

UGLY THINGS



The Music Machine

Up Close & In Depth

THE LIGHT



Freedom's Children

The name losers

PAT KELROY

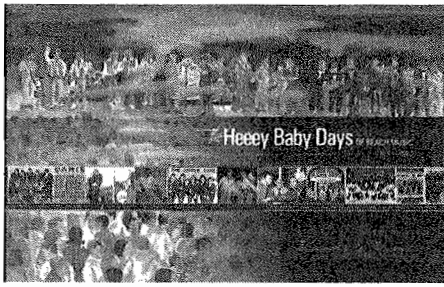
Radio Birdman



The Attack



A DOUBLE SHOT OF BEACH MUSIC HISTORY



THE HEEEY BABY DAYS OF BEACH MUSIC by Greg Haynes (Rare Reads Publishing, Atlanta, GA; 2006; 553 pages)
V.A. - THE HEEEY BABY DAYS OF BEACH MUSIC: Vols 1-14 (Ripete) CDs

"Beach music"—not California surf but rather the soul-inspired scene of the Carolinas and points further south—has never been mistaken for a hip genre. With a strictly regionalized following that is statistically in the vicinity of 99.9% Caucasian, wider appeal is discouraged by such factors as the inherent self-loathing of white boy purist soul collector types.

But in retrospect the real obstacle to wider acceptance is the square image projected by the few "beach" bands to break out of the south, namely one-hits like the O'Kaysions and Swingin' Medallions. At a time when we were putting a man on the moon, plenty of beach bands in the Carolinas were still parading on stage with National Guard-ready haircuts, matching Lacoste shirts, and pressed madras slacks. This was red state music for the conservative "in" crowd. Outside of beach music's graying southern demographic, the general public is probably too sophisticated today to bother with what's left of this stuff.

This brings us to an unexpected and impressive campaign to pay homage to the glory days of beach music, namely Greg Haynes' massive coffee table tribute, *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*. In a self-effacingly obsessive style, Haynes takes us on a journey from his days as an independent concert promoter in Waycross, Georgia (where as a teenager in the late '60s, he staged concerts at the local civic with beach luminaries like the Tams and Swingin' Medallions) to the post-Woodstock collapse of the scene and his efforts in more recent years to reconnect with his musical heroes.

The latter mission is handled with an enthusiasm that borders on good-natured mania, to a degree that would put most UT enthusiasts to shame. This is also one of the most fascinating aspects of the book and a peak into the mindset of a beach music fan from the Deep South: Haynes could care less about Woodstock, Ron Woods (sic), or Bono. Instead, he displays an encyclopedic knowledge of possibly every lineup of the Swingin' Medallions (who through the years might have burned through more members than Uriah Heep and the Pretty Things combined).

Haynes' first-hand knowledge revolves around the Georgia/Alabama/Florida beach music axis (South Carolina-based Swingin' Medallions, it is revealed, focused on the lower states, playing infrequently at home and virtually ignoring neighboring North Carolina). Along the way he enlists the help of experts from other scenes, with a particularly satisfying large chapter on NC. There is also a pirate's haul of amazing memorabilia reproduced from Beach music's primary stomping ground, Myrtle Beach, SC.

The south's legacy of racism, still in full flower during the heyday of beach music, arguably gets glossed over. But that's not the intent of *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*, which serves more

like an elaborate fanzine; a hard cover, full color, glossy scrapbook which beautifully reproduces hundreds of band photos (including a few conspicuous rockers like the Allman Joys, Sam the Sham, and in a helluva surprise, the Rolling Stones playing for a college fraternity in Statesboro, Georgia!). This book weighs ten pounds (!), so you couch marshmallows might want to stick to your CD liner notes.

Speaking of which, this book comes packaged with two bonus CDs of a random sampling of (mostly) the acts presented within its pages. There are beach music essentials (Prophets' "I Got the Fever," Bill Deal & the Rhondells' "I've Been Hurt," an apparently remixed Swingin' Medallions' "Double Shot," etc.) and future R&B hits in their original attempts (Sensational Epics' "Be Young, Be Foolish, Be Happy," Rubber Band's "Let Love Come Between Us").

Unfortunately, there are also too many revived acts hobbling either through recuts (O'Kaysions in legal name-only, regurgitating "Girl Watcher" via the miracle of cheesy modern technology) or nostalgic banality (Ron Moody, who sounds like your drunk uncle at a karaoke party, on "Timeless"). Since these discs are thrown-in *gratis* with the book, I should probably be ashamed over this petty complaint.

Thankfully, the track assembly only improves across a dozen additional volumes of "Heeey Baby" music marketed under the same title on the Ripete reissue label. These discs are a bonanza of rare local soul and R&B-flavored garage recordings.

