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**ONLY IN THE AJC**  
REMEMBERING  
KATHY SCRUGGS



Writer Kathy Scruggs "was an incredibly energetic, beautiful woman," friend Lisa Griffin says. PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA GRIFFIN

## The Ballad of Kathy Scruggs

Longtime AJC crime reporter isn't alive to challenge 'floozy' portrayal in 'Jewell' film.

By Jennifer Brett  
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ATHENS — Ernest Hemingway's words grace a wall in the Athens Academy writing center named in memory of Kathy Scruggs.

*All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.*

What's the truest sentence about Kathy Scruggs?

"She was the real deal when it came to being a dedicated reporter," said attorney and family friend Edward Tolley.

"She had a vulnerability about her," said author Robert Coram, who once fashioned a fictional character after her.

"Kathy was a wild child," said friend and former coworker Tony Kiss.

Hollywood's version of Scruggs appears in "Richard Jewell," coming out Dec. 13.

Directed by Clint Eastwood, the movie was filmed in Atlanta over the summer and is based on a Vanity Fair article titled "American Nightmare: The Ballad of Richard Jewell." Paul Walter Hauser stars in the title role as the security guard who saved countless lives, only to become a suspect, after the deadly Centennial Olympic Park bombing.

Olivia Wilde plays Scruggs, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporter who broke the news that the FBI was focusing on Jewell. The movie captures the messy AJC newsroom well enough and managed a spot-on recreation of Centennial Olympic Park circa 1996.

But the film's rendition of Scruggs veers from reality, according to people who knew and worked with her, in suggesting she landed scoops by offering to sleep with sources.

Scruggs continued on E8

## What's inside

### Where Can I Find It?

Gochujang fermented chile sauce, pomegranate acai mints and where to get a music box fixed, E11

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Discover the failed Victorian utopia of Rugby, Tenn. Plus: 10 more things to see and do, E16-17

**ONLY IN THE AJC** MERCER MUSIC AT CAPRICORN



Ovie Sparks (from left), Jim Hawkins and Paul Hornsby visit the new Capricorn Studios in Macon in early November. Hawkins was an original engineer at the studio starting in the 1960s, while Hornsby, a former member of Hour Glass with Gregg and Duane Allman, became a producer at Capricorn. Sparks also worked as an engineer at the original studio in the 1970s. MELISSA RUGGIERI / MELISSA.RUGGIERI@AJC.COM

# Capricorn rising

Iconic Macon recording studio used by Allman Brothers, many others reopening as Mercer Music at Capricorn

## CONCERT PREVIEW

### Mercer Music at Capricorn celebrations

With Robert McDuffie Center for Strings, Otis Redding Foundation's DREAM choir, Jimmy Hall and Friends, Robert Lee Coleman Band, Chris Hicks from the Marshall Tucker Band, Magnolia Moon and Caleb Melvin of Hindsight. 2-6 p.m. Tuesday. Free. Mercer Music at Capricorn studios, 540 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. "Capricorn Revival" with Chuck Leavell, Randall Bramblett Band, Wet Willie's Band member Jaimoe, Taj Mahal and former Capricorn recording artists John Bell of Widespread Panic and Tommy Talton of Cowboy. Charlie Starr from Blackberry Smoke, Marcus King, Brent Cobb and Duane Betts of the Allman Betts Band. 8 p.m. Tuesday. \$58-\$128. Macon City Auditorium, 415 First St., Macon. 1-800-745-3000, ticketmaster.com.

By Melissa Ruggieri  
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### MACON

In the spring of 2016, Gregg Allman stood on the grounds of Mercer University to receive an honorary doctorate of humanities degree, presented to him by former President Jimmy Carter and university President Bill Underwood.

Beforehand, he chatted with Underwood in the green room of Hawkins Arena on Mercer's Macon campus about a beloved site at 540 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.: Capricorn Studios.

