QUEEN CITY BACKSTAGE

MUSIC / FASHION / THEATER / CULTURE

THE PREMIERE ISSUE

Charlotte, in the spotlight.



JOSEPH McRAE

Beyond the runway

gnash

The Garden Tour comes to Charlotte

PLUS / FASHION • BLUES • FABFEST

Charlotte's Stories. Backstage and Beyond.

AUG 27 - OCT 2, 2026

EVERY CITY HAS STORIES.

These are Charlotte’s.

Charlotte’s Stories. Backstage and Beyond.

An evening in Charlotte can begin in a jazz club, at the edge of a runway, or in a theater as the audience settles into its seats. The event may last only a few hours. The people who make it happen, and the work they bring to it, have stories that extend beyond that night.

Queen City Backstage is a place for those stories. Our focus is Charlotte’s music, fashion, theater and culture: the performances that draw a crowd, the creators developing their work, and the venues and communities that give that work a home. This premiere edition begins with the events we covered and the photographs made along the way.

The magazine pairs original photographs with reporting about the events behind them. We want readers to meet the performers, understand the work and find something they would like to experience themselves. Follow the links throughout these pages for the full QCB stories and galleries.

In this issue, that approach takes us to Joseph McRae’s Project Runway viewing party at Junction, Charlotte Fashion Week at PINE and Face the Runway. It continues through Curtis Salgado at Middle C Jazz, gnash, Mark Diamond and Brake at The Underground, and Friday night’s Tosco Music Beatles Tribute at Knight Theater.

These events differ in scale, sound and style. Together, they offer a starting point for exploring Charlotte through the people who create here and the audiences who show up. The Tosco feature also looks beyond a single concert to the nonprofit’s history and community work, while our Up Next page points readers toward more evenings to come.

This is an introduction, and an invitation. Read a story about an artist you know. Spend time with a photograph from an event you missed. Follow the links to explore more coverage and galleries. Queen City Backstage begins with the belief that the city becomes more interesting when we pay attention to the people shaping it.

Continue exploring at QueenCityBackstage.com

Issue No. 2 arrives November 1, 2026

Backstage & beyond.

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ROOM FOR

Charlotte to gather.



JUNCTION CLT

“Charlotte’s Living Room.”

Words & photography
Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography

At Junction CLT, hosts can shape a gathering around the people coming through the door. The Charlotte event lounge describes itself as a place for local talent, shared experiences and new connections.

A living room with a wider purpose

Junction calls itself "Charlotte's Living Room." Its stated purpose is to connect friends, families, professionals and people meeting for the first time. It is a welcoming idea for hosts who want guests to feel at ease.

The lounge offers flexible layouts and customization for different occasions. Its team also describes interactive options such as pickleball, cornhole and ladder toss. Those activities give hosts another way to get people talking, particularly at team events where a formal presentation may be only part of the day.

From a wellness morning to a holiday evening

A wellness workshop needs space to move. A corporate reception needs room for conversation. A holiday celebration calls for atmosphere. Junction's flexible layouts let hosts discuss those needs with the team before choosing a setup.

Planning a gathering? Ask the Junction team about layouts, accessibility, catering and equipment to find the right fit for your event.

The next gathering

Charlotte's creative life needs places to gather. A launch, community program or private celebration begins with a practical question: where can we bring people together? Junction's emphasis on local talent makes it one venue to explore.

Explore Junction CLT and contact the team for a tour or to discuss your gathering. Follow @junction.clt for the venue’s own updates.

READ THE QCB STORY + / EXPLORE JUNCTION CLT +

JOSEPH *McRae*

Project Runway.
A Charlotte gathering.



FACE The Magazine brought Charlotte’s fashion community to Junction on August 27 for Joseph McRae’s Project Runway viewing party. Supporters gathered to follow his television run together and celebrate the designer behind the label.

JUNCTION CLT

Words & photography
Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography



THE VIEWING PARTY



From the screen to Junction

The Season 22 episode, “Designing with the Stars,” asked designers to create performance looks for Dancing With the Stars dancers. Movement was part of the brief: these clothes had to work in a performance as well as make an impression.

McRae’s New York label, JOSEPHMcRAE, explores identity and expression through collections including Skin, Urban Widow, Widowed Bride, Bloom and Growth. The Junction gathering brought that design story into a Charlotte setting, giving local supporters a place to share the experience of watching his work on screen.

READ THE QCB STORY +

EXPLORE THE FULL PHOTO GALLERY +



CHARLOTTE *in full* COLOR

Charlotte Seen brought Charlotte Fashion Week to PINE in NoDa on September 24. The Thursday runway was part of a week promoted across five days and six events, with designers, models and production teams presenting their work to Charlotte audiences.

