

More Stories From The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music *the ones that arrived to late to get into Volume One*

The Athens Rogues

Glenn Brown

The Athens Rogues was essentially a band formed in 1967 and comprised of students at Athens High School (now Clarke Central). Jim Cleveland, Bill Walker, Dennis Carter and I were all Class of 1969, and Terry McGee and John Barrett were Class of 1968. Gerald Fleming was a student at Georgia and was brought into the band in late 1967; Larry Moor also was a student at Georgia and was brought into the band when our lead singer and sax player, David Woods, left the band.

As far as the records are concerned, Gerald Fleming wrote our music. He composed ten songs at which time he and a couple of the others literally got in the car, drove to Nashville and started knocking on doors. Columbia and the other major labels were not interested in a high school band from Athens, Georgia, but Pete Drake was. His STOP label was primarily a country label, but he wanted us to be his "cross over" group. We left Athens after school on a Thursday in March of 1968, and drove all night through a blinding ice storm to get to Nashville. When we went to the studio the next day, The Jordanares and D. J. Fontana were there doing a session with a country artist. I knew enough about Elvis Presley to know that they were his backup vocal group and drummer, respectively. I admit that we were impressed beyond words. For a bunch of seventeen year olds from Athens, Georgia, we had died and gone to heaven. We actually cut some other songs while there, but Pete liked *She Could Love Me* and we put *Sally, Sally* on the B-side with Gerald and myself singing two part harmony. The record was released soon after that, and got a fair amount of regional airplay, but was never a "hit" by any standards. I really thought that the only remaining copy of the record was hanging on my living room wall until Marion Carter called me back in the fall.

It was on this trip that I had a life altering experience. At one point, we were in Pete's office trying to decide which of the recordings would be released, and he had some songs by other composer/musicians that he was considering for us to record and release. Not knowing much about how the system worked, we took that as somewhat of a personal affront that our songs were not good enough. To make an impression on us (and kind of put us in our place), he took us into a room, which adjoined his office, which was lined with shelves full of unpublished original compositions by Nashville artists. I remember standing there thinking "I'm an average seventeen year old guitar player from Athens, Georgia, and I'm looking at hundreds of songs by some of Nashville's best which apparently were not good enough to make it. What are my chances of really hitting it big and making a living as an adult playing music?" That realization never left me. After we got home, the other band members wanted to continue the quest, but Dennis Carter and I decided to leave the band in late 1968. I think the band continued on for a short time thereafter until the early part of 1969.

Regarding The Jesters. They are a great band, and Davis Causey is one of the finest guitar players anywhere. They were a couple of years ahead of us in school, but are also essentially an Athens High School band. Although Ed Saye is no longer with the band, he and I see each other occasionally and talk about old times.

After I left The Rogues, I stayed out of bands for about a year, but eventually formed a five-piece club group with Mercer Crook who had originally been in The Axemen from Winder,

Georgia. We played Elks Clubs, National Guard Armories and VFW's for several years all around northeast Georgia until I went to law school in 1976. The Axemen and The Athens Rogues were around about the same time, but I didn't really know Mercer Crook then except by name. He and I later ended up playing together for years beginning about 1970, after The Rogues and The Axemen had disbanded, and we have remained good friends ever since. They were a horn band like us, and actually beat us in the Athens High School battle of the bands in 1968, which Mercer has never let me forget. They had Cal Hale on drums, Jimmy Hale and Harvey Towns on trumpets, and Mercer was the leader of the band, on keyboards. Mercer went on to become the band director at East Hall High School in Gainesville, and continues to live there today. Cal Hale still plays, and is a fine drummer. *He is to drumming as Davis Causey is to guitar playing.*

I will always cherish the experiences and memories surrounding the making of the record, and the entire era of Carolina Beach Music- that was a special time particularly if you were from the South. As you know, once it gets in your blood, it never gets out regardless of age or circumstance. (Ed. Note: I think that Glenn is talking about The Never Gonna Give It Up Club which is the grand finale in the book, *The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music*)

Marion Carter sent me a CD with not only *She Could Love Me*, but some other songs, and I was amazed at how much good music was around back then that you just didn't hear unless you went to The Beach Club or somewhere like that.

Greg- Just an aside. I remember playing a fraternity house on Milledge Avenue in the fairly early stages of the band- we didn't even have a good P. A. system at that point. Next door, a band was setting up to play, and we quickly learned they were Bob Kuban and the In Men. We were intimidated (they had just released *The Cheater*) because they had all the expensive instrumentality that we were yet to get, and they were already well known. It was an eye opener that brought to light how good the bands were then, and what we would have to do to compete with all that talent.

The South was LOADED with young musical talent in the 60s. (Who needs Neil Young anyhow?).

Glenn

A follow up question for Glenn: Glenn, in the paragraph above you reference Bob Kuban & The In-Men Ltd. Is there any possibility that the gig you reference was at the Chi Omega house on Milledge on Friday February 4, 1966? If so, the remarkable band you heard was not Bob Kuban and The In-Men Ltd. from St. Louis but the In-Men Ltd. of Burlington , North Carolina. They were an incredible show band.

Greg- It's been too long ago for me to remember which sorority or fraternity it was but it was basically across the street from the Theta house on Milledge. We were told it was Bob Kuban, but maybe not. Whoever it was, they were good enough to intimidate the hell out of us- I think I was still sixteen at the time. They were already everything we were trying to become.

Glenn: The Chi Omega house is right across from The Kappa Alpha Theta house on Milledge (same side of Milledge) Now, Could it have been February 1966 ?

Greg: I think you're right.

