

The Georgia Music Hall of Fame Rocks

When I arrived in Macon yesterday, one of the first things I wanted to do was to pay a visit to **The Georgia Music Hall of Fame**. I have visited a handful of times in the past but had not darkened their door since 2001. Besides, most of the people who work there are old friends and it is always a stone cold blast touring the beautiful museum.

Just before going over to the Hall of Fame, I paid a visit to the (fairly) recently added Otis Redding Memorial down by the river. What a *beautiful* bronze statue of Otis. Absolutely amazing. I sat there on the bench enjoying this January-Spring weather and meditated on Otis and his amazing life and music. What a man he was. What a sheer *soul man*.



That led me to think about Mr. Phil Walden who passed away last year. I was just about as big a fan of Phil as I was of the Capricorn Records artists during the seventies. I admired this man who was born in the town where I live (Greenville, SC) and all he did for Southern music. Someone told me yesterday that Phil is buried at Rose Hill but that the only marker is a small one-foot stone. This isn't *right*, man. I sure hope someone will come up with a grave marker befitting Walden's greatness.



I went into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame where I met our old friend Pamela Lockhart. We spoke for a while and then I made my way through the museum once again. Man, I love this kind of thing. So much music history, including a couple of James Brown's stage outfits from his "red sparkle" era. There is a really nice display on Macon's own Little Richard and plenty of photos and memorabilia on Otis Redding.

There are special rooms for country music memorabilia, with a nice Charlie Daniels display as well as one on Gram Parsons, along with tons of great photos and stage worn items like dresses from Tricia Yearwood and many other great ladies of country.

There is a room filled to the brim with rock and roll, including a full wall of artifacts from Athens' own R.E.M. Amazing stuff. Then I caught sight of the awesome Gregg Allman display. There, behind the protective glass, is Gregg's Hammond B-3 organ as well as his "Melissa" acoustic guitar, vintage photos and posters and more. Of course I was drooling over all of the memorabilia from The Allman Brothers Band, The Marshall Tucker Band, Grinderswitch, Wet Willie and all the Capricorn Records stuff.



Toward the end of the tour, I walked into a room that blew my mind. A huge display coinciding with the release of **The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music** book by our friend Greg Haynes. There are walls filled with 45-rpm records and photos, costumes and instruments from the good ol' days. Great memorabilia from The Swingin' Medallions, The Tams.... *so much great stuff*. And there, right in front of me, a whole wall of material on The Rubber Band, a group that not only contained John Townsend (Sanford Townsend Band, "Smoke from a Distant Fire") but also my good friend John Wyker who went on to be in Sailcat and recently formed **The Mighty Field of Vision** Internet Radio station, playing great music 24/7.

In the gift shop I ran into Pam again along with Melvina Spence and Vickia Johnson. We had a ball talking about local music and such and Melvina spoke about how everyone always looked forward to the new stack of Gritz Magazines when they would come in. I told them all about our merge with Swampland and how we are now in the Age of Aquarius, a time when the future comes down to meet and shake hands with the past and the south becomes immortalized on the internet by some good ol' boys out of Florida and Austin, Texas. You have to admit it is pretty exciting.

I left the museum with a pocketful of memories and a bounce in my step, went back over to the park where Otis sits on the river and walked the beautiful



trail around the park. It felt like spring. All I could think about was the next day and seeing old friends at the Big House Foundation Dinner and at my gig at 550 Blues. It was going to be another great day.

Keep it Real, Keep it Southern! - Buffalo