Founded by Rita Miles in 2010, Charlotte Seen has spent more than a decade and a half bringing fashion talent together. Its recurring shows connect designers with the creative teams and audiences who help their work grow.

PINE / NODA

A RUNWAY *built over time.*

Rita Miles and Charlotte Seen's lasting place in the city's fashion community.



Rita Miles founded Charlotte Seen in 2010. WCCB's 2023 coverage identified her as its owner, producer and CEO. The September 24 runway at PINE is one chapter in that sustained work of bringing designers, models and production teams together.

Miles began in interior design. In an August 2023 interview with The Charlotte Post, she described consistency and relationships as central to Charlotte Seen's growth. Both matter in an industry where a designer needs collaborators as well as an audience.

Charlotte Seen says it has produced more than 200 shows. Its calendar includes spring, summer and holiday events, Charlotte Fashion Week and New York Fashion Week production. These recurring events create opportunities for fashion talent.



Its stated mission includes showcasing emerging designers, boutiques and models, alongside opportunities for hair and makeup artists, photographers and videographers. A runway presentation depends on all of them. Returning shows give those teams more chances to work together.

The 2026 fashion week ran September 22-26, according to the organizer's calendar: a kickoff at Stylus Sound Lounge, rehearsals at PINE, then Thursday, Friday and Saturday runway shows. QCB's photographs document the September 24 evening.

Miles' contribution extends beyond any single show. She has kept bringing people together to present their work. Designers, models and crew interested in future events can find current casting and participation details through Charlotte Seen.

CHARLOTTE SEEN + / READ THE QCB STORY +



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Go beyond the headline. Meet the people making Charlotte a place worth watching—and listening to. Explore the stories. Discover the photographs. Find your next night out.

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A stage OF THEIR OWN



FACE THE *Runway*

Charlotte talent. A shared stage. A wider horizon.

HILTON CHARLOTTE AIRPORT

Face the Runway brought designers, models and fashion fans to the Hilton Charlotte Airport on September 26. Joseph McRae, known to Project Runway viewers, was among the featured talent on a bill that made room for emerging designers alongside established names.









ON THE CHARLOTTE RUNWAY

Photography
Scott Jelleyman /
A&J Creative Photography

CHARLOTTE RUNWAY.

Bigger ambitions.



The people and production behind the stage

Face the Runway held its Charlotte event at the Hilton Charlotte Airport on September 26, 2026. The organizer advertised runway presentations, designer and boutique collections, red-carpet photography and pop-up shopping. Joseph McRae, known to Project Runway viewers, was among the featured talent; WCCB also covered his connection to the show.

Face the Runway's website describes coordinating designers, models, beauty teams, backstage flow, photography and video. Its participation pages welcome emerging and established designers, models of different sizes and backgrounds, photographers, volunteers and media. A show needs all of those skills to bring a collection before an audience.

BEYOND THE RUNWAY

FACE The Magazine's "That Face" page announced an October 2023 project introducing emerging models through interviews and editorial images. It describes a way for readers to meet the people behind the photographs.

In May 2024, Living La Vida Diva reported that FACE The Magazine presented Fashion Row at Dillard's SouthPark, naming Luko Marion, Snarkeez, Beck Bags and The Cosmo Gypsy. Those credits are from the earlier showcase. Together, the editorial project and retail event show how the publication has introduced talent away from a live runway.

Andre's ambitions include expanding the runway platform and FACE The Magazine beyond Charlotte. Follow Face the Runway and FACE The Magazine for announcements about future events and editions.

Follow the linked QCB story for sources and the full Charlotte photo gallery.

SOURCES: THAT FACE / 2024 FASHION ROW

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VISIT FACETHERUNWAY.COM +

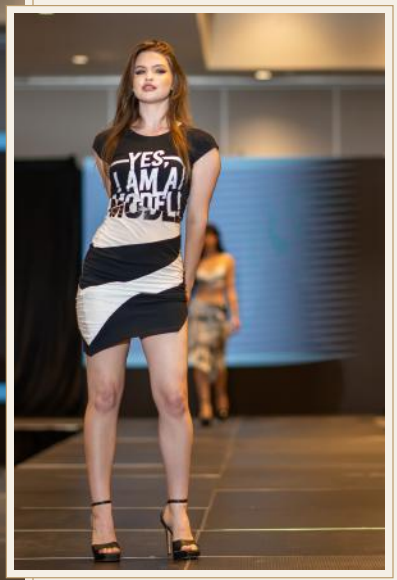
INDIVIDUAL STYLE.

