

- Home
- Camping
- Golfing
- Exploring Texas
- Vacations
- Lakes & Boating
- Hunting & Fishing
- Texas Venues
- Reviews
- Fun Stuff

Larry Joe Taylor's 2012 24th Annual Music Festival Review

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In April, some scenic, peaceful, and gently rolling countryside that is normally home to several grazing cattle, wild turkeys, and other wildlife plus an interesting resident hippie comes alive with over 35,000 music fans, camping gear of all kinds, speakers blasting outstanding country music, lots of laughing, plus flavorful aromas from the campers, chili cook off competitors, and a variety of food vendors. The thousands of cars, motorcycles, and campers start rolling in on Monday to Larry Joe Taylor's 380 acre Melody Mountain Ranch and the cows meander to the back 40 and the resident hippie adds a friendly smile to his face and sits back in his chair outside his residence and takes it all in. It's the start of another fun and lively 5 day [Larry Joe Taylor Music Festival](#) - his 24th annual!



This is already the biggest and badest Texas country music festival in Texas, in fact it won "Music Festival of the Year" again. And this year it's five days of music, two stages, and 48 performers singing their hearts out for the 35,000 fans. Each year it seems to get an extra day and more talented singer songwriters and when I look at the lineup, for the last four years I've said "wow, this has got to be the best lineup ever!" And this year was no exception with Pat Green, Roger Creager, Gary P. Nunn, Robison Brothers, Jason Borland, Kevin Fowler, Cory Morrow, Reckless Kelly, Randy Rogers Band, Jason Borland & the Stragglers, and lots more. Before you know it this Texas music festival will be longer than the 18 days of music at Kerrville and I'll be there for all 18 days.

Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival Music Lineup



The Festival is home to two main stages - the smaller more intimate Allsup's Acoustic Stage and the huge Bud Light Stage. The covered Allsup's Stage probably holds 200 or more lawn chairs under the roof and lots more coolers and lawn chairs in the grassy area surrounding the covered part of the stage. The fans that make it up early for the music starting around noon on the Allsup's stage are there for the music and respectful of the musicians and MC Tommy Alverson does a great job of keeping them quiet and orderly! Between 3 and 5 after the music ends on the Allsup's Stage, there is a mass migration of coolers, chairs, and music fans to the Bud Light Stage.



This stage is huge with monster speakers, two jumbo trons broadcasting the music, a VIP seating area in back of the stage, and VIP sky boxes above both side of the stage. The stage faces a good acre or more of open area that each day quickly fills with music fans of all ages - lots of whom must be skipping a lot of classes at nearby Tarleton State. And they don't leave until the music stops around 12:30 AM or later. Around the perimeter of the open area are several food vendors and other merchants. Behind the merchants are the acres of campers and tents.



I could go on and on and on about how great all of the bands and performers were - there is not a bad one in the lot. But it would take several pages of text to describe each musician and what we liked about them and it might be longer than "War & Peace" and take a couple cases of beer to write and several days to read! So, in the interest of time, here are our highlights by day and stage:

Allsup's Stage - 25 very talented performers and bands over 5 days with a perfect mixture of newcomers to seasoned veterans:

↳ **Tuesday** - it's impossible to pick one highlight for the first day when the choices are the Robison Brothers, Hayes Carll & The Poor Choices plus a dynamic and funny set by Daryl Dodd, Dave Perez, and Larry Joe - what a great way to kick off LJT's 24th Annual Texas Music Festival and well worth the price of the weekend tickets

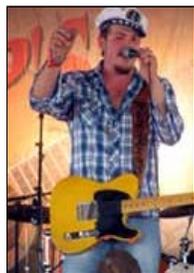


↳ **Wednesday** - you either like him or say "who and what was that" but we love Ray Wylie Hubbard and as usual he put on a great show with his humor and off the wall songs like "Snake Farm" and one of our favorites "Screw You, We're From Texas"

↳ **Thursday** - all six were great but newcomer Zac Wilkerson was fantastic, Davin James is always outstanding and Gary P Nunn sings some of our favorites (like "Wanna Go Home With The Armadillo") and it just doesn't get much better than when he had Michael Hearne join him for "This Girl Just Loves to Dance" and Tommy Alverson join him for "You Ask Me What I Like About Texas"



