

Trail Round-Up

Annual salute to cowboy heritage grows in size, scope

BY LISA KESTLER
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The original Chisholm Trail cattle drives lasted less than 20 years. The Chisholm Trail Round-Up aims to be around a little longer.

Organizers of the annual Stockyards festival, now in its 12th year, are trying to turn what used to be a "good ol' boy" street party into an internationally recognized event.

During its first 10 years, the festival was run on a volunteer basis, an approach that became increasingly unworkable as 75,000 to 100,000 people herded themselves to the Stockyards for the three-day event, explained Quentin McGown, hired last year as general manager of the Round-Up.

Hiring McGown to plan and promote the festival year-round was the first major step toward turning the Round-Up into a professional, family-oriented street party.

A major goal of this year's festival is to draw larger crowds in the daytime, instead of just to the ever-popular nighttime street dances. The festival will host a county fair — the first in Tarrant County for some 80 years — with winners in creative arts, fruit and vegetable categories competing in the State Fair later this year. There are also more gun fights than before, and the size of the Indian dance competition has been tripled.

"The goal is to get some more families, and gear it to out-of-town folks," said McGown. "We know we've got a built-in audience for the street dances."

Eventually, festival organizers hope for a "truly international event that will draw people to Fort Worth to start their summer vacations," said McGown. That truly international event might even run for 10 days, rather than three.

The festival probably will add a cattle drive next year, McGown said. Other plans call for three or four trail rides of different lengths, maybe even a re-riding of the original Chisholm Trail.

"We're starting to develop connections with other cities along the Chisholm Trail," McGown said, with an eye to recreating the original 200-mile route from Texas into Oklahoma.

This year, though, the Round-Up is based on the old favorites — including a temporary reopening of Billy Bob's Texas.

The giant honky-tonk will be open (with no cover charge) from noon to 2 a.m. Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. Live music will be furnished for dancing Saturday night.

Barbecue and souvenir concessions will be doing business inside, and so will the bar.

FRIDAY

7 a.m. — Trail ride registration, Boat Club and Robertson roads
7:30 a.m. — Cowboy breakfast, downtown
9 a.m. — Tarrant County Fair entries accepted, Mule Alley Barn E
10 a.m. — Chisholm Trail Ride begins
3 p.m. — Tarrant County Fair ribbons awarded
About 5:30 p.m. — Chisholm Trail Ride arrives downtown
5:30 p.m. — T.J. and New Frontier, Gazebo Stage
6 p.m. — Trail's End Barbecue, Livestock Exchange Building
6 p.m. — Texas Songwriters Concert with Geezinslaw Brothers, Larry Joe Taylor, Butch Hancock, Robert Earl Keene Jr., Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark
8 p.m. — Bill Pickett Memorial Rodeo, Cowtown Coliseum
8 p.m. — Twenty Nations Indian Dance Competition, Competition Arena
8 p.m. — Don Edwards and the Rush Creek Cowboys, Main Street Stage
8 p.m. — Ed Post and El Paso, Coliseum Stage
9 p.m. — Nanette Garner and Gary Burford with Rodeo Drive, Ellis Avenue Stage
9 p.m. — Street dances, all stages

SATURDAY

8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. — TCU/Chisholm Trail Writers' Workshop, Moody Building, Texas Christian University
9 a.m. — CASI Chili Cookoff, east end of Exchange Avenue
11 a.m. — Gary P. Nunn, Red Man Concert Stage
Noon — T.J. and New Frontier, Gazebo Stage
Noon — Geezinslaw Brothers, Red Man Concert Stage
1 p.m. — Darden Smith, Red Man Concert Stage
1 p.m. — Twenty Nations Indian Dance Competition, Competition Arena
2 p.m. — Bill Pickett Memorial Rodeo, Cowtown Coliseum

2:30 p.m. — Western parade
3:30 p.m. — Massey's Club 21 Jacksboro Hiway Band, Main Street Stage
4 p.m. — Skip Ewing, Red Man Concert Stage
4:45 p.m. — Baillie and the Boys, Red Man Concert Stage
5:45 p.m. — Big Shoot Out, East Exchange Avenue
6 p.m. — Gary P. Nunn, Red Man Concert Stage
6:30 p.m. — Shalako Country, Coliseum Stage
6:45 p.m. — Don Edwards and the Rush Creek Cowboys, Main Street Stage
7 p.m. — Geezinslaw Brothers, Red Man Concert Stage
8 p.m. — Cowtown Coliseum PRCNA Inaugural Rodeo
8 p.m. — Darden Smith, Red Man Concert Stage
8 p.m. — Centerfield, Ellis Avenue Stage
8:30 p.m. — T.J. and New Frontier, Gazebo Stage
9 p.m. — Skip Ewing, Red Man Concert Stage
9 p.m. — Street dances, all stages
9:30 p.m. — Pale Riders, Main Street Stage
10 p.m. — Baillie and the Boys, Red Man Concert Stage

SUNDAY

9 a.m. — Trailblazer VI Barbecue Cookoff, North Main and 25th Street
Noon — T.J. and New Frontier, Gazebo Stage
Noon — Pale Riders, Main Street Stage
Noon — Texas Old Time Fiddlers' Association Contest, Exhibits Building
1 p.m. — Twenty Nations Indian Dance Competition, Competition Arena
2:30 p.m. — Borderline Band, Ellis Avenue Stage
3 p.m. — Massey's Club 21 Jacksboro Hiway Band, Coliseum Stage
3:30 p.m. — Westbound Band, Gazebo Stage
5:45 p.m. — Big Shoot Out, East Exchange Avenue
6 p.m. — Gary P. Nunn, Red Man Concert Stage
7:30 p.m. — Bobby Bare, Red Man Concert Stage

The Round-Up gets off to a down-home start Friday with a Cowboy Breakfast for the whole town, 7:30-9 a.m., in front of the Chisholm Trail mural in Sundance Square.

The annual trail ride leaves from Eagle Mountain Lake at 10 a.m. Friday, arriving downtown around 5:30 p.m. Other highlights include the Texas Songwriters Country Concert Friday night, featuring Texas-grown writers and musicians.

There will be a working cowboy camp, the Twenty Nations Gathering and Pow Wow (with more than 200 Indian dancers in competition), a fiddlers' contest, a barbecue cookoff, a chili cookoff and three rodeos.

Gen. John T. Chain Jr., commander of the Air Force's Strategic Air Command, will lead a Western parade through the Stockyards at 2:30 p.m. Saturday.

And, of course, there will be street dances — which tend to draw crowds of 45,000 — ranging up and down the Stockyards from 9 p.m.-1 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

The good ol' boy, street-party image of the Round-Up is not gone — rest assured, the beer and food will flow as usual — but organizers hope to turn the festival into something more — "to capture the Western history of the city," as McGown says.

Activities like arts and crafts exhibits and the TCU/Chisholm Trail Writers' Workshop reveal the impact of the West on the finer things in life. "The history of the West still affects us in Texas, even though we may not be cowboys," McGown said.

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