

Northern Soul Scene Project  
Kevin Draper (KD) interviewed by Jason Mitchell (JM)  
Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

JM: Yeah, good, perfect. So first of all, Kevin, that's great. Can I just ask you, if you had a ... did you ever manage to get a look at the, the oral history Participation Agreement form I sent you?

KD: I did, yes.

JM: Okay and because obviously you can't sign it. I'm just kind of asking you that I've sent it to you and you've seen it, and you're okay to start off the interview. Is that alright?

KD: Yes, yes, um yes.

JM: Perfect. That's great. So the date's the 18th of March 2020. I'm Jason Mitchell. I'm going to be interviewing you. And you're the person I'm interviewing you. And your first name is ...

KD: Kevin.

JM: And if you could spell that for me,

KD: KEVIN.

JM: Perfect and your surname ...

KD: Draper.

JM: And if you could spell that for me too?

KD: DRAPER.

JM: Lovely. And it's a telephone interview in relation to the fact that we've had to cancel the one to one interviews. So it's for the Northern Soul project. Can I ask you where you were born?

KD: I was born in Bedford.

JM: And when were you born in Bedford?

KD: 6<sup>th</sup> August 1954

JM: Perfect. And you live now in Bedford or in Peterborough?

KD: No, I live nearer to Peterborough at a little village called Little Stukely, near Huntingdon.

JM: Perfect. That's great stuff. And as I said, so this is for the Northern Soul project in Peterborough. So, as an opening question, can you just tell me about your experience with northern soul?

KD: My experience with northern soul in Peterborough goes back to the Wirrina. The Wirrina at Peterborough on Bishop's Road, which is no longer there now. That was my first all-nighter in Peterborough itself. Very well attended over 1,000 people there. This would have been I should think round about I would think 1973-74, something like that and that was really the start ... the start of my local activities with northern soul. It was great to have an all-nighter in Peterborough, it meant we didn't have to travel. Up until then we've been travelling quite some distances to get to all-nighters. Yes, it was great. It was just a bus ride up the road.

There was no worries about getting lifts or anything like that. Fantastic. It was just what the doctor ordered, so to speak.

JM: Perfect. When you say that you travelled some distances, what were the other clubs or all-nighters you went to before the Wirrina opened?

KD: Before the Wirrina, there was one place called Tunstall, Stoke on Trent, which was called The Torch, the Golden Torch. I went there only ... only twice but that was my first birth to all-nighters really, but there are others locally at Market Harborough, and also in Northamptonshire at a place called Bletsoe. Although personally myself, I didn't actually attend the Bletsoe one although it was very popular, much talked about one at the time.

JM: So the one at The Torch, could you tell me a bit about that because obviously I have watched some documentaries around that and I mean, they just looked fantastic. But could you tell me a bit about your experience, what it felt like to be there? The kind of energy, the atmosphere?

KD: The energy was electric. I was a bit of a newbie at the time, didn't really understand a lot of what was going on with the music. Was to my ... to my way of thinking was mind blowing. It was upbeat. It was ... it was a new world. It was fantastic.

JM: Yeah, when you say you were a newbie, do you mean that you were new to the music or had you started collecting records or ....?

KD: Relatively new, I'd been a soul music collector for as long as I can remember but this was a new kind of thing. This was a lot of records that I didn't know that ... that I felt were instant hits for me, you know? And I was hooked.

JM: Yeah. When you kind of... I'd just like to sort of unpack a bit of the detail of actually going there. So when you went there, did you go on a bus? Did you go with friends? Could you tell me a bit about, sort of the preparation almost like the day, the night before the preparation of going there, how that happened?

KD: No, no real preparation. I was just picked up with a guy called Dave King who we never see these days though. Dave king, he lived in St Neots. He had this red 1100 car and we used to travel all over the place together at the time and there was always music blaring out the tape machine in his car. I think on the first night I went I was virtually kidnapped for the night, which is a great experience. I didn't mind, I was willingly kidnapped shall we say. Yeah, and that's how we got there. I personally didn't drive at the time so I was just grateful to go anywhere I could get a lift to.

5:22

JM: And, and sort of, you know, what time did you sort of get there and what time did it end and ... and... yeah, just a bit of detail about the actual evening ... the night.

KD: Well, we would probably arrive about midnight having been probably somewhere locally beforehand just to warm up and then we would arrive at midnight and we'd probably get home about 10 o'clock the next day, you know.

