

George Reid – Recollections of Festival 2008

Hi Folks,

I started writing this when I came back as a kind of diary and then never managed to finish it so I just tatted it up a bit as its now about as good as my memory will allow.

Enjoy

The North Lancs Soul Festival 2008

For me the weekend all began a couple of months ago with Zane Hunter saying "are you going to Morecambe? I never knew what "Morecambe" was so I had no idea what he was talking about. After putting me straight and pointing me towards the thread on EMS and doing a bit of research, I booked a hotel and sorted out the travel plans. I was intending to go to a weekender this year and I nearly booked up for Soul Essence In the end I chose Morecambe mainly due to the travelling involved (9 hours) and the fact that it appeared to have more of a DJ/punter ethic about it and that appealed to my maverick nature.

I took the Friday and Monday off work and set about getting myself sorted for the trip. After throwing some clothes in a bag I sorted out a few musical treats on the MD to keep me company; The latest Worldwide from Gilles, JJ's Samba Soul, A Loft special from 6MS and some download mixes from Colin Dilnot's site more than enough variety and quality to keep me going.

I packed a copy of Stephen Fry's "Liar" for reading material so for the next three hours I was entertained by an eclectic mix just as I like it.; Mulatu of Ethiopia, an interview with IG Culture including the exclusive preview of his new LP which includes remake of Eddie Kendricks "girl you need a change of mind" (qulaity) and Sharon Jones in session. For Me GP is an essential listen. Near the end of the show GP played a remix of Darondo's "didn't I" (sublime). All this music whilst reading what the well offs get up to whilst being educated at public school.

As the train pulled in to Morecambe station I was on to the Loft /Mancuso story. I love to find out about how these clubs came about and how they selected the music so this was wonderful stuff. I've read Loves saves the Day so it was great to hear the man himself talking about the ethos of the club. David was saying how it was the sound that he focused on and how important it was to build the atmosphere in the party. The music covered all bases and he just played what felt right at the time. As luck would have David was waxing lyrical about one of the Loft's seminal tunes the aforementioned "girl you need a change of mind" (which some consider to be the first "disco" record. No room to debate that now but a lot of folks agree) He was saying how the record has different movements and how it worked really well in the club as it was unlike anything else. The Loft was all about

bringing together all kinds of people united by a love of the music and having a good time. I was hoping for the same thing in Morecambe. I was not disappointed.

As I was checking in at the hotel the door opened and in walked a shaven headed bespectacled 40 something carrying some record boxes. My sixth sense told me this was Brett Franklin, a recent guest on Shaun Robbins Sunday Soul Selection radio show on Solar Radio. On the show Brett played mainly obscure hens teeth tunes that were right out of the top drawer so this was a man I had to meet. As it turned out we spent many hours debating trophy pieces and Four Tops LP tracks. All in good humour. Big respect to the man. Anybody who plays Curtis Mayfield in a set has my vote. Criminally underplayed artist. I digress, I do a lot of that. Anyway It was great to meet somebody so soon and make the first of many new friends who share a passion for soul music.

I made my way up to the York Hotel and got there for about 1.00pm.. Things were just getting started and when I walked in I was greeted by another new friend Charlie Dixon. Charlie offered to buy me a pint and he had some weird pear concoction as he has a dodgy stomach. So for the next twelve hours we drank a lot of alcohol (more weird drinks, milk tia maria and Vodka anybody ? we shot the breeze about families life work and of course music. Like me Charlie is a man who likes it all but if pushed he is a "mecca head". This was music to my ears as I have always been interested in this era as I just missed out going when it was in its heyday as I was too young. Charlie and had moved on from collecting to just enjoying the music and the dancing. Like me his tastes are varied and across the spectrum anything and everything from 60s soul to nu jazz the Last Poets to Michael Franti. There and then we cemented a friendship bound together by the love of the music. That's how they do it in Morecambe. Charlie you are a gent sir. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I'm just glad I had the good sense to not drink 1 for 1!

The weekender was split over 3 venues with The York and the Bath running in parallel and Smokeys being held on Saturday evening only. I did think this was a bit odd but on the plus side you could choose which DJ to go to of their music wasn't your bag. Charlie asked if I wanted to nip over to the Bath so I accepted a lift and we listened to Tuomo on the car on the way and discussed how music is truly international now and all concepts of "blue eyed soul", " black music" "modern soul" are becoming meaningless to outsiders and just act as shorthand for the hard core to communicate easily. "It's a crossover tune with a big vocal" doesn't mean much to a non soulie! If you check the EMS forum you will see the quality of the music on at both venues but without a particle accelerator what can you do?. Looking at the playlist now I missed a brilliant set by Kevin Oxbury. Anybody who plays Little Milton has my vote, a Soulville favourite.

