

Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival 2017



Normally, to get ready for one of the best music festivals in Texas which is [Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival](#) I start preparing a couple weeks in advance by sitting in a lawn chair for hours, have a Bloody Mary in the morning and drink beer from 10 to midnight, turn the radio up real loud and try to hear what my wife is yelling at me as country music blares in the background, visit a crowded shopping mall to get used to big crowds and trying to navigate through them, try to stay up past midnight, practice carrying a cooler full of beer and appetizers, and stay away from pizza, fajitas, burgers, and corn dogs which sustains me and soaks up the beer during the festival.



for 6 days of music, camping, campfires, and good times then headed home after the music on late Sunday afternoon, did a couple loads of wash, took a long hot shower, got a few hours of sleep, and reloaded the motorhome with fresh clothes and beer and took off for Melody Mountain Ranch in Stephenville for another week of music. A little tired but ready for a week of excellent country music.

Melody Mountain Ranch

Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival is held on Melody Mountain Ranch which is Larry Joe's 380 acre ranch with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside, over 250 campsites with water and electric hook-ups and 4000 primitive sites that can be reserved, 2 music stages, a cozy bar (T-Bird's Garage Pub) and it's adjoining music stage, and lots more. The Ranch is usually home to some cows and lots of wildlife until the weekend before the music festival starts and by the end of that week the air smells like beer, BBQ, bacon, and a few people who need a shower; the campground is full of everything from trucks with mattresses to tents of all sizes and lots of travel trailers and RVs; and over 20,000 music festival fans per day - and the cows have all disappeared!



Here are a few stats from the Texas Music Festival website: the festival has been rated the "Best Event/Festival of the Year" since 2011; over 60,000 people attended in 2016 from nearly every state in the US as well as several foreign countries; 55% of the attendees are between 18 and 29 years old; 30% are married (we consistently hear "I met my spouse at LJT's music festival"); 83% of the attendees camp at the Festival; and 47% of the people attend in a group of 7 to 10 and more friends.

The 8000 square foot Bud Light Stage is the main stage and it's huge with room for tens of thousands of music fans in a big field facing the stage plus their coolers, lawn chairs, blankets, and canopies and it has an excellent sound system, two huge jumbo trons, backstage seating and sky boxes for VIPs plus a VIP area with a bar and free dinners for VIPs. Close to the front of the stage is always packed shoulder to shoulder with beer coolers and younger music fans - I think the entire student body of Stephenville's Tarleton State plus 1000s from Baylor, TCU, UT, A&M and several other colleges are up front having a great time. The Bud Light Stage is always one big happy party with live music!



The Bud Light Stage is surrounded by a variety of vendors selling some very tasty food ranging from fire roasted pizza to BBQ, burgers, chicken on a stick, Philly Cheese steaks or fajitas and lots more. The best that we sampled this year was the Gyro and an excellent burger loaded with peppers, cheese, onions, and great sauce.



Overlooking the main stage and 15 yards up a gently sloping hill is T-Bird's Garage Pub and the Zing Zang Stage. The pub is home to a full bar with great margaritas and an outside covered patio to sip a drink and watch the happenings around the Bud Light Stage. Each morning at 10:00 the day starts with "Bloody Mary Morning" and live music in the bar. At 5:00 the Zing Zang stage, which is adjoining the Pub, is where musicians play for 45 minutes or so on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The Festival closes on Saturday with music that starts on the Zing Zang Stage right after the last band on the Bud Light Stage stops playing. And when the music stops on the Bud Light stage each night it's a mass migration of 1000s of people and coolers in various states of sobriety heading to the campground to party some more or to the parking lot to head home.

We love the Allsup's Stage which is about 300 yards from the Bud Light Stage and it's a smaller covered stage with plenty of room for several rows of lawn chairs. The stage is surrounded on 3 sides by a grassy area with some trees which is great for listening to the music, socializing, or playing corn hole. This is the so called "acoustic stage" because it's usually quiet and filled with serious music lovers under it's roof who want to listen to and enjoy the music. Or is it quiet because most of the younger crowd is still trying to wake up?



