

Young players give boost to ma

Mariachi musicians may not get the spotlight that superstars Christina Aguilera and Jennifer Lopez get, but mariachi music is here to stay.

Enduring interest in the century-old mariachi tradition is being fueled by a continuing influx of young players.

"Mariachi music is a big part of our culture and our heritage. For many kids, mariachi music is another way to connect with their past," said Rodri Rodriguez, producer of the Mariachi USA Festival going on this weekend in Los Angeles.

Held at the Hollywood Bowl, the two-day event features Mariachi Imperial de Mexico, Mariachi Mujer 2000 and the Mariachi USA Ballet. Also performing are Mariachi Los Arrieros from El Paso and San Antonio's Mariachi Campanas de America.

In the last two decades, mariachi instruction at the high school and university levels has increased, as well as mariachi competition and conferences throughout the country, but particularly in the Southwest.

Rodriguez said the increased academic and professional activities strongly supplement mariachi's widespread presence.

"Mariachi music is played everywhere from weddings and quinceañeras to Mother's Day and Valentine's Day serenades," said Rodriguez, who is working to integrate mariachi music into mainstream culture.

She has produced the mariachi festival at the Hollywood Bowl for the last 12 years and estimates annual attendance at more than 18,000 fans. In a new move this year, Rodriguez taped a "Mariachi USA" special that aired on pay-per-view TV late last month.

"We had tried to get the special aired on network TV, but the executives felt there was no audience for it," she said. "When the numbers come in, we're hoping to prove there is a big audience for this."

While preserving tradition is important, supporting youth who believe in that culture is vital.

San Antonio's annual Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza is one of the largest conferences in the country, bringing more than 1,500 students to town for



RAMIRO BURR
LATIN NOTES

mentary-level vocal competition winner at last year's festival.

Acosta said she was inspired to become a singer when she first saw Tejano singer Patsy Torres.

"I was only 3 years old, and she asked several children to get up onstage

with her to sing and dance," Acosta recalled. "Ever since then, I got into the music. At home, I would stand by the fireplace and sing songs like 'Little Mermaid' and 'Over the Rainbow.'"

After years of practicing rancheras, Acosta finally entered the Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza last November.

"When I grow up I want to become a singer because I like to make people happy and help them forget about the moments that felt bad for them," she said. "I like to sing because when I listen to radio, the music and the singers sound so wonderful."

Her musical influences include Linda Ronstadt, Aida Cuevas and Lucero, as well as Destiny's Child and Britney Spears.

When young singers such as Acosta show an interest in Tejano, norteño or mariachi, it bodes well for Mexican American culture, said Rudy "The Flash" Garza, a longtime mariachi fan and disc jockey at Houston's top Tejano station, KQQK-FM.

"All this helps preserve our culture," Garza said. "Whether we're Tejanos or norteño fans, it all starts with the music, and mariachi music is part of that. It's our original roots music."

Music news

The Fourth of July Star Spangled Festival at Lackland AFB on July 4 will feature a fireworks display and musical fireworks with David Lee Garza y Los Musicales, Los Kumbia Kings and Chris Chitsey.

Scheduled for release Tuesday is the soundtrack for "Crazy/Beautiful," a teen drama with a bicultural theme, starring Jay Hernandez and Kirsten Dunst. It features tracks from top alternative Latin and Anglo acts, including a new song in English by La Ley ("Everytime," also reprised in Spanish as "Siempre" as a bonus track) and Seven Mary Three's "Wait." Other participating acts include Fastball, Mellow Man Ace and Delinquent Habits.

Fans of West Coast norteño should check out the new sophomore set by Los Jardineros de Jesus Chavez Jr., "Cuatro Caminos." Chavez's father leads the veteran group Los Originales de San Juan.

Coming up is the latest by Los Traileros del Norte, "Recordando," which includes romantic norteño songs and is scheduled for a July 3 release.

Ramiro Burr covers the Latin music scene each week. For questions or comments, call (800) 555-1551, Ext. 3429, (210) 250-3429 or rburr@express-news.net.



COURTESY PHOTO

Victoria Acosta, 9, of San Antonio won a vocal competition winner at last year's Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza.

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CHOCOLAT (PG-13) 1:55-4:55 7:20-9:55	JOE DIRT (PG-13) 12:30-2:40 4:50-7:00 9:10
CROCODILE DUNDEE IN L.A. (PG) 12:15-2:30 4:45-7:00 9:15	KINGDOM COME (PG) 12:30-2:45 5:00-7:15 9:30
DOUBLE TAKE (PG-13) 1:00-3:05 5:10-7:15 9:20	O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU (PG-13) 12:05-2:20 4:40-7:00 9:20
DOWN TO EARTH (PG-13) 12:45-2:50 4:55-7:05 9:05	RECESS: SCHOOL'S OUT (G) 12:15-2:50 4:55-7:10
DRIVEN (PG-13) 1:40-4:40 7:10-9:10	SAVE THE LAST DANCE (PG-13) 12:00-2:35 5:10-7:45 10:10
ENEMY AT THE GATES (R) 7:00-9:50	SEE SPOT RUN (PG) 12:00-2:15 4:30
EXIT WOUNDS (R) 12:55-3:15 5:35-7:55 10:15	TOMCATS (R) 9:30
FREDDY GOT FINGERED (R) 12:30-2:40 4:50-7:00 9:10	TRAFFIC (R) 12:45-3:45 6:45-9:45

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DRIVEN (PG-13) 11:20-2:00 4:30-7:00 9:30	JOE DIRT (PG-13) 11:15-1:25 3:30-5:40 7:55-10:05
KINGDOM COME (PG) 11:30-1:15 3:35 5:50-8:00 10:15	SAVE THE LAST DANCE (PG-13) 11:30-2:15 4:50-7:20 9:50
CROCODILE DUNDEE IN L.A. (PG-13) 10:45-1:00 3:15 5:25-7:45 10:00	EXIT WOUNDS (R) 10:50-1:05 3:25 5:55-8:05 10:30

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