

## Raquels, Wakefield

FOR A LONG time I've been meaning to get over to Wakefield to check out Raquels' Saturday night Northern Soul scene. Having at last managed it, I'm sure that it will not be such a long time before I get over there again.

With **Paul Rowan** spinning the sounds for the last 18 months after taking over from **Phil Jay**, and a regular crowd of Northern Soul fans plus the usual Mecca amenities, Saturday night at Raquels is well worth a visit.

Although it is Mecca-owned, Raquels isn't the usual jacket and tie place but a more relaxed atmosphere prevails — with smart casual wear and denims accepted. I have to say that I wish more places could join the 1970's and accept, like Manager **Mick Vadden**, that jeans and tee-shirts don't make yobbos out of the people that wear them.

Jock, Paul Rowan, is a guy being more and more accepted as a leading Northern Soul jock with every gig that he does. Music policy follows Paul's personal leanings which means New Sounds and Oldies in roughly the same proportions. Paul believes in giving the paying customers what they want which is a lesson other more well established jocks could learn.

He's been accused of sitting on the fence whereas I would prefer to think of him standing astride the fence picking out the best of both the "stomper" and the "New York" sounds. He certainly seems to make the regulars, of which there are many, happy.

Raquels, like many Meccas, consists of a couple of discos, with Paul in one and another guy playing commercial Soul and British releases in the other. Again, this is a good set up as it helps to attract more people into Northern Soul while giving the pop fans somewhere else to go without getting in the way of Northern fans.

The regulars turn up from all over Yorkshire and the East Coast, many preferring Raquels to other, more established Saturday night gigs and I noticed rather a larger group of older fans than has become usual on the scene these days.

If Northern Soul is to continue a club like Raquels, mixing old with new, both in music and in people, is likely to do more to help the scene than other clubs that I can think about. Although many of its patrons travel to all-nighters after Raquels they seem satisfied with their own scene.

The list of current popular sounds at the club helps to illustrate, I think, the independent quality of the place: **Ramsey Lewis**, "Wade In The Water" (Chess); **Shawn Robinson**, "My Dear Heart" (Minit); **Randy Pie**, "Highway Driver" (Polydor); **The Neighbours Complaint**, "Boogie In The Schoolyard"; **Norma Jenkins**, "Can You Imagine That" (Desert Moon); **Velvettes**, "These Things Will Keep Me Loving You" (Tamlam Motown).

Besides Raquels on Saturdays, Paul also does Thursdays 8.30-2

# CHECKIN' IT OUT



**Having failed his audition for the upcoming sensualround movie "Last Foxtrot In Oldham", Frank Elson continues with his soul jottings. (An' it's 'is birthday this week, so tap 'im for a drink when 'e turns up down your way . . .)**

am (although hardly anyone arrives till 10.30). Coach trips arriving before 11 pm get in for 50pees a head while normal prices are 55p up to 9.30 pm and £1 afterwards. These prices include a meal. For both the music and atmosphere Raquels is highly recommended.

## Wakefield Unity all-nighter

YES, I was there again! Three weeks on the trot must mean that I like it I suppose! Three weeks of Wakefield on the Friday and Wigan on the Saturday not only mean that I'm getting out and about a bit more these days but also that come Monday mornings I'm in what can only be described as a state of shock.

The point is that for the first time in a few years I've been doing what some of you lot have been doing every weekend for years — getting no sleep! Now while I can

stay in bed all day Monday to make up (and I have to do) you lot out there have schools and work to go to — you really have my deepest admiration. With a birthday due between writing this and it being in print I don't think I'm getting old — I know it!

My third trip in a row to Wakefield Unity coincided with **John Vincent's** first appearance and I took the time to ask him about the stories of his selling his records. John told me that he had sold off a few oldies, but not with any intentions of leaving the business.

He tells me that he finds no problem in obtaining new stompers and as he is hired to play new discoveries the oldies are surplus to his needs. With people like John Ginger Taylor and Russ around to discover these new stompers I can't see the traditional sound dying away for some time yet.

Some of John's currently popular sounds include: **Derek and Ray**, "Interplay" (RCA Victor); **Susan Farrar**, "The Big Hurt" (Philips); **Soul Philadelphia Orchestra**, "Soul



Les Spaine (left) with George McRae at the RCA TK label launch party.

City" (Epic-Italian of French production); **Willie Hutch**, "Love Runs Out" (Dunhill); **The Pussycats**, "I Want Your Love" (Columbia) — vocal to "Rat Race" no less; **The Brons**, "Since You're Gone" (RCA Victor).

## Halifax, Tiffs

I'VE NOT been to Halifax Tiffs, Monday night scene for a long time although I was quite a regular there at one time. It is nice to go back to clubs that I have enjoyed and find them as popular and as enjoyable as ever which is how I can describe Halifax.