Friday (York Hotel) Kevin Oxbury

Duane Williams - My Love Is Real
Gina Foster - B Side Of Love
Heaven & Earth - Let's Work It Out

Enchantment - I Believe In You
Bobby Womack - Trust Your Heart
Anita Baker - Feel The Need
Manhattans - Don't Say Goodbye
Winstons - Color Him Father
Rance Allen - Reasons
Dottie Pearson - Bring It Over Baby
John Edwards - How Can I Go On Without You
Little Milton - Let Me Back In
O'Jays - Time To Get Down

Over in the Bath they were dancing to the likes of Anthony White "yes you need love" , Al Wilson " Going through the motions" , Randy Brown "I'm always in the mood. Then Brett Franklin Sheffield's most soulful painter and decorator over the decks and played a blinding set of steppers that would cost you the price of a small car, and I'm told that was what he did to buy them!! Now that is dedication to the cause for playing originals. No sign of Brett's sets yet on the forum but its likely to include The Dells "Closer", Joes Feliciano "Golden lady", Dennis Lee and the Notables "Sunday Afternoon", Otis Smith "keep striving" so not all mega rare but definately all good.

Back in the car and back to the York which was in full flow with Shaun Robbins and Bob "The Crate" Smith were entertaining the crowd with hands in the air Sunday Soul Selection anthems like Sharon McMahan " Got out of my life", The Pioneers "my good friend James", Faith Hope and Charity "To Each His Own, Sister Sledge "Pain Reliever" The Tymes "Only your love" , and many other obscure gems from Bob's crates. A real quality selection of rare pieces and more accessable items with the key ingredient being quality.

By now the York was rocking and I met up with fellow Scots Zane and Fiona Hunter. I'd never met Zane before although we had talked on the phone so it was great to meet up and join "Scots corner" The atmosphere was warm and friendly and I was introduced to members of the Wakefield Soul Club the Seaside Soul Club, Frankie Lucas and the Newcastle contingent and I even shook a leg on the dancefloor!

After about four hours sleep and a hearty breakfast in the Hotel it was back to the York for the Saturday sessions. As I was walking along the seafront I bumped in to some of the aforementioned Wakefield Soul Club still looking a bit shaky after Friday's indulgences. First up at the York was "Jazz Man" Garry who was still having his breakfast at 10am! The decks were free so since I had a bag of tunes (for selling) over my shoulder somebody suggested I stick on a few tunes. First up was The Cate Brothers "Can't stop" , which I think is a killer Willie Mitchell style slice of blue-eyed soul destined to have its day in the sun. I followed this with The Sweet Inspirations "Hot Butterfly, Patsy Gallant "Tia Caliente (kerching, my first sale :o) and two Gavin Cristopher tracks "We're in love", "This side of heaven" (kerching, thanks Martin). I was really enjoying myself playing this morning set but it was Garry slot and I was only keeping the decks warm for him so I handed the controls to the "jazz man". Garry Johnson didn't disappoint with gems from the

likes of Mop Mop, Was a Bee and other Jazzy flavours.

Garry was followed by Shaun and Bob doing their double act and pulling out tune after tune everything from ballads to uptempo items all good. I remeber Shaun playing Marlyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr " "you don't have to be a star" and he had the whole place on the dancefloor singing along. Next up was Paul Thrower but I don't have his set and my memory is fading.

Kev Oxbury
Saturday (York Hotel)

Boozoo Bajou - Take It Slow (Thanks Sutti!)
Wizards Of Ooze - Trippin'
Charen Cotten - A Little Bit Of Love
Terry Callier - Holding On For Your Love
Beres Hammond - Oh I Miss You
Donny Hathaway - Love Love Love
Four Wonders - Just Looking For My Love
Gaslight - All Because Of You
Fifth Avenue/Carol Townes - Love Has Found My Heart
M J Wade - I'm Gonna Ball Baby
Impressions - Sooner Or Later
Carl Carlton - This Feeling's Rated Xtra
William De Vaughn - Give The Little Man A Great Big Hand
Jose Feliciano- Golden Lady (for Andy Lett)

Another quality selection I'm sure you will agree. Just the right mix of known and not so well known. Charren Cotton was one from the crates and a tune I had not heard for years. MJ Wade made his first appearance in what became a bit of a weekend anthem.

Next up on the DJ roster was the man from Edinburgh Zane Hunter. I had heard "The Reverend" Zane on Shaun's show so I was expecting some quality ballads and mid tempo items. This is what we got from Zane's Morecambe debut.

