

## Local Beat

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Last Wednesday, the **Memphis & Shelby County Music Commission** convened for their December board meeting, with the bulk of the meeting spent discussing two hot topics: the commission's economic-impact survey, released last week, and the "50th Anniversary of Rock'N'Roll/50th Anniversary of Soul" concert, tentatively scheduled for mid-2004.

First, the survey: According to the **University of Memphis' Bureau of Business and Economic Research**, which polled more than 4,000 area residents, the Memphis music industry had a local economic impact of \$367 million last year. Compared to numbers from the last survey, conducted in the early '70s when Stax and Elvis were going strong, those dollars are way down. "It's disheartening but informative to have our losses in black-and-white terms," Music Commission president **Rey Flemings** told his board.

But it's not all bad news, Chairman **Phil Trenary** explained. "The goal here is to better justify the business of music in Memphis," he said. "We're trying to position Memphis as a place for people to come make music and keep [existing] musicians in Memphis. This is our end-goal."

Both Trenary and Flemings hope that the proposed rock-and-roll/soul concert will breathe new life into the Memphis music community. But as Booker T. Jones once said, "Time is tight." When will we know whether or not the city will stage the event?

"Conversations are ongoing with several national media partners," Flemings said. "We expect an offer letter by January 15th." If that happens, Flemings assured the board, "we can announce the event at MIDEM (an international music market) and at the Grammy Awards ceremony the first week of February."

"Time is our number-one challenge," Trenary admitted. "We need two \$2 million sponsors."

Emphasizing the potential global impact of such an event, Flemings added, "This is the premier entertainment property of the year." He also unveiled the working title of the concert, **Turn It Up**.

**Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau president Kevin Kane** was on hand to lend solidarity, squelching rumors that the MCVB hasn't been supportive of the event. "We aren't in the event business. We promote the destination," Kane said. "But we're excited about what the music commission is doing. It's a big deal."

Kane's goal is to "weave a marketing message to capitalize on the music hook. [We need] as much media pop as possible for 2004," he said.

For instance, 750,000 copies of an area map and tourist guide touting the 50th anniversary of rock-and-roll already have been printed and distributed.

"As a community, we're sitting on something that can claim our place in history," Kane said. "Our historic legacy is the sizzle and pop that gets tourists here."

However, Kane seemed flummoxed by the idea of simultaneously celebrating the 50th anniversary of soul.

"We've received some resistance on putting rock and soul together from BMG (RCA Records' parent company) and the Hard Rock Caf , but we want as diverse a message as possible. We are on board. We will do our best to co-promote the event. We just want to be careful," he cautioned, "that in trying to do it all, we don't lose or confuse people with our marketing message."

**Deanie Parker**, executive director of **Soulsville U.S.A.** and the guiding light behind the **Stax Museum of American Soul Music**, objected.

"We're extremely fortunate to lay claim to both musical genres. If we don't establish ourselves as the soul-music capital of the world, we're gonna miss out," she said, noting that Philadelphia already has broken ground on a soul museum of its own. "We need to create synergy here. We're all on the same road."

It's gonna be a Merry Christmas for the members of local rock group **Ingram Hill**, who, fresh off their Rubber Meets the Road tour, just signed to **Hollywood Records**. "The years of working our butts off has finally paid off a little bit," frontman Justin Moore wrote on the group's Web site, **IngramHillMusic.com**. "I guess now the real work starts. But seriously, we're extremely excited about the signing, and just as we wanted, this is our next step in our plan to take over the world."

According to publicist **Tracy Blackburn** of **Hoopla PR**, Hollywood will re-release the band's recent album, **June's Picture Show**, with a couple of the tracks remixed. Blackburn says that tentative plans call for the record to drop in late March.

After the recent **Olivians** reunion, musician **Jack Yarber** is picking up steam. Earlier this month, Yarber also cut a handful of tracks with **The Tearjerkers** at the **Money Shot, Bruce Watson's** Water Valley, Mississippi, recording studio. Afterward, Yarber took time out to explain how he's restructured the group, which backed him on 2001's stupendous blend of country and R&B, **Bad Mood Rising**, adding **Terrence Bishop** on bass to replace **Scott Bomar**, who's been busy with his own band, **The Bo-Keys**, and pianist **Adam Woodard**, who also plays with Yarber in the band **South Filthy**.

The Tearjerkers will play with **The Subteens** (both bands share drummer **Bubba John Bonds**) at the Hi-Tone on Friday, December 26th.

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