

## RIDE 'EM COWBOY

### Livestock show and rodeo begin this weekend

STORY BY MARIANO CASTILLO • GRAPHICS BY RUBEN DELUNA



Big houses, big hair, big belts and big cars — what makes something Texan is that it can be described as being big. This weekend the biggest event of them all will begin in Houston — The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

This year's activities includes 17 days of concerts by famous country, tejano, and R&B artists, a rodeo featuring the top 64 cowboys and cowgirls and a variety of exhibitions in the Astrodome-Astrohall-Astroarena complex.

Show President Jim Bloodworth said the 67th annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, running Feb. 19 through March 7, has a wide appeal.

"We are excited about the 1999 show and believe that it offers something for everyone," Bloodworth said. "The attractions of the show appeal to both young and old, the rural farmer and the city dweller and people of all ethnicities and heritages."

Some of the artists performing will be featured on The Nashville Network's "Prime Time Country" variety show. The show will film twice at the Hide-out in Adventure Plaza, Feb. 19-23, and Feb. 25-March 1.

Tickets are free, but only 250 tickets are available each session. Artists scheduled to appear include Hank Williams Jr., Lee Roy Parnell, Neal McCoy, Jack Ingram, Faith Hill, Ricky Van Shelton, Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson and Wynonna Judd.

In addition to the country music stars who usually highlight the show, R&B stars Brian McKnight and Monica will perform on Saturday, Feb. 27 to celebrate Black Heritage Day.

The Houston rodeo has the highest award money in the world with a purse of \$731,757. Only the top contenders, as ranked by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA), are invited to participate. Events include bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping and barrel racing.

Meg Smith, a senior speech commu-

nications major, said the rodeo can be a great family outing.

"A lot of people think [the rodeo] is easy to attend and fun, and it can be done as a family event. That's what makes it inviting," Smith said.

In addition to the competition and entertainment value, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is also



an educational charity. This year, organizers expect that more than \$7.75 million will be distributed in scholarships and among other education related endeavors.

The festivities kicked off last weekend with the Rodeo Parade and

the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest. Texas A&M's Parsons Mounted Cavalry participated in the parade.

Victor Garza, a Pason's Mounted Cavalry member and a junior mechanical engineering major, said Parson's Mounted Cavalry is no stranger to the event.

"The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Parade is one of the several events Parsons Mounted Cavalry participates in every year," Garza said. "The people in Houston really enjoy having us there and it is exciting for us to be able to represent Texas A&M and the Corps of Cadets since the 'Cav' is the only existing ROTC mounted unit in the nation."

Thirty three thousand entries are expected this year in the livestock show. Professional breeders will compete the first week, while the junior livestock competition will feature high-school FFA and 4-H members from around the state.

Eleven students from Bryan will be among those competing in market steers, market barrows, dairy heifers, market goats and the dairy scramble events.

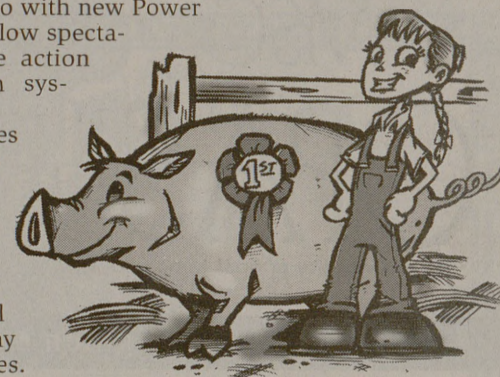
Several of the activities are aimed at entertaining the younger audiences. The diversity of this year's show can be seen in the various petting booths, which will feature exotic animals such as wallabies, llamas, miniature goats and Chinese silky chickens.

The final attraction is the Houston horse show. The competition includes both halter showmanship and performance classes. Seven different breeds of horses will compete. The donkey and mule show is also part of this event.

Other entertainment includes a laser and lights creation by Houston Industries. The show will also include pyrotechnics and video enhancements.

Houston Industries is also enhancing the technology at the Livestock Show and Rodeo with new Power Vision screens that allow spectators to catch all the action with high-resolution systems.

Other activities scheduled for this weekend include sheep dog trials, a tractor mechanics contest, an international trading post, a carnival, a special cowboy's church, pony rides and pig races.



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