Saturday afternoon
Jeffree - Mr Fix-It
Lamont Dozier - You Oughta Be In Pictures
Betty Wright - Keep Feelin'
Epicentre - Get Off The Phone (Radio station VA LP)
The O'Jays - Now He's Home
Leon Haywood - Fair Warnin'
Pauline Shivers - Won't You Come Back Home
Ronnie Dyson - Just A Little Love From Me

Little Charles & The Sidewinders – Please Open Up The Door
Jae Mason - Everyday I Go Sailing
George Wilson - Here Stands The Man Who Needs You
Major IV – I Can't Believe I'm Losing You
N'Cole - You're Gonna Need This Love
Norfolk – Together
Natural Four - Try Love Again
Van McCoy – I'm In Love With You Baby
Melvin Sparks Ft Jimmy Scott - I Got To Have It
D.J. Rogers - Let My Life Shine, Part I

A quality selection and many that were new to me which is just what I want to hear and judging by the applause after every tune just what the doctor ordered for those suffering for the previous nights excesses. The great thing about this sort of weekender is there is no pressure to fill the dancefloor, especially in the afternoon sessions. Folks are just chilling, drinking, chatting so its not all about getting them to shake a leg at 11am on a Saturday morning. Next up was Kev Oxbury and this is what he played.

Next up was one of the Seaside Soul Club's regulars Duffs. Duffs played a quality set of mainly 70s LP tracks and some Mecca sevens.

Tata Vega: I need you now
David Ruffin: I get Excited
Leroy Hutson: Ella Weeze
Omni: keys to the city
Godley Colbert:

This set had me shaking a led or al least swaying in time to David Ruffin (tune!!) and was one of my many highlights of the weekend. The man has taste.

Saturday evening was all about Smokey's but before that kicked off some of us headed over to The Bath to find out what was going on. Garry Jazz man was digging deep in the crates for jazz soul vibes and Brett Franklin was in awe of the rare items in his box. Brett treated us to some quality steppers with a jazzy vibe. Gary played one of the tunes of the weekend for me The Intruders "favourite candidate" which has the type of tempo and vibe to tick all the soul music boxes, stepper/rare groove etc. I'm amazed its not a big tune and its still cheap (bagged one last week he he,) If memory serves me another gem was a cut from dancers Infero LP which had Mr Franklin in raptures frantically scribbling down titles and labels. We all decided to move on to Smokeys for more quality tackle.

Smokeys is the name given to what looks to me like an old working man's club. Classic layout rectangular sprung dancefloor, seated area on both sides of the stage and in front of the bar along the back wall and a stage directly opposite.

However instead on the decks being on the stage they were set up in one of the Stadler and Waldorf boxes on the same wall. This was a really novel approach as it meant the DJ could look down on the dancers like the Pope in St Pauls. When we go there Terry G was mixing it up with the live version of the Bottle (brave man) and a tasty rework of the Tramp's "Where were you when the lights went out" by Joe Clausell. Garry was followed by one of the Orwell lads in the shape of Steve O'Connor who played some classic modern soul. Then it was Steve Plumb who took to the decks and played the likes of Peabo Bryson "why don't you make up your mind", Tony Middleton "Spanish lady", Jean Carn "Free Love", Willie and the Mighty Magnificents " part II",

Next up was Steve Naylor who I was told was an ex Mecca head and would be playing a Mecca tribute set for Andy Lett who was sadly unwell and unable to attend. Get well soon Andy. I really enjoyed Steve's set as the Mecca music was probably my first introduction to the strange world on northern soul. A friend's sister was dating this guy and they went to Wigan and the Blackpool Mecca. Pat bought a few tunes and she used to play some in the house. Elise Laws "Love Factory", Joshie Armstead "I've got the Vibes", Vessie Simmons "I can make it on my own", Philip Mitchell "I'm so happy" and many others now regarded as classics. This would be about 1976 and I was just discovering northern soul at youth clubs and hearing mainly 60s motown style dancers. I found it hard to reconcile the two styles of music as "northern soul" in my head but I always had a hankering for the 70s productions with their strings and breakdowns.