JM: When you say warm up, what do you mean?

KD: Oh, just sort of meet up somewhere probably at a local club, local pub, club and then travel from there.

JM: Yeah.

KD: Yes.

JM: Was there, you know, in a club beforehand would you like ... was there ... because .... was it... I know that there's a sort of thing around the drugs etc, but what about drinking? I mean is it, is it unlike today where we associate going out with drinking?

KD: No, we never used to drink at all.

JM: Um.

KD: No, soft drinks.

JM: Yeah.

KD: There was never really an issue, you know?

JM: And so The Torch was obviously a big one. Did you go to any ... I'm going to sort of go wider afield and then come back to Peterborough. What were the other big clubs that you went to and ... and all-nighters?

KD: Over various times, there was obviously Wigan Casino. We went there, but that was probably only for about a year or so because we had things open up locally, like we had the Wirrina, we had St Ives in Cambridgeshire, there was an all-nighter opened up there and there was one at Cleethorpes as well. And there was Samantha's in Sheffield on Friday nights so we could have a whole weekend without travelling to the ends of the country as such. Within 120 miles we had three or four good all-nighters so we had somewhere every weekend.

JM: So when you say you travelled every weekend, would you go ... would you literally do a ... could you explain that a bit to me? So did ... was it like one on one day and one on the other?

KD: The Samantha's one at Sheffield was on a Friday night, I mean bearing in mind that I never had a car at this time we get there any which way we can.

JM: Yeah.

KD: If we couldn't scrounge a lift we'd hitchhike in those days. You know, we'd get out on the road at about seven o'clock on a Friday night and hitchhike to Sheffield from Huntingdon which was I suppose something that seemed a bit of a daunting task, but we thought nothing of it. It didn't take us that long to get there to be honest. This is what from 120 miles we would get there in four hours quite easily.

JM: Were you dressed? Did you get dressed there or did you ever get picked up by people who were also going there as well?

KD: We got ... we got picked up by a range of people, some strange ones as well, some strange stories we could tell you ... about a lady who picked us up and tried to drag us off to a party

in Grantham which we obviously declined because we wanted to go to Samantha's and she tried to make it most interesting to a couple of us but we declined because we wanted to go to Samantha's such was the drive of this very enthusiasm for the soul scene.

JM: Yeah. And ... and so did you exchange records? Did you take records when you went there?

KD: Oh yes, always carried records. We carried records, some to show, some to swap, some to sell. There was quite a lot of record trading going on amongst a group of people that I hang out with, yeah.

JM: And any particular stories about a record deal that you did or something that you found and as I say, before I'm sort of covering outside of Peterborough first ... anything that comes to mind about that, that record. You know, whether you picked up something really, that you still remember today?

KD: Well, I was telling you a story. I mean, I was actually offered the Frank Wilson record that is, is kind of like the Holy Grail thing. I mean, there's only three known copies of that in the world now.

JM: Oh really.

KD: I was actually offered that for £400 and I actually turned it down because it was warped and it was scratched and it got writing all over it. So that copy now resides with a guy called Tim Brown up in Lancashire, but I was offered that for £400. That value that exists right now to be somewhere in the £20,000 mark I would have thought.

10:14

JM: Do you regret not taking it?

KD: No, not at all really, no. As far as I'm concerned now it's a spent disc, it's now just a collector's piece really, an iconic tune but it's not something that I would play if I was out DJing because it's been played so many times. And yes, it's popular, but it's not the kind of thing I'd do, I tend to try and move things forward a bit when I play and try and feature something different as well as the old favourites.

JM: So for you, the collecting of the records was all about the actual playing of them not almost like artefacts that you have and don't use?

KD: I've always bought records purely on the strength of the fact that I liked them and when I was a DJ tried to share what I like and I know what other people like as well, I like to think I try and do something for everybody, but also try and give something that other people might want to think about, you know. But primarily, I was collecting and buying records that I enjoy. I see no ... no point in spending a lot of money on a record I don't enjoy, just because other people do. So occasionally I will get requested to play records and I say, "No, I haven't got it" and people say "Why not?" and "I say I haven't got it because I don't like it". And that does shock a few people. But at the end of the day, I'll consider that when I'm DJing, I'm a DJ not a juke box.

