

# Destination



# Musical Mobile Bay

BY CHERIE YURCO

The city of Mobile, Alabama, combines the scenic beauty of a coastal location, with the charming antebellum architecture of a city well preserved. Its renowned for being the place where Mardi Gras began in the US, plus it is the hometown of musicians from Jimmy Buffett to The Band Perry. Mobile enjoys its music, and you can find just about any type of music you desire, from jazz to funk, hip-hop, country, and rock and roll.

Mobile hosts a few annual music festivals. The Southsounds Music and Arts Festival ([www.southsoundsfest.com](http://www.southsoundsfest.com)), held the second weekend of April, showcases the best up-and-coming musicians in the South performing in bars, restaurants, and outdoor stages in downtown Mobile. The Gulf Coast Ethnic & Heritage Jazz Festival ([www.gceh jazzfest.com](http://www.gceh jazzfest.com)), held July 29-August 2, 2015, is a small edu-

cational festival at the History Museum of Mobile and The Temple Downtown.

Alabama's largest annual festival, BayFest ([www.bayfest.com](http://www.bayfest.com)), was first launched in



Mobile 20 years ago. Up through last year, it took place on seven stages, spread over 20 square blocks in downtown Mobile. However, it has officially outgrown this venue, and for 2015 it will move outside of the downtown area. BayFest's stages feature a wide selection of music throughout three days, from hip-hop to gospel to rock and roll. Last year's festival featured diverse headliners like Thomson Square, Joan Jett & the Blackhearts, Alabama, Earth Wind & Fire, Foster the People, Kid Rock, Trombone Shorty, The Roots, and Ludacris. This year's BayFest is set to take place October 2-4.

Aside from its music festivals, Mobile is well known for its over-the-top Carnival or Mardi Gras celebrations. Mardi Gras (or Fat Tuesday) is the day before Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of Lent. Celebrations begin about a month

before Fat Tuesday with more than 30 parades in the city. Five happen on Fat Tuesday alone. If you don't visit during Mardi Gras season, you can still get a taste of the celebration by visiting the Mobile Carnival Museum ([www.mobilecarnival-museum.com](http://www.mobilecarnival-museum.com)).

No matter when you visit, there is plenty of live music to be heard. In the evening, you can catch some of Mobile's local musicians performing downtown at venues that of-



Big name acts take the stage at Mobile's BayFest. Among the performers in 2014 were Thomson Square (opposite page) and Alabama (this page) with lead singer Randy Owen (inset).

fer music several nights a week: Alchemy Bar, Boo Radley's, Callaghan's Irish Social Club, Dauphin Street Blues Company, Soul Kitchen Music Hall, Veet's Bar & Grill, and more.

Outside of the city, live music venues include Lap's Grocery & Grill or John Word's Restaurant and Jazz Café on Battleship Parkway.

One special venue is the Bluegill Restaurant in Spanish Fort, where you can sit in Elvis's booth. It was one of the King's favorite stops whenever he passed through the Alabama coast. Today, it features live music six nights a week, staged on its dockside amphitheater.



Elvis's booth inside the Bluegill Restaurant, located just outside Mobile, in Spanish Fort, Alabama.



For weblinks and more venue information visit: [www.MakingMusicMag.com/mobile](http://www.MakingMusicMag.com/mobile).

