past have left an imposing legacy.

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**\*Shannon II** (Property of a Syndicate)



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1 1/8 miles	1:47 3/5	Shares world record with Indian Brown
1 1/4 miles	1:59 4/5	Shares world record with "Salut Andrew II in England.

No other horse today shares as many world records as does "Shannon II. The mile race was run in Australia with 120 pounds up, the other two were run in America with 124 pounds up in each instance. "Shannon II also holds two track records in America (besides the above two records 1 1/8 miles at Tanforan (1:50 1/2, 127 lbs.) and 1 3/16 miles at Bay Meadows (1:55 1/2, 114 lbs.) Giving four and 18 lbs. "Shannon II also ran third by three-quarters of a length in a mile race at 1:34 2/5. Within a space of three weeks, "Shannon II ran three races... the first was his third by less than a length in a mile race at 1:34 1/2, the next two were his world record runs at 1 1/8 miles and 1 1/4 miles.

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804 THE BLOOD-HORSE

who was Australia's champion three-year-old in 2004-05, began reverse-shuttling to Tipperary in 2010. In that year, he covered 79 mares in Ireland, which escalated to 150 last year, and this year he has been supported in similar figures.

In a handful of years, Darley will know if Lonhro will have muscled into the more difficult American market, and if he'll have done it in whirlwind fashion, as he has in Australia, or slowly, methodically, as has Exceed And Excel in Europe.

Lonhro, Exceed And Excel, Encosta De Lago and Fastnet Rock are the most recent, and most famous, Australian-based

horses to reverse-shuttle to overseas markets. Their successes, and failures, prompt a look back at some of the Australian horses who hit international shores for breeding duties.

**Carbine (NZ) (1885, Musket (GB)-Mersey (GB), by Knowsley (GB))**

Although New Zealand-bred, Carbine is remembered as one of Australia's greatest early exports. Sold in March 1895 to the English-based Duke of Portland (after four seasons in Australia), he began northern hemisphere duties in 1896 at Welbeck Abbey Stud for a fee of 200 guineas. Though not

immediately successful, Carbine appeared among the leading 20 sires by earnings on five occasions in England against invidious competition—among his rivals at stud were St Simon, Ormonde, Persimmon and Cyllene.

In 1906, his son Spearmint won the Epsom Derby and the Grand Prix de Paris, cementing Carbine as a sire of note in England. In Australia, his son Wallace had already won a tally of top races and became the leading stallion. However, it was Carbine's descendants in later years that made him legendary. Through Spearmint came the

**AT STUD:** this historic advertisement for Australia's star export, Shannon, appeared in America's *The Blood-horse* magazine.

outstanding mares Plucky Liege and Catnip. Catnip was the granddam of Nearco; Plucky Liege produced Sir Gallahad, Bois Roussel and Admiral Drake.

The Duke of Portland wrote of Carbine's time at Welbeck Abbey: "He was not a great success as far as my own stud was concerned, but I think he justified himself in this country." In Australia, the horse's legacy was more noticeable. In the next 71 runnings of the Melbourne Cup after his death in 1914, Carbine appeared in the pedigrees of no fewer than 51 winners.

**Shannon (1941, Midstream (GB)-Idle Words, by Magpie (GB))**

Shannon was one of the earliest Australian thoroughbreds to be sold to and race in America before beginning his stud duties. With six Stakes wins at the highest level of U.S. racing, he retired to Spendthrift Farm, Kentucky, in November 1948, second only to Citation in earnings. The exposure he had received in racing certainly helped him. Shannon commanded his first season at US\$2500 a cover. By comparison Bernborough, who had not raced outside Australia and who was also standing at Spendthrift, was getting US\$1500.

Shannon was afforded good opportunity as an American sire. Though second string to the imported Alibhai, he produced the 1957 Withers Stakes winner Clem, who defeated Round Table in the Washington Park Handicap. Shannon was also the sire of Sea O'Erin, who won the Citation Handicap and a score of other races. All up, Shannon sired the winners of more than \$4 million during a short career in Kentucky (he died in 1955). Without any significant sire sons, however, Shannon's legacy fell by the wayside.

