

Larry Joe Taylor's 13th Annual Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines

We had a blast, as we usually do, at Larry Joe Taylor's Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines held in September at Melody Mountain Ranch just north of Stephenville. This was Larry Joe Taylor's 13th annual Rhymes & Vines and I probably say this about each one, but I think this was the best one of the 11 other Rhymes & Vines we've attended.

Here's what we love about Rhymes & Vines and why we've been coming back year after year:

- it's just the right size - not too big and not too small - around 3000 fans and it's easy to get close to and even right in front of the stage
- it's all about great country music, Texas singer songwriters, cold beer, camping, and good times
- the fans are friendly and outgoing and always having a good time
- it's great to reacquaint with people we've known from past festivals and to meet lots of new people who we hope to see again next year
- there's lots of hugging, back slapping, high and low fives, kisses and of course, singing and dancing along with the music
- it's BYOB and lawn chairs and lots of campsites very close to the music stage



Bottom line, Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines is like a great big friendly reunion coupled with excellent music. Some of what made this year's Rhymes & Vines special for me included:

- the extremely entertaining and lively set by Shinyribs
- The James Taylor Bloody Mary Morning Show with Davin James and Larry Joe Taylor - great songs but the bantering, jokes, digs, story telling, coupled with shots of Jagermeister (he even used the Jagermeister bottle as a capo for his guitar) and sips of Bloody Marys kept me, and everyone in the packed bar in stitches with tears, a sore jaw and tummy from laughing so hard - one of the best if not the best sets I've ever seen
- a light drizzle most of the three days instead of the down pouring and flooding like they had from Dallas to Austin
- a great mix of both well known artists who have played Rhymes & Vines several times (like Davin James, Tejas Brothers, Max Stalling, and Mike McClure) plus lots of great bands playing on the stage for the first time like Giovannie & The Hired Guns
- Cody Wier reminiscing about his dad, Rusty Wier, and singing some of his songs like "Don't it make you wanta dance"
- Bloody Mary Mornings with good music and the free shots of Devils River Whiskey, home made wine and beer, and delicious samples from the jalapeno poppers contest



The Lineup at Larry Joe Taylor's 13 Annual Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines

Wednesday's Lineup

Wednesday the music started around 7 on the small stage in Larry Joe's T-Birds Garage Pub and for a Wednesday it was packed with every seat and table taken.

- Coalition with Larry Joe Taylor, Dave Perez of the Tejas Brothers, and Deryl Dodd
- Max Stalling with his band and Heather Stalling playing a wickedly good fiddle



Thursday's Lineup at Rhymes & Vines 2018

What a fantastic night of music and fun! The Coalition was outstanding as usual and Max was his cool self and Heather was hot as usual (meaning a great fiddle player!).

Since the music didn't start until 4:45 on Wednesday we headed to Dennis (about 30 minutes north from Melody Mountain Ranch) to play a round of golf at one of our favorite courses and true hidden gem - Sugar Tree Golf Club. It's home to some excellent golf holes, normally in fantastic condition, and is very reasonably priced. That's the good news, I must have had a few too many drinks at T-Birds because when I tried to place my ball on the tee on the first hole, I nearly fell over. And when I was ready to take a swing I swore there were two balls on the tee and I wasn't sure which one to hit. So I tried to hit them both and dribbled the ball into a pond - the first of many balls I lost during my round. By the 5th tee the coffee and Advil had kicked in and I was ready to play. Here is a link to our review of [Sugar Tree Golf Club](#) which we rated as one of the [Best Golf Courses in the Ft Worth Area](#).

Once I got all the sand out of my hair and all my other orifices (I spent a lot of time in the bunkers at Sugar Tree) we headed to T-Birds for Hour Hour - just what I needed, some more Bloody Marys and beer. Happy hour music was on a stool at the edge of the bar and the music lasted from 4:45 to 6 when everyone moved to the Devils River Whiskey Stage, which is attached at one end of T-Birds. It's covered, which protected us from the light drizzle that started that evening.

- Fall Fest Kick-off Happy Hour Hour with John Baumann in T-Bird's Garage Pub
- Shea Abshier & the Nighthowlers at 7 PM on the Whiskey River Stage
- Mike McClure



- Shinyribs



John was good, Shea & the Nighthowlers were a fun new addition, Mike McClure is always hot (not quite as hot as Heather), and Shinyribs was funny, entertaining, a joy to listen to. What a way to start a festival!

Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines Friday Lineup

I couldn't believe it but I woke up in time for Bloody Mary Morning at 10 in T-Birds. I do love those Zing Zang spicy Bloody Marys and usually have a couple too many - but what a great way to start the day!

- Bloody Mary Morning at 10 AM with Jarrod Morris
- The Powell Brothers kicked it off at 3 on the Whiskey River Stage
- Walt Wilkins & the Mystiqueros



- Kody West
- Bri Bagwell
- Randall King



- Deryl Dodd
- Josh Weathers



Another excellent day of music - it's hard to beat Walt & the Mystiqueros, Deryl Dodd, and Josh Weathers in one day, each of which is very different from the others with their unique singing and entertaining style!