JM: Hmm. Yeah. And do you think that's, it's a common thing, your attitude towards that or do you think it's sort of ... how would you describe that in terms of your ... you... it sounds like

you're interested in ... in the records for the playing of the record as opposed to the records for another reason.

KD: I'm not particularly interested in them for their value sake. I'd say, primarily, I'm interested in them because I like them. And I enjoy sharing them with other like-minded people. And I don't want to play the same ones over and over again, because ... because my taste is always moving on, I'm always searching to find something new that excites me that I've not found before. And it's all about sharing that if I can with people. We do spend a lot of time in America.

JM: Yeah.

KD: Looking for new discs. And again, if we actually come across something that is worth a bit of money that other people like we may ... we may if we can get it at a reasonable price, buy it to sell on obviously to help cover our costs. Generally speaking, we only buy stuff that we like.

JM: That's great. I'm going to bring us back down to Peterborough now and ...

KD: Yeah.

JM: Obviously I only know the Worrina as a car park. So could I ...

KD: Yeah, that's all it is now.

JM: So could I ask you first of all, just to give me personally a little bit of detail around when it opened, the circumstances under which it opened, if you know that, and then sort of, I'd love it if you could describe, you know, an evening of you getting there, walking up, so you could almost walk me through what it would have been like to go in there.

KD: Okay. The Worrina, we're talking 1973/74 ish I would think. There would be a group of us from Huntingdon that would arrive on a bus and the bus station was quite near the Worrina. And we walked from the bus station as a group and as you ... as you got closer to it, you could actually start to hear the sound of the music. And, and we've got this little side door rather than the front door and there would be a queue of people waiting to get in, a lot of bustling, a lot of talking, a lot of saying hellos to people that you ... you knew, and that you only saw at these events, they lived in towns far away. And the atmosphere was already built before we actually got inside the place. And once you were in through the door, that was it, it was a massive sports hall, skating rink. And ... and the seating there was very crude, it was like bench seating that could be pushed away to clear the floor spaces and some of the room could be petitioned off but it was a massive place and the music was loud, intense. The atmosphere was intense. Electric in fact, very exciting, very upbeat. And it was just generally a great place to be, lots of people, lots going on, lots of dancing, and quite honestly good times as well.

15:12

JM: What was it before that? How did it come about? Do you know anything about how it came about to be a spot for a northern soul. I'm speaking in terms of, again, I'm talking about the documentaries I've been watching in relation to how some of the venues became northern

soul venues, you know, they were empty, the people picked them up. Do you know anything about that?

KD: Yeah, I think locally, there was ... there was an interest in ... in smaller clubs. I mean, there were, there were small clubs in Peterborough. There was small clubs in Cambridge, Northamptonshire, there was Howard Mallett's club in Cambridge was very prominent. As I said there were a lot of local clubs and at the time the ... the Wirrina started, there was a void pretty much in the country because all-nighters like The Torch, and Va Va's at Bolton had all closed down and there was nowhere to go. And so, if any, if anybody wanted an all-nighter there was a famine, if you like at that particular time, because the big ones were being closed, largely through police action through misuse of drugs and the like. So when this started up at Peterborough it was great, we got one on a doorstep. There was nowhere else pretty much to go. So that was it. Like I said, the first night over 1,000 people turned up. Fantastic.

JM: And the DJs were ...

KD: DJs there was.... it was local guys, there was Andy Smith, Jonas, that's Steve Jones, a guy called Spinner, Gary Spencer, Paul Donnelly, local DJs from Stamford – Poke, from ... from Cambridge, there was Tony Dellar. Plus we have big names from around the country as well, people like John Vincent was a regular too at the Wirrina.

JM: And a DJ, if you're going to a club and you were going there, and you ... how would you know whether it was going to be a good DJ or a bad DJ? I mean, was there any sort of ... sense of "Oh, it's this person, it's gonna be a really good night".

KD: Well, yeah, if you was a regular, if you was a regular, you would tend to watch which DJs were on. You did have your favourite DJs that you did enjoy the most, but minds were pretty open in those days and people were just happy to be out and would judge the night as they found it.

JM: And your favourite DJ?

KD: My favourite DJs at the time, um .... difficult to choose but I would put John Vincent fairly high up there, because he was innovative. He had his own kind of style and he was not afraid to play some fresh stuff.

JM: Fresh stuff. Of course, I you know, my ... my ignorance is showing slightly, fresh stuff as in something you hadn't heard or some things that might be .....