Paul Rowan, shares Monday nights with **Graham Slater**, which means that these two have been together at Halifax for a hell of a long time. Paul plays his usual mixture although, as Graham is almost completely over to Funky sounds now, Paul tends to play rather more oldies to keep the balance.

In the main, this balance is accepted by the regulars at the club although Graham pointed out that his music attracts mainly the ladies to the dancefloor while Paul's attracts mainly the fellers. The lack of antagonism between the followers of differing forms of music may be explained by the fact that men and women have other, more important, reasons for getting together!

We've had a look at Paul's play list in the Raquels feature above so let's take a look now at Graham's list of popular Sounds at Halifax: **Doris Troy**, "I'll Do Anything" (Cameo Parkway); **Edwin Starr**, "My Weakness Is You" (Motown); **People's Choice**, "Jam Jam Jam" (TSOP); **Fat Larry's Band**, "Centre City" (WMOT); **Bo Kirkland and Ruth Davies**, "You're Gonna Get Next To Me" (Claridge); **Silvetti**, "Spring Rain" (Salsoul). You can see that he does play a few oldies as well!

## Elson gems

**Fat Larry's Band**, "Feel It" (WMOT): I've mentioned this album before. It is, of course the album from which comes "Centre City" the extremely popular Northern single. Popular that is with the modern thinking Northern fans. I've had it for some time now and the more I play it the more I get into this excellent album and the more I come to the opinion that this album is destined, for me at least, to become one of the albums of the year.

Besides the excellent "Centre City" the title track "Feel It" is a real rocking stomper, much more in the tradition of the Northern Stomper. Then there are sweet Soul tracks and Pure Funk tracks — all featuring fresh tight musical accompaniment to adventurous vocals. Those of you who have let this album slip by could do much worse than check it out. Fat Larry's Band could yet become one of the discoveries of the year.

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## Checkin' It Out:

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### Motown lives, at the Cavern

TOO LATE for the Oldies section but I want to get this in this ish, so here we go. **Billy Paul**, formerly of Ashton-under-Lyne Tiffany's and Wigan Mr. M's, has surfaced back in Ashton at the Cavern, a pub which I have mentioned in these pages before. It's only pub hours but during those hours Billy is packing them in to a 99 per cent Tamla Motown night of oldies.

From **The San Remo Strings**, to **Edwin Starr** and from **Marvin Gaye** to **The Temptations**, Wednesday night rocks to the sounds that many people feel had more than a little influence on the birth of the Northern Soul Scene as we know it today. I've been to one of his nights and was pleased to find many of the older crowd of Northern Fans from the Ashton / Oldham / Manchester areas down there enjoying the sounds.

The one per cent of Non-Motown music comes from oldies all of the same era of the mid and late sixties as the Motown records. Definitely a great night for those of you with memories or those younger people who are into oldies and/or Motown music.

### The Mississippi: something different

SOME OF us are getting a little older (we're none of us getting any younger) and while we still go for the one music that seems to have something to offer — that is, Soul music.

There is still the time when we feel like getting dressed up and sitting down to a well-cooked meal in rather nicer surroundings than the average Discotheque. While the trend nowadays is to informality a little formal evening out — combined with modern Jazz-funk still has its appeal.

Well I've found just the place and recently spent a very nice evening at the Three Horseshoes Hotel, just outside of Leek, Staffs on the Buxton road. As I've mentioned before, my old friend **Barry White**, from Macclesfield,

handles the jocking and when he told me that it was a "posh" place and I'd have to wear a tie I was a little alarmed but complied. (I was going to say I acquiesced but I can't spell it.)

When I arrived I was quite frankly knocked out. The Three Horseshoes is owned by a genial Spaniard, **Juan Falero**, who has definite ideas about how people want his place to be run. The food and service is excellent, in fact they have recently won a rather nice award and the best way to describe the place is that it is dicky-bow rather than tie!

The Mississippi Room consists of a dance-floor surrounded by tables where you can have anything from a meal cooked by a Swiss-trained chef (and I was able to order a vegetarian meal direct from the menu) to just drinks. Barry's music ranged from the smoothy groovy **Grover Washington** and **George Benson** to **O'Jays** and, later in the evening, oldies like **the Platters'** "With This Ring" and to see people who will ever see thirty-five again really getting into Grover and friends is a sight for sore eyes!

Mr. Falero spent some time with me outlining his ideas for the night (Thursday by the way — the rest of the week is dinner-dance) which is basically to provide good music and food for those people who find ordinary restaurants too boring and discotheques too overpowering.

In case you haven't guessed by now, I loved the place and will definitely return. It is highly recommended but remember that it is completely different from most places you will have been to and the behaviour of the customers bears this out.