Perhaps recalling the dim room with its rust-colored soundproof walls and isolation booth covered in roof shingles, Allman gave

Underwood some advice.

"Don't change that room. It's perfect," he said. "And get an analog board."

Three years later, with Allman buried less than 2 miles away at Rose Hill Cemetery, the mecca now named Mercer Music at Capricorn is readying its rebirth as a 20,000-square-foot complex owned by the university: two studios, a museum, offices and a 12-room "incubator" for musicians and students to utilize 24 hours a day.

The journey to the revitalization of Capricorn Studios has been, as these things tend to go, lengthy, exhausting and pricey — more than \$5 million in total costs for the building and renovations.

Capricorn continued on E9



Capricorn Studios is seen back in the day. The new studios have a custom-built analog API 2448 recording console. API consoles were signature to the Capricorn sound. AJC FILE PHOTO

## AJC HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE BOOKS

# 10 books for young (or youthful) readers on your gift list

Atlanta wordsmiths pen abundance of recommended works.

By Julie Bookman  
For the AJC

Autumn marks the publishing world's most bountiful crop of new books. Sifting out the right choice for the young people — be they tots or high-schoolers — on your gift list can be overwhelming. We aim to help by combing through new releases to put some

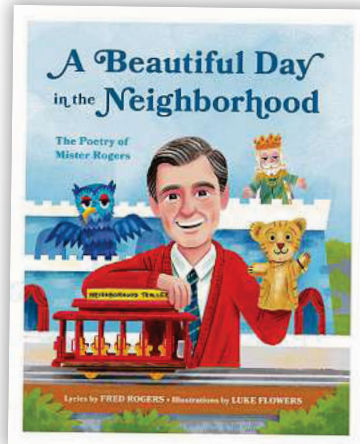
less obvious but superior choices on your radar. With these 10 titles, you can't go wrong.

### All ages

"A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: The Poetry of Mister Rogers." If you need a gift for a family, the search stops here. With the recent debut of the Tom Hanks feature film, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," on the heels of the 2018 documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor?," the longtime TV host, who died in 2003, may be hot right now,

but his words prove evergreen. The lyrics to 75 ditties that Fred McFeely Rogers wrote for his children's program, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," are now poems illustrated by Luke Flowers that tickle your fancy, soothe your soul or maybe both. The poems echo the show's messages: You are uniquely you, love and wonder are all around, and it's OK to sometimes feel mad or blue. For instance: "If you can't be a pine/ On the top of a hill/ Be a shrub in

Readers continued on E7



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## LIVING &amp; ARTS

## Upstairs museum spotlights all things Capricorn

## Capricorn

continued from E1

The original studio was purchased in 1967 by the late Phil Walden – the impresario behind Capricorn Records and a Mercer alumnus – along with his brother Alan Walden and Otis Redding. Redding and Walden conceived the idea of a studio where artists on their Capricorn label could record, but Redding's untimely death in a December 1967 plane crash halted those plans.

Two years later, Walden, with guidance from mentor Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, joined with his brother Alan and legendary music executive Frank Fenter to open Capricorn Studios (the name chosen for Wexler and Phil Walden's shared zodiac sign).

That was also the year that The Allman Brothers Band moved to Macon and quickly became the centerpiece of Capricorn, recording most of three albums there, as well as solo work from Gregg Allman ("Laid Back" in 1973) and Dickey Betts ("Highway Call" in 1974).

But after a decade of witnessing Allman and his bandmates craft seminal work such as "Midnight Rider" and "Statesboro Blues," as well as recordings from a parade of artists, including the Marshall Tucker Band, Kitty Wells, Wet Willie and Dobie Gray, Capricorn Studios filed for bankruptcy and shuttered in 1979.

And then it languished, although Walden's Capricorn Records relaunched out of Nashville in 1990 with acts such as Wide-spread Panic and 311.