**Royal Gem (1942, Dhoti (GB)-French Gem, by Beau Fils (GB))**

The son of an outstanding broodmare, Royal Gem was a leading Australian racehorse before he was sold to America in 1949. The winner of the Caulfield Cup, Futurity Stakes, Linlithgow Stakes and 10 other principal races, he was shipped to >



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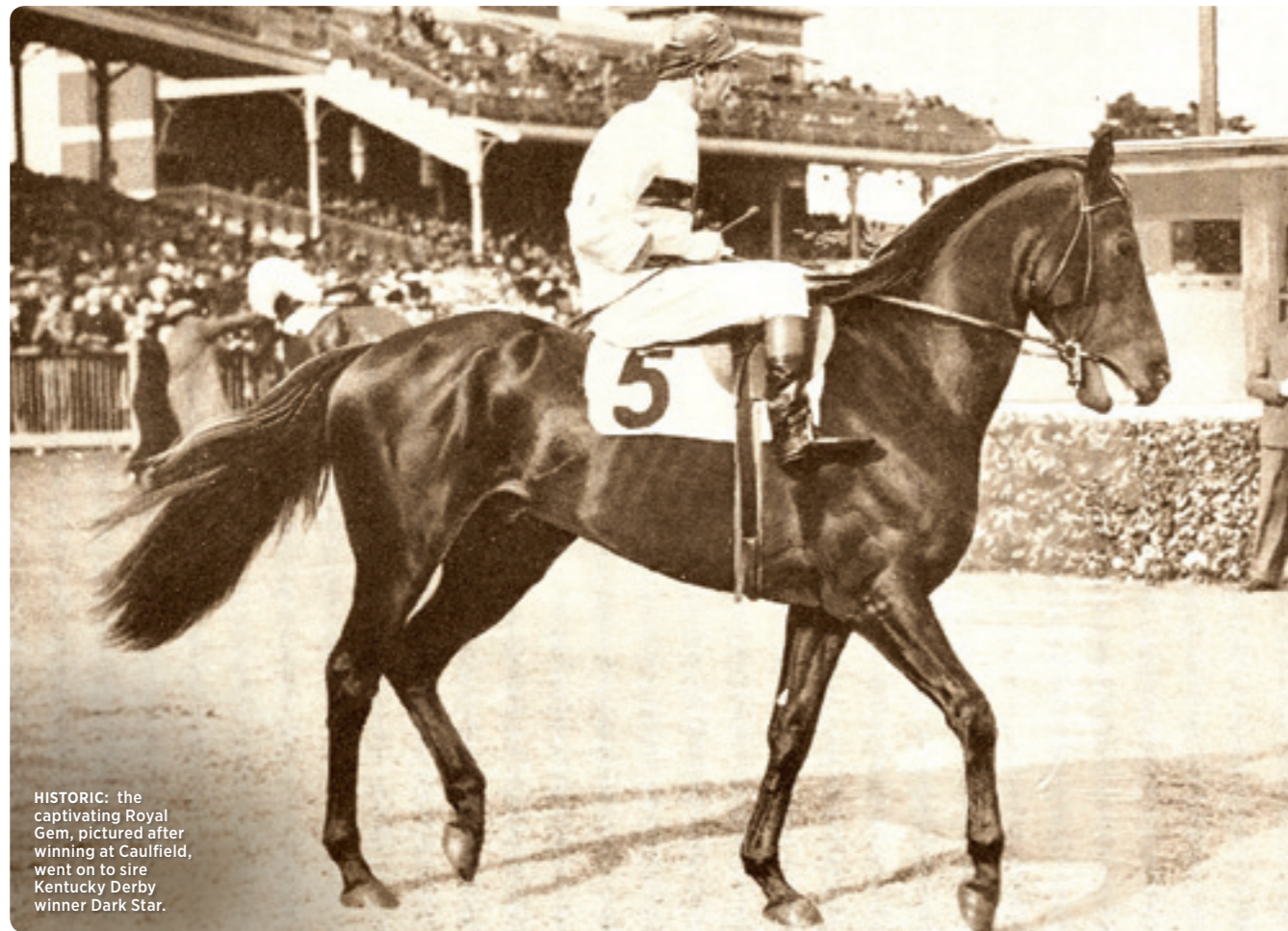
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**HISTORIC:** the captivating Royal Gem, pictured after winning at Caulfield, went on to sire Kentucky Derby winner Dark Star.