Collective presence.









FACE THE RUNWAY

Hilton Charlotte Airport
September 26, 2026

Photographs by Scott Jelleyman
A&J Creative Photography

EXPLORE THE FULL PHOTO GALLERY +

CURTIS SALGADO



Curtis Salgado knows how to make you hang on to a note. At Middle C Jazz on September 23, his voice had the soul and texture of a singer who has lived with these stories for years. When he sustained a phrase, I wanted to stay with it as long as he did.

The room brought listeners close to the band. Salgado moved between singing and harmonica, but it was the warmth and strength in his voice that kept pulling my attention back. He could hold a line without letting the feeling slip away.

There was wit in the songs, too. His lyrics found humor in familiar situations, the kind of detail that makes you recognize a little of yourself. You listened for the story as eagerly as the next note.

REVIEW BY SCOTT JELLEYMAN



That combination of voice and personality once caught John Belushi’s attention. They met in Eugene, Oregon, in 1977 while Belushi was filming Animal House. Salgado shared blues and R&B records with him and became an influence on his “Joliet” Jake Blues character. The Blues Brothers dedicated their 1978 debut, Briefcase Full of Blues, to Salgado.

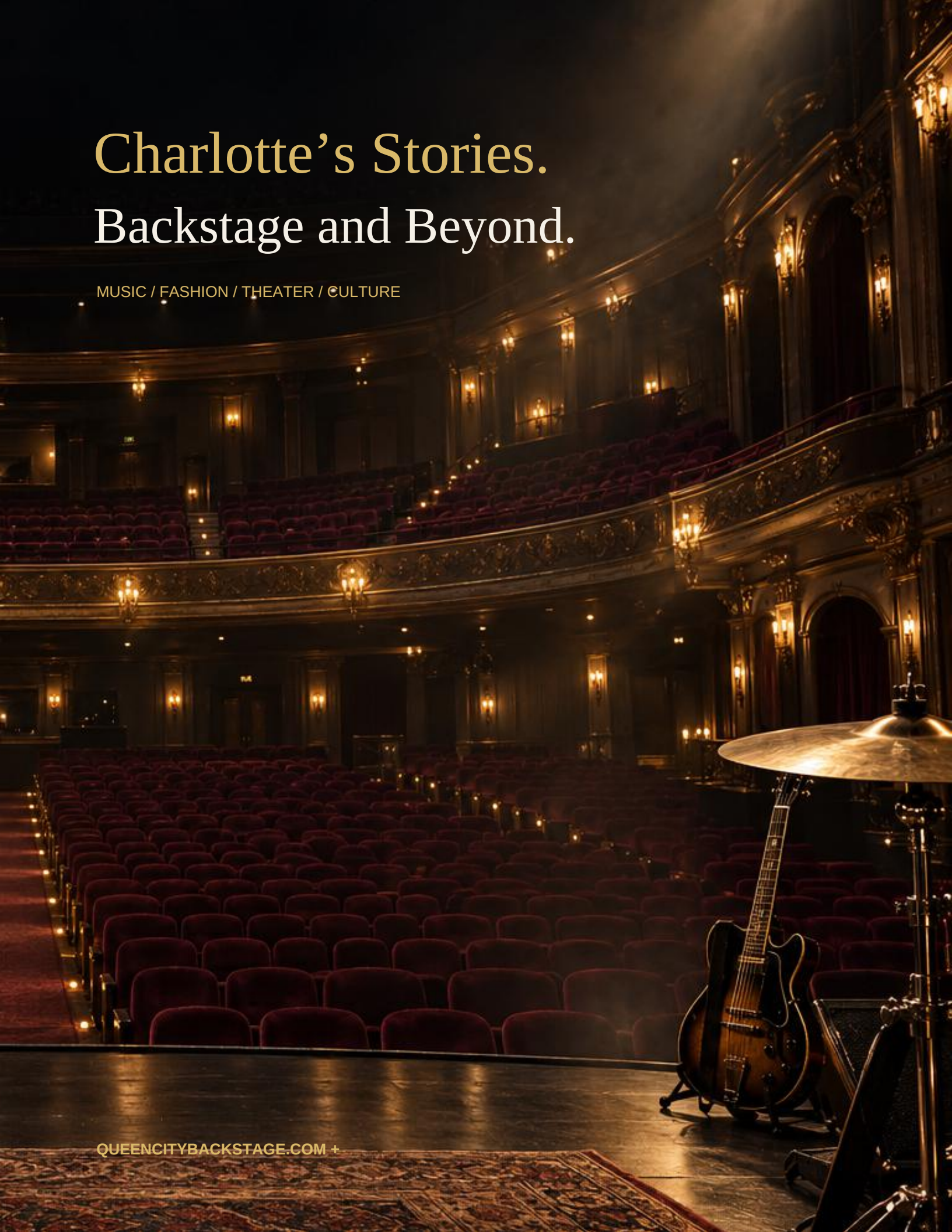


His records offer another way into that career. Clean Getaway (2008) earned four Blues Music Award nominations. “Walk a Mile in My Blues,” written with David Duncan and Mike Finnigan for The Beautiful Lowdown, won the 2017 Song of the Year award. Fine By Me won Soul Blues Album of the Year in 2025.