KD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Yeah.

KD: Yeah, correct, fresh stuff, stuff we hadn't come across before, whether it be a new release at the time or whether it was something in a classic '60s vein. They all had that driving beat and that same kind of style.

JM: And what was your dancing like?

KD: My dancing?

JM: Yeah. Well, I can hear laughter in the background.

KD: I'm trying hard not to swear. Let's say it was ... it was not the best of standards but I didn't care.

JM: So where you ... I only know this because I picked it up, the back of the hall or the front of the hall?

KD: Probably in the middle somewhere.

JM: In the middle. Yeah, I picked that up from a thing that I watched in terms of obviously the more lively you got, the better you were, the more you progressed to the front. Is that correct?

KD: That's an urban myth I think! I think a lot of the action was down at the front, if you ... if you didn't know what you was doing and you were down at the front, you was likely to get bumped into or clobbered. You had to have your wits about you. I don't think there's any real pecking order as such. I think that was an urban myth.

JM: And the person you're with laughed at the dancing question. Were they a participant in the dancing or not?

KD: Yeah, that's my wife, Denise . She was there from about 1974 onwards.

DD: I used to hitch it down from Yorkshire.

20:03

JM: Ah, and how would you compare ... shouldn't really do this. It's not really interview technique, but let's just do it anyway. How would you compare your dancing to his?

DD: Oh, a lot better!

JM: So, friends, you know, you went there, you went there with friends, could you ... what was the ... how did you feel? I know it's a bit of an odd thing to ask, but how did you feel? I just want to try to crouch the emotions, so in terms of like the sense of feeling you got going there.

KD: It was the excitement.

JM: Really?

KD: It was very, very enthusiastic. It was something different. It was something that other people didn't really know much about which kind of made it exciting because it was our thing that we did at the weekend and it was like going into a different world, a world of your own. Almost a secret world shall we say so there was that kind of excitement to it, a kind of group euphoria as well when you got in there. I mean, let's be honest, a lot of that was amphetamine induced but at the time but yeah, it was a great uplifting feeling.

JM: You talked about when there wasn't a club, there was a drought and nobody could get .. what was that? What did that feel like?

KD: A bit of despondency. We were always looking around, we were kind of relying on what was happening in the local pubs and clubs and in some ordinary discotheques of the day. We were trying to get our records played by the DJ, taking records in and saying "Here, play this, play this, play this" and madly taking over the dance floor when a couple of our tunes got played. We generally got stared at by the civilians as we called them.

JM: And so, back in ... in terms of ... if I can just bring you round to your, your DJing, etc. So the Wurrina's gone?

KD: Yes.

JM: And where now, what happened after that? I know that's a bit broad, but if you could just sort of trace out ...

KD: Locally St Ives really took over from that. It was the birth of the East Anglian Soul Club, an organisation set up in Stamford by a guy called Ken Cox who actually pinched the name East Anglian Soul Club from the original people who ran the Wurrina who then changed their name to the Phoenix Soul Club, but basically the second East Anglian Soul Club was kind of seen to be sort of cashing in on something that was now a national phenomenon. And a lot of people didn't like it obviously, but a lot of people just swallowed it and went along with it. St Ives became the local focal point and rising up to be quite a notable feature nationally as well. And by this time also Wigan Casino had opened and I think the following year Cleethorpes Pier and Winter Gardens had opened up with the Lincolnshire Soul Club run by Mary and Colin Chapman, which was very popular, and very well attended and respected event.

JM: I just want to ask two things because of what you've just said there. First of all, just for me, the Wurrina and the Wigan Casino opened at the same ... they were at one point open at the same time?

KD: They were indeed, yes.

JM: And would you ... with ... would you go to the Wurrina because it was local or would you sometimes go to Wigan because it was ...?

KD: Well, once we had the choice of things locally, we didn't bother going to Wigan.

JM: Yeah.

KD: It was just as good and so what ... so why travel?

JM: Okay, so there's not like ... there's not like okay, you know, it's completely different. But you know, Ibiza ... the people go to Ibiza, or they did before everything closed down. And you know, you go to the Cafe Del Mar, because it's the Cafe Del Mar, and you go to this club because it's this club not necessarily because they're the best but was there no .... it sounds like you're saying that there wasn't really ... I don't want to put words in your mouth, but there wasn't ... if it was good, it was good. It didn't matter where it was.

