

MOFRO and More

Reggae, rap, rum and rednecks at Secret House Vineyards.

You're asking, what's MOFRO? No, it's not about afros. It can be substituted for any other word, like, "What's up, mofro?" or "Let's go get some mofro." It's also the name of JJ Grey's band, which features just one other full-time dude, Daryl Hance. Both guys hail from North Florida's swampy Blackwater region, specifically Lochloosa, a tiny town southeast of Gainesville, situated between Micanopy and Welaka, Citra and Grove Park.

MOFRO is playing at Secret House Vineyards, along with **Blackalicious**, **Marcus Eaton**, **Hot Buttered Rum String Band** and some chap named **Michael Franti and Spearhead** that you may have heard of. **Ani DiFranco** was scheduled to perform, but canceled her tour due to inflammation of the nerves and tendons of her wrists and hands. That sucks for you if you only wanted to see Ani, but I hope that's not the case, because there's enough entertainment still lined up to inflame the nerves and tendons of your whole body!

MOFRO's music is backwoods foot stompin' blues poured into an ass flask along with G Love (if he had an actual Southern

upbringing) and the Black Crowes. Grey's love for surfing the Atlantic Ocean gave him the traveling bug when he was young. As a teenager, once his parents lightened up enough to let him switch from listening to Grand Ole Opry music to — gasp — Lynyrd Skynyrd, he embraced singing, and, later, playing instruments. "I'm definitely a singer first, and an instrument-playing person a far distant second," he said, though he plays guitar, piano, bass and drums along with Hance's guitar and dobro. "I could always sing, and so I just did. Singing along with my dad's 8-tracks and anything, and we'd sing in church. Little by little I pursued it."

Grey and I chatted while he was hangin' with his family on their chicken farm, waiting for the West Coast leg of his tour to start. When we finally spoke, hours after our scheduled interview, he apologized, saying he had a vehicle breakdown and was stranded. "It was something I should have fixed a long time ago and I didn't so it come back to bite me," he said.

Grey and Hance identify strongly with the region where they grew up. MOFRO's first CD is entitled *Blackwater*. Their second,

2004's *Lochloosa*, has four trees on the cover — pine, cypress, hammock and palm. As Grey explains in the liner notes, "All four are on the land where I live; all four speak to me about who I am. They say 'You are home.'"

Being a fellow North Floridian myself, I wanted to get to know Grey better, so I quizzed him with word associations. Read on:

Me: Alabama or Lynyrd Skynyrd?

Grey: Lynyrd Skynyrd. **Parliament or Grand Funk Railroad?**

Parliament. I'm not too familiar with Grand Funk Railroad.

John Lee Hooker or Robert Johnson?

Oooh, split right down the middle on that one. I go with both.

Pork rinds or potato chips?

Pork rinds, for sure.

Flounder or catfish?

Gosh, I'm split on that one too. I love saltwater fish and freshwater fish. Right down the middle.

Budweiser or Coors?

Budweiser.

Fried fish or fried shrimp?

Shrimp. That was easy!

Hot dogs or hamburgers?

Hamburgers.

What about movies? Deliverance or Creature From the Black Lagoon?

I'm gonna have to go with *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, even though I like *Deliverance* a lot. Part of the sequel was shot here in Jacksonville, at the old Diamond Head Restaurant downtown. There's a scene where the monster comes up out of the river. I wasn't a kid when they made it, but when I was a kid, that was a big deal. **EW**

MOFRO



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