

State Fair opens today.

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Byline: Peter Roper

Aug. 24--It's Fair time.

The 2007 Colorado State Fair is opening its doors today for an 11-day run that organizers hope will be graced by large crowds, dry weather, and top-flight entertainment.

The annual extravaganza begins at 10 a.m. for a full slate of competition and entertainment throughout the day and evening. The PRCA Dodge Rodeo gets under way at 6 p.m. and Fairgoers who like motorized thrills instead of horned ones, can take in the motorcycle daredevils of the Boost Mobile Freestyle MX Tour in the Events Center at 8 p.m.

Fair officials are hoping for a dry 11 days this year, after severe rain and windstorms hounded the Fair on three days last summer, holding Fair attendance at 452,000 visitors n about 10,000 short of the 2005 total.

The National Weather Service is forecasting a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms today and tonight, with a daytime high around 90 degrees. Saturday and Sunday are expected to be sunny and dry, with only a 10 percent chance of isolated rain.

Fair staff were putting the finishing touches on preparations Thursday n giving the carnival rides provided by Crabtree Amusements a last safety inspection before today's opening. This will be the second year that Crabtree Amusements has provided the carnival for the Fair after impressing the State Fair Authority Board with last year's performance. The Fair is where urban and rural Coloradoans cross paths at everything from livestock sales and horse shows to the nightly concerts.

This year's concert line-up is that traditional mixture of rock and country musicians n with a sprinkling of comedy and thrills thrown in.

Classic rockers such as Los Lonely Boys and the Doobie Brothers (Sept. 2 in the Budweiser Rodeo Arena) are on the schedule this year, along with Peter Frampton (Aug. 31 in the Events Center).

Country music lovers can catch newcomer Josh Turner after the rodeo Monday and recording star Clay Walker the following night.

And if comedy is more your style, "Weird Al" Yankovic, the master of music parodies, will bring his show to the Events Center as well on Thursday.

Tickets for all the evening entertainment can be purchased through the Fair Box Office at 520-9090 or by going online to www.ticketmaster.com.

This year's Fair is reaching back to the golden era when Coloradoans also came to Pueblo by rail. Saturday, the Colorado State Fair Express in an 11-car train of historic cars provided by the Union Pacific Railroad will travel from Denver to Pueblo, arriving at Union Depot at noon. More than 300 passengers are expected to make the trip on the Express.

The PRCA Rodeo is as much a tradition at the Fair as ice cream cones, cold beer and funnel cakes. It will get under way at 6 p.m. today in the Budweiser Rodeo Arena. Tickets are \$10 for today's performance. The competition will continue through Sunday night.

Bull-riding fans can catch the horned twisters Thursday and Aug. 31, in the arena when the Professional Bull Riders compete, starting at 8 p.m. Ticket prices range from \$16 to \$49.

HOURS

- Admission gates are open from 10 a.m. until midnight.
- Food and concession stands are open for business at 11 a.m.

MIDWAY

- Carnival rides open at noon on weekdays and 10 a.m. on weekends.
- Cost: Unlimited ride band is \$25 per day or individual tickets are \$1 apiece.

PARKING

- Public parking lots are located west of the Fairgrounds off Prairie Avenue and south of the Fairgrounds between Mesa and Northern avenues.
- Parking fees are \$7 for the Preferred Lot and \$5 for the South Lot.

SHUTTLE

- A free shuttle operates daily. The shuttle runs every 30 minutes until 5 p.m. and every 15 minutes after 5 p.m. The shuttle departs the Midtown Shopping Center parking lot and arrives at the State Fair's main gate on Prairie Avenue. The shuttle service hours are from 10 a.m. to midnight on Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.
- A courtesy shuttle is available to transport Fairgoers from the South and Preferred parking lots to the Fairgrounds.

PRICES

Gate admission:

- Monday through Thursday, \$5.
- Friday and Saturday, \$8.
- Children 6-and-younger are admitted free when accompanied by an adult.

ENTERTAINMENT

- Grandstand Arena PRCA Dodge Rodeo, 6:45 p.m., \$10.
- Events Center Boost Mobile Freestyle MX Tour, 8 p.m., Kids (4-11) \$16, Adults \$21.

TODAY'S SPECIAL

- Stop by American Furniture Warehouse and pick up a \$5 off coupon for the 2007 Colorado State Fair PRCA Dodge Rodeo.
- Purchase a Wrangler product in a Pueblo retailer and get free admission to to the PRCA Dodge Rodeo.

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