### Commodores rule

DID YOU know that the Commodores admire the Beatles? Neither did I until I had a chat with **William Orange**, drummer extraordinaire, and the smallest member of the group. His height is relevant because it is an integral part of the Commodores as we know them. The story goes like this:

After eight years at a private Catholic school the 14-year-old William Orange left this sheltered existence and went to a public school. In his own words, "I joined the outside world and met thugs

and bullies. I was only small and I wasn't used to it. So I figured out the quickest way to make friends was through the school band and I joined it.

"In the band at first I knew nothing about drums at all until one night I saw the band drummer practising on a full set. It really turned me on but he refused to teach me! It seems that he had taught other guys who had left school and he wanted me to stay on."

The teenage Mr. Orange got round his mother who bought him a full set of drums and there they stayed in a corner for a while. The reason? "I didn't like the colour of the drums!"

Eventually William started to play, "I picked it up, began to get gigs with groups and then won a scholarship in music studying percussion.

"I played gigs at weekends and planned to become a studio musician because every group I ever joined broke up. Then along came the Commodores with a drummer who was actually a sax player who didn't want to play the drums! I could play and sing as well which was really something at that time and the Commodores asked me to join them.

"I joined still with the intention of becoming a session drummer — I didn't expect it to last! However there is something about the Commodores, a sort of family togetherness and I guess after all this time I'm staying!"

That "family togetherness" is evident in William Orange, who was undertaking a national tour of the country doing interviews and press. Although a friendly feller, he seemed rather at a loss except when talking about the group, about the tour.

"Hey I'm really looking forward to playing again. We haven't played on stage together in three months and at the moment we're all split up doing these interviews. When we started we were into an identity thing we wanted to be known individually like the Beatles but we've got off that. The world knows who I am so what? I'm one of the Commodores and although we're all individuals we're the Commodores."

The interview took place a week before the gig and for that week I was fired with the enthusiasm coming from William Orange about the group as a whole. The show was at the Apollo, Manchester, which was a shame from my point of view as I find it next to impossible to enjoy an act in the aura of insensitivity that pervades the place.

It could be that I'm not the only person who actively dislikes concerts at the Apollo as for the Commodores the audience was about half what it should have been. People that I have talked to in Manchester say the same thing. The general air of disorganisation and the fact that local gangs are allowed to virtually run riot around the theatre puts people off as much as it does me.

I was able to put up with it long enough to enjoy a couple of

numbers before I was forced to leave the place. It will be a long time before I return to the Apollo, Manchester to see any act. I am all the more disappointed because I am informed that the Commodores were fantastic and I must say that what I did see (or could see is a better way of putting it) was very together.

I just hope that the group didn't realise that much of the audience could not enjoy the show because of the actions of a minority.

### Bits and pieces

**Sandra Goodling** informs me that Grimbsy has its scene on Mondays and Fridays at the Social and Reform Club. Times are 7.30-11 pm, admission only 10pees and the booze is cheap. Music is mainly oldies from **John Bradshaw** and **Gary Hudson** . . . not yet on release is a single due on Salsoul by **Eddie Holman** entitled "This Could Be A Night To Remember" . . . I don't often stick my neck out on Northern sounds but I am in complete agreement with **Richard Searling** that this could be one of the biggest records ever on the Northern Scene . . . a modern recording with a stomping beat it is my tip for the top of the Northern ratings and commercial charts together.

Who is known as "Tapper" from the way he dances? . . . your secret is safe with me **Mr. Evison** sir . . . Rather nice motor car, a Lincoln Premier, featured in "Custom Car" magazine and belonging to **Micky Ilka**, the guy in charge of booking all those luvverly Soul acts at the California Dunstable . . . I might write nice things about the place for a ride in his car . . .

I hear that the Highwayman out in deepest Wales has closed down Soul-wise . . . leaves a gap in Wales . . . anything else happening there?

Next All-dayer at Chester-Le-Street's Sombbrero is on April 23rd . . . those so far have gone down well I understand . . . times are 12-12 jocks include **Soul Sam**, **Dave Evison**, **Bill Swift**, **Alex Lowes**, **Paul Mooney** and **John Fitt**. May be a Contempo promotion there as well. **Bill Swift** tells me that he and **Alex** do a Northern Night at the Sombbrero on Fridays, 7 pm-11 pm, admission 30p mixing the new releases and oldies and feature the same sort of music at Neville's Cross WMC on Tuesdays, 7.30 pm-10.30 pm, admission 25p.

Julies, up the road in Newcastle is still going down well with its own brand of out-of-sight Jazz-Funk with **Tony Clarke** and **Bill** doing it.

**Mike Rolo** at Wigan recently . . . just returned from Jersey and soon off to Denmark — he plays Northern Soul in the strangest places . . . ! Is **Richard Searling** the star of the Wigan Casino 500-a-side football team or is it just a nasty rumour? Talking of rumours I'd like to deny the rumours about **Bob Killbourn's** disgusting personal habits, but they're all true so I can't!

Apologies to any clubs / people / hermaphrodites / ardvarks, etc., that I've missed out this ish. I've run out of space.



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