KD: Yeah, pretty much, that's the way I saw it. However, I must admit that the Wurrina wasn't on every week. So whereas Wigan Casino was, there were days when you could pop up to Wigan and not miss the Wurrina.



25:06

JM: And The Fleet, did you go to a few connected with The Fleet?

KD: I was indeed, The Fleet in fact that was probably my DJing high point of my DJing career. I was ...

JM: Tell me about that.

KD: Okay. I started DJing at The Fleet from about 1978 something like that. We had two rooms on the go, my first ventures were in the small room at the back, where we played the old classics and reflected back to the old 1960s, early '70s tunes that were played at all-nighters like the Twisted Wheel, Manchester and The Torch which I previously mentioned in Stoke. Those kind of favourites were being played in that room whereas the tunes of today were being played in the main room. I started off in the back room but I had already done some of the St Ives all-nighters as well that had gone on before that and subsequently closed. But they were being run by the same guy, Ken Cox. So, yeah, I started off at The Fleet in the back room and then graduated into the main room where I like to think I became one of the front running DJs in as far as I was ... I was playing the big tunes of the day, and trying to push new tunes as well. And at one point, we were pretty close to playing a similar, if not virtually the same playlist as the number one at Wigan Casino. There were a few exclusives that they didn't ... that they had which we didn't have but also we had exclusives that they didn't have too. But we were pretty much level pegging with the people at Wigan and I was quite proud of that.

JM: Yeah, I mean, what's interesting for me is obviously, in today's modern sort of culture, you don't physically have to have the record but obviously, you're talking about something where if you didn't physically have the record, you couldn't play it.

KD: Well, that's it, yeah. It's still like that now, yeah, I mean, there are cases where people will get to recordings of the record and make their own copies. That's that is very frowned upon to do that publicly these days and wasn't so much in those days, but it is now. The big thing was to have exclusive tunes at your venue or in your ... in your DJ armoury, which people liked and therefore they could only hear it from you because it was exclusive and the way that was achieved was by concealing the identity of records. There was one such record which was considered by a DJ at Wigan, to be his best record ever. A record by a guy called Cecil Washington and he's played this successfully for over a year at Wigan Casino and it was very much, very, very much a King thing in his ... in his DJ spot.

JM: When sorry, when you say ...

KD: I managed to get the second copy of that in the country. He had the record concealed under ... under the guise of Joe Matthews but when I obtained a copy I didn't follow suit and conceal it at all. There was quite a big row over the fact that I played this record openly and revealed to the nation the true identity of the artist. Much, much to my disadvantage in some respects because I potentially lost a fair bit of DJ work over that because I've not kept the secret if you like.

JM: What was the actual tune called?

KD: The tune was called "I Don't Like to Lose".

JM: That's great that is. And when you say conceal, do you mean it's concealed as in, they put it in a sleeve so you couldn't see the actual person who'd recorded it?

KD: They would actually put a false label over the top of the record label with something else written on it. It was known on the ... initially when this was done, they were known as secret sounds, but later on they became cover ups. And to uncover someone else's cover ups, well was going to be ... it was game on. If I knew what it was and they were playing it under a different guise, then I would reveal it. And there were a few other things we would do that too. I had records, which I had covered over and other people straight away would say that's so and so. And ... and that was it that was the end of the cover. But so long as people didn't know what it was, you could keep that up for as long as you like. Some of these cover ups have gone on for about 15 years before people had actually discovered what they are.

30:35

JM: So the scene would be you'd be at the club, you'd play this record, people would love it. They go crazy for it.

KD: Yeah.

JM: You, you ... they wouldn't know what it was, you wouldn't let them know what it was. You play and then ...

KD: You give it a false identity so that they have something they could relate to it as.

JM: How did you go about getting the ... the ... "I Don't Like to Lose" record, did you just go out and search for it?

KD: Well, I actually approached the person who was the main supplier for this guy at Wigan, and said, if you ever come across another copy, let me know. I'll be interested in buying it and then I got a letter from him one day saying, yes, I've got one.

JM: And do you mind me asking how much that would have cost at that time?

KD: It cost me £150.

JM: What would that be equivalent to today?

KD: Today probably about £1,500.

JM: Yeah. Wow, that's just fascinating. So there's a kind of, you know, there's a kind of secret world in that cover up thing which is kind of really intriguing. Did you ... how long were you at The Fleet for? What, what ... you know ... tell me a bit about The Fleet from there to now as it were, and where you are now?