Hermitage Farm, Kentucky, for a reported US\$100,000. Within a few short years he had produced the 1953 Kentucky Derby winner Dark Star.

Falling into the mould of a successful sire very quickly, Royal Gem also sired 1961 Canadian Horse of the Year Hidden Treasure, and Royal Bay Gem, a winner of 13 races. With a female line that had produced Popinjay and a tally of other Stakes winners in Australia, Royal Gem was arguably the best-bred Australian horse to be exported in the 1940s, and certainly the only Australian sire to produce a Kentucky Derby winner. But he was also a sire of sires. Dark Star went on to produce the winners of more than US\$4 million in prizemoney, including the outstanding filly, and later broodmare, Gazala. Royal Gem's half-brother Beau Gem (by Helios), a Victoria Derby winner, also stood in the US.

**Noholme (1956, Star Kingdom (IRE)-Oceana (IRE), by Colombo (GB))**

In *The Australian and New Zealand Thoroughbred*, author Ross de

Bourg states that Noholme was Australia's 'greatest single stallion export since Carbine'. A full brother to super sprinter Todman, Noholme was exported to America in 1960 with a solid race record—across 1959 he had won six stakes races in Australia, including the Champagne Stakes, Epsom Handicap and Cox Plate. Incredibly, his sale price to the US was only US\$18,000.


Noholme subsequently sired more than 350 individual winners of over 2000 races across the Northern Hemisphere, earning more than US\$16 million in prizemoney. Beginning his stud career in an obscure corner of Arkansas, he was moved to Ocala, Florida, in 1968, where he stood for US\$7500. Between 1964 and his death in 1983, Noholme produced 20 foal crops in America of which 68 per cent were winners, with 55 individual stakes winners. His most notable progeny was Nodouble who, de Bourg states, 'vigorously extended and ramified the Star Kingdom-Noholme male-line dynasty in North America'.

