

Stephen Catterall and Keith Gildart, *Keeping the Faith: A History of Northern Soul*.
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I was very happy to have been given the chance to fill some time, during the pandemic induced lockdown, reviewing this book. In a world where most social interaction is (hopefully temporarily) not possible, being able to reflect on a world of crammed night clubs, filled with exuberant dancers and the sound of dazzling 1960s US soul music was a welcome escape from the monotony of lockdown life. This book focuses on the night-clubs (or more specifically the northern soul events that took place in a range of ballrooms and other night-club spaces) that were the focus of the original northern soul scene. For those not familiar with what northern soul was, it was an under the radar youth movement that was particularly active during the 1970s in the UK. It was a scene centred on dancing to (and collecting) American soul music from the mid to late 1960s. The North West and Midlands of England were the site of the most well-known of the northern soul venues; The Golden Torch in Stoke on Trent, the Wigan Casino and the Blackpool Mecca. In these clubs the DJs owned and played soul music that was not available in mainstream night-clubs, radio or the pop charts. It was a youth movement of some significance. The Wigan Casino club regularly attracted 1,500 attendees to the Saturday night northern soul events during the mid 1970s. Young people travelled from a wide radius to attend northern soul events. The scene grew to develop distinct dance styles, fashions and rituals. A good introduction to the look and feel of the scene is via Tony Palmer's 1977 documentary, which gives a sense of a typical northern soul night at the now legendary Wigan Casino. Another excellent source for introducing novices to what northern soul is (or was) is the feature film *Northern Soul: The Movie* (dir Constantine). Both of these audio-visual resources give a good sense of the clothing choices, dance styles, passion, sense of community and camaraderie between the northern soul fans.

The book, *Keeping the Faith: A History of Northern Soul*, has been written by two social historians who also were involved with the scene. This is highlighted in the acknowledgements; '*Having had the privilege, at a time that now seems aeons ago, of attending many of the iconic venues mentioned in this book....Stephen would never have dreamt that one day he would be involved in writing a book about the subject.*' (ix). This lived experience of northern soul will give the book credibility amongst those who were part of the northern soul scene in its heyday. The front and back cover of the book feature images of the Wigan Casino club (taken by youth and music culture photographer Francesco Mellina) and this provides an indication of the importance of this particular club to the story of northern soul during the 1970s. If VR technology ever allows for an authentic recreation of iconic club nights, then this would certainly be a great one to focus on.

The insider knowledge of the authors has been skilfully combined with their experience of carrying out historical research. The book contains a lot of detail about dates, places and key players and draws from a range of archive material such as specialist music magazines and fanzines, diary entries and interviews with DJs and participants. Subsequently the book is a rich resource for music and youth culture researchers and anyone generally interested in youth culture history. The book contains a great deal of contextual information about Britain during the heyday of northern soul (the 1970s) and there is frequent reflection about the relationship between northern soul and wider social change and context. The first four chapters follow the chronological denouement of northern soul. Chapter 1 outlines mod culture and the fan appreciation of 'rare soul' in 1960s northern England to set the scene of the roots of northern soul. Here Manchester's Twisted Wheel club is a central focus. The second chapter focuses on the embryonic stages of northern soul and clubs the Golden Torch in Stoke on Trent and the Catacombs in Wolverhampton. Chapter 4; 'Soul explosion, fragmentation and decline' charts the ending of the 'heyday' of northern soul and the later 1970s where scene started to weaken.

Having laid out the rise and fall of the 'iconic' period of northern soul (the duration of the 1970s) the rest of the book takes a more thematic approach. The importance of the DJs and the fans to the creation and sustenance of the northern soul scene is discussed in chapter 5. These people were the lifeblood of the scene – but with the rare American soul records taking centre stage. The drug taking associated with northern soul is also highlighted in this chapter. Not everyone on the scene took drugs but there was a sizeable use of amphetamines amongst a sizable number of young people involved with northern soul (see Andrew Wilson's excellent 2007 book, *Northern Soul: Music, Drugs and Subcultural Identity*, for more on the role and impact of amphetamine use).

The centrality of class and place to the scene is explored in chapter 6. Specifically the working class demographic of most northern soul fans and the spatialisation of key night-clubs in deindustrialising towns (though rarely cities). For more on place and northern soul see Hollows and Milestone (1998). The under-discussed issue of race and northern soul is tackled in chapter 7. The northern soul scene consists of a mainly white British fandom with a passion for black US soul music. The authors discuss race and racism in 1970s Britain and discuss ethnicity and northern soul via key commentators of the scene, music journalists Dave Godin and Tony Cummings, as well as reflecting on fan utterances on ethnicity and northern soul. Catterall and Gildart provide evidence that some fans show awareness and interest in the politics of race and soul music, some though seem less aware or interested in race, racism and the context from which soul music emerged. The authors raise an important point about some of the uncomfortable contradictions around ethnicity and northern soul which can be described as oscillating between cultural appropriation and solidarity between oppressed groups in Britain and the United States. For an African American perspective of the British Northern Soul scene Kimasi Browne's (2008) work is invaluable. Women's participation in northern soul is also discussed in this chapter. The authors note that 'Women of all ages formed the backbone of the various clubs as fans and workers' (p230) and yet northern soul was a very male dominated scene in terms of the key movers and shakers and commentators of the scene (see Milestone 2018 and 2019 for more

detailed discussion on women and the rare soul scenes). Sexuality and northern soul is given a brief glance at the end of this chapter. Many of the issues raised in this chapter are given more detailed focus in the recent 2019 publication *The Northern Soul Scene* (Raine et al (eds) which is a comprehensive text on the scene featuring contributions from aca-fans and key figures in the scene such as rare soul expert, record label founder and DJ, Ady Croasdale. The final chapter of the book highlights what happened to northern soul in the 1980s and beyond. The Wigan Casino closed in 1981 and this heralded the end of the original northern soul scene. The authors explore the various attempts to continue the spirit of the northern soul hey-day highlighting revivals, new soul ventures and legacy of and nostalgia for the 1970s era of northern soul.

The authors raise a number of interesting and important questions throughout the book. One issue they raise is why the researchers at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies did not write about northern soul. These scholars were researching and writing about British youth subcultures in the period when northern soul was at its height. Birmingham was not so far from a number of important northern soul venues, yet this subculture largely eluded them. Perhaps this was due to the fact that northern soul was a mainly club based culture rather than a street based one.

The book compliments a recent flurry of academic and participant voice publications on northern soul. A scene that has lasted for so long and gone through so many changes is difficult to write about because it means different things to different people. There is no one northern soul. With such a long running scene there are a range of time periods that people entered (and sometimes left) the scene and different sub genres of soul music favoured by different factions within the scene. Participants within the scene have done a great job of archiving documentary material and social media has provided a repository for memories, photographs and recordings (including audio material of the last night of the Wigan Casino) and for long lost friends to reconnect. The authors acknowledge the amazing resource of almost every fanzine and specialist soul music magazine being lent to them by rare soul fan, collector and author, Dave Rimmer and the resources and information imparted by the late Russ Taylor of Crocodile Records (as well as the plethora of other archive material lent to them by other scene archivists). The authors of this book have done an excellent job of drawing on a wide range of sources to produce an ambitious but comprehensive book about northern soul from its embryonic state to the present day. They do a great job of bridging the gap between the detail and nuances of what was happening on the 1970s northern soul scene and reflecting on this in terms of the wider socio-economic context of Britain in this period.

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