

REAL SOUL - AND THEN SOME! ... FEATURES - REVIEWS - NEWS - VIEWS - AND MORE!

# In The Basement

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# book & dvd reviews

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# HEEEY BABY DAYS OF BEACH MUSIC

by Greg Haynes

*Rare Reads Publishing (US)*

*ISBN 0-9786047-0-9*

Beach Music, that uniquely southern (US) strain of soul, it seems is defined by its audience more so than even the sounds. This allows for a fluid definition of the genre as illustrated in Greg Haynes' book, with 500-plus pages dedicated predominately to white southern soul bands like the Swingin' Medallions. An ironic punch line can be found towards the end of the book, with the inclusion of the 'Author's

Dream of 'A Best of Beach Music' Album'; a list populated almost entirely by classic '60s soul records... black soul records. The heyday of beach music - 1960-70 - coincided with segregation's last stand in the sixties south. But for a deeply penetrating look at the social policies and contradictions extended into that era, look elsewhere. Instead, 'Heeey Baby Days' serves a different purpose; as a nostalgic celebration of what author Haynes refers to as a decade-long 'party'. Think 'Animal House'! As mentioned, the heart of this book is coverage of the ('blue eyed') bands; typically enormous line-ups with three to five piece horn sections. As contributor Marion Carter succinctly tells it, "From Texas across the Deep South and up the coast to Virginia, aggregations of white teenagers, enamoured with the sound of their black heroes, began committing to vinyl a soul sound of their own."

For those willing to suspend their purist definition of soul, this book is an admission ticket to the fun of a bygone era. Masquerading as a handsomely-appointed coffee table tome, 'Heeey Baby Days' actually reads more like a fanzine. In fact, a better description might be 'fan scrapbook'. Local newspaper features are reprinted, even entire e-mail exchanges between the author and the original artists that he managed to track down. In the late sixties, author Haynes tried his hand at concert promotion and it is those experiences that fuel his feverishly enthusiastic remembrances. His interviews are a scream, with rambling questions typically three times the length of the answers. By the time he gets to a particularly unengaging interview with Maurice Williams, it's unveiled that he is in on the joke. All this aside, the key selling point of this book is in the wealth of illustrations, beautifully reproduced and ranging from ultra-rare promo photos and full colour record label reprints to museum-worthy, boxing-style concert posters (e.g. the Tams and Vibrations at Williams High School Auditorium, Burlington, NC, circa 1966). It is the abundance of these posters as well as non-pro 'stage 'n backstage' shots of the touring royalty of the day - James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Musicor-era Platters, Billy Stewart, etc. - that will be of interest to even the most staunchly anti-beach music of 'ITB' readership.

Coinciding with the publication of 'Heeey Baby Days', Carolinas-based Ripete Records has issued a series of various artists CDs under the same title (and cover art, to remove any confusion). Out of the gate, this new series already numbers fourteen volumes, with more to follow. Whether by design or consideration



toward licensing, these discs seem to place an increased emphasis on the authentic black soul records popularised by the beach crowd. This is a boon for soul collectors, as it rounds up many sought-after local or regional indie 45s. Skipping over the big names, these discs include soulful entries from King Louie & the Court Jesters, Appreciations, Benny Gordon, CC and the Souls, Les Mack & the Impacts and too many others to mention. Of these, a personal favourite is the well-represented Moses Dillard (who, according to an old issue of 'ITB', played guitar on another under-appreciated gem: 'I Was Born To Lose Out' by James & Bobby Purify). These are placed alongside patently pale-faced but excellent - and yes, soulful - offerings from the likes of the In-Men LTD, Bernard Smith & the Jokers Wild and Oxfords, to name just a few. Ripete's decision to include more recent recordings - '80s to the present - by many of these same groups makes sense on one front: most of these musicians never faltered in their dedication to beach music nor retired from active duty. For example, Dobie Gray's 'Soul Days', a Ripete production from 1999 with a wonderful vocal, holds up fine on its own. However, the smooth 'shag' - for you UK readers, that's a dance! - sounds of the more contemporary cuts does not mix well, at least to these ears, with the tense, driving up-tempo (and delightfully lo-fi in many cases) vintage material from the golden age of Beach Music. But as each disc only allows for two or three of these newer cuts, this is a minor complaint. On the plus side, the first two volumes are included in the book. The biggest problem for punters outside the US is going to be arranging affordable delivery of this massively oversized\* (and, at ten pounds, weighty) book but well worth the trouble, regardless. (For more information visit: [www.heybabydays.com](http://www.heybabydays.com) and [www.ripete.com](http://www.ripete.com).)

[\*The cover was actually too big to scan - images above from the website. -Ed.]

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