

St. Helens: take your partners at the Court

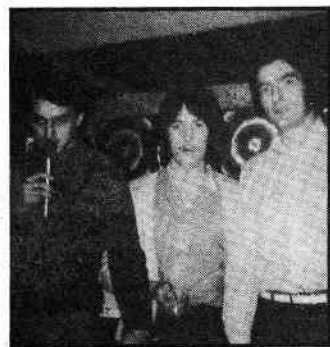
THE Court School of Dancing in St. Helens is one of those places where you go along to learn Ballroom dancing. During the day and at night a succession of people turn up their sensible dancing shoes to learn how to waltz and suchlike. But there is another face to the Court and one would be hard put to supply the thoughts of the regulars if they should happen to turn up on a Sunday night when the music is Soul and the dancing anything but "Come Dancing" style.

The Court is run by **Phil Case**, who is a qualified dancing instructor, and for the last six years he has had a Soul night in some form at the school. . . . there's no way anyone can say the floor is not suitable for dancing there!

I've been along to the court before, a couple of years ago at least when my good friend **Dave Langley** was jocking there. More lately there has been a highly successful Thursday night scene but licencing problems have closed that down. Phil is off to court soon to try to sort his licence out but in the meanwhile the Sunday night scene, minus alcohol is thriving. They also have All-dayers but only a few a year. Phil quite rightly says that there are more than enough regular All-dayers without adding to it.

Jocks are **Andy Shard** and **Keith Latham**, with occasional visits from **Russ Winstanley** or **Richard Searling**. Andy, a Wigan regular plays a mixture of modern sounds and oldies while Keith has found himself getting more and more into funkier sounds. Between the two of them they cover just about the complete spectrum of dancing music — a fact which is appreciated as there was a full floor for almost the entire evening.

One thing that I found particularly satisfying was that the people at the Court seem receptive to new sounds — while some of the newer records clear the floor at first they seem willing to have a go at anything. This fits in well with Andy and Keith who tends to look at playing with an open mind and thus play a few surprising records — surprising that is until one sees the dancers on the floor.



Left to right . . . Keith Latham, Andy Shard and the boss Phil Case.

CHECKIN' IT OUT



Frank Elson's been snoopin' around again; notebook in hand, ear to the ground. Herewith lotsa lovely info on clubs and sounds around.

One such record that Andy features is **Gladys Knight's**, "I've Got To Use My Imagination" (*Buddah*). To my knowledge this is the only Northern Style place where that record is even played, let alone extremely popular. Few more of Andy's choices which go down well include, "Let's Go Movin'", **Soul Agents**, (*Phillips*); **Slick And The Family Brick**, "Don't Trust A Woman" (*Swamp Dogg*); **Muscle Shoals Horns**, "Breakdown" (*Bang*); **Skullsnaps**, "My Hang Up Is You" (*GSF*); and **Stanley Mitchell's** classic "Get It Baby" (*Dynamo*).

Most popular of Keith's sounds include, "Biyo", **E.W.F.** (*CBS album*); "Dancing", **Crown Heights Affair** (*Delite*); "Ha Cha Cha", **Brass Construction** (*UA*); "Ripped Off", **Loleatta Holloway** (*Goldmine album*); "Don't Leave Me This Way", **Thelma Houston** (*Motown*).

Keith is off to America soon where he is to have an interview for a job on a local Radio Station in Houston, Texas. Seems he sent them some tapes via relations he has out there and they'd like to offer him a Job. Easy when you try isn't it?

Until the licence is sorted out and a mid week disco is added the Sundays will continue. Opening times are 7.30pm-11pm and admission is 50 pence. A great scene and one well worth a visit.

Rochdale Tiffs . . .

ON MY WAY back from St. Helens I called in at Rochdale for a look at Rochdale Tiffs where **Dave Evison** is soldiering on with his regular Sunday night thing. It's always a nice scene to go to at Rochdale, very friendly and full of atmosphere, a great place to wind down the weekend ready for work on Mondays. (Since doing this column I don't dread Monday mornings anymore

— working the hours that I do I dread every morning!

Dave jocks at Rochdale by himself, with a couple of spots from "**Drew The Hat**" and while he's obviously going to rely heavily on oldies he's built up a fair collection of newer stuff, enough to please most people anyway. The atmosphere is so relaxed and "family" that Dave has told me that it is the best gig he's ever done and that is really saying something. Always ticking over, Rochdale Tiffany's is well worth remembering on Sunday nights.

