

# 10 Questions: with JJ Grey

Born and raised just outside of Jacksonville, JJ Grey knows a little something about fishing, surfing and singing. His song lyrics drip with stories of Southern culture and Florida that existed before golf courses took over.

Grey and his band, MOFRO, travel the world, extolling the virtues of a Florida few recognize anymore. They do so with a set that combining a rhythm that ranges from raw funk to soul, blues and rock. When he's not traveling, Grey spends time on his 20-acre farm outside of Jacksonville where he, his wife and 7-week old newborn live beneath a grove of pecan, persimmon and apple trees.

Grey is headlining the Surfin' Snook Summer Jam

June 20 at the Sunset Cove Amphitheater in Boca Raton, where he will play a solo set, giving MOFRO the night off. Associate Editor Mike Readling recently tracked him down at his farm for a quick 10 Questions session, which ranged from chicken houses to MOFRO to Barbie dolls.

**FFW:** How would you describe your music?

**JJ:** Dan, who has produced every record we've done, describes it as front porch soul and that's about as close I think you can come. I'd like for it to feel that way when people listen to us.

**FFW:** What's on your farm?

**JJ:** I just have a few tomato

plants and squash right now. We have about 60 adult pecan trees and some persimmon, apple and pear trees. It used to be all chickens. We had anywhere between 50,000 and 60,000 chickens out here. Kind of like they say the two happiest days of your life are when you buy a new boat and the day you sell it, the same thing goes for chicken houses.

**FFW:** Why is performing at the Snook Jam so important to you?

**JJ:** (Snook Foundation Southeast Regional Director) Brett (Fitzgerald) brought me in on this idea while we were fishing from his kayak in the canal behind his house. He was letting me know all about the whole thing and the fight



JJ Grey and his "Granny". **FF Weekly photo**

they had just won against the dredge-and-fill project and all the stuff the Surfriders and the Snook Foundation do. If somebody doesn't do some sort fighting, it runs too far amok. Obviously, the brakes got put on and the whole economy slowed, so maybe we can rid of the ridiculous, out-of-control and non-sensical groups that are out there. In the end, maybe this gives things time to grow and do things sensibly.

**FFW:** What is a MOFRO?

**JJ:** When I worked in the lumber yard, there was always this one guy who, whenever I shoed up in the morning, was like "Hey, mojo or Mofro or moho" It was always something different. It sounded Southern, but it didn't mean anything.

**FFW:** What do you want people to take from your music?

**JJ:** I'm not sure. I guess I would say I want people...you know, I don't know if I want them to take anything. I can't even tell you what compels me to do all of it. I guess I just want people to feel it. I want them to feel the whole thing from start to finish. I guess I want them to feel the same way I feel when I see somebody I like and it moves me.

**FFW:** You seem to have a tiny bit of a...preoccupation, if that's the right word, with Barbie dolls...

**JJ:** My buddy and I did a video for one of the songs ("On Fire") off our new album, Orange Blossoms. I had seen - a while ago - a documentary called the "Karen Carpenter Story" where the guy did it all with Barbie dolls. It was very, very creepy because he made it like a serious documentary. I thought it would be very dark and creepy to do a video with all Barbie dolls. but I decided I wanted to do something similar. It was very weird having four grown men buying Barbie dolls off of Ebay. We created a set at my house and spent four days playing with Barbie dolls. We made it kind

of a strip club video. The video is on YouTube and it turned out pretty well.

**FFW:** Is there any place you want to play that you haven't played yet?

**JJ:** Red Rocks in Colorado, right outside of Denver. I remember as a kid watching a U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday" video, which they filmed live at Red Rocks and used to play on MTV all the time. I love that amphitheater and it's one of the few places we haven't played yet even though we play Colorado all the time. It just looked so beautiful.

**FFW:** What is the last book you read?

**JJ:** Herbal Home Healthcare by Dr. John R. Christopher. Kind of like when people read books to learn about all the different kinds of fish or animals there are, I wanted to learn about the different kinds of plants that are growing around here and what they can do.

**FFW:** A perfect day on the water would look like what?

**JJ:** Fishing. It would be glassy calm like it gets right at sunset, especially over towards the Gulf, near Cedar Key. Pound-for-pound, those are some of the best sunsets on earth for me. You can relax and check things out. Surfing, I'd be in my favorite spot up here in Jacksonville in the fall. The fall is my favorite time of year. The water is still warm and there's usually a pretty good groundswell from one or two of the tropical storms or hurricanes that are, hopefully, passing by.

**FFW:** Two choices, you can eat your favorite food, or drink your favorite beer. Which way do you go? And what do you choose?

**JJ:** Food. Whatever the special is at Chowder Teds. He has his own way of seasoning wahoo, grouper, dolphin, scallops, whatever is it is, it's good. The weekend specials there are insane.

[miker@floridafishingweekly.com](mailto:miker@floridafishingweekly.com)



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