↳ **Friday** - wow, the Damn Quails & the Quail Philharmonic band were fabulous and put on a show that filled the stage with talent and a sound that made all of us stand up and take notice of music styles that ran the spectrum and included most every instrument you can imagine some of which included a fiddle, squeeze box, saxophone, keyboard, and more; Josh Weathers' has an unbelievable voice and his rendition of Whitney's "I Will Always Love You" got the crowd standing and gave me goose bumps; Clay McClinton was outstanding, and Max Stalling is always one of our favorites - so Friday was a tie between those four making for a wonderful 5 hours of music - Friday's lineup was typical of what makes this the best music festival in Texas, Larry Joe and Zack mix it up with new up and comers like the Winner of the Ranch Singer Songwriter Showdown and real veterans like Radney Foster plus musicians who are playing at the festival for the first time

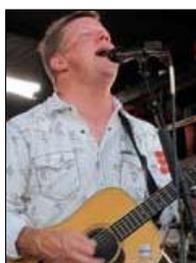


↳ **Saturday**- another wow lineup and impossible to pick a favorite, they were all outstanding - Josh Grider was dynamic with lyrics that have weight, intensity, and impact; Michael Hearne was smooth and mellow with outstanding songs like "New Mexico Rain;" Tommy Alverson was country through and through and got us going with "UNO Mas Cervasa," and Walt Wilkins & the Mystiqueros is one of the most talented group of singers and musicians in the State



Bud Light Stage - 24 of some of the best bands in Texas

- ↳ **Wednesday** - we've loved the Texas troubadour Cory Morrow and his unique Texas music sound (with elements of country, bluegrass, swing, and blues) forever and he put on a great set and the KHYI Battle of the Bands winner was enjoyable and someone we would like to see again, although I'm sad to say we didn't catch their name
- ↳ **Thursday** - tough choice but the award goes to Aaron Watson and some of his songs that have dominated the Texas Country music charts



- ↳ **Friday** - getting to enjoy two of our all time favorites - Roger Creager and Pat Green - in one evening just can't be beat and Roger's set was as dynamic and entertaining as ever with a blend of Cajun, Jazz, Latin beats, Sinatra sounds, and of course, traditional Roger Creager on the trumpet, guitar, and piano accompanied by a talented band with a Mexican squeeze box and washer board; Grammy nominated Pat Green is one of the best and his set was fun and lively and filled with crowd rocking music and a lot of his top hits; an evening we hated to see end as we strolled back to the camper singing "Wave on Wave" and "Everclear"



- ↳ **Saturday** - it's really hard to pick a favorite when the line-up includes William Clark Green, Cooder Graw (he's back and as great as ever!), the fun and entertaining Tejas Brothers, Brandon Rhyder, dynamic "double D and Pearl Snap" Deryl Dodd, Jason Borland & the Stragglers, and our host for the weekend Larry Joe Taylor - the award goes to LJT with his songs with elements of country, reggae, blues, rock & roll, an occasional twist of 50's doo-wapp, and salty melodies reminiscent of the slow-paced, relaxed experience of island-hopping through a long carefree tropical vacation but the highlight was his tribute to Rusty Wier and having his fellow musicians join him on stage for some clever lyrics and verses to "Will The Circle Be Unbroken" - Larry Joe concluded the festival by heading to the front of the stage to sign autographs and hand out some LJT tee shirts - a nice touch!



Wow, what a fun five days filled with excellent music. Click here to see this [year's line-up and some pictures](#). How in the world will Zack Taylor and Larry Joe be able to top that next year. Can't wait to find out!

In addition to lots of great talent, what makes this one of the best is the way that Zack and Larry Joe mix it up with new comers (like the 2012 Battle of the Bands and the Singer Songwriter Showdown winners) and first timers to the Festival (like the Damn Quails) and veterans like Tommy Alverson who has been to 23 of the 24 festivals. Several of this years performers first attended the Larry Joe's festival as part of the audience (Pat Green, Jason Borland, Six Market Blvd, and the Tejas Brothers for example) and some actually got their start from playing at one of the LJT festivals. The first time Randy Rogers performed at the festival he slept in the bed of LJT's dump truck - now he sleeps in a very well appointed 45' bus! You need to go to the Larry Joe Taylor Texas Music Festival at least once, so add it to your bucket list. But beware, his festival is like a potato chip, nobody can go to just one - it's a music, camping, and partying experience you won't soon forget.