KD: Oh, The Fleet is actually still continuing as a soul venue. In fact, it's probably one of the longest running soul functions in the country under ... under different people running it. And I think Ken Cox who I worked for, he finished there about 1980 .... it would have been about 1984. It was about the time I got divorced from my first wife, that's how I remember that. And ... but by this time, everyone was going to a place called The Top of the World in

Stafford. Wigan had closed. Ken had finished at The Fleet. Although after that there was some other people took The Fleet on. It took slightly different terms, slightly different people attending, more geared towards mods and scooterists as well as the northern soul fans. So it did continue and has done so right up until present day. In fact, the one for March has only just been cancelled due to our current situation with the virus but the next one's for September.

JM: Hmm. Do you have photos and bits and pieces?

KD: Very few unfortunately, very few. Yeah, we may have some articles, adverts from newspaper clippings and things from fanzines. I'll have a look and see what I can dig out and see if I can supply you with some. Yeah, but like, like I was saying earlier, I do have a recording of one of those sessions at The Fleet. I used to do two sessions, I used to do the early session where I used to play all my new stuff so people would get familiar with it as they came in saying hello, getting themselves sorted out in that first session and then I'd do another session at prime time, at four o'clock in the morning and I'll try and teach some of those new things in in the late session when the ... when the all-nighter was at the peak shall we say. Yeah, so I have got a recording which I can let you have.

JM: Oh, that would be ... yeah perfect.

KD: I think that recording does actually include the "I Don't Like to Lose" record.

JM: Oh nice. So, overall, I mean, your ... your experience with northern soul, what were the kind of the ... you've probably got hundreds, but what were the kind of abiding memories from it, and also, what kind of ... what has it meant to you in terms of your life?

35:00

KD: In terms of my life, I suppose meeting my wife who to be honest, I couldn't stand her when I first met her. I met her back in about '74/'75. And we kind of re-met again early '90s, in the '80s, early '90s and we kind of got off on a different foot because we're not seeing each other for a long time. It's probably a couple of months before we realised that we'd actually previously known each other. But obviously, we're getting on and getting on a much better wavelength and eventually in 2001, we got married.

JM: Was the connection with northern soul part of that?

KD: Yeah, if it wasn't for northern soul I wouldn't have met her. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. When we sort of re-met the second time it was ... that was at an all-nighter at Keele in Staffordshire.

JM: And your ... your ... your and it's a difficult question because it's like over a long period of time, but your abiding, your memories, your, you know, the thing that you think about if you had to sort of sum it up in, in some sentences?

KD: I think enjoying the travel, the journeys with friends, meeting friends in all kinds of places all over the country. And indeed abroad as well. I mean we've actually DJ'd abroad in Europe and in America and to actually go over to America and DJ and find that there are people that you know from England who've come along as well, I mean there the kind of memories that you don't forget. With playing in America as well, we've come to meet some of the people that actually made these obscure records. I mean, some of them have actually become

friends. And that is something which I never actually dreamed would happen. These are records that we bought that were unknown, totally by the general public. And yet years later all these years later, we've actually managed to actually find these people, hear them perform and have them actually become friends. That is something which I do really appreciate and value and something I that would never happen. So that's probably some of the most memorable things about it.

JM: How often ....

KD: Actually meeting and hearing the songs.

JM: How often would you go to America?

KD: We'd generally go a couple of times a year. This year, we didn't, we didn't go this spring, we didn't go in the spring and in the autumn as well. We didn't go this spring because my wife, Denise, had to have a hip replacement operations so that sort of put things on hold. So we didn't plan a trip to the spring.

JM: And where did you go to?

KD: We'd go all over the place actually. Once we get there we have certain areas over there where we have friends that we go and see. We've got a lot of friends in the Carolinas, have been visiting the Carolinas since the 1990s. Built up a lot of friends over there. A lot of contacts for music as well. So we go over, we visit our friends. We search for music as well, explore different avenues as well as the Carolinas we, we spent a lot of time in Pennsylvania, where we DJ in ... in the Keystone, the Keystone soul weekend in Lancaster in Pennsylvania. That's become a yearly event. I think we're in the fifth year this year. We DJ'd in Detroit. Yeah, we did the '60s Motown anniversary celebrations over there. DJ'd in Chicago too.

