Latin Notes Now

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 glistening under the spotlight, began to stride onstage. 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.

**Music Resources**

- E-mail Ramiro at rburr@express-news.net
- Ramiro Burr's blog
- RamiroBurr.com
- More Burr Columns
- Burr Columns at Chron.com
- Latin Gossip
- AmigosRadio.com
- YouTube.com
- Ultimate Band List
- Tours.com
- Ticketmaster
- Pollstar
- allmusic.com

**Music News Sites**

- Billboard
- La Opinión

**Interesting Links**

- Puroparty.com
- BNET
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**Local Headlines**

Ramiro Burr: Shakin' it's tour DVD is next best thing to live concert
Ramiro Burr: Los Tovares bring variety to stage
Ramiro Burr: Duranguense band Dezatados showcases versatility in first CD
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."

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
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,
"Cucurrucucu 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