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THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

COWBOYS & INDIANS

MAY/JUNE 2020

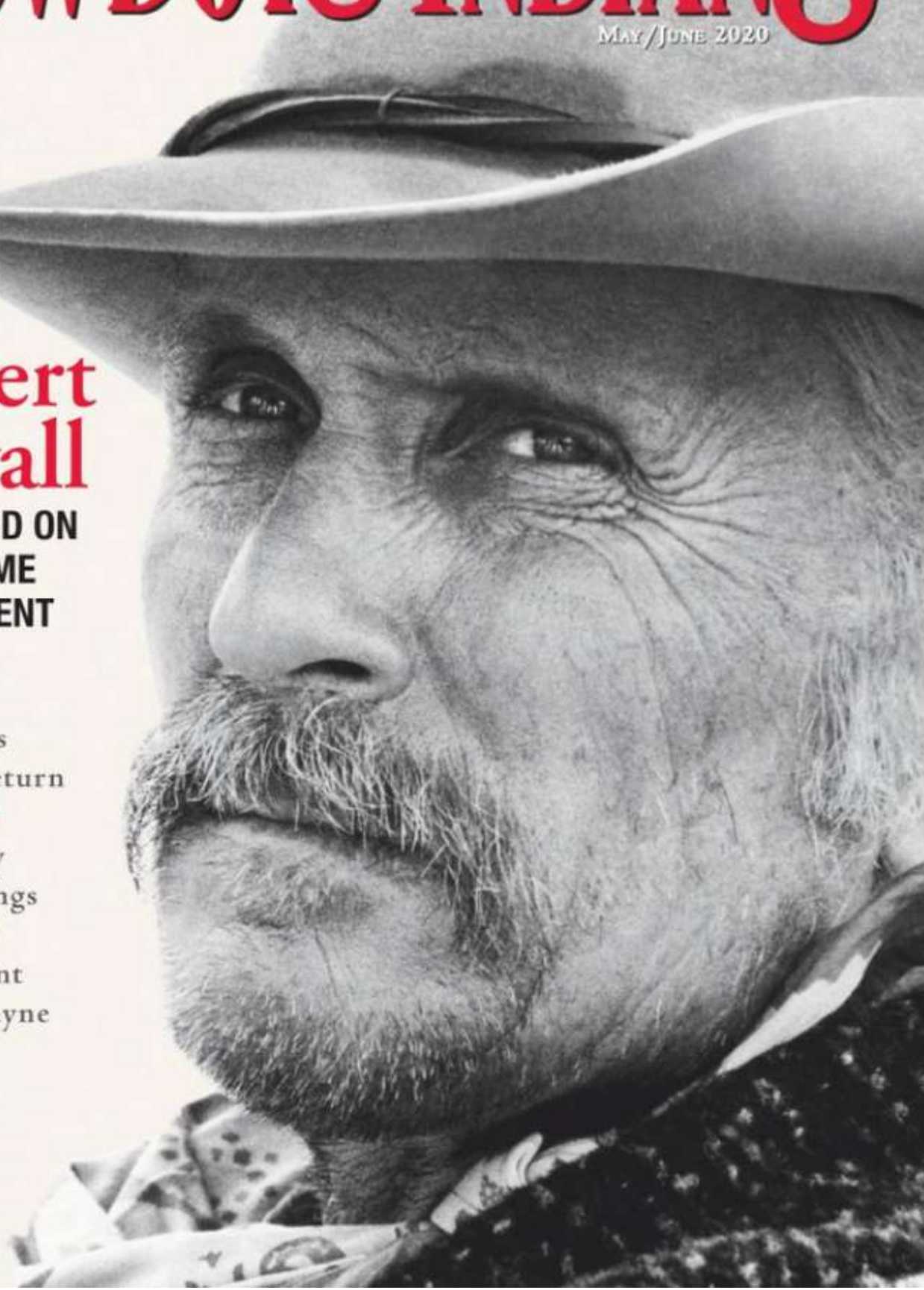
Robert Duvall

**THE LEGEND ON
HIS LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD**

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ON THE COVER:
Robert Duvall in *Lonesome Dove*.
Photography by JT Vintage.
Duvall received the Western Heritage Awards' lifetime achievement prize at a ceremony in April in Oklahoma City.