Welcome back Rose Room

EXACTLY TWO years and two weeks (**Ginger** worked it out) from the last time a regular Northern Soul night was put on at the Rose Room of the Cats Whiskers, Burnley, Northern Soul was played again — and without any prior advertising in the specialist press about five hundred people turned up. With **Ginger Taylor** and **Andy Ryding** spinning the sounds it looks as though the Rose Room Sunday night scene is back with a bang.

A couple of years ago avid Northern Soul fans will remember that the Rose room featured a Northern Soul night and All-dayers. Under the managership of **Dave Miller**, a guy who happens to like Northern Soul himself the scene at Burnley flourished until its untimely end — owing to a succession of circumstances beyond the control etc etc. — Dave is still there and he asked **Ginger** to come back to get the thing going again.

I popped in on the first night and was amazed and delighted at the response purely from word of mouth. The Cats Whiskers has been featuring a commercial disco on Sunday nights for some time now, jock **Lee Simon** has been keeping

700 people entertained with everything from the Mannattans to "Car Wash". The first night that the Rose Room re-opened however there were 1200 people in the place. **Ginger** and **Dave Miller** were naturally even more delighted than I was.

Burnley has always had a great tradition of Soul followers, with Accrington, Blackburn and even Rochdale within reasonable travelling distance it is centrally situated within the heart of a solid Soul area. The Rose Room and Cats Whiskers are Mecca-owned which means that all the facilities you could need are there. The place is well organised and of course its all clean and tidy.

One thing that I like is the fact that movement between the two scenes is completely unrestricted enabling youngsters with little or no knowledge of the Northern Scene to be exposed to all that luvverly music and dancing. **Ginger** with new and old sounds and **Andy**, one of the fastest rising oldies jocks, while neither in love with modern sounds can be relied upon to play whatever the paying customers really want.

The details are as follows — open between 7.30pm and 11.30 (with an option to open until later if needed) and 25p for members 40p for non members (including automatic membership) which gives access to both scenes. All-dayers are being thought about if the demand is there. It looks like the Rose Room is back and here to stay!

United at Unity House

ONE OF the finest All-nighters I've been to in a long while. That's my verdict on the third All-nighter organised at the Wakefield Unity House recently.

Promoted by former Radio Hallam jock **John Green** and Northern Soul fanatic **Malc Burton** the only (slight) criticism can be that the 'nighter is on Fridays and only once a month! The building is terrific and the organisation is spot on and exactly right — as it should be of course being run by people with extensive experience from the paying side of the cash desk.

John, **Malc** and their many helpers know what they like and see to it that it is provided. In fact they seemed as if they've been promoting All-nighters all their life.

Apart from the usual cloakroom and "natural needs" rooms (everybody's gotta go sometime) which are excellent in this council owned building there is a large room and a small room. Good dancing floors and jocks who mix the sounds between New York and oldies and in the kitchen (again with all mod cons paid for by the generous ratepayers of Wakefield) there is everything from Hamburgers and coffee to fancy cakes and coke.

Keeping it in the family. **John's** mum and dad look after that side of things along with a friend who is responsible for the cakes. (Gourmet

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Checkin-It-Out:

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note: try her lovely scenes -- that is if I don't get 'em first!). The whole scene is relaxed and friendly and doormen come from Northern Soul circles instead of the "bruiser" section of the local pubs as in other places.

Jocks vary a little for each night but on the night I was there they included **Soul Sam, Paul Rowan** (having "served his time" at commercial and small Northern nights he's improved no end and shows a refreshing willingness to give any music a go); **Derek Greenhoff** (after goodness knows how long, he finally gave me the Les McCann "River Deep Mountain High" instr. I've been after for so long); **Poke; Derek Sheldon; Mick Goodwin** and in the oldies room upstairs, **Malc** himself, **Nev Wherry** and **Chris Donoghue**.

A good mixture of local and nationally known jocks there and, although I can always find other jocks with the odd unkind word to say about a few of them, all with impeccable Northern Soul pedigrees. (Guess who watched Crufts on the telly then?)

