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RONNIE DUNN CAPTURES THE ELECTRICITY OF RODEO IN NEW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AT THE COWBOY

the same rush: rodeo photography by ronnie dunn, Opens Oct. 1 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City

OKLAHOMA CITY, Date tk 2026 – Country music icon Ronnie Dunn has spent decades stepping onto stages in front of thousands, chasing the moment when anticipation turns electric. Now, a new exhibition at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum reveals how Dunn has found that same feeling on the other side of a camera.

the same rush: rodeo photography by ronnie dunn opens to the public Thursday, Oct. 1, at The Cowboy, offering an up-close look at rodeo through Dunn's lens.

The exhibition captures the speed, grit and unpredictability of the sport — the moments when the gate swings open and preparation gives way to instinct. From riders and ropers to barrel racers and bucking stock, Dunn's photographs put viewers close to the action, capturing not only the spectacle of rodeo but the fleeting moments that happen in between.

For Dunn, photography and performing are more closely connected than they might first appear.

"There's a moment right before it happens — whether you're walking onto a stage or watching that gate open — when you know something is coming, but you don't know exactly how it's going to turn out," Dunn said. "That's the rush I'm chasing with a camera. You commit to the moment, and if you're lucky, you catch something real," said Dunn.

That element of uncertainty runs throughout the exhibition. Rodeo offers few second chances: the rider nods, the gate opens and the next several seconds unfold in real time. Dunn approaches photography much the same way, looking for the fraction of a second when motion, expression and emotion come together in a single frame.

The result is a collection that feels less like an observer looking in and more like someone standing inside the arena.

“Ronnie Dunn has spent his career understanding the power of a moment and what it takes to connect with an audience,” said Pat Fitzgerald, president and CEO of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. “These photographs bring that same instinct to rodeo. They capture the skill and athleticism, but also the tension, emotion and unpredictability that make the sport so compelling. It’s a perspective on the contemporary West that feels completely at home at The Cowboy.”

A longtime photography enthusiast, Dunn has turned his camera toward Western subjects, wildlife and landscapes in addition to rodeo. With the same rush, the celebrated singer and songwriter brings together two creative pursuits built around timing, instinct and the willingness to put yourself in the middle of an uncertain moment.

The exhibition asks viewers to consider what performing, photographing and competing in rodeo have in common: showing up, committing completely and accepting that there are no guarantees about what comes next.

Different arenas. Same rush.

the same rush: rodeo photography by ronnie dunn opens to the public Thursday, Oct. 1, at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63rd St. in Oklahoma City. The exhibition is included with general Museum admission. The exhibition closes Dec. 29, 2026.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COWBOY & WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is the nation’s premier institution dedicated to the history, art and culture of the American West. Founded in 1955, the Museum houses an internationally renowned collection of more than 35,000 Western and Native American artworks and artifacts, including the world’s most extensive collections of American rodeo photography, barbed wire, saddlery and early rodeo trophies.

Through its exhibitions, programs and scholarship, the Museum preserves and interprets the continuing story of the West, illuminating the people, traditions and ideas that continue to shape American culture. With more than 10 million visitors from around the world, it stands as a leading authority on the enduring legacy of the American West.