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**Entertainment**

Thursday June 14, 2007

**Vibrant music scene of '60s and '70s captured in photos**

by **Monica Orosz**  
Daily Mail staff

Music in America in the 1960s and '70s was particularly interesting because of the many changes going on from race to politics.

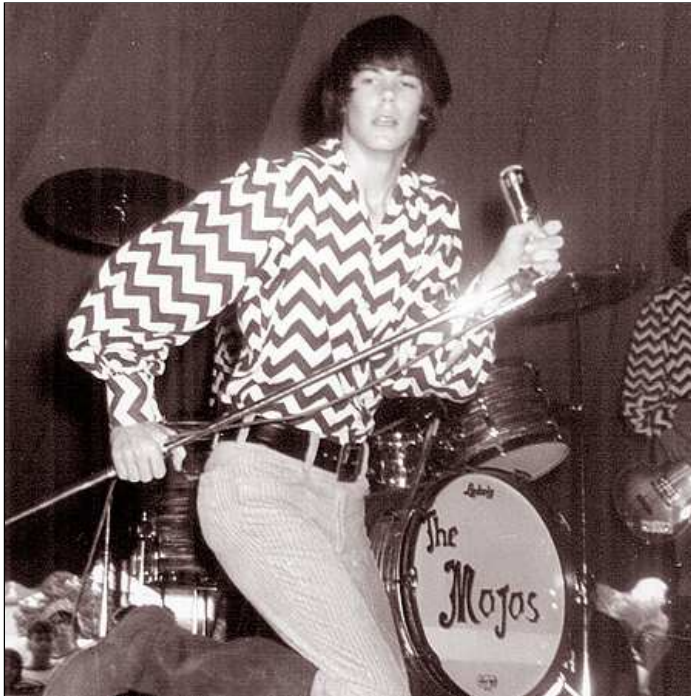
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The Kanawha Valley was no exception, said Michael Lipton, who heads the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame, an entity that exists now in the form of a Web site and several projects under way and which eventually will have a facility to house its artifacts.

**Music Hall of Fame**

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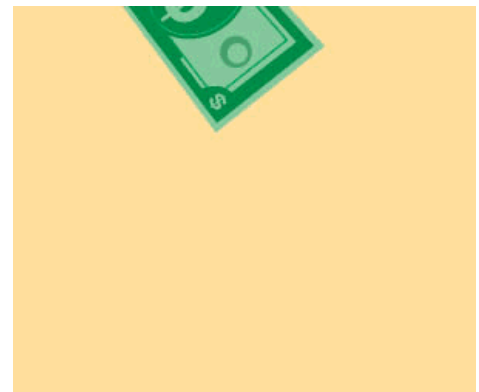
COURTESY PHOTO

Singer Joe Clatworthy performed with The Mojos, the area's first and most popular rock band, known for their mod clothing and British Invasion sound. They scored the highest-rated record ever on "American Bandstand's" Rate-a-Record segment, where viewers were invited to vote on a recording each week. ...

"That period of time was so incredibly fertile," Lipton said, "and I

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almost feel like it was more vibrant and fertile here."

"Everybody I've talked to tells stories of how many clubs there were and how many really good bands there were and how so many people were into the music.

"You can see that from the reception The Esquires get here today," he said of the longtime popular regional band that still commands big audiences when it performs in the valley.

"Another noticeable thing in the '60s was that Charleston had just been desegregated but so many of the bands were mixed racially -- I found that really interesting," Lipton added.

Music crossed genres from rock, pop and blues to country, jazz and gospel and Lipton said the Kanawha Valley was home to many groups and performers of national caliber.

They included names like Ralph Norman, a singer for a local group called Heavy Rain who went on to play with The Joe Perry Project (a post-Aerosmith band) and Savoy Brown. A British Invasion band called The Mojos earned notoriety when one of its songs was played on "American Bandstand's" Rate-a-Record segment -- and garnered the highest rating ever from TV viewers.

"People who heard them play said The Mojos were unparalleled here," Lipton said.

Lipton decided the upcoming FestivAll would be the perfect time to remind Kanawha Valley residents about this rich history and he had the perfect way to do it -- with an exhibit of photographs from the era.

The exhibit, featuring just a small portion of images collected, will be shown Wednesday at the Clay Center as part of a preview celebration for FestivAll that will include a performance by the original Mojos mentioned above. (See [www.festivallcharleston.com](http://www.festivallcharleston.com) for details.)

"I'm a habitual collector anyway," Lipton said. "I've been collecting this stuff for years and that's where some of this started."

For this exhibit, Lipton has put together 30 or so laminated images, just a small part of a collection called "The Art of West Virginia Music" that will debut this fall and include sheet music, 45 rpm records and memorabilia from many decades of West Virginia music.

"A big difference with this exhibit is that most of the people are still alive, so there are many ways you can go with this (in the future) in terms of talking to people and getting anecdotes from them," he said. "Already, I've been calling people to see if they have any photos and even that brings up memories - a flood of stuff comes back."

Lipton credits local archivist Terry Lowery with providing most of the material for this exhibit.

Lowery, who currently is a library assistant for the state Division of Culture and History, also is a musician and a writer best known for his six books on Civil War history, though he wrote music columns and stories for The Gazette back in the mid-1970s.

He agrees with Lipton that the Kanawha Valley has an unusually rich music history, particularly in the 1960s and '70s.

"It's not like we're the music center of the world, but it seems like there was and is so much talent here," said Lowery, 57.

He noted guitarist Randall Wray from that era and calls him "the best guitarist I've ever heard in my life -- and I've heard a lot."

"He never quite got out of here," Lowery said. "He passed away in his sleep a few years ago."

Next week's exhibit will highlight two upcoming hall of fame projects. One is a tribute CD to Blind Alfred Reed, an old-time fiddler who spent most of his life in West Virginia. The hall of fame gathered an impressive group of talent to perform Reed's songs on the tribute CD, which will be available this fall and will raise funds for the hall of fame.

Next up is inducting the first 10 musicians in the hall of fame, which Lipton hopes will occur during FestivAll.

Musicians from all genres and decades will be considered as upcoming inductees and Lipton says he continually hears about musicians from all corners of the state.

"It's way richer than I ever realized and I've been playing music for 30 years," said Lipton, who plays in the house band for Public Radio's Mountain Stage and is a member of The Carpenter Ants.

"I find new people every day."

He believes remembering these musicians is an important part of chronicling West Virginia's cultural heritage.

"We did these outreach meetings in some of the coalfield counties where we asked people to submit names," he said.

"It was really touching how much the music and the people who played it meant to people. They don't have much to hang their hats on but this."

The exhibit received financial help from the city of Charleston, the Kanawha County Commission and the law firm of Farmer, Cline & Campbell.

Lipton said he's interested in borrowing 45 rpm records, LPs, cassettes, etc. of Kanawha Valley artists from the 1960s through the 1980s, in particular. Contact him at [mlipton@gmail.com](mailto:mlipton@gmail.com) or call 342-4412.

*Contact writer Monica Orosz at 348-4830.*

If you go

What: Photo exhibit of Music of

the Kanawha Valley: '60s-'70s

When: 5:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.

June 20

Where: Clay Center

Cost: Free. The event is part of the FestivAll Preview West Virginia Day celebration at the Clay Center.

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