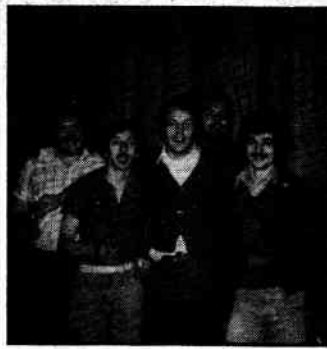
Customers have hovered around the 400-450 mark for the last few All-nighters (this one was only the third) and the atmosphere can only be described as terrific. Although I stopped giving people namechecks ages ago Paul and Lesley of Goole asked for one and who am I to deny them? I was pleased to meet a lot of old friends from the "other" side of the Pennines and to make a few new ones.

Entrance is £1.25 and after a chat with John about costs I can say that neither he nor Malc will become rich from the exercise although they'll make enough to get by and to carry on with the exercise. In fact I think some critics of many aspects of the Northern Soul scene might be surprised if they knew just what the profit on All-nighters and disco promotions was.

Considering the effort and work involved I doubt very much if I could be persuaded to invest my hard earned mini-fortune in such a precarious business. Not that I see any problems for John and Malc, however. With the third All-nighter they're at the point where they're about to start memberships (25p for life) and if this last one was anything to go by the Wakefield Unity All Nighters are here to stay.

Soul at the Grapes

KNOWING what a dead hole Oldham is these days for Soul (notwithstanding the incredible shop Golden Disc with stocks of just about everything), I was pessimistic when I received a letter from **Tony McDermott** and **Stuart Potter** to the effect that they were trying to get a Soul scene going at the Grapes Hotel in Yorkshire Street, Oldham. Especially when the letter stated that it was a sitting-



A right mob of reprobates here ... left to right, Derek Greenhoff, Phil Rowan, Derek Sheldon, Pat Brady and Poke ... a small but select bunch of the happy lunatics playing the sounds at Wakefield.

down scene, no dancing. However, we've all got to keep trying so I crept carefully in to have a look at it. (The carefulness stems from the fact that my Bank is almost opposite and me and the Bank manager don't always agree on matters of finance -- I'm expecting him to mug me for my cheque book any time now!)

Tony and Stuart are Soul fans and that means the whole of Soul. They'll play anything from Commercial Soul to Northern, Funk, Jazz, Blues, Latin and Gospel. Although not exactly overflowing there was a small band of dedicated followers there and they seemed to be enjoying what was happening.

The one problem is that the lads are on trial at the moment and that trial runs out in between my writing this and you lot deciphering it. So although I can recommend the Grapes Hotel on a Wednesday night you'd better check up beforehand to make sure that it's still on!

Entrance is free although the more you spend on booze the likelier it is to continue. I congratulate Tony and Stuart for at least trying and I fervently hope the venture succeeds.

Buster Discos: Scotland awa'...

HOPE THAT spelling is o.k. I wouldn't like to be attacked by angry natives as I'm spending my holiday in Scotland this year. While I'm there I just might not be able to resist the temptation of visiting a club or two (does this man never rest, such a dedication, such activity, such bullmanure!).

Part of the temptation might come from a letter I received recently from **Terry Quinn**, proprietor and star of the Buster Discotheque which consists of three units playing Soul around the Kilwinning area (oh there, well we all know about the young lady of Kilwinning who'd do anything for a shilling, in fact so it goes she'd ... CENSORED!...).

Terry writes a very interesting letter about his residency at the Claremont Hotel in Kilwinning on Thursdays and Sundays. Thursdays is light funk etc. (good game, good game) and Sundays is "one hundred

and ten percent" pure funk (something wrong with your calculator there Terry?).

Although its only been going for a short while they've started closing the doors at 8.20 pm already. As it only starts at 8pm they've either got a good scene going or space for only five people! Terry described the audience as musically "well educated" and as he features 90% imports they must be. Admission of £1 is a little steep to my mind but it appears enough people think its good enough value.

Although most of the publicity about the Scottish scene so far has been angled towards Northern Soul it does seem from my observations while I was there and from talking to people that Funk really rules the roost North of the Border. Most people realise by now that I have a completely open mind even if I do lean a little towards Northern Soul but please don't let that hold anyone back from writing about your local Soul scene no matter what the type. This column is devoted to Soul music of whatever description.

Elson gems

SHORTAGE OF space has limited the record mentions I'm afraid but I've permission for quick mentions one of my favourite platters or so here goes:-

Walter Jackson, "Feeling Good" (UA):- superb artistry on ballads from veteran Bluesman (means he's been around a bit). It's bloody terrific!

