

Previews

Texas State Fair opens today

For a while there, it almost felt like the Texas Sesquicentennial was over.

We heartily celebrated all of the really significant anniversaries in Texas' illustrious 150th birthday celebration earlier this year and then wearily said, "Get thee behind us sesqui...susqua... whatever you're called. We've had it up to here with you."

And just when you thought it was out of mind, some pesky sesquicentennial Joe Bob, who actually revels in all that sesquicentennial trivia, doesn't hesitate to remind us all that this year's State Fair of Texas offers its biggest, best and longest-running extravaganza — and one final sesquicentennial stab.

In this, the year of the giant Texas birthday celebration, the best is yet to come. The State Fair of Texas is nigh.

The fair, located in Fair Park in Dallas, is one of those experiences that says to all who attend, "Everything's bigger and better in Texas."

Officially designated "Texas 150," the fair is a celebration of the state's sesquicentennial and the fair's own centennial.

The gates officially open today and festivities will continue for 31 straight days until October 26. The fair grounds are open daily from 7 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and exhibit buildings are open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Adults get in for \$5, children ages 5 to 11 get in for \$2, children under 5 get in free at all times and senior citizens get in free on Tuesdays. There are \$1-off weekday admission discounts.

The fair just underwent \$18 million worth of renovation and restoration in order to showcase a diverse slate of activities.

There'll be exhibits, crafts, cooking, fireworks, animals, a flea market, a miniature horse show, a quarter horse show, concerts, plays, wandering impromptu acts, rides, a

Music lovers can schedule their trip to the fair to coincide with these dates: Sept. 28 — T. Graham Brown; Sept. 29 — Steve Wariner; Oct. 3 and 10 — the Mac Band; Oct. 4 — Keith Stegall; Oct. 5 — Jim Collins; Oct. 11 — the Maines Brothers Band;

you can enter that competition as well. The fair is even catering to professional pig racing fans. Decked out in custom racing silks, the pigs will be going for glory as they squeal around "Porkchop Downs."

Oct. 11 is the only weekend that you might really want to consider avoiding the fair, unless you're an experienced veteran of the annual Texas - Oklahoma football weekend, or you enjoy sitting in traffic for hours. Enough said?

There's always been a certain flair to the State Fair of Texas. From its very beginnings in 1886, when the fair actually split into two rival fairs only to see them both lose money, the need to be "Texanic" in scale has been the guiding goal.

By the time the Texas Centennial rolled around in 1936, the fair had to be rebuilt to live up to the expectations of a demanding public. Not unlike this year's fair, millions of dollars were spent. *Definitely* unlike this year's fair, there were nude dancers on the Midway in 1936.

The 1936 fair lasted 178 days, and drew 6.35 million people. And imagine what \$25 million in 1936 dollars was compared to the \$18 million worth of improvements of this year's fair. They went all out fifty years ago.

And then there is the bizarre. The 1887 fair had one of the more unusual exhibits to appear not just at a state fair, but anywhere — a replica of the Washington Monument made entirely of human teeth and Texas-raised camels. Honest.

Of course, no state fair would be complete if there weren't the heated livestock and homecrafts competitions.

And if you think you look a lot like that towering cowboy, Big Tex, you can enter that competition as well.

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Big Tex welcomes visitors to the Texas State Fair. With size 70 shoes and a 75-gallon hat, the 52-foot tall statue made its debut in 1952. The theme for this year's fair is "Texas 150," a celebration of the state's sesquicentennial and the fair's centennial.

car show, games, diving, football, pig races, ice skating, parades, beauty queens, dancers, professional wrestling and gymnastics. And even that isn't all.

At 7 p.m. each night there will be a parade featuring parade-type staples such as marching bands and beauty queens. A fireworks display will follow at 7:50 p.m.

Oct. 12 — Little Joe and La Familia; Oct. 13 — Stallion; Oct. 17 — Ultimate Force; Oct. 18 — Frenchie Burke; Oct. 19 — Exile; Oct. 20 — Randy Travis; Oct. 24 — Jewel Akens and the Boys; Oct. 25 — Chance; Oct. 26 — Sweethearts of the Rodeo. Most concerts are scheduled for 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

A major exhibit attrac-

— by Tony Cornett