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December 01, 2007

Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza

The 2007 Ford Motor Company's Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza that unfolded Saturday night at the Municipal Auditorium ran with high emotion, from fear and excitement to pride and joy.

Almost a dozen mariachi troupes from elementary level to the world best — Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan — performed the heartland music of Mexico with verve and passion, delighting the capacity crowd of students, parents, instructors and music fans.

The crowd cheered and applauded even as the 12-member Mariachi Vargas, the silver metallic trim on their dark blue charro outfits glinting under the spotlights, began to stride on stage. Their opening run included the ebullient medley "Sones de Jalisco," as well as two poignant tunes "Dos Arbolitos," on love and companionship, and "Cuatro Milpas," a reflection on what used to be.

Though they played most old classics, the Vargas musicians played with enthusiasm and energy. They powered into the old chestnut "Rancho Grande," made famous by the late Tito Guizar, with youthful power and vigor.

Earlier, Mexico singer Azucena wowed the crowd as she belted out her tunes backed by San Antonio's 12-piece Mariachi Los Galleros.

Ramiro Burr

Ramiro Burr is a San Antonio Express-News music reporter and regionally syndicated columnist.



Music Resources

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 Ramiro Burr: Los Tovares bring variety to stage
 Ramiro Burr: Duranguense band Dezatados showcases versatility in first CD

Latest Entries

K-Paz singer slain; latest in series

Cafe Tacuba to touch down in SA

Concerts Calendar 12/4: Cafe, Inocentes, Tovares

Shakira's new DVD stunning, captivating

Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza

MVE tonight; group/vocal winners, NEW video

Weekender: Tovares, Mariachi Vargas, Celsuis

Mariachi Campanas, Los Inocentes in Christmas concerts

UPDATED W/Video - 2007 Mariachi Vargas: music+lyrical beauty = passion

Julio Iglesias - 'El Amor'

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Dressed in a light blue charro outfit, Azucena demonstrated her versatility as she sang the mournful "Lena de Perul," and the I'm-going-and-I'm-not-looking back tune "No Volvere."

Ramiro Burr: Dance off calories with Esquivel and others
 Ramiro Burr: It's all in the remix for Barcelona's Pinker Tones

The mariachi heavy-hitters were preceded on stage by the student troupe winners in the various categories in elementary, middle, high school and university level.

"Every year the competition gets tougher," said Jose Longoria, director of the Houston-based Las Patriotas, who took 2nd place in the middle school category. "But it's a fun experience, and a chance for the (Houston) students to learn in the workshops, and meet other young kids that are also into this music."

Ruben Prado, 14, of the San Marcos Mariachi Academy that was also competing, said he felt the fear and excitement of competition.

"The competition was hard, but I still liked coming here," he said standing next to his mother, during intermission. "The best part is was hanging with kids my age."

Cultural pride and community support were the reasons cited by Ford Motor Company spokesman Alvaro Cabal, that Ford has sponsored the annual gathering for 13 years.

"In certain years we have received a lot of responses. We've had sold out shows," Cabal said. "The people (fans) go back to our (automotive) dealers and tell us they went to the concert and that they appreciate the support we are doing.

"For me, it is such a great joy to see these kids, the new generation, embracing the music and discovering new things about it. At the same time, they enjoy the music's past, which is something you do not see quite often."

During Saturday's ceremonies, officials also presented the Ruben Fuentes Hall of Fame Award to Ernesto and Esmeralda Cortez for their contributions to mariachi music.

The concert Saturday capped a

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week-long schedule of events including workshops, school presentations, concerts and an art exhibit.

WINNERS LIST:

Elementary/Middle School

1st- Mariachi Tesoro de Tucson, Community Group, Tucson, AZ

2nd- Mariachi Los Patriotas, Patrick Henry Middle School, Houston

3rd- Mariachi Juvenil Halcon, Zapata Middle School, Zapata

High School

1st- Mariachi Halcon, Zapata High School, Zapata

2nd- Mariachi Primer Orgullo, Edinburg High School, Edinburg

3rd- El Mariachi Cotuleno, Cotulla High School, Cotulla

College/University

1st - Mariachi Nueva Generacion, Texas State University, San Marcos

2nd - Mariachi OLLU, Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio

3rd - Mariachi Veritas de Harvard, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

2007 Best (overall) Mariachi Vocalist in the U.S.

Esteban Velasquez, 18, Odessa High School, Odessa.

Other Mariachi Vocalist Competition Winners and their songs

Elementary/Middle School

1st- Angela Mendoza, 12, "El Crucifijo de Piedra," Poe Middle School, San Antonio

2nd- Samantha Arispe, 12, "El Gallo de Oro," MECA, Houston

3rd- Enny Velasquez, 13, "Cucurucucu Paloma," Patti Welder Magnet Middle School, Victoria

High School

1st- Esteban Velasquez, 18, "Si Te Vas," Odessa High School, Odessa

2nd- Xenia Adrian, 12th Grade, "El Mercader," HM King High School, Kingsville

3rd- Abigail Silva, 16, "El Crucifijo de Piedra," La Joya High School, Mission

College/University

Tie for first

1st- Selina Elizondo, 19, "El Crucifijo de Piedra," San Antonio College, San Antonio

1st - Renee' Ganceres, college junior, "Por Amor," Texas State University, San Marcos

2nd - Alison Garcia, 21, "Te Quise Olvidar," Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio

3rd - Beatriz Corral, 19, "Con Fecha de Manana," Southwestern College, San Diego, CA

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