MIRAVAL MODE

A LUXURIOUS TEXAS HILL COUNTRY RESORT OFFERS EXPERIENCES RANGING FROM ADVENTUROUS TO INDULGENT, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON DISCONNECTING FROM TECHNOLOGY AND EMBRACING THE WORLD AROUND YOU.

By Rhonda Reinhart

BEFORE EMBARKING ON A TRIP TO Miraval Austin, it helps if you know the answer to one simple question: What's your purpose? Opened early last year in the heart of Texas Hill Country, on the site of the former Travaasa Austin resort, Miraval Austin is neighbored by 220 acres of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve overlooking Lake Travis. The setting is as beautiful as it is serene, and I immediately felt lighter the moment I set foot on the property—or, as the resort's motto suggests, life started to feel a little more in balance. Like the flagship Miraval resort and spa situated outside Tucson, Arizona, the



Austin offshoot is a Choose Your Own Adventure-style retreat, offering unique activities for nearly every type of traveler. Whether you're in search of adventure, relaxation, or wellness of mind or body, Miraval's experienced planners can help you create a personalized itinerary for whatever your soul desires.

When I visited the property last fall, my purpose was to get a taste of everything the resort had to offer. I had recently left my full-time job as a magazine editor to try out life as a freelancer, so I was a woman in transition and, therefore, a prime candidate for Miraval's mindfulness-based programming. A little bit of adventure sounded good to me, but so did some rest and relaxation. And who doesn't need to recommit to their mental and physical well-being every now and then? For my two-night stay in one of the resort's Dreamcatcher rooms, which are outfitted with the plushiest, coziest featherbeds I've ever experienced, I booked a spa treatment, some meditation classes, a tour of the property's on-site



farm, and a session with one of Miraval's equine specialists.

Upon check-in, I was happy to discover that Miraval's 20,000-square-foot Life in Balance Spa sat just a few steps from my room. I had a facial scheduled the day I arrived, a treatment my dull skin desperately needed, but I

also had a new mystery novel I couldn't wait to crack open, and there was a chaise in the spa's relaxation room that was calling my name. The treatment I chose, the Vitamin C Facial, was billed as an intensive treatment that would brighten and stimulate skin—and, best of all, the facial promised instant results. When my



PHOTOGRAPHY: (ALL IMAGES) COURTESY MIRAVAL/AUSTIN

YOUR CUSTOM JOURNEY AWAITS

THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT MIRAVAL AUSTIN.

For the Thrill Seeker

For the adventurous among us, there's no better way to take in Miraval's surrounding nature than from the top of a 25-foot pole. Part of the resort's Outdoor Adventure series, the Quantum Leap experience requires participants to ascend the pole—harnessed and helmeted, of course—then say goodbye to their comfort zone as they make a sky-high leap. But the pole jump is just the beginning of the bold activities that await at Miraval Austin. With Swing and a Prayer, for instance, you can face your fears while swinging from a cable 35 feet above the ground. Meanwhile, the Hill Country Challenge Course—complete with high ropes and low ropes—takes you through a series of obstacles meant to help you set goals for yourself, then taste the triumph once you accomplish them. Throw in slacklining, hatchet throwing, archery, and a climbing wall, and you've got a full schedule of adrenaline-inducing experiences. On the dining front, adventure comes by way of the popular Just Cook for Me experience, in which executive chef Ben Baker and his team prepare their choice of mouth-watering dishes. The samples served are a complete surprise to diners, but they're guaranteed to be delicious. Even better, they're each paired with a fine wine.

