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New book reveals Augusta a 'mecca' for beach music

By [Don Rhodes](#) | *Columnist*

Thursday, July 03, 2008

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Summer is the time for beach music and good books, and you can combine those two with the massive compilation *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*, by Greg Haynes.



Special

The Oxfords, of the 1960s, are one of the many Augusta-area beach music groups mentioned in a new book by Greg Haynes.

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This book is not only a "coffee table book," it is so large (at 553 bigger-than-legal size pages) that it can be used as a coffee table.

It is the definitive work about Southern beach music groups popular mainly in the 1960s.

What's really cool about this enormous collection of historic photos and personal recollections is that the section of the book dealing with Augusta groups is one of the largest.

"If there are any two Meccas that produced the most beach bands of the best quality, it was Augusta and Burlington, N.C.," Mr. Haynes said from his office in Atlanta,

where he is senior vice president and broker of industrial real estate for C.B. Richard Ellis.

Just a few of the bands he named from the Augusta area include The Georgia Prophets with Roy Smith and Billy Scott; The Oxford Nights with Jack and Ben Barnard; The Oxfords; The Soul Seekers; The Blue Notes; The Pallbearers with George Croft; The Celestials and The Red Hots (both with Johnny Hensley); and The Features Four with Sammy O'Banion.

Aiken groups include The Intruders with Archie Jordan; Mike Stewart; and Stewart Harris.

There also will be the Swingin' Medallions in Greenwood, S.C., whose 1965 single *Double Shot of My Baby's Love* became an international beach music classic.

Many musicians from these local bands became hit international songwriters and singers. Many more became civic, business and government leaders in the Augusta area.

To understand the importance and influence of Augusta's beach music bands, Mr. Haynes said to look to northern England, where American beach music groups are as revered as The Beatles or The Rolling Stones.

"There was a record label in Augusta called Delphi that is highly collectible in England and by beach music lovers everywhere," Mr. Haynes said.

"When I began working on this book, I was blown away by the amount and quality of groups out of the Augusta area," he said. "I always knew it was a music center and knew that the Georgia Prophets and the Swingin' Medallions played every fraternity house. But there were so many other groups I didn't know came from Augusta."

He points to none other than James Brown as a main reason why Augusta-area beach music groups became so popular.

"You had the main man from there," he said. "His influence was so incredible on the showmanship and style of beach music groups.

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"Joe Pope of The Tams told me they never had any real stage moves until they toured with James Brown.

"He said that they basically were just another doo-wop group that stood on the stage and sang, until James told them, 'You can't just stand there and be a part of my show. You've got to move.'

"And so they did."

Don Rhodes has written about country music for 37 years. He can be reached at (706) 823-3214 or at don.rhodes@morris.com.

BEACH BASH

WHAT: Book-signing and concert

WHO: Greg Haynes, the author of *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*; blues and beach musicians Mike Stewart, Clifford Curry, Rhonda McDaniels and Shameless Dave will perform.

WHEN: 6:30 to 10 p.m. Friday

WHERE: Rose Hill Estate in Aiken, 221 Greenville St. N.W.

ADMISSION: By donation to the Fisher House, which serves families of military veterans

BOOK SALES: Copies of Mr. Haynes' book cost \$59.95, with \$20 from each sold at the concert going to the Fisher House.

From the Thursday, July 03, 2008 edition of the Augusta Chronicle

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