At Middle C Jazz, though, the pleasure was immediate. I came away thinking about the humor, the heart in his delivery and those notes he could still carry. The stories were every bit as engaging as the voice.

READ THE QCB STORY +


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gnash



Songs that say it plainly.

gnash headlined the Garden Tour’s September 22 stop at The Underground, with Mark Diamond and Brake sharing the Charlotte bill. For Garrett Nash, personal songwriting has long been the connection between a small room and a much larger audience.

His breakthrough, “i hate u, i love u” featuring Olivia O’Brien, reached No. 10 on the Billboard Hot 100. He also featured on MAX’s “Lights Down Low.” Those collaborations introduced listeners to a writer willing to put complicated feelings into direct language.

For more of his own catalog, try "the broken hearts club" and "imagine if." The listening link below offers an easy place to continue.

OCTOBER / SELECTED TOUR STOPS

06 Saint Paul / Amsterdam Bar & Hall
07 Lincoln / Bourbon Theatre
10 Denver / Marquis · 12 Salt Lake City / The Complex
17 Seattle / Neumos · 18 Vancouver / The Pearl
22 San Francisco / August Hall
23 Los Angeles / Pacific Electric

LISTEN + / DATES & TICKETS +

Tour dates can change. Check the venue before booking.









THE GARDEN TOUR

Photography / Scott Jelleyman

MARK *Diamond*



A place to start listening.

Mark Diamond joined gnash’s Garden Tour at The Underground on September 22, bringing the Seattle singer-songwriter to Charlotte on the same bill as Brake.

Start with "Books of Fantasy," "Colorado" and "Hold It Still." They offer an easy introduction to Diamond's recordings after his Charlotte appearance.

Keep listening with his longer releases: "Hold It Still" appears on Butterflies in My Head, and "Colorado" on Dusty Flares. Fell Asleep in Paradise gives listeners more to explore.

START LISTENING

Books of Fantasy / Colorado / Hold It Still

OCTOBER 2026 / SELECTED TOUR STOPS

01 Toronto / The Mod Club
02 Chicago / House of Blues
03 Ann Arbor / Blind Pig
04 Milwaukee / Shank Hall
06 Saint Paul / Amsterdam Bar and Hall
07 Lincoln / Bourbon Theatre
08 Kansas City / Warehouse On Broadway

LISTEN + / DATES & TICKETS +

Tour dates can change. Check the venue before booking.

Brake



Keep listening after the show.

Brake joined gnash and Mark Diamond at The Underground on September 22 for the Charlotte stop of the Garden Tour. His Bandsintown artist profile lists Greensboro, North Carolina as his hometown.

Start with “cigarettes & black lipstick,” “Whiskey N’ Lace” and “Like The First Time.” Released in 2023, 2024 and 2025, the singles trace three years of Brake’s recorded work.

Add “Dear Everyone” and “u jump i jump” to the queue for more. The Charlotte show was an introduction; the songs give listeners somewhere to go next.

START LISTENING

cigarettes & black lipstick / Whiskey N’ Lace / Like The First Time

OCTOBER 2026 / SELECTED TOUR STOPS

07 Lincoln / Bourbon Theatre
22 San Francisco / August Hall

LISTEN + / DATES & TICKETS +

Tour dates can change. Check the venue before booking.

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COME *together.*



At Knight Theater on Friday, October 2, the Beatles' music brought Charlotte together for the 22nd Annual Tosco Music Beatles Tribute. Opening FabFest's weekend, the concert made room for individual artists, ensembles and an audience invited to sing along.

The evening's printed program paired 16 featured acts with songs from across the Beatles' catalog, weaving singalongs between their appearances. That structure carried an idea familiar to Tosco Music audiences: a concert can introduce listeners to different musicians while also inviting them into the music.

MANY ARTISTS.

ONE SONGBOOK.



