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# CoJo highlights fair's concerts

LOVINGTON, N.M. – For years, the PRCA rodeo was the big drawing card for the Lea County Fair and Rodeo, but that changed a few years ago.

The Lea County Fair Board and the Lea County Commission have worked in unison to create an annual concert series that makes Lovington, New Mexico, the place to be in August. It's a world-class exposition and is scheduled for July 29-Aug. 6 at the Lea County Fairgrounds.

But one event may be helping another. This year's concert series is highlighted by country artist Cody Johnson, who will close out the fair during his show after the Saturday, Aug. 6, rodeo performance.

"Cody Johnson is right at the top of the charts right now," said Larry Wheeler, the fair board's chairman. "We're very fortunate to get him. I've heard there may have been other venues that wanted him for that date, but we were able to get him to Lovington.

"I think our PRCA rodeo had a lot to do with him coming here."

Johnson played the fair in 2019, and he was greeted by throngs of fans awaiting to hear his style of music. A former bull rider who also ropes, Johnson's ode to his past life as a rodeo cowboy, "Dear Rodeo," has hit a trigger with fans across the country.

"It's so hard to watch the fight to get the cowboy back on the radio," Johnson said in a statement on his website. "Because that's who I am and the lifestyle I live. I can't sacrifice my integrity for who I am. I am just being myself."

"Dear Rodeo" also inspired an autobiographical documentary, "Dear Rodeo: The Cody Johnson Story," and it showcased Johnson's growing up in rodeo, his passion for the sport and how his life transitioned to music.

Johnson may be the headliner in Lovington, but he's just one of several big acts that will be featured in the concert series:

- Friday, July 29: Ramon Ayala y sus Bravos del Norte and La Leyenda will be the featured acts during the annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration on opening night.
- Tuesday, Aug. 2: Randall King grew up in west Texas, and his sound reflects that.
- Wednesday, Aug 3: Zach Williams has seen his life change over time, from being a hard-playing and hard-partying musician to a powerful Christian artist.
- Thursday, Aug. 4: Randy Rogers Band has been around a while, and the chemistry shines as brightly today as it did two decades ago.
- Friday, Aug. 5: Joe Nichols has been singing country songs for two decades, with songs like "Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off" being among his hits.

"I'm just really thrilled about the lineup we were able to put together," Wheeler said. "Randall King is one of the up-and-coming, big-time artists. I'm looking forward to seeing Zach Williams, and a lot of people love the Randy Rogers Band. Joe Nichols has been popular for a lot of years."

When mixed together, each act makes for one phenomenal series.