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'Big Squeeze' finals slated for Saturday

Austin to host accordion contest final playoffs for the first time

APRIL 23, 2014 (AUSTIN, TX) – The final competition in Texas Folklife's statewide accordion contest, "The Big Squeeze," will take place Saturday, April 26, in Austin for the first time in the competition's eight-year history. The Bullock Texas State History Museum will host the final playoffs, normally held in Houston, for the popular competition that has expanded this year to include grand prizes in three categories, polka, zydeco, and conjunto.

The public is invited to this free celebration from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the Lone Star Plaza as Texas Folklife celebrates all things accordion with the final playoffs and a concert, naming three Big Squeeze champions. While judges deliberate the winners, the crowd will be entertained by an all-star musical line-up.

This year's Big Squeeze playoffs at the Bullock will be headlined by Grammy Award-winning Sunny Saucedá, a Tejano star who likes to collaborate and "mix it up" in other genres, allowing him to stand out, breakout, and crossover into one of the top solo artists performing today. Also on this dynamite program are zydeco accordionist Curtis Poullard and the Creole Zydeco Band and the Austin-based Fabulous Polkasonics famous for their "old country polkas." The 2013 Big Squeeze Champ, Michael Ramos, will join this exciting group of musicians.

Texas Folklife is an Austin-based non-profit organization dedicated to presenting and preserving the diverse cultures and living heritage of the Lone Star State. The Big Squeeze is a program that seeks to preserve Texas's musical traditions by encouraging accordion players ages 21 and under to showcase their performance abilities in a variety of genres.

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A total of 49 contestants – the largest number in the event's history – entered the competition this year. After eight showcases held around Texas, nine finalists were named last week. Three champions will be selected after the playoffs, one in each category. Finalists in the zydeco category are: Randall Jackson of Dallas, Je'an-Trel Jolivette of Marvel, and DeJe'an Jolivette of Marvel. Finalists in polka are: Rebecca Huck of Harker Heights, Chris Trojacek of Ennis, and Garrett Neubauer of Altair. Finalists in the conjunto category are: Aaron Salinas of San Antonio, Luis Gonzales of Grand Prairie, and Mariano Resendez of La Joya.

All three winners will perform at Texas Folklife's highly acclaimed annual Accordion Kings & Queens Festival, now celebrating its 25th year, at Houston's Miller Outdoor Theatre on Saturday, June 7, 2014. In addition, the three Big Squeeze 2014 Grand Prize winners will receive a prize package valued at more than \$4,000, including a cash prize, a new Hohner accordion, performance opportunities in Austin and Houston, publicity, and other professional development opportunities.

Come early, stay late, and bring your folding chairs and dancing shoes for this rain-or-shine event. For more information, visit TexasFolklife.org, or call (512) 441-9255.

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About the Bullock Museum

The Bullock Texas State History Museum in downtown Austin tells the unfolding story of the history, culture and people of Texas. One of the most popular attractions in Central Texas, the museum has welcomed over 6 million visitors since it opened in 2001. The Bullock Museum and IMAX Theatre are located at 1800 N. Congress Avenue, between the State Capital complex and the University of Texas campus, and are open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. For more, visit www.TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

About Texas Folklife

Texas Folklife is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to presenting and preserving the diverse cultures and living heritage of the Lone Star State. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2014, Texas Folklife has honored the authentic cultural traditions passed down within communities, explored their importance in contemporary society, and celebrated them by providing accessible and joyful arts experiences. It is located in Austin, Texas, in the SoCo neighborhood—one of the city's vibrant commercial and arts district.