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## Hootie and the Blowfish Guitarist Finds Inspiration in His Adopted Hometown



**"I've been everywhere on the planet, and I like it here the best."**

When Mark Bryan is on hiatus from playing guitar with Hootie and the Blowfish, the Grammy Award winner can be found riding his bike in downtown Charleston. After joining Hootie in his college years at the University of South Carolina, Bryan abandoned his mid-Atlantic roots and became a converted Southerner.

"I've been everywhere on the planet, and I like it here the best," he explains. "Once I moved here, I found that there's a nice spirit here, a youthful, vibrant, creative spirit with lots of galleries and tons of musicians." Unlike towns where music is an industry, in Charleston the city's history and port are always center stage, which allows the music scene to develop unencumbered by commercial interests.

Bryan has always been a songwriter. When Hootie is inactive, he spends much of his time working on his own, playing

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gigs with his band the Occasional Milkshake, and collaborating with other artists. When he found he had built up a repertoire of good music, he began [Chucktown Music Group](#) to produce and release his own songs, as well as those of innovative local and regional acts he'd met and played music with.

In Charleston, a music lover can listen to a major national act at [Music Farm Charleston](#) or jam at intimate venues like the [Pour House](#). "There's a lot of people here who are content playing their original music," says Bryan. "Hopefully what I can do with Chucktown Music is help that scene grow."

Proximity to the water and the laid-back living that comes with it are part of Charleston's allure for Bryan. When he wants to recharge his creative energy, he can take his three children on the inland waterways, visiting secret beaches accessible only by boat. Surprisingly, Charleston is just minutes away from great hiking, so Bryan likes to meander the walking trails on Bull Island to see Boneyard Beach, where the forest meets the ocean and the sand is strewn with the bleached remnants of old trees.

It's there, in the sea air, that this songwriter finds inspiration. A great lover of the water, Bryan likes to hike along Folly Beach, Charleston's closest sandy respite, to the tip of the barrier islands to see the historic Morris Island Lighthouse on its sandbar. Or he'll go to the southern tip of Sullivan's Island at the mouth of Charleston's harbor to watch the sunset over the city.

"You see the Morris Island Lighthouse in the distance, you're overlooking downtown and giant freighters are going right by you in the channel," he explains. "And there are dolphins all the time."

It can be a challenge to articulate the sound epitomized by the Charleston music scene. Local musicians defy stereotypes with an eclectic, soulful vibe that's not quite country, Southern rock or blues, but a unique amalgam of all these and more.

Bryan intends to stay here so he may one day put the city's sound into words. "I'm going to enjoy the music, enjoy helping make the music, and hopefully find the best, most innovative ways to release it," he says.



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