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Sunday, December 16, 2007

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Still shaggin' gifts for someone special? Heeey baby, consider this book

Sunday, December 16, 2007 1:34 AM EST

You don't have to be from Myrtle Beach to like beach music.

Mention that genre of music, and you also quickly realize you don't have to be from Greenwood to immediately think of the Swingin' Medallions.

And so it should be no surprise that the Medallions' John McElrath writes the foreword to "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music," a new book by Greg Haynes. And it's no surprise that "Hey Hey Baby," by the Swingin' Medallions, is also the first cut on the first CD that comes with the book. In fact, it's no surprise the Medallions gather frequent-flier miles in the book.

Yeah, CDs and a book!

Haynes just released what has to be the most comprehensive sight-and-sound journey through a musical style that gave us the Shag and blended whites with blacks in a time when segregation was the norm. Haynes calls his book a set of stories and remembrances of a Southern music genre.

It's that, and more, because it's not just memories and photos. It's also a history book.

Haynes, a Waycross, Ga., boy, became a band promoter at a time when boys should have been more focused on girls than work. One early shot at promoting bands resulted in an April 18, 1968, performance. The band? The Swingin' Medallions, of course. The location? Waycross City Auditorium.

He and fellow youthful promoter Robert Adams were A/H Productions. The way Haynes tells it, A/H was approached by the student council requesting they find a band for the junior-senior prom. The story involves UGA connections, former Medallion Brent Fortson and so much more. Ultimately, it wasn't the prom that the band ended up booked for. This story is the topic of chapter five in the book, titled "The Big One." It features a photo of Grainger "Brother" Hines and Hack Bartley playing their saxophones and much more.

The story's a great read, not to be given away here, but here's one excerpt from Haynes' memory banks: "My favorite of all the on-stage antics of the Medallions was their rendition of 'Along Came Jones,' featuring the hilarious routine of (Charlie) Webber, (Joe) Morris, and (Jimbo) Doares. I could not possibly put on paper a worthy description of this charade, but if your belly wasn't splitting when those guys got through, then you ain't got no soul."

Oh, one other thing. The tickets for that show -- a show by the band dubbed "the signature band for the party of the '60s, the official band of the Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" -- went for \$2 in advance, \$2.50 at the door.

Of course, the book is far more than a story of Haynes' involvement with the Medallions. Remember, it chronicles a musical genre that's rooted in the Southeast and steeped in musicians.

One of the more humorous stories is about Charlena, the woman who was more like Haynes' big sister ... for a while. A slow dance with hands strategically placed led up to what he thought would be a significant event in his life. Again, no need to spoil the story here. You might want to read it yourself. One of the least funny -- and more tragic -- stories also involves Charlena.

What this book does, among other things, is help plot a beach music/R&B/Southern rock family



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