In 2010, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation assigned the building to its "Places in Peril" list (the 540 building was built in 1880), prompting The Peyton Anderson Foundation – the charity established by the late Macon newspaper publisher – to purchase the building out of foreclosure and stabilize it with a new roof. At the time, the historical site was about two years from collapsing.

"Peyton Anderson saved this building," said Larry Brumley, senior vice president for marketing communications and chief of staff at Mercer University.

In December 2015, Mercer announced a commitment to restore the studio space through a combination of historic tax credits and fundraising, including a \$2 million grant from The Peyton Anderson Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Underwood was determined to have Mercer Music at Capricorn completed by 2019 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the studio.

It is – mostly – and will be publicly feted with festivities and live music on Monday and Tuesday before officially opening for business on Jan. 2.

And Allman's recommendation for an analog recording board has been fulfilled.

## The secrets inside

On an unusually warm fall afternoon in Macon in early November, a trio of men who are deeply connected to Capricorn lore visited their old haunt, lured by an interest in seeing the new analog, 40-channel API 2448 recording console custom-built for the studio (API consoles were signature to the Capricorn sound), as well as the original iconic recording room.

Studio A, where all of those fabled recordings were made, has been left largely intact. The old curtains that hung along the back of the control room still exist. They were just sent to the cleaners for a much-needed refresh. And wood paneling revived a '70s vibe.

As Jim Hawkins walked the hallways back to Studio



The newly renovated Capricorn Studios in Macon honors the studio synonymous with 1970s Southern rock. It's being reborn for its 50th anniversary. Mercer University will reopen the landmark building this week as the Mercer Music at Capricorn complex. RYON HORNE / RHORNE@AJC.COM



During the 1970s, Macon's Capricorn Recording Studio was a mecca for Southern rock music legends such as the Allman Brothers Band, Charlie Daniels Band, Dixie Dregs and the Marshall Tucker Band. The studio filed for bankruptcy in 1979. THE GEORGIA TRUST

A, he paused and smiled.

"There was a Pepsi machine right there," he said, pointing to a spot on a wall.

Inside the control room, Hawkins looked appreciatively at the new soundboard.

Of anyone in the room, his opinion carried the most heft. Hawkins was the original engineer at Capricorn Studios and also built its first console.

During his tenure at the studio from 1968-71, Hawkins worked on hundreds of recordings, but when asked to share memories of sessions, he laughed.

"There aren't any that I'd want to repeat," he said.

But he did reminisce about working as an engineer with the Allman Brothers Band on their second album, "Idlewild South."

"We cut 'Midnight Rider,' 'In Memory of Elizabeth Reed,' 'Hoochie Coochie Man' and 'Statesboro Blues.' It wasn't included on the record, but I'm pretty sure that recording of 'Statesboro' is the one that was finished out (on a deluxe version of the album)," Hawkins said.

Joining Hawkins in the



The late Capricorn Records exec Phil Walden bought the Macon studio in 1967 along with his brother Alan Walden and Otis Redding. AJC FILE PHOTO

studio were musician/producer Paul Hornsby, who played with Gregg and Duane Allman in Hour Glass and produced five Marshall Tucker Band albums among other bona fides during his tenure at Capricorn, and Ovie Sparks, who in 1972 was named chief engineer at Capricorn Studios.

"It seems like yesterday," Hornsby said as he leaned back in a chair behind the console.

Sparks later recalled a story about Wet Willie singer Jimmy Hall that utilized another part of the Capricorn building.

"Jimmy was sitting on the landing of the upstairs stairwell just outside the studio practicing his harmonica solo (for 'Keep on Smilin'). I went out to tell

him we were ready to record his solo, and when I heard how wonderful he sounded in that stairwell, we decided to put a microphone out there with him and record his solo from right there," Sparks said. "The natural reverb of the stairwell complemented the harp so well that we wanted to capture its 'magic' for the recording. ... As far as I know, no one else ever used the stairwell for a recording. That stairwell is still there today exactly as it was 46 years ago. So, who knows, maybe it will get used again someday."

