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# SAND IN MY SHOES

## Chronicling Beach Music's

**It's a great coffee table** book. Heck, in a pinch you could probably use it for a coffee table.

The obsessively researched, tremendously informative and entertaining tome, *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*, was a massive undertaking for author Greg Haynes, and it's evident before you even turn one of its 552 pages. Over a foot tall, nearly two feet wide, two inches thick and weighing in at 10 pounds, the hardback is not what one would call "a quick read." As Haynes chuckles, "you don't wanna drop it on your toe."

What started in late 2000 with Haynes jotting down a few stories from his days as a small-town concert promoter – first in Waycross while still in high school, and later for his fraternity at the University of Georgia – steadily grew into an entire history of so-called "beach music" bands working throughout the Southeast during the mid-to-late 1960s. "I never thought it would get to this stage, you know, to this size or to this extent," says Haynes. "I'd end up telling these stories to various friends, and they'd say, 'You know, that's something other people'd like to know about.' And it really kind of segued into a much broader experience, because when I'd interview musicians, or I'd talk to 'em, they all had stories..."

A predominantly Southeastern phenomenon, beach music – which had nothing to do with West Coast "surf music" – took on several different forms and varieties across the region, but can generally be summed up as white Southern soul music – clean-cut young bands, nearly always in matching outfits, playing hopped-up originals and interpretations of the black rhythm & blues music of the times. Which is not to say there was no crossover or racial

integration among the bands, but generally, Southern beach music groups played horn-fueled, R&B party music for the region's beer-swilling Caucasian college students. And there were hundreds of these combos traveling from town to town, from party to party, across the Southeast during the 1960s. Haynes' book revisits those days with enthusiasm, affection and incredible detail.

"This is really just a little grain of sand on the beach of information about these times. Some of these bands were really just one song away from the Top 40, just one little break away from really being a mainstream, well-known band," Haynes says. Indeed, a few of the groups did score some measure of success outside of the South, such as Memphis' Box Tops, Atlanta's Tams and South Carolina's Swingin' Medallions, whose "Double Shot of My Baby's Love" is generally regarded as beach music's most recognized anthem. But for every Swingin' Medallions there were dozens upon dozens of other groups who, while they released singles and albums and were popular around the South at the time, are largely forgotten today. It is those groups that Haynes' book spends most of its time chronicling, and it is what makes his book so important as an historical account of a certain strain of American rock 'n' roll. It's a document of a scene that until now had gone undocumented to any serious degree.

Longtime Atlanta resident Haynes, 57, works today in inter-



Michael Hunter

## Heeey-Days

David Hood, who went on to be a respected Muscle Shoals musician and is the father of Patterson Hood of Drive-By Truckers, was in Alabama's Mystics. And Tuscaloosa's Misfitz featured a young Chuck Leavell, who went on to suc-

cess with the Allman

Brothers and Sea Level and is now, of course, the touring keyboardist for The Rolling Stones.

In fact, one of the more remarkable accounts in the book tells the tale of The Rolling Stones playing a show for the Sigma Epsilon Chi fraternity at Georgia Southern College in Statesboro in May 1965, complete with photos from the show. Booked months in advance of the gig, it was just before "Satisfaction" but just after the band had appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The Stones were surging in popularity by the time of the show and could've cancelled it for a better-paying gig in a larger town, but played anyway.

"Wouldn't you have loved to been there at the back of that gymnasium, to see the pickup truck roll around with Mick Jagger holding the Vox amplifiers, keeping them from falling out of the truck?" Haynes ponders, referring to the manner in which the local homeboys transported the British rockers and their gear to the performance from their rooms at the Thunderbird Motel on Highway 17.

While the Stones' Statesboro gig was a bit of an anomaly, Haynes insists that it wasn't unheard of for stars such as

national real estate brokerage, and is not a seasoned writer by any means. And there are certainly some instances in the book where you wish he'd edited himself a bit more diligently, such as by the 50th time he refers to the era as "the Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music." Simply coming up with a shorter catch phrase every once in a while might've saved a few pages. But the wealth of information, interviews, vintage photos and memorabilia filling the book more than makes up for such small irritations. Personally, I found it fascinating to learn about so many well-known musicians and veteran local music figures whose first start in the business came while playing in some little-known, smalltime cover band, and to read their experiences. Atlanta producer Rodney Mills, for example, cut his teeth playing in The Bushmen. Dean Daughtry and Robert Nix, who helped form The Atlanta Rhythm Section in the '70s, previously played together in The Candymen. Randall Bramblett was in King David & the Slaves. Marvin Taylor of Wilbur Walton & the James Gang, among others, ended up playing the Atlanta circuit with bands such as Mose Jones, the Out a Hand Band and Java Monkey, who became Francine Reed's backing band.