The Larry Joe Taylor Music Festival Experience

The Camping Experience at Melody Mountain Ranch

Clearly the music is a huge part of the Larry Joe Taylor Music Festival experience, but camping and the 35,000 music fans contribute to making this one of the best and most fun and unique Texas Music Festivals. If you're going to attend the festival you definitely should plan on camping where you can:

- ↳ walk to the music stages dragging your cooler and lawn chairs and then mosey on home without having to worry about driving or getting a DWI - you do need to be careful about some staggering drunks, run away coolers, and fun loving fans trying to find their camper
- ↳ set up your games of horseshoes, bean bag toss, washers, and ladder golf or toss a frisbee or football
- ↳ cook breakfast, or hot dogs, or BBQ, or roast marshmallows or hope that your cooking neighbors ask you over for a bite to eat or go sample some of the chili from the chili cook off teams
- ↳ reacquaint with friends from last year or meet new friends that are camping next to you or walking by or through your site
- ↳ sample some great food from several venders - patty melts, pizza, gyros, BBQ, corn dogs, fajitas, and lots more
- ↳ pull up a chair and pop a cold beer and join in the singing around the campfires just about any time of day and well into the next morning
- ↳ sit in your chair, on the roof of your camper, or on any other contraption you may have brought and listen to the music or watch the crowd pass by on their way to and from the music
- ↳ meander through the campsites or music fans at the front of the stage for a unique experience



Larry Joe Taylor's Melody Mountain has 200 RV sites with electric, water, and 30 amp electric (very tough to get) plus 380 acres for primitive camping (no water or electric) in your RV, tent, or whatever you've got to camp or sleep in. There are over 3500 total sites that the LJT staff carefully start staking out several days before the festival starts. And it's unbelievable what people bring to camp in so they don't have to go home. You'll find music fans camping or sleeping in luxury \$300,000 motor homes, vintage trailers that have seen better days, pop-ups, travel trailers, rental RV's (Campers 4 Rent out of Dallas would be happy to rent you one), four room tents to teepees, lawn chairs, air mattresses, hammocks, couches, and more.





Some of the campsites can get pretty elaborate with huge BBQ grills, couches and sofas, platforms to check out the girls passing by, flags and decorations, and even a swimming pool.



We woke one morning and found a complete stranger sleeping in the driver side of our jeep on Saturday morning - a 6' 5" gentle giant who was dusty and dirty and very confused and still very sleepy and very hung over. He got out of our Jeep and when asked if he knew where he was he did say "Larry Joe Taylor" and then tried to get in our motor home thinking that it was the one where he should have been sleeping!!!! We convinced him that it was our motor home and guided him back toward the music stage. Never saw him again, so I don't know what happened. Our next door neighbor was the resident hippie and he said last year he found 4 people sleeping on his porch so this year he set an old mattress out front but he said it didn't look like it ever got used. Our gentle giant would have gotten a much better sleep if he had found that mattress!

The campground is always alive with games, or music, or laughter, or signing. It's a hoot to walk through the campground and check out the creative sleeping arrangements, join a music circle, or play a game of washers. During the late evening campfires, you may find yourself sitting next to or singing with one of the main stage artists who love to hang around the campfires. In most cases you'll be welcome with open arms at any campfire, handed a cold beer, and ask to join in the singing or picking. On Sunday, the Wednesday Night Boys cook breakfast Tacos and it's free to anyone who is awake and sober enough to stagger over on Sunday morning before it's gone.



Larry Joe, Zack, and their staff make sure that the campers have all the services they need. There is trash pickup, roving security, mobile ice delivery, mobile RV repairs, water trucks delivering fresh or non potable water as well as spraying the roads to keep the dust down, and an office where you can rent your own private porta potty or sign up for RV holding tank flush services. New this year were VIPs (very impressive potties with air conditioning and very clean facilities) and hot and cold showers. But I didn't see laundry service, maid service, roving chiefs, or cooler shuttle service to the and from the festival - maybe next year.



Experiencing the Larry Joe Taylor Music Festival Fans & Partyng



Larry Joe's Texas Music Festival attracts a wide variety of very diverse music fans and party animals. You'll encounter dedicated music lovers of all ages as well as several thousand wild and crazy college kids out for a good time and 5 days of partying.

Some have described the afternoon and evenings at the main stage and around the grounds as a big fraternity party. As such, this is not a real kid friendly music festival. But the fans are what make this festival fun and interesting experience. And over the five days there are at least 35,000 fans who attend this festival on Melody Mountain Ranch, just north of Stephenville.



Find a strategic spot to park your chairs and coolers or meander through the crowd to check out the fans and the wide variety of very creative ways to get their beer and gear from their campsite to the music. You're likely to spot some heavily modified shopping carts, trailers and carts and wagons of all types, a lawn mower converted to a mobile chair, two mountain bikes creatively hooked together with a large beer cooler between them, a modified wheel chair with a cooler and umbrella, and lots of other ways to transport food and drink to the main stage area. And there are also some interesting ways to consume the drinks - kegs of beer, beer bong of all types and sizes, jello shots, bags or jugs of wine or other stuff, hiking hydration systems holding wine or beer, and one year a garden sprayer full of some strange liquid drink.