Taj Mahal, "Music Fuh Ya" (Warner Bros): first for WB as unconventional and exciting as ever. These two have just about taken over my turntable.

Bits and pieces

BUMPED INTO **Bub** at Wakefield (could hardly miss him really) and he tells me that the Monday night scene at the Londoner, in Barnsley is doing as well as ever. 7pm-11pm 20 pees admission with **Bub, Pat Fisher, Len Hewitt** and **Snowy** jocking ... great scene when I was last there ... **Mick Goodwin** does his thing at a Northern Soul night at Temple Normington Miners Welfare Club on Tuesdays 7.30-11.30 with 30 pees admission ... Mick says that Matlock Pavillion All-dayers are outasight ... the promoter, **Phil Claydon**, tells me that next one is April 11th (Bank Holiday) times 12 noon to 12 midnight admission £1.25 ... Phil is also hoping to start promotions at Derby Tiffany's on May 15th ...

The ITV series "All You Need Is Love" is due to explode a fair few myths in coming weeks ... story's of the origins of Blues and Jazz are due for a heavy jolt ... many people interesting to Blues and Soul fans will be featured including hitherto unknown films of Billy Holiday and Charlie Parker ... Director of the series **Tony Palmer** was at Wigan Casino recently and a programme may be in the offing ... Tony told me that many of the Blues artists he filmed for the series have since died so morbid or not it may be our last

chance to see some of the Blues giants in colour.

Much hilarity at Wigan one evening when a young lady requested the "Beefburger Boogaloo" ... it was later decided that she meant Wendy Rene's Stax waxing of "Bar-B-Q" ... Rochdale Tiffany's Sunday night scene soldiering on with **Dave Evison** at the helm ... I've spent a couple of happy hours down there recently.

While nothing can condone the pure bad manners of the recent "Anti-Levine Demo" at the Ritz one can't help feeling that Ian's unbending attitude has brought some of it on himself ... however, as I said ... there can be no excuse for ignorance and rudeness ...

Colin Curtis has left Sale's Blue Room leaving **Dave Evison** with **Richard Searing** on Thursdays now ... to all students at Park Lane College Leeds, say hello to **Morris Collins**: apart from being daft enough to marry my sister he tells me there's quite a thriving cadre of Soul fans there (bugger up his lectures and say I told you to!) ...

Watch adverts for more details but note March 11th, 18th and 25th for more all-nighters at Wakefield ... **Duke Ozzie** and "The Beat Is Black" Soul programme on the BBC World Service Sundays 4.30 am, Tuesdays 1.00 am and Thursdays 7.45 pm ... already a good response after only a couple of shows ... sorry, programmes! ... my good friend **Barry White** Macclesfield deejay and record shop prop., starting a new residency, February 24th at Three Horseshoes, Blackshore Heath, Leek, Staffs and every Thursday -- all kinds of Soul from the greatest collection I've ever seen ...

Terry Samson's Northern Soul Scene starts regular All-nighters at Doncaster Bailey's on Feb 19th ... mainstay jock will be **John Vincent** ... see adverts for full details ...

What's happening at Bolton Tiffs? ... I hear rumours of a Soul night featuring **Alan Soul** but I can't confirm ... Rochdale's Exit 21 Soul club off and running again every alternate Thursday at Kingsway Hotel (opp. Heron petrol Station), Kingsway, **John Grant** and **Pete Thorpe**, 7.30-10.45 pm start at 10th Feb. and work it out every two weeks from there ... is **Dave McCadden** his real name? ... is **Dave McCadden** who's real name? ...

Hot Buttered Soul still putting it together rather well ... still 30p per ish from **Chris Savory** (someone with Soul music's furtherance at heart rather than personal ego or finance) at 67 Albert Terrace, Wolstanton, Newcastle-U-Lyne, Staffs, ST5 8AY ... I've looked in the mirror (aaargh) and I don't look a bit like "Serpico" despite what many of you lot seem to think ... anyway I've given my woolly hat away, sold my donkey jacket and my shoulder bag isn't even the same colour as his ... this column is the only piece of journalism I've seen this week that doesn't mention Sir Harold and Lady Falkender ... oops, therit goes again ...!

Keep the letters coming and let's have the info on your local clubs.