Courtesy of Kevin Delaney/Sieve Deneberg

The young Mr. Jagger



Photos/memorabilia courtesy of www.heeybabydays.com

"The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" chronicles the careers of such performers, as Johnson City's C. Vaughn Leslie & His Sleepless Knights

Otis Redding, James Brown or Ike & Tina Turner to play college fraternities and the coastal beach club circuit during those young/foolish/happy days. Those particular acts had their own bands, but others, such as Jackie Wilson, Jerry Butler and The Platters, utilized

certain local party acts, like Athens' Jesters, for instance, as their backing bands. "This is really a book about backup bands, if you really wanna put it in perspective," Haynes underscores. "You know, it's bands that are so obscure that you really would've had to have been there to have appreciated that."

*The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music* covers – and then re-covers, and re-covers again – a ton of ground throughout its pages. The first few chapters act as something of a memoir of Haynes' own experiences. Then the middle chapters – the bulk of the book – take a state-by-state overview of the whole scene, including numerous interviews with many of the musicians that made these bands jump. Later chapters include a look at the long-gone clubs that hosted these acts, and a "where are they now?" section. Augmenting the whole story are two CDs' worth of the era's most popular acts and tunes, with individual cuts referenced within the text of the book so you can listen to what you're reading about, if you choose. And when you hear these bands – most of which, honestly, you have probably never heard of before – chances are you'll be

floored at how great they sound today. I know I was.

Still, while there's no denying this music's vitality and simple charms, when you consider that all of this was happening during a time when the West Coast was exploding with the psychedelic

scene, Hendrix was burning guitars at Monterey and England was breeding a new, heavier brand of blues-influenced bands with the likes of Cream and Led Zeppelin, it really makes these bands appear quite

old-fashioned, even for their day. They seem like they have more in common with the groups of the late '50s or early '60s.

"They were definitely hold-overs, in a lot of respects," Haynes agrees. "Because the West Coast was already moving with people like Jefferson Airplane and that scene – harder rock, the flower child scene. But these bands were kind of unique to the South. In certain areas, especially in the South, soul music remained so strong, even though the charts were somewhat dominated by the British groups. I think it was just a little slower to change down South than it was other places. And these bands didn't wanna change."

Neither did Haynes. As the hippie rock scene, and its harder, more complex music, began to take hold in the South, and free shows at Piedmont Park became a familiar occurrence, and weekend-

long multi-act events such as the Atlanta Pop Festival were drawing more than a hundred thousand young longhairs, the comparatively innocent days of shagging to beach music faded away. A few of the bands tried to adapt their brass-heavy sound by covering newer acts like Blood, Sweat & Tears and Ides of March. Others, as mentioned, had specific members that went on to later success in the quickly changing music business. Most groups just gave up and went extinct. Haynes, personally, didn't feel the same passion for the harder rock groups as he had for Southern soul.

"As good as the Allman Brothers were, they weren't a show. You went and watched them play for themselves. These [beach music] bands with these horns, they were really more show bands. They were really trying to get the crowd infused with the party. And they did a great job. That was what I kinda think I missed, more than anything – that camaraderie of the party, that good feeling. And later on, it wasn't quite like that."

So that's pretty much where Haynes' book ends, at the dawn of the '70s. And perhaps another writer will eventually take up the story of Southern rock 'n' roll from then forward. They'll be hard-pressed, however, to do it as thoroughly and with as much true affection for the times as Haynes has with *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*.

"I'm not your typical music historian, but I was really interested in that period of time, because I was a little small town band promoter, and I got to see some of these people, some of which went on to be kinda famous. And it was fun," Haynes, a married father of two, explains. "And people like The Temptations, they were proud of the fact that there was this bunch of white-boy bands down in the South trying to sound like them. And that's exactly what it was. This book is to kind of honor that era when things were turbulent, but there were a lot of good parties going on." ☐

*In the greater Atlanta area, The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music is available at Decatur CD, and Barnes & Noble Booksellers. For further information, go to www.heeybabydays.com.*



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