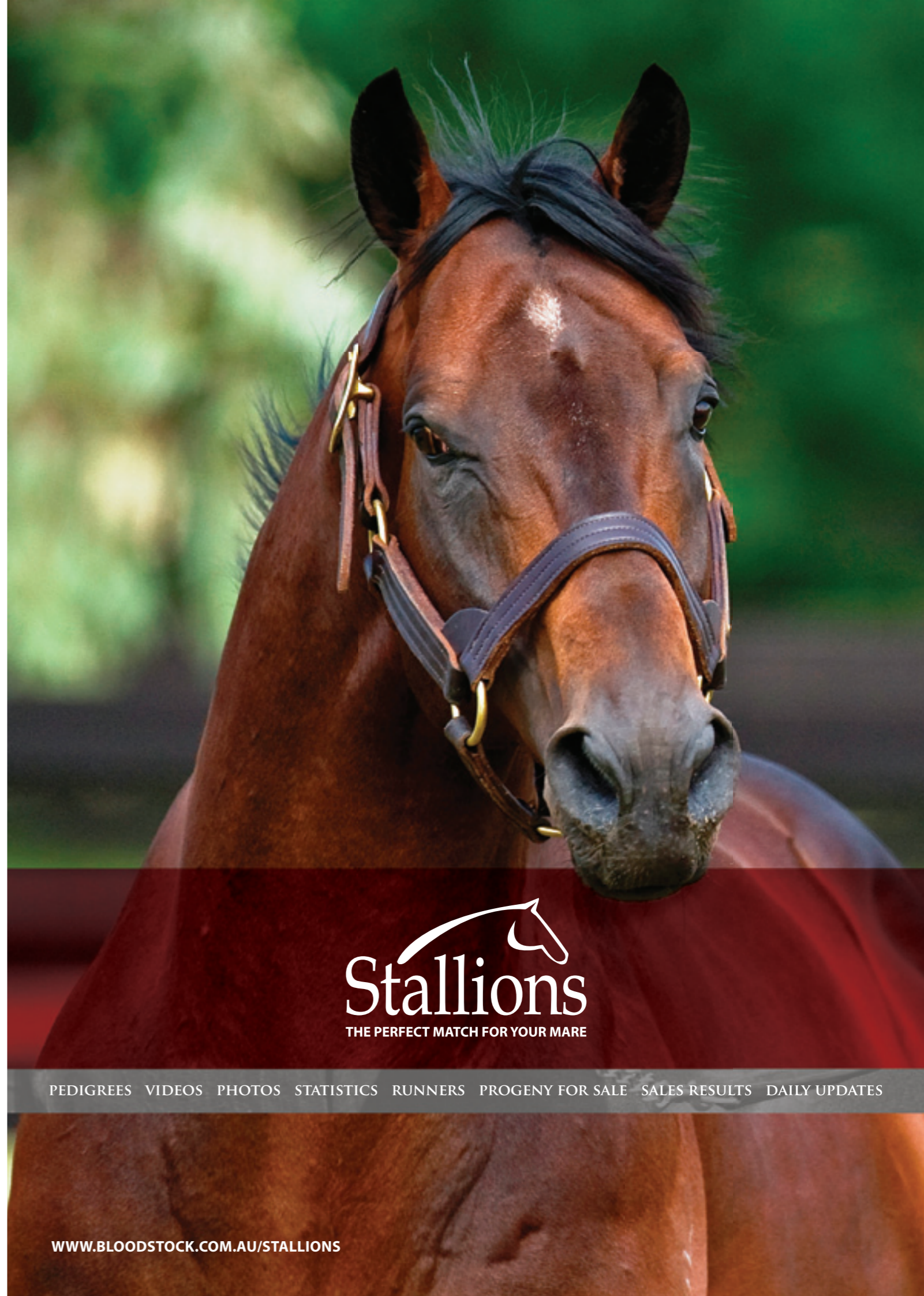
**Strawberry Road (1979, Whiskey Road (USA)-Giftisa (NZ), by Rich Gift (GB))**

Strawberry Road, a champion winner of the Cox Plate and AJC Derby, left Australia to campaign in Europe in 1984, where he won the G1 Grosser Preis von Baden in Germany before finishing fifth in the G1 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. He also campaigned successfully in France and North America (second in the Breeders' Cup Turf) before being bought for stud duties by Allen Paulson, who stood him privately at his Brookside Farm, Versailles, Kentucky. Strawberry Road prove something of a phenomenon; from 368 foals, he sired 233 winners, including three Breeders' Cup winners—Fraise (BC Turf), Escena (BC Distaff) and Ajina (BC Distaff)—and G1 Santa Anita Derby winner Dinard. He also is the sire of the dam of champion 2YO colt Vindication, 2002 US 2YO of the Year and Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner.

**Choisir (1999, Danehill Dancer (IRE)-Great Selection, by Lunchtime (GB))**

The muscly, chestnut Choisir is best remembered as the first Australian racehorse to conquer Royal Ascot, winning the 2003 King's Stand Stakes and Golden Jubilee Stakes before running Oasis Dream to a close second in the July Cup. Two days later, breeding giants Coolmore secured the son of Danehill Dancer for stud duties, and he shuttled between Jerry's Plains and Tipperary until 2010 when it was announced he would remain in Australia.

Choisir's most famous progeny is the Australian-sired Starspangledbanner, who recently went back into training for Coolmore after he proved subfertile. From his northern duties, Choisir got some good performers, including Stimulation, winner of the G2 Challenge Stakes, and Lady Springbank, who won the G3 C.L. Weld Stakes at the Curragh. However, Choisir has not fired in Europe the way he has in Australia. 



  
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