For the Chill Seeker

In addition to Miraval Austin's roster of relaxing activities, every guest room at the resort comes equipped with a meditation pillow, Tibetan singing bowl, and guided meditation TV channels, which means you don't even have to leave your room to get a meditation fix. But you do have to leave your room to check out the Life in Balance Spa, which features 30 treatment rooms, a pool, salon, sauna, and steam room. Treatment highlights include *Pranayama-dina*, which means “flying



breath” in Sanskrit. A Miraval Austin exclusive treatment, this tension-taming floating massage lets you rock gently in a silk sling as your guide massages your muscles from below, using skilled foot techniques.

For the Health Nut

With interactive courses such as Restoring Bone Broth, Flower to Root Cooking, Mindful Grocery Shopping, and Healthy Gut, Healthy You, Miraval Austin has your nutrition needs covered. Plus, the resort's kitchen offers healthful and sustainably sourced food morning, noon, and night, including fresh eggs

and produce harvested from the on-site Cypress Creek Farm. Fitness enthusiasts will also love Miraval's wide array of yoga classes, as well as the 5,600-square-foot Body Mindfulness Center, where guests can partake in spin classes, cardio drumming, kickboxing, and more. For a Texas twist on getting fit, sign up for Country Line Dancing, You're in Austin, after all, so why not burn some calories while sweating to the country oldies?

For the Soul Searcher

If a spiritual quest is what brings you to Miraval, start your journey with the Cleansing Ceremony. In this energy-cleansing workshop, holistic healer Courtney Parnell helps guests let go of energy that no longer serves them while sharing the purifying properties of plants such as palo santo and sage. Other offerings include tarot card workshops and a session called Cosmic Conversations, in which astrologer Emily Klintworth uses the time, date, and place of your birth to explore ideas about karma and reincarnation. But if you really want to look inward, the Miraval Equine Experience will help you identify any patterns of thought and behavior that might be holding you back.

—R.R.

50-minute session was over, my skin really did glow, and I felt more relaxed than I had in ages. Still dressed in my robe and slippers, I grabbed my book and made a beeline to the spa lounge, where expansive windows let in spectacular Hill Country views. It was the best possible way to kick off my stay.

Because Miraval encourages living in the moment—a foreign concept for so many of us these days—cell phones and digital devices are permitted in designated areas only. As someone who checks email and Instagram about a thousand times a day, I had a hard time sliding into “Miraval Mode” at first, but by day two, I was ready to embrace being untethered from technology. I popped out of bed early that day, turned off my iPhone, and headed to Morning Meditation. I’ve struggled with meditation in the past—my mind instantly turning to my to-do list or messages that need responses or even just some random thought about a Netflix series I recently streamed—so



I was determined to master the art of meditation this time. As our guide led a small group of us through the various stages of meditation, encouraging us to breathe deeply, relax, and give thanks, I managed to stay focused most of the time. My mind wandered a few times, but

as with any journey, it’s about progress, not perfection, so I still counted it as a win.

It wasn’t until my final day at the resort, however, that Miraval’s mission came fully into focus. During my one-on-one session with equine specialist Paula Basden, I participated in a course called

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Common Ground. In this experience, you move a horse around a pen without touching or speaking, all in an effort to help you identify your communication strengths and challenges. "This is about lifemanship and not about horsemanship," Basden said. "It's about gaining some insights into how you show up in the major relationships that you're in and how you can change some of the behaviors and actions that you take and the way that you relate to the people you really care about." As Basden explained it, horses are hard-wired for connection, and because of their natural instincts, they're able to give us immediate feedback about what's going on inside of us.

"I never know what's going to happen when I put someone down in the arena with a horse," she said. "Sometimes they get in the arena and they start crying." I nodded as Basden spoke, even though I didn't really understand how such a beautiful creature could make someone cry. But before I knew it, I was down in the arena myself, standing in front of a 1,200-pound horse named Pepper, who stared at me in silence as tears rolled down my face. I had spent the past few minutes frustrated because Pepper wasn't moving in the direction I wanted her to. After a while, I gave up, which, admittedly, is something I tend to do when things get too difficult. As Basden and I discussed my frustrations, Pepper strolled over and looked at me with her big, blinking eyes, and I think I know what she was trying to tell me. She was giving me a second chance.

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