

atters

ED 1953

GS "Only You," "The
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ER HIGHLIGHT Led
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PLAIN DEALER FILE

Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed posing with a close friend — the rock and roll music he helped to promote and influence.

Rock on Cleveland

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ports from Mike Olszewski.

7PM BEGINNING MONDAY

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Maureen O'Boyle,
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King of the Moondoggers

Celebrating Alan Freed, DJ who named rock 'n' roll

By ROGER BROWN
PLAIN DEALER RADIO CRITIC

In 1951, disc jockey Alan Freed walked into a small studio at Cleveland's WJW AM radio to play the blues-based music he eventually would be credited as naming "rock 'n' roll."

There was little reason then to imagine that more than four decades later people would honor Freed's contribution and celebrate his influence on American popular culture.

But such is the case on the museum's second level where — as part of the wing hailing radio's influence on rock — an exhibit has been devoted to Freed's pivotal role in playing the music.

"There's no way you can present the full story of rock without devoting some chapters to Alan Freed," said James D. Henke, chief curator. "He was playing and recognizing the depth of this music long before others did, and Cleveland was where he was doing so."

The centerpiece of "The Big Beat: Alan Freed" exhibit is a continuously running film, narrated by Freed's former business manager, Jack Hook, detailing the disc jockey's life and controversial career as a radio person-

Learn about legendary Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed on The Plain Dealer's World Wide Web page. The Web site address is:

<http://www.rockhall.com>

ality. While spinning records at WJW, Freed defied tradition by openly playing the soulful songs by black artists who were to serve as the foundation for the music that was to become "rock 'n' roll."

Freed combined his genuine love for the music with an exuberant sense of self-promotion, which culminated in his title as "King of the Moondoggers." His career was to take an ill-fated turn when he left Cleveland for a radio job in New York City. In 1959, Freed was implicated in a scheme in which disc jockeys received payments from record companies to play certain songs. The resulting scandal effectively destroyed Freed's influence in radio and he died in 1965, obscure and broke. He was 43.

But Henke said for all of Freed's flaws, his place in rock history is unmistakable and significant. "There's no doubt he deserves the prominent place he has been given in the hall," he said.

2.00



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