At almost 300 songs, there is simply too much ground to cover here but for starters it's worth mentioning that Augusta, GA wins this reviewer's award for best beach music local talent pool. This includes the aforementioned Prophets (aka the Georgia Prophets, Billy Scott & the Three Prophets, et al) whose highly infectious sound might best be described as "bubblegum-soul."

Another Augusta standout is Roy Smith; a particularly pasty-completed soul crooner *par excellence*. His original of "Very Strong on You" cuts a '70s redo, also included, by the equally capable Cortez Greer. From South Carolina, Moses Dillard emerges as an unsung soul champ, and that's whether leading his own Dynamic Showmen, Tex-

Town Playboys or backing Kip Anderson. Not at all surprising, Dillard eventually landed top flight session work as a guitarist on the hits of Arthur Conley and James & Bobby Purify.

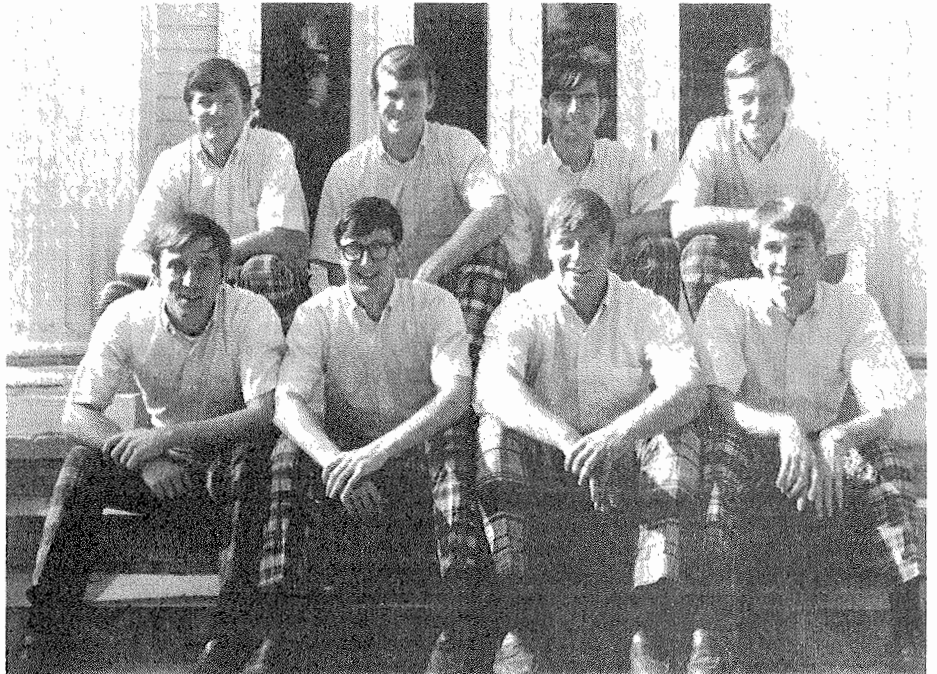
Raleigh, NC's prolific JCP label gets cleaned-out for stripped-down frat-rock from the likes of the Sardams (madras spelled backwards) and Frankie & the Damons (who otherwise sneak in a cool Zombies-ish time change 'n' jazzy keyboard break on "I Hope You Find the Way"). While no UT reader needs another inclusion of "Roadrunner" by the Gants, there are other cool garage-soul combos worth hearing. For instance, the Nomad's "Something's Bad" whips up the excitement like ? (Question Mark) at his testifyin' best.

I wish I had a dime for every time I've flipped past a junk shop copy of the Swingin' Medallions' follow-up flop, "She Drives Me Out of My Mind." It's resurrected on one of these additional volumes to once again wear out the "Double Shot" formula. But like the name claims, it's swingin' stuff anyway.

The better of these bands have a horn-blastin' approach similar in style to Bob Kuban & the In Men of "The Cheater" fame. Kuban is here as are other horny blasts like "Gotta Be a Reason" from Bernard Smith & Jokers Wild. (Trivia: This from the same Richmond, VA label that gave us the Hazards' insane waxing of "Hey Joe")

It doesn't get much better than Louisiana acts like Willie Tee ("Please Don't Go," "Walking Up a One Way Street"), Lil' Bob & the Lollipopps ("I Got Loaded") and Jewell & the Rubies ("Kidnapper"). Yet a cover of the latter by Bert Miller & the Swing Kings somehow exceeds even the original, thanks to an updated/uptempo'd sound that the compilers rightly compare to Cliff Nobles' "The Horse."

Inevitably, newer recordings from the eighties and beyond creep into these 12 volumes. Mercifully, they are kept to two or three per disc. For anyone with an expansive interest in southern soul (other than pet labels which have already been anthologized to death) and willing to delve deep into an often whiter shade of R&B, this entire CD series is indispensable. ("Loafers" Jarema)



Beach Music and plaid trouser icons, the Swingin' Medallions