Saturday's Lineup at Larry Joe Taylor's Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines

I must be getting very old - I was in bed snoring shortly after Josh finished his set instead of roaming from campsite to campsite to listen to some pickin' and singin' around the campfire until 2 or 3 AM. But I was one of the first to show up for Bloody Mary Morning and we were a bar stool away from Larry Joe and Davin. As I mentioned earlier, their set was outstanding and we all hated to see it end!

- Larry Joe Taylor and Davin James at Bloody Mary Morning at 10 AM



- Cody Wier started the afternoon music off at 2 on the Whiskey River Stage
- Giovannie & the Hired Guns
- Davin James



- Mark McKinney
- Tejas Brothers
- Larry Joe Taylor



- Bruce Robison & Kelly Willis
- Tommy Alverson's after party in T-Birds starting at 11:30



The first timers at Rhymes & Vines (Cody and Giovannie) were enjoyable and the regulars kept us stomping our feet, clapping our hands, singing, dancing, laughing, and drinking until around 1. I was sorry to see it end on Saturday night but I'm not sure if I could have lasted another day and survived the upcoming work week!



It drizzled most of every day but that didn't stop the fans from listening to the music and having fun. The hats, rain coats, boots, and umbrellas and canopies came out and the "party continued on!"

Once back in the RV I didn't sleep a wink - I knew that with all the rain I'd be stuck in mud like I've been at several other music festivals! Sure enough when it was time to leave my tires did nothing but spin circles and spew mud! But everybody else got out ok! Could it be due to all the food, beer, and Bloody Marys and the 33,000 pounds of RV? Several people stopped by to offer advice, try towing me out, adding logs and rocks under the wheels and more with no luck. We gave up and got in touch with one of the Melody Mountain Ranch staff who arrived with a farm tractor and better yet a metal ramp. They put the 8' ramp under one of the back tires and said "gun it" which I did and with mud flying everywhere I headed as quick as I could to the road! Thanks to Joe Dye, the tractor driver, Sherry Taylor, John Costlow and Lynda Zetnick (who keep saying "we're not leaving until you're out of here"!)

The Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines Music Fans

I mentioned early that part of what makes this one of the best festivals are the fans. It's an older, mature, fun loving, beer drinking, singing, dancing, back slapping group of people. You'll very quickly get to reacquaint with friends from previous festivals and get to meet several new people. Don't be afraid to join in the campsite parties, the fun at the front of the stage, or share a laugh or beer under one of the canopies or with the people sitting next to you. And don't forget to bring a cooler full of your favorite beverages, maybe some snacks, a lawn chair, and a raincoat, umbrella, or canopy. You're going to have fun. Here is a link to [more pictures of the Rhymes & Vines fans.](#)



Other Fun Stuff at Fall Fest Rhymes & Vines

I mentioned that this festival is about great country singer songwriter music, cold beer camping, and good vibes. But it's also got a home made wine and brew contest with free sips, a cooking demonstration with Nick Pugh a Stephenville native and longtime foodie who was cooking some good stuff for samples, and a stuffed jalapeno contest - very tasty and spicy!



Food and merchandise vendors lined the outside perimeter of the Devil's River Whiskey Stage and included: Pearl Snap Shirts for sale, a masseuse which great massages, Crusty's Fire Smoked Pizza, musician's tee shirts/koozies/CDs, and a variety of food some of which included: turkey legs, nachos, brisket and ribs, hot dogs and sausage on a stick, and more - you shouldn't go hungry.



Surrounding the back of the vendors are hundreds of campers - the front row of campers can sit in their chairs under the campers awning and listen to the music. Melody Mountain has over 300 acres of beautiful ranch land (normally filled with cows until all the campers start rolling in on Tuesday/Wednesday) and they have over 3000 sites, the vast majority of which are primitive, meaning no water or electric. There are lots of water and electric sites but they are reserved (we got ours 8 years ago) for the previous year's renter and only a few open up each year. All the sites are within less than a 5 minute walk to the stage. The campground is always alive with the sounds of laughter, picking and singing around the campfires, plus games and the mouth watering smell of bacon cooking or ribs slow cooking on the grill. Camping is the way to go so you don't have to worry about driving home after a long day of fun. Stephenville is only 9 miles away and they have lots of hotel/motel rooms. There is a free shuttle back to town and to certain hotels or there is always UBER.



For next year you should consider being a sponsor to help keep the music going strong or get VIP tickets. The VIP tickets give you on stage seating, a special VIP bar area where you can usually find several of the performing artists, and some excellent meals (we enjoyed chicken fried chicken, meatloaf, and all the fixins Thursday through Saturday night.

Our thanks go out to the Taylors (Larry Joe, Sherry, Zack, and Martha) and all the staff that work very hard to make this festival great for us and one of the best festivals in Texas. And specifically to the T-Bird Garage Pub bartenders for keeping me supplied with some delicious Zing Zang Bloody Marys!



See ya next year!