Around most of the outside perimeter of the stages is the campground which is always alive with music, laughter and games, and music fans having a good time. If you come to Larry Joe's you need to camp so you can thoroughly enjoy the whole experience - late night campfire music (you'll typically find some of the main stage artists picking and singing around the campfire with fellow campers until the wee hours of the morning), friendly outgoing campers, a short walk home after or between sets, and lots of other activity. Sites with water and electricity are typically already reserved, a few do come available each year, but there are always plenty of primitive (no water or electric) sites available. If you don't camp, Stephenville has a variety of lodging options and there is a free shuttle that runs back and forth into town Wednesday through Sunday. If you've been drinking you don't want to drive - the cops are everywhere and it's not worth the risk. There are also several RV rental companies where you can rent an RV and they will even drop it off, set it up for you, and then pick it back up - no pain!



Over the 5 days of the Texas Music Festival, there are over 60,000 fans which makes for some great people watching. Here is just a sample and if you want to see more click on this link to [Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival Fans](#). The winner of the costume party was the guy who looked like he was sitting on the shoulder of a teddy bear.



Although a large part of the fun at Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival is the camping, reacquainting with friends and people you've met at previous festival, and the partying (I swear that some people never leave the campground), most of us really come for the excellent line-up of singer songwriters.

Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival Line-up for Monday

The music started on Monday around 5:00 in LJT's T-Bird's Garage Pub with Randy Brown, Michael Hearne's South by Southwest, and Asleep at the Wheel.



Wow, what a great way to start the Festival - Randy is always a joy to listen to and we love Michael Hearne - he's one of the best. We'd heard a lot of things about Ray Bensen and Asleep at the Wheel and it was easy to understand why they've won 6 Grammy Awards - excellent!

Tuesday's Music at LJT's Texas Music Festival

Tuesday we had plenty of time to sleep in before Randy Brown and friends started paying at 3:00 in the bar section of T-Birds Garage Pub and at 5:00 the Bud Light Stage kicked off with music from:

- Coalition - Larry Joe Taylor, Deryl Dodd, and Dave Perez
- Randall King



- Sean McConnell
- Whiskey Myers
- Randy Rogers Band



The Line-up for Wednesday

What a great way to start the day - Bloody Mary's and music with Randy Brown and guests at T-Bird's Garage Pub at 10 in the morning. That was followed by music from 12:00 to 5:00 on the Allsup's Stage with:

- T-Birds Garage Pub Songwriter Competition winner Cole Risner
- Bri Bagwell
- Michael Hearne



- Brandon Rhyder
- Gary P Nunn



Before the music started on the Bud Light Stage, Tommy Alverson played a great set on the Zing Zang stage at T-Bird's Garage Pub.



At 5:00 we moved our camp chairs and coolers over to the Bud Light Stage which came alive with:

- Koe Wetzel
- Shane Smith & the Saints
- Sam Riggs
- Kevin Fowler



- Cody Johnson



Thursdays' Music at Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival

I'm now getting used to starting the day with a Bloody Mary and music with Randy Brown and his friends - it just doesn't get much better than a couple Zing Zang Bloody Mary's before lunch!

And after a couple Bloody Mary's we settled in at the Allsup's Stage for music from:

- Clayton Landua
- Richard Leigh
- Kaitlin Butts





- A Guy Clark Tribute - several artists came out and sang their favorite Guy Clark song
- Billy Joe Shaver
- Radney Foster



At 5:00 we went to the Zing Zang Stage at T-Birds Pub for an enjoyable set with the Coalition - Dave Perez from the Tejas Brothers, Larry Joe Taylor, and Deryl Dodd. Great camaraderie, funny, and good songs.