Close to the front of the 540 building resides the second, larger studio in the complex – Studio B – which is christened the Phil Walden Memorial Studio. A

## AJC.COM

**Video:** Exclusive walk-through of the grounds and inside Capricorn Studios in Macon.

**AJC.com**  
Atlanta. News. Now.

motorized screen will make it accessible for orchestral film scoring, and a nearby room fits enough people for an intimate concert.

In addition to the studios, an upstairs museum of about 1,200 square feet will spotlight the history of all things Capricorn, with cases housing the label's record covers, along with artifacts such as Walden's address book, photos and memorabilia. A touch screen panel will run the length of the floor – an idea inspired by a similar station at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles – and explain historical tidbits, such as why Walden didn't like the term "Southern rock."

And, befitting the playful spirit of Capricorn Records, a mural of Wet Willie (the finger-in-the-ear visual pays homage to the, uh, Southern rock band) will greet visitors.

"The Capricorn story will be told in 'things,'" Brumley said.

## Cementing the musical future

Though the history of Mercer Music at Capricorn is to be venerated, its future is what makes a music legend, such as Chuck Leavell, optimistic.

"What we hope is that we get young people," the longtime keyboardist for the Rolling Stones and Allman Brothers Band said. "The hope is to bring new blood in there. Sure, if I have a project that comes up, (Capricorn) would be my first consideration. It's an iconic studio, equally as much as Muscle Shoals or

Fame Studios in Alabama or Criteria in Miami. In my mind, it's up there with all of those."

The ever-busy Leavell will lead the "Capricorn Revival" concert at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Macon City Auditorium. The Randall Bramblett Band will serve as the house band, with performances from Wide-spread Panic's John Bell, Taj Mahal, Charlie Starr of Blackberry Smoke, Brent Cobb, Bonnie Bramlett and others.

Leavell is also lending his Hammond B3 organ, the same one that toured with him in his early band Sea Level and with the Rolling Stones.

Leavell's instrument will be situated in the original Studio A, where on this day, Rob Evans, the chief engineer and studio manager, and Nashville producer Steve Ivey fiddle with the API console and talk with Hawkins, Hornsby and Sparks about the technology in the room and how it will benefit both students and any other musicians who choose to record at Capricorn.

"The idea was to honor the past, the tradition. It was killing two birds with one stone to honor our history and get a board that any musician would love to record on," Evans said. "We do have a strong campaign to get the word out that Capricorn is back. We plan to network with musicians and producers and have taken many trips to Nashville. There is a musical tourism that happens, too. People like to go to Fame or Stax (in Memphis). This icon is back on the map, and that alone is reason to come here."

Added Ivey, "We want to teach students how to record. I was a student at Mercer, and Paul (Hornsby) taught me how to record. We want to do the same thing. We can still bring in the old way of recording on analog, but we have the digital (component)."

In addition to the studio, both students and the public can access the "incubator," the 12 rehearsal rooms – which can be used for storage rooms – are entered via a card, like a hotel room. Rates range from \$250-\$500 per month, depending upon the size of the room, or \$100 per day.

The top floor of the incubator also pays homage to the building's roots – Leavell, Alan Walden and Fenter all have rooms named for them – and a mural by Athens artist Michael Pierce enlivens the stairwell.

There is no doubt that the long-dormant block of buildings will soon be filled with music, which anyone associated with the project will view as a victory.

As Brumley posited, "This is about leveraging Macon's music heritage to create Macon's music future."



The mid-1970s lineup of The Allman Brothers Band included Chuck Leavell (from left), Jaimoe, Butch Trucks, Gregg Allman, Lamar Williams and Dickey Betts. In Macon, the band quickly became the centerpiece of Capricorn Studios, recording most of three albums there, as well as solo work from Allman ("Laid Back" in 1973) and Betts ("Highway Call" in 1974). CAPRICORN RECORDS