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'Heeey Baby' Distribution Begins; Music Hall Of Fame To Celebrate With Gala

Greg Haynes and his wife, Nora, both formerly of Waycross, have been consumed by the project that has resulted in the publication of "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music."

By GARY GRIFFIN, Staff Writer

When Greg Haynes was in his late teens in Waycross, he was a rock-and-roll promoter. He brought people like the Tams, Billy Joe Royal, The Swingin' Medallions and Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels to Waycross. He made a little money doing it.

In hindsight, though, it was fun, and it was simply the pleasure, the experience of it all, that way outweighed any monetary gain.

For the past half decade, the Atlanta businessman has really had fun. He's been writing a book based on those 1960s experiences and the bands he booked ... even some that he didn't. Make that a lot that he didn't. The book, as a matter of fact, includes text on most of the South's party bands of the era.

"The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" is out now, ready for distribution this week. Friday in Macon the Georgia Music Hall of Fame is celebrating Haynes' book by opening a six-month exhibit. There will be a free book-signing Friday evening and the public can get, not just the author's signature, but those of the attending musicians.

"It's unbelievable," Haynes said Monday by phone. "No less than 27 bands from that era are going to be there ... the Bushmen, the Candymen, the Rockin' Gibraltars. Obviously the whole bands won't be there but representatives of them" are planning to make the scene.

Will Waycross's most famous Bee-bopper of them all, Johnny Bee, be there?

"He's invited!" Haynes said.

It took Haynes five years to complete "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" and that part was not by design.

"What started happening was people in these bands would hear about the book and they would find me," Haynes said. "They would call to say, 'hey, I hear you're writing this book; can we be in it?' "Consequently, the book kept growing. And each time I thought I was about finished with it, it would grow some more."

In much the same way, Friday's ceremony in Macon is snow-balling, too.

"It is truly phenomenal," said Joseph Johnson, curator of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. "I have heard from everybody from Virginia to Louisiana, and a good many of them are coming." Johnson pointed out that the event is free to the public. He said that Haynes has arranged a private reception just for the musicians at 6 p.m. at the hall.

"At 7 o'clock Greg will have a few remarks and then he and all of those here from the bands will cut the ribbon," Johnson said. "Then out in the lobby tables will be set up and Greg and the musicians will be signing copies. You can get a copy with all of these great autographs if you come on Friday."

The hall of fame exhibit of "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" will be up through March 31.

Haynes has seen the exhibit at the hall of fame. He said it is massive and impressive. "The hall has collected all of this memorabilia," he said. "Joseph Johnson, the curator, has assembled instruments, costumes and lots of other things from the 1960s.

"The first thing you see is the stage it is set up like a band is on break and the guitars and instruments are there, waiting for the band to come back for the next set."

While Haynes was blown away by Johnson's transformation of the hall of fame into The Beach Club, Johnson cannot get over the book itself.

"It is phenomenal," Johnson said, "... just the size of it; it weighs 10 pounds. It's the 11-by-17 format and it has 500-and-something pages. And it's only \$59.95!"

Those familiar with the music scene in the 1960s will delight in meeting the many musicians Friday night.

Representatives from these bands have committed to attending: The Athens Rogues, the Billy "Fat Boy" Stewart Band, the Bushmen, the Candymen, the Caravells, the Duprees, the Dynamic Consouls, the Four Winds, the K-Otics, King Edward and his BD's, the Monzas, Mouse and the Boys and Brass, Oxford Nights, Pieces of Eight, The Centaurs, Rubber Band, the Rockin' Gibraltars, Second Nature, Sleepless Knights, Steppin' Stones, Swingin' Medallions, Swingin' Travelers, Soul Inc., Soul Set, Sensational Epics and Strange Bedfellows.

"Plus promoters and deejays from the '60s" will be there, Haynes said. And other bands will probably jump on board by Friday.

"I wanted the Faux Pas (of Waycross) to be here," Haynes said, "and I couldn't find John Smith's email address." As it turns out, though, Smith's current band, Rhythm Oil, is playing at the Okefenokee Fair Friday night.

"There are (representatives of) four different Swingin' Medallions coming, including John McGraith," said Haynes. "That is the most incredible thing about the event ... the response from all the musicians."