We missed the first part of Parker's show, which started at 5 on the Bud Light Stage, because we were enjoying the Coalition and the Margaritas:

- Parker McCollum
- Flatland Cavalry
- Mike Ryan



- Roger Creager
- William Clark Green



The Line-up on Friday at Larry Joe Taylor's Texas Music Festival

At 10 we were back at T-Bird's Garage Pub for Bloody Mary's and Randy Brown and some special guests which was followed by music at noon on the Allsup's Stage with:

- BJ Barham
- Keith Sykes
- Walt Wilkins



- Max Stalling
- Mike McClure & Cody Canada
- Ray Wylie Hubbard



From there we stopped at the Zing Zang Stage at T-Birds for a fun and enjoyable set from one of our favorites - Thomas Michael Riley.



How do you beat a line-up like that!

Then we hauled the chairs and coolers and set up for music at the Bud Light Stage. The front of the Bud Light Stage is always shoulder to shoulder with young kids having a blast and singing to the music. Us older folks set up the chairs towards the rear of the vast majority of the fans and, enjoy the people and the music, watch the jumbo tron, play dominos and eat appetizers, chat with the neighbors and those that pass by, and, of course, drink lots of beer while the following sang to us from the Bud Light Stage:

- Mark McKinney
- Jason Boland & the Stragglers
- Wade Bowen



- Stoney LaRue
- Josh Abbott Band



The Final Day of Larry Joe Taylor's 2017 Texas Music Festival

I'm sad to say that by Saturday morning we were too tired to make it to see Randy Brown and his friends for Bloody Mary Morning, but we did make it to the Allsup's Stage at 12 for music from:

- Erick Willis
- Josh Grider
- Tejas Brothers



- an auction to raise money to help pay the medical expenses for Davin James quadruple bypass surgery - over \$75,000 was raised from an auction of several items like a private show with the Coalition, a bird hunt and dinner with Larry Joe, signed guitars and a Tejas brother's bass fiddle, a fishing trip in Port O'Connor, and lots more including asking a couple that was planning on getting married at the Festival to sit up on stage as an artist sang a great rendition of Davin James Sweet Magnolia - the officiant didn't show up to marry the couple but several other people volunteered to officially marry them later in the day.



We reluctantly moved the chairs and coolers from the protection of the wind out to the field of the Bud Light stage and for the next several hours we got sand blasted with cold air and sand as we sat in the chairs listening to:

- Charla Corn
- Prophets and Outlaws
- Josh Weathers



- Deryl Dodd
- Bart Crow
- Larry Joe Taylor
- Casey Donahew



Right after LJT's set we were so cold and sand blasted that we headed back to the motorhome to warm up, wash the grit out of every orifice we had, and play some 42 while we listened to Casey Donahew in the warm motorhome. Which means we also missed the 11 show on the Zing Zang Stage with Dalton Domino.

What an amazing 6 days of fun and music. If you are planning on coming next year and If you can afford it, the best way to enjoy the Texas Music Festival is to get VIP tickets. There are a variety of options for VIP tickets, some of which include: back stage seating on the Bud Light Stage and Allsup's Stage; tasty buffet style dinners on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday; access to the VIP lounge with a full bar, free back massage, and TVs to watch the main stage music; VIP golf cart shuttle to and from your campsite; a VIP camping area with water and electric; and use of the air conditioned VIP (very important potty) restroom. The VIP tickets are worth it for the buffet, watching the bands and crowd from backstage, and a full bar.



It's amazing how quickly the week of superb music passed by. Now I need to start getting ready for the 30th annual Texas Music Festival in April 2018. Our congratulations to the Taylor family and their staff for all the months of hard work that they pour into the festival and to the hundreds of volunteers and paid employees who make sure that the Festival runs smooth and is fun for everyone.

Thanks to the guys who come in weeks before the festival to stake out 4000 campsites, the guys who pick up the trash or direct us to our campsites, the security force and local police

who make us feel safe, the vendors who feed us and sell us merchandise, and the stage hands and MCs who make sure the bands start on time. See you next year.