Anyway, back to the plot. Steve's set consisted of many tunes I cut my soul teeth on . Chuck Jackson "I've got the need" , Viki Sue Robinson "turn the beat around", and some that sounded a bit strange and really tapped in to the spirit of the mecca as it would have been back in the day while Ian Levine or Colin Curtis were spinning the records . History has a way of recording only some tunes from famous clubs that become the top 100 tunes from the likes of The Paradise Garage, The Loft, The Gallery, Wigan Casino ect with a couple of compilations with about 25 tracks, but the reality is there must have been many more records played that never made it to compilations as there were many hours to fill and many years the clubs existence. What I felt Steve did was to play the long forgotten but played at the time tracks that now sound a bit dated or just plain strange. For me this is like a time machine where you can experience the music as you would had you been there in the 70s. At the mecca they were still playing tunes that had been played on the northern scene like Bobby Hutton "lend a hand", alongside the new releases of the day. Such as Bobby Womack " What is this", The New Birth "I can't understand it" , The first tune that was new to me although I have it was the Commodores "Human Zoo" and this was followed soon after by Earth Wind and Fire " Happy feelings", both "hard" sounding records and not what would be played today. By the time he played "War "Galaxyt" the place was bouncing. After all that funky stuff he switched to the soul. Tavares: Heaven must be missing an angel" , the 12" version which had the whole place singing along to every word. It was really great to hear this played out and to feel the energy in the room. In fact Steve's set guided the dancers and ebbing and flow from funk to disco to jazz funk to soul kept the dancers moving He knew exactly when to slow it down and give the dancers a rest a play the more "last hour" type

tunes. When he dropped "Jackey Beavers " Trying to get back to you girl", I knew I had to have a chat with this guy. JB is one of my all time favourite records and has been a regular oldie whenever I do my radio show or play out . Steve's set was inspiring, educational and perfectly captured what it must have been like in the Highland Room.

Next up was one of the regulars whos name I didn't catch but anybody who played any Philly is OK with me. He opened with Jean Carn "my love don't come easy" and kept the soul flowing until the last tune of the night.

Sunday:

Sunday was all about the York hotel and the DJ lineup consisted of most of the guys who had already played and a couple of guests. When I got there is was about 10am and Zane was just getting in his stride. This is what he played.

Sunday morning

Little Beaver - I Like The Way You Do Your Thing

Lorraine Johnson - Can I Hold You To It

Ruby Andrews - You Gotta Do The Same Thing

The Family Circle - If You Wanta Really Make It

Belita Woods - I Just Love You

Clarence Glover - Keep Your Promises

Dionne Warwick - You're Gonna Need Me

Cleveland Eaton - Pure Love

Sharon Cash - To Get Him Back

Wee Gee - You've Been A Part Of Me

Terry Collins - The Show Must Go On

Sammy Jones - You've Got To Show Me

Linda Jones - Not On The Outside

Bobby Wade - Blind Over You

Ruby Carter & The Exceptional Three - What About Me

Freddie Hughes & The Chevelles - I Just Found Out

Ike Noble - Your Love

Sharon Ridley - Where Did You Learn To Make Love The Way You Do

Innervision - I Just Want To Love You

Like the previous morning Sunday started off mellow and built to a climax by the end of the night. It was a joy to sit around chatting and reading the paper whilst this wonderful soul music flowed out of the speakers. At one point there were a few local kids climbing on the outside of the window looking in and wondering what we were all doing dancing at 10am. The music on Sunday was the best I have heard anywhere and covered most of the musical spectrum. The energy and love, yes love, in the room was something I will never forget.. By the end of the night we all had our shirts off and were having a soul love in (you had to be there)

Sunday afternoon/evening

Gary Jazzman/Steve Naylor

Mr Mecca was up next and this time it was Nu Jazz that was coming out of the speakers. For some folk this was a bit too far left and the dancefloor emptied. Nevertheless Steve battled on and when I asked him for Mr Hermano "Free as the morning sun" his face lit up. "that was my last tune", He asked the next DJ if he could play one more and Garry being the lovely chap he is said carry on. To hear a tune of this quality at a soul venue was a joy for me. I did my best to dance to it and dragged a few old soul heads on to the floor to hear this soul/jazz masterpiece. It's a cover of the Devadip Carlos Santana song but it takes the song to another level since the CS version is very short. This is as good as soul/jazz gets for me and it sounded wonderful. Bloody hard to dance to though so beware if you step out on the floor.

I spent a long while chatting to Steve Naylor and enjoyed hearing his recollections of days gone by and the Mecca and what he was digging now. We swapped "have you heard" tunes back and downed a few beers like old mates when we had only just met. That is what Morecambe is all about, like minded souls just enjoying the music, the shared travels and memories and the family feeling that permeates the place.

The final sets were simply sublime tune after tune and Zane and Kev did the last hour as a tag team and squeezed in some quality tracks such as Tavares ever had a love like this boefre (sounder superb) and Michelle Wileye " I feel so at home here" which was the last tune of the weekend.

All in all a wonderful weekend, quality music and quality people and I will definitely be back next year.

George Reid
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