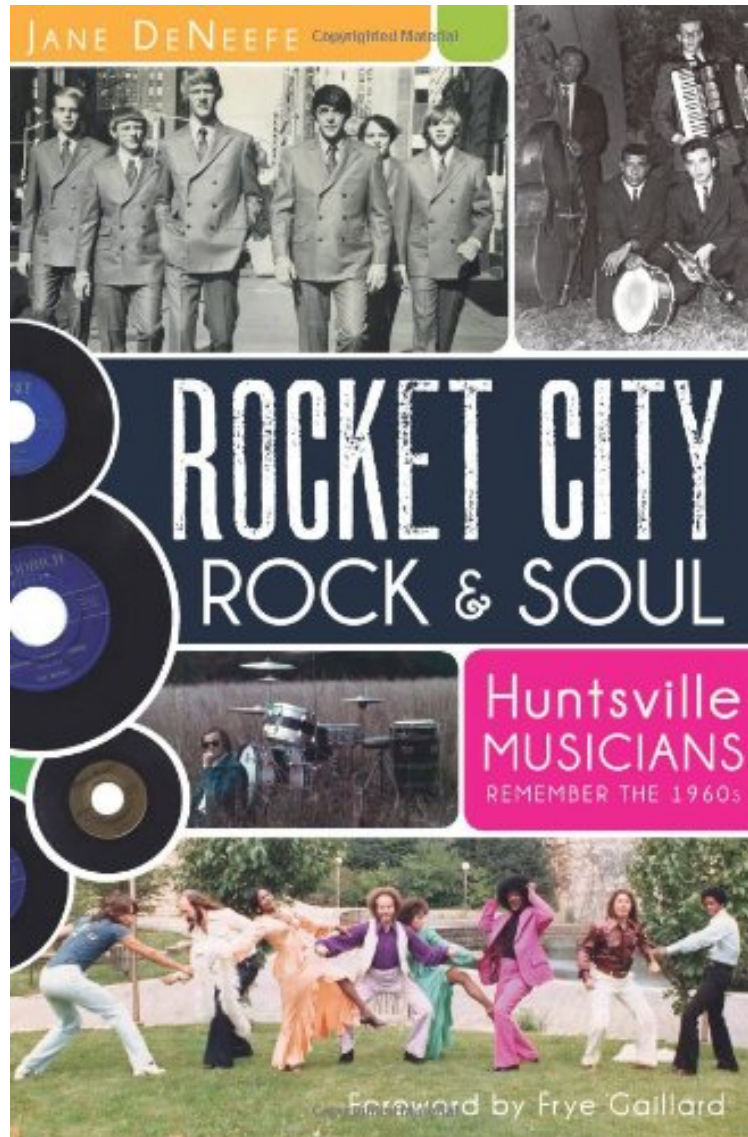


(Download) Rocket City Rock and Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the Sixties

Rocket City Rock and Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the Sixties

Jane DeNeeffe

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Jane DeNeeffe : Rocket City Rock and Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the Sixties before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rocket City Rock and Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the Sixties:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Rocket City Rock Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the

