

Face plant



Jeff Malet/Daily Bulletin

Ben Cody Robinson of Boerne, Texas, takes the painful way off his saddle bronc during competition Sunday at

the San Dimas Western Days inaugural rodeo. Despite appearances, Robinson walked away. Story/B1

Rodeo helps city round up new visitors

By Robert Monroe
Daily Bulletin

SAN DIMAS — The Western Days celebration has been a part of the city's social calendar for 28 of its 35 years of existence.

But it wasn't until this year that the town with the wooden sidewalks hosted the quintessential Western event — a rodeo. With the newly added weekend event drawing 4,000 people both Saturday and Sunday, organizers said the celebration will never be the same. The bronc buckin' event was so popular that officials were turning people away Sunday.

"It's a wonderful problem to have," Chamber of Commerce President Janet Larsen Palmer said. "This is the best Western Days we've ever had."

After years of "dreaming" about a rodeo, the city finally was sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, which made San Dimas a new stop on its tour. Western Days kept its original components, a street fair, carnival, Little Miss San Dimas Pageant and other attractions, but the rodeo provided the draw for visitors who had never been to the event before.

"I think it's pretty terrific," said Sharon Strong, 40, of Glendora as she wrote out a check for a Western Days T-shirt. "It makes it special."

"For a first-year effort, I don't see any problem with it," said Maryanne Stubblefield, who sold Strong the shirt.

The Arrow Highway rodeo didn't detract from the Bonita Avenue street fair a few blocks north. Larsen said initial estimates put the crowd for the three-day event between 15,000 and 18,000, a 50 percent jump from last year — not bad for a city with 35,000 residents.

Craft booths lined the street for several blocks and vendors hawked items ranging from teriyaki burgers to Western wear to rare coins.

Not all the wares would classify as impulse buys. The framed, torch-rendered steelworks depicting Western scenes, sold by Brian Jones, 31, of Mammoth, started at \$2,000 apiece. Jones, a former trick skier whose started his own poster and art business, said he hadn't sold anything yet over the weekend but still "had a great response" at the first Southern California show he has attended.

"It's neat," said Jones, scanning the bustling street. "The Western theme is definitely here."

Western Days was a product of the same folks who voted to revitalize downtown San Dimas with the Western motif some 30 years ago, said Dave Harbin, president of the San Dimas Historical Society.

The Festival of Western Arts, hosted in April and November, originated around the same time, he said.



The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association made San Dimas an official stop on its tour this year during the city's Western Days celebration. Dennis M. Swearingen of Simi Valley, above, falls to the ground and hopes his horse does not hit him during the saddle bronc competition Sunday at the San Dimas Western Days Rodeo. At left, Sharron Berry helps her granddaughter, 14-month-old Brook Henney of Azusa, off the pony ride after finding out the toddler really does not like ponies yet.

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