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# New Dallas concert venue offers a different take on performance space

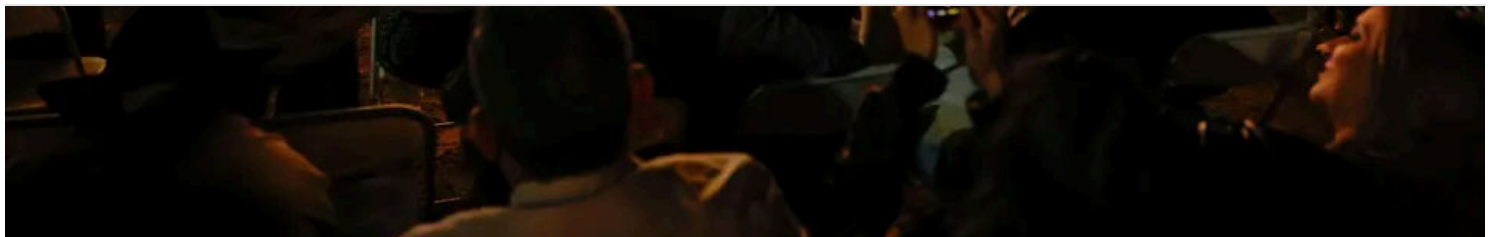
Longhorn Backyard Amphitheater in the Cedars is offbeat and intimate while boasting a festival vibe.

By **Thor Christensen**, *Special Contributor*

April 4, 2026

 Gift Article
 



People watch as La Mafia performs at Longhorn Ballroom's new Backyard Amphitheater, Saturday, March 28, 2026, in Dallas.

Elías Valverde II/Staff Photographer



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New Dallas concert venue offers a different take on performance space

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In music-biz lexicon, "amphitheater" usually means a huge venue with covered, reserved seats near the stage and a lawn section on a hill. The new Longhorn Backyard Amphitheater breaks that mold.

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After a test run last fall, the 6,500-capacity music spot south of downtown officially opened March 28 with a show by the veteran Latin band La Mafia. From that concert, the lasting impression was that the Backyard Amphitheater has more charm — and more of a festival vibe — than Dos Equis Pavilion (20,000 capacity) or Toyota Music Factory (8,000), the two busiest amphitheaters in D-FW, which are both run by Live Nation.

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For starters, the Longhorn amphitheater isn't a "shed" — industry shorthand for an outdoor venue with reserved seats under a roof. The new spot has no roof and no permanent seats.

"Because our configurations are flexible, standing and seated areas may change based on the type of show," says owner [Edwin Cabaniss](#), the independent concert promoter who also runs the adjacent [Longhorn Ballroom](#) and [Oak Cliff's Kessler Theater](#), two venues known for flex seating.

For La Mafia's show, about a thousand fans sat near the stage in lightweight folding chairs on a paved stone surface while another thousand stood and danced behind them on terra cotta-colored crushed granite, the amphitheater's main surface. A dozen portable restrooms added to the music-fest feel.

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A small grassy area sits at the back, but the Longhorn offers none of the sweeping, sloped lawns typical of other amphitheaters. The floor is largely flat, with only a modest 1.8% grade.



Fans stand and watch as La Mafia performs at Longhorn Ballroom's new Backyard Amphitheater, Saturday, March 28, 2026, in Dallas.

Elías Valverde II/Staff Photographer

While most of the venue is unshaded, a handful of mature trees offer relief for heat-stressed fans arriving before sunset. Looking ahead, the venue has planted a dozen more shade trees around the perimeter.

At La Mafia, the stage was easy to see; with about 2,000 in attendance, the venue was less than a third full. Sight lines will, of course, vary when the crowd is larger.

The Backyard, like many modern venues, has massive high-definition video screens: one behind the stage and two at the sides. La Mafia used them only for bright, moving graphics. Bigger acts will almost certainly put the screens to fuller use, with live close-ups.

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Still, one of the amphitheater's most appealing qualities is its intimacy. From nearly anywhere, the stage is in clear view, and when the screens stay dark, fans can enjoy a rare break from the video overload common at most large concerts today.

The acoustics were near perfect for La Mafia, with the house speaker system delivering crystal-clear sound across the venue. Cabaniss said there have been no noise complaints from residents of the nearby Cedar Crest neighborhood and [Tenth Street Historic District](#).

"Which is not at all surprising," he said. "We measure noise levels in real time and remain well below allowable thresholds. Being situated in the 'bowl' of the original Trinity River surrounded by levees gives us a unique natural setting, both aesthetically and acoustically."



People sit and drink at picnic tables at Longhorn Ballroom's new Backyard Amphitheater, Saturday, March 28, 2026, in Dallas.

Elías Valverde II/Staff Photographer

The Longhorn's setting — in an industrial area of the Cedars known as “Rock Island” — is part of the amphitheater's urban-rustic charm. The Dallas skyline peeks through one side, while on the other side, wetlands stretch behind a stand of trees, with manufacturing towers rising beyond.

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Its off-the-beaten-path locale does come with a parking challenge. Street spaces are limited and not always well-lit, and nearby paid lots can fill up early, which is why the venue strongly recommends rideshare. If you do drive, be patient: Ongoing street construction can make finding a spot trickier.

The Backyard Amphitheater isn't for every fan — or every performer.

If you're looking for a comfortable, sit-down evening, there are plenty of other options around D-FW, with more on the way, including [the Sunset Amphitheater in McKinney](#), slated to open in late 2027.



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But for anyone who appreciates offbeat ambiance in a super-casual setting, the Backyard is a welcome addition to the North Texas concert scene.

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## Details

The Longhorn Backyard Amphitheater is at 216 Corinth St., Dallas. Upcoming shows include Panchiko (April 18), Mt. Joy (April 24), Toadies (May 2), Braxton Keith (May 30) and the String Cheese Incident (May 31). [longhornballroom.com](http://longhornballroom.com).

April 4, 2026



**Thor Christensen**

CONTRIBUTOR

Thor Christensen is a former pop music critic for The Dallas Morning News and The Milwaukee Journal whose work has appeared in The New York Times and several books.

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