The first half of the printed lineup moved from Blue Jay Way's "You're Gonna Lose That Girl" to the NWSA Musical Theatre 4 Ensemble's "Here Comes the Sun." Anthony Vasquez, The Taxmen, Queen City Vocals and Anthony Robustelli were also on the bill, followed by The Commonwealth Divide, Cole Thannisch, Persona Bell and Beatles 4 Sale.

After intermission, the program brought together RevelWood Mission, Oliver Romero, North State Grass, John Tosco, Modern Alibi and Reeve Coobs. Its selections ranged from "Penny Lane" and "Get Back" to "Helter Skelter" and "Oh! Darling." The variety of performers gave the tribute its own local identity within a widely familiar songbook.

The program placed singalongs throughout both halves, ending with "Hey Jude." With the TMP House Band & Singalong Choir part of that framework, participation was built into the evening rather than saved for a single closing moment.

16

FEATURED ACTS IN THE PRINTED PROGRAM

Explore the official FabFest program for the complete lineup and more about the musicians.

IT STARTED

in a living room.



John Tosco, founder of Tosco Music.
Photography: Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography.

That invitation to join in reaches back to Tosco Music's beginnings. John Tosco started hosting informal music gatherings at home in the mid-1980s. Songbooks document organized parties by 1989, and the gatherings gradually moved into clubhouses and rented venues as more people came along.

Tosco Music became a nonprofit organization in 1999. Its own history traces the first Beatles Tribute to The Evening Muse in 2004 and its move to Knight Theater in 2010. The broader Tosco Music Parties series made Knight Theater its home in 2014. FabFest followed in 2019, expanding the Beatles celebration into a festival.

The venues grew, but the connection to those early gatherings remains visible in the format: musicians sharing a bill, familiar songs welcoming new listeners, and an audience invited to contribute its own voice.

Tosco Music history +



BEYOND *the stage.*

For Tosco Music, concerts are one part of a year-round nonprofit mission. The organization supports musicians through scholarships and performance opportunities, runs a family-friendly open mic, and brings music into the community through outreach that includes senior singalongs. Those programs help connect people who may meet music in very different places.

Friday’s program connected the tribute to that larger purpose. It listed opportunities to meet performers in the lobby, along with raffles and a silent auction supporting the organization’s work. The same publication credited volunteers, donors and a festival team, a reminder of the people needed to bring an evening like this together.

Keep the connection going with another concert, an open mic or a contribution to Tosco Music’s outreach. Its calendar offers ways to take part throughout the year.



KEEP THE *music going.*

The Tosco Music Holiday Party returns to Knight Theater on Monday, December 14, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. It offers another opportunity to gather around music as the year draws to a close.

Looking ahead to the Valentine’s season, Love Notes at Booth Playhouse brings a cabaret-style evening of love-themed songs from different genres. Tosco welcomes couples, friends and solo guests, with proceeds supporting its nonprofit music programs.

From the Beatles tribute to these seasonal concerts, the thread is the same: making space for musicians and listeners to come together. A tradition that began among friends in a living room continues to invite Charlotte into the room.

LOVE NOTES / VALENTINE'S SEASON
Visit Tosco Music for current dates and tickets.

UPCOMING SHOWS + TICKETS +

Sources: FabFest 2026 program; Tosco Music history and mission; event listings. Photographs: Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography.

UP NEXT.

ISSUE NO. 2

NOVEMBER 1, 2026

More Charlotte stories.
A new month backstage.

OCT 09

Bikini Babes Swim Week

The VAPA Center

OCT 17

High Point Fashion Week

Adult fashion show / Villa Magnolias, Browns Summit

OCT 22

Haley Reinhart

Middle C Jazz

NOV 13

Bearly Dead

BoatYard Lake Norman

NOV 19

DJ Raphi

The Underground

NOV 27

Uptown Dueling Pianos

BoatYard Lake Norman

Explore event details through the links. Confirm current schedules with organizers.

BEHIND *the issue.*

PHOTOGRAPHY & EVENT COVERAGE

Scott Jelleyman / A&J Creative Photography

EDITORIAL SOURCES

Reporting: Queen City Backstage. Background: Junction CLT, Freeform, Joseph McRae, Charlotte Seen, The Charlotte Post, WCCB, FACE The Magazine, Living La Vida Diva, the FabFest program, Tosco Music and artist biographies. Music and tour listings: artist sites, Apple Music, Amazon Music, Live Nation and Bandsintown.

BRAND ARTWORK

The auditorium spread and PhotoPit advertising illustration were created with AI assistance. Event photographs are Scott Jelleyman’s original work.

IN THIS ISSUE

House advertisements: Queen City Backstage, A&J Creative Photography and PhotoPit & Profits.

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THERE'S MORE

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November 1, 2026

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