A lot of the drink transport systems are then used to try and get a good view of the stage. And take a look at all of the other very creative ways to be comfortable and get a view above the crowd. There are trailers with car seats or couches and umbrellas, custom designed elevated platforms with wheels, modified chairs and couches on wheels, and there are always beer coolers of all sizes that came in clean and new and full of beer and leave muddy and broken from trying to hold one to twenty fans trying to rise above the crowd for a view of the bands.



And keep an eye out for the unusual outfits ranging from home made LJT tee shirts to unusual hats to some really strange and interesting attire.



As you meander through the crowd you're likely to spot a guy in a speedo or wearing a bra, someone dressed like superman or spiderman, ladies in skimpy shorts or hula skirts, a variety of unusual headgear, and lots more that will attract your attention and get an "ugh," "awe," or "did you see that!"



You'll also see plenty of interesting and creative paraphernalia like home made multiple station beer bongs to a fishing jon boat on wheels loaded with guys with fishing poles holding jello shots or beads for pretty women passing by who want to try and earn a jello shot or some beads.



Each year there is something that grabs your attention and this years award goes to 58 year old "Red Dirt" Randy from Oklahoma who for this years event was at the front of both stages from when the music started to when it ended and he was always dancing, playing the tambourine, and moving to the music. He out danced and out lasted the young college kids and the old folks and most everybody in between. He was even asked to get on stage and dance and play the tambourine with one of the bands who gave him the tambourine which he never let out of his possession for the next four days. I noticed that he also had collected a couple of play lists, many picks, and several drumsticks. And how does he always end up in exactly the same position at the front of the main stage each evening (I know he doesn't camp there) where he always has a good looking girl on each side of him as he moves and shakes to the music from noon to midnight. And he must have a very big bladder because I didn't see him leave his position at the front of the stage!



The Eating Experience at the Festival

And each year there is always something new in addition to the new bands and this year was no exception. There with several new bands, Rockin' P full service bar, a tractor trailer full of clean hot shower facilities including a VIP (very important potty) both of which are clean and air conditioned, and several new food vendors! You can get lots of good food from 10 AM to well after the music ends each evening. You'll find everything from hot dogs to gyros to fajitas to BBQ to kettle corn. But our favorites remain the wood oven baked pizza for Fired Up Kitchen and the Patty Melts and burgers from Kate's Cafe - a must have!



Thanks Larry Joe, Sherry, and Zack Taylor and their staff and hundreds of volunteers who make this outstanding event happen. We appreciate all the hard work it takes to stage an event like this and make it flawless, safe, and a lot of fun. For example there are a dozen full time employees working year round on the festival, an additional 175 or more people hired for the festival, 35 vendors with food sales exceeding \$250,000, around the clock ambulance service, a full staff of EMTs, firefighting equipment, and a security force of more than 75. The Taylor family invests more than \$1 million to present the festival annually! Some of the staff that deserves special recognition includes: Ray, the Allsups sound technician is outstanding, Joe Dye manages and recruits food vendors that work very hard to serve some very tasty food to over 35,000 hungry music fans, Dave Hinsley is The Bud Light back stage manger and he runs a flawless operation, the security team and local police are to be congratulated for both their patience and politeness, Tommy Alverson was the perfect MC for the Allsups stage with very sincere and personal introductions for each artist and he kept the crowd quiet and respectful, and our thanks to the hundreds of other staff and volunteers who deserve a big round of applause for doing everything from picking up the hundreds of thousands of empty beer cans left when the festival ends each evening to clearing the stage for one band and quickly setting up for the next one!



If you've never been to a LJT festival then you need to do whatever you can to make at least one - this was our 12th and we'll be back again next year. So round up some friends, get the coolers loaded, and break out the camping gear for next year. Can't wait for the 25th and say once again "how in the world will the Taylors top the 24th annual? See ya there!

A decorative footer banner with a central star and navigation links. On the left is a "River Walk" photo and a "RANCH 385 ROAD" sign. On the right is a "Golfing" photo and a longhorn head. The navigation links are: Home | About Us | Advertise With Us | Work With Us | Great Links | Contact Us | E-Specials | Golfing | Newsletter | Camping & RV's | Boating & Lakes | Hunting | Fishing | Texas Music | Exploring Texas | Outdoor Weddings | Privacy | Sitemap.

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