DD: [unclear]

KD: Did you hear that?

JM: Um, yeah, yeah. So with your DJing ... so being on the floor as it were, and DJing, are they ... are they different or ... what's... you know, you went to the clubs and you start DJing, is that ... are they two different experiences?

KD: Yeah, they are two different experiences but if you've enjoyed the dance floor, then it's a lot easier to DJ because you've got ... you've got to feel it to do it. If you're not feeling it ... yeah. I mean, you go out there and play all the tunes that you personally enjoy in your own front room and expect everyone to enjoy the same as you because that won't happen. You've ... you've got to feel it, you've got to feel that everyone has enjoyed it in the room as much as you possibly can. And there'll be times when you get an empty dance floor because they're not familiar with the record or ... or purely and simply because they've had enough and they need to sit down and have a drink

40:20

JM: What's, what's it feel like when that happens?

KD: You learn to get that feel, sense the vibe from the audience because it after all generates the atmosphere in the club. And you've got to feed that atmosphere.

JM: What does it ... sorry, my fault to interrupt you ... what's it feel like when the record goes wrong or empties?

KD: Some people are frightened by it, it feel it's a disaster, but I feel also it's just a point to look at what you are doing and you know, use your experience to tell you what you're doing next.

JM: Yeah, yeah. On a more practical level if you don't mind me asking, what ... what did ... how did you obviously...? I take it you've been working too because it ... it ... it sounds like it needs some money input to make this happen for you.

KD: Yeah, I worked in a full time job as well but we ... as I said when we're in America we buy records which we'd sell when we get back and that generates a bit.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

KD: We, we sell records that we, we are ... I won't say tired of but records that have gone off the boil or we no longer use. Some of them being classic records that other people have never owned and would like to own so we ... so we get a bit of income back from that. But yes, it does cost a lot of money. We spent God knows how much on it, thousands over the years but it's what we do and it's never bothered us. We cut our cloth to suit, you know, we put as much into it, as we can without crippling the families, you know.

JM: And, and work is it... is it... and is there any, is there any connection with work in it or is it ... is it literally the person at work is different from the soul, Northern soul person?

KD: Well, I do work in the music industry, more on the production side. I work in the concert industry, touring with bands for a period as well.

JM: Yeah.

KD: I still work occasionally with a film and TV company, production company, provide lighting for film and TV.

JM: Oh, okay.

KD: So I'm still loosely connected with the entertainment industry.

JM: So there's a connection ....

KD: I'd like to think .....

JM: There's a connection there isn't there with the .....

KD: There is. I've done it largely on a self-employed basis so I've been able to take jobs and do a lot of short term as and when I've needed to or wanted to. I've been lucky, you know, I've enjoyed my life. I've done, I've done what a lot of people don't do. My job has been something that I enjoy. Yeah.

JM: That's good. And so just, it's been brilliant and is there anything that you think and this is always something that you ask and then I put the phone down and then you go "Ah, I should

have said....". Anything that we ... that you ... you were ... you were thinking about that I haven't asked you about or anything that in the conversation we've had has brought to mind and that you that we just could finish off with?

KD: No, I think that maybe we should emphasise that there is a great camaraderie amongst people who attend these venues. You can go anywhere in the country and know that you'll see friendly faces that you've seen elsewhere. There's a lot of people that I call them nodding acquaintances, but they were very comfortable in a room of people whose faces, you know, you see them every week, but you don't quite get time to speak to them but it's a friendly vibe between you. You're always nodding and saying hello and that is the thing that I like. Over the years it's become much more friendly. I mean, initially on the northern soul scene, it was, it wasn't quite like that at times. Yeah, it could have been vicious. There were some devils amongst us, shall we say. By note of the very fact that it was an all-night thing that was not really widely known about to the general public. It was a criminals' playground to be honest.

JM: Um.

KD: But you had to learn how to fit in with it and once you did, you were okay. Hopefully.

45:04

JM: And do you think ....

KD: Yeah, lifelong friendships and they're good friends too?

JM: Yeah.

KD: Yeah. They're people who will rally around if need be.

JM: That's excellent. That's really good. And thank you. That's just, that's just been fantastic.

KD: And thank you too. I hope what I've been able to tell you has been helpful towards your project.