1960s By GintGotham Last March--out of the blue--I received a Facebook request from a Jane DeNeefe, who had heard about me through fellow musicians. She told me she had been writing a book about Huntsville, Alabama musicians during the 1960s, and how they helped promote racial harmony in a former southern cotton town that had become "The Rocket City." I responded positively, and let her interview me. As a jazz accordion player, I earned part of my living in Huntsville, Alabama (from 1963 until 1968) by playing in hotels and nightclubs, on radio and television, and at jazz festivals. Happy to accommodate her, I even sent her some photographs from my collection--photographs of me and fellow musicians, street scenes, and some photographs of membership cards from entertainment venues of the era. Well, the book has been published; I've read it a few times, and am very pleased with the results. I must say, I learned more from reading this book than I had learned during the sixties when I lived in Huntsville wearing the hats of soldier, musician, and television director. "Rocket City Rock Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the 1960s" consists of 125 pages packed with history and oral interviews with the musicians who were part of the Huntsville scene during that era. DeNeefe helps the reader understand the social relationships between white and black musicians, and the musical relationships between rock, soul and jazz. The sixties were an eventful decade in the history of the world, and in Huntsville, Alabama, German rocket scientist Wernher Von Braun and his team were preparing America to land on the moon. But Huntsville is an old southern cotton town that sports a famous-landmark Greek Revival bank (with barracks in the rear where plantation owners used to deposit their slaves--for interest). The 1960s occurred a century after the Emancipation Proclamation and Reconstruction. African Americans had secured only menial jobs in Huntsville's aerospace industry causing Huntsville's doctors, lawyers, and professors to march in front of the New York Stock Exchange as they protested the investments that were being made in a racially segregated space program. However, there was another group that helped integrate Huntsville: the rock, soul, and jazz musicians. When I was shipped to Huntsville by the U.S. Army Signal Corps (music was not my military occupational specialty), I noticed that native white musicians were playing "corn" or "rockabilly" music; black musicians were playing jazz and soul. Thus, I tended to motivate towards the black musicians. Also...they were the musicians that usually hired me to play their gigs. During the first half of the decade, white venues would not allow blacks to enter. DeNeefe's book explains that this was a de jure rule. Blacks could get arrested for entering a white venue and vice versa. But things became de facto during the second half of the sixties. White nightclubs required membership cards. Many clubs refused admittance to blacks by denying them membership; however, whenever I entered a black club (which I did numerous times to hear the spectacular music!), I was always treated with utmost respect and made to feel at home. Black musicians played in white clubs but during the breaks, they were required to sit in the kitchen. Whenever I played in a black club, however, black patrons would buy me a drink during the breaks. This hospitality led to a major change in race relations in Huntsville so that by 2006, "Black Family Today" magazine voted Huntsville "#1" among American cities for being hospitable to blacks; and four years later, The National Trust for Historic Preservation placed Huntsville on its "America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2010" list. Jane DeNeefe is an oral historian, and through interviews and historical background material gleaned from an enlightening bibliography, she weaves an extremely interesting, and fast reading, narrative about the climate of the times and the musicians who were part of it. This informative book could be the seed for a video documentary. Although I was in the middle of this story over forty years ago, I did not realize exactly what I was in the middle of--until reading "Rocket City Rock Soul." "Rocket City Rock and Soul: Huntsville Musicians Remember the Sixties" This book puts things into perspective.--Val Ginter, New York 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. That was an amazing time of in the deep south By Bill That was an amazing time of in the deep south. To call it civil unrest would be a vast understatement. Racial tensions and Viet Nam had ignited so many people to the boiling point. The players in Ms DeNeefe's book dealt with it with song. They completely defied the goings on of the politicians. Never has there been so many great musicians come from such an unlikely area at the same time. Thinking back on my years as a musician in Huntsville during those times makes me smile every time. Thank you so much for putting all this in words, Jane, through your interviews, research, and incredible writing talent. You Rock!...Bill Peck 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Bill Phillips A+

In a state widely considered ground zero for civil rights struggles, Huntsville became an unlikely venue for racial reconciliation. Huntsville's recently formed NASA station drew new residents from throughout the country, and across the world, to the Rocket City. This influx of fresh perspectives informed the city's youth. Soon, dozens of vibrant rock bands and soul groups, characteristic of the era but unique in Alabama, were formed. Set against the bitter backdrop of segregation, Huntsville musicians--black and white--found common ground in rock and soul music. Whether playing to desegregated audiences, in desegregated bands or both, Huntsville musicians were boldly moving forward, ushering in a new era. Through interviews with these musicians, local author Jane DeNeefe recounts this unique and important chapter in Huntsville's history.

About the Author Jane DeNeefe, coauthor of Alabama's Civil Rights Trail: An Illustrated Guide to the Cradle of Freedom, lives in Huntsville, Alabama. A former bookseller and community columnist for the Huntsville Times, she

has contributed to the WLRH public radio program Writer's Corner, the web magazine *Swampland: Cultures of the South*, *Encyclopedia of Alabama* and other publications. DeNeeffe earned a BA in history from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.