

In Defiance of Any Sense Of Normalcy: A Portrait of 21st Century Northern Soul

Dan Briston

1960s Industrial America: A songwriter pours emotion into their lyrics and a band provides a catchy beat. A record is produced on a limited timescale and budget and is released. It doesn't reach the top 100: multiple copies remain stored in a warehouse somewhere, destined for destruction.

Years later, an Englishman finds a box of these records. He takes them home on a budget flight to Britain's Industrial heartlands and plays them to his friends at a youth club. He practices dance moves in his bedroom, then his friends do the same. Soon, people from across the country meet every weekend to hear more, to dance and buy copies of these obsolete sounds at giant halls. A movement begins; British cultural history, out of records that were discarded years ago across the Atlantic. Thousands of emotions, thousands of lyrics, thousands of records enjoyed by people for four decades and counting. This phenomenon can be boiled down to two words: Northern Soul.

For those who have devoted the last 40 years of their lives to this movement, the amount of meaning packed into those two words is indescribable. Northern Soul is the light at the end of the tunnel, an escape from the drudgery of the working week. Northern Soul is their life. For those who are young and discovering the scene, Northern Soul also provides an escape; from plastic pop and regurgitated club tunes. They become as devoted as their forefathers did in the '70's.







Dan Briston is a photographer based in Norfolk. His long-term documentary project 'In Defiance of Any Sense of Normalcy: A Portrait of 21st Century Northern Soul' collates over a year of photographs from around the UK and was published as a paperback book in May 2016. He looks to publish Volume 2 in Autumn 2017.

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