JM: Yeah, no, it's ... it's really good. And it's just sort of obviously you've got the perspective of having been to the broader clubs, the one in Peterborough and also the DJing and, and what will happen now is and we'll ... we basically put this into a digital format and then it gets transcribed and then Nick Woods, who's looking at the project looks at it, and we look at all the interviews and we ... we're sort of aiming to make a sort of, a piece about it, an interactive piece, which was going to be on at the Peterborough Festival, but obviously that things are going to change now, so we're still looking at it. So in terms of, you know, the Oral History Project recording agreement, did you have a look at that?

KD: I did, yes.

JM: Yeah, yeah. So basically, I'm not quite sure how this works with the telephone interview 'cos it's not quite the same format, but obviously that agreement there, what I'll ask you to do, if possible, is I might just send you an email asking you to send both signed copies of those having agreed that we're .....

KD: I'm quite happy for you to use anything I've said here for this project. Am I right in assuming this is not a fund ... money making project as such?

JM: No, no.

KD: No one's going to be making money out of it then I'm fine with it. It's just for a Heritage Archive or something like that then I'm pleased and proud to be able to contribute.

JM: Absolutely, it's funded by the heritage project with Vivacity, etc and the idea it would become part of the Peterborough City archives. I think they may have to just slightly relax some of the, I'm not an expert at this, but obviously they're ... they're ... they're one to one interviews generally. So telephone interviews, hopefully, think it's all to do with sound quality but .....

KD: Right.

JM: But so yeah, absolutely. That's great. And obviously, at JumpedUpTheatre Kate Hall will keep everyone that we've interviewed up to date of where we're at and what we're doing. And actually, it may be that we also come back to you at some point and say, you talked about this. Jason, you know, didn't quite get the, you know, all the information we wanted about that. So we may come back to you and just ask you to unpack us something that you've said.

KD: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I'm fine with that. Yes, please do, by all means. Yeah, we're going to hunt out some, some memorabilia and stuff. And see what we can help to supplement this with.

JM: That's perfect.

KD: And the recording which we said we'd let you have.

JM: That's brilliant.

KD: And so we'll look for some flyers and adverts and any other stuff that we can find that's relevant to the Peterborough scene.

JM: That's great, thank you very much. It's been really good for me especially because obviously I, you know, I'm ... I'm ... I'm going to be putting this together in relation to the.. the ... the performance, let's call it performance piece, you know, and it's you know, I'm doing some reading and I'm doing some dancing and I've also doing some looking at the ... the stuff online etc. But obviously just to get first-hand accounts is brilliant.

KD: When you're doing the dancing, make sure you get the handclaps in the right place.

JM: Now the handclaps ....I'm really glad you said that, the handclaps.

KD: That was all part of the atmosphere, people actually clapping to the beat of the music.

JM: So with ... with the handclap ..... did that ... was that instigated by the DJ because I've watched the things I could see it happen everyone knows it's happening. Is it on a .....

KD: No, you .... that is something that came from the floor. It was just keeping that beat going, especially if there was a ... there was a, say a slow bit on the record. That's how keep the beat going. You'll ... you'll hear the handclapping on this recording I've sent you. It's something that's sadly died off a bit. Yeah, yeah, it really was loud.

Northern Soul Scene Project  
Kevin Draper (KD) interviewed by Jason Mitchell (JM)  
Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

JM: That's brilliant.

KD: But we all say at Cleethorpes Pier, you could hear the clapping and the foot stomping long before you got to the pier and long before you could hear the actual music. You could hear this rhythm coming from the pier. And you could sometimes tell which record was being played before you heard the music as you approached.

JM: So the clapping that was going on now, but they clapped all the way through the record.

KD: No, it was generally, there were high points in the records where clapping would kick in but everybody knew when that was.

JM: Ah, I see.

KD: But it was like every, everything became one at that particular point, and again, it was all part of driving the atmosphere.

50:14

JM: Yeah, yeah.

KD: Yeah, but you'll hear some of this from the recording I'm going to send you.

JM: That's perfect. Yeah, great stuff. Well, thank you. I'm just to say obviously take care of yourselves and just .....

KD: And you too. Please do get it touch, stay in touch.

JM: Yeah.

KD: And please do get in touch with us and ask any further questions you want to.

JM: That's brilliant.

KD: We'd love to help.

JM: Great stuff. Thank you very much.

KD: Okay.

JM: Cheers, thank you for your time, cheerio. bye.

KD: Bye.

The End