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Souled Out signs go up across Stoke-on-Trent

The City of Stoke-on-Trent is to take star billing in a new movie charting the rise of the Northern Soul scene of the 1970s.

The city has been chosen as the backdrop for a story which tells the tale of a teenager who learns about life and love through the infectious beat of Northern Soul music.

A host of venues across the city were used in the shooting of the new movie, entitled *Souled Out*. But pride of place goes to Kings Hall in Stoke, which not only plays the part of the legendary Wigan Casino (which shut in 1981), but also holds its own Northern Soul all-nighters to this day.

Directed by Shimmy Marcus, the film is set in 1974 and stars Martin Compston as Stoke City fan Joe MacCain, a bored and restless 19-year-old who has never left the confines of "The Potteries". He meets Jane who introduces him to Northern Soul and a world of exciting music and dance which he never knew existed.

The film, which also stars Pat Shortt, Alfie Allen and Huey Morgan of the Fun Loving Criminals, features an original soundtrack of Northern Soul, including Tainted Love and On My Way. The legendary Bernard Butler, of Suede and Duffy fame has composed the music for the film.

Producer Christine Alderson grew up in nearby Stone, and is adamant the film will help to put Stoke-on-Trent on the movie map of Great Britain.

Shimmy Marcus added: "We spent a long time looking for somewhere to film, and Kings Hall is the most perfect venue. It's beautiful and is the closest resemblance to Wigan Casino you are going to get anywhere. I went to an all-nighter at the Kings Hall with another member of the crew and we were smiling to each other and saying this is the place to be. There's a hotbed of Northern Soul still very much alive in this city."

That's not too surprising, given that Stoke-on-Trent (or Soul-on-Trent as it was dubbed in the 1960s and 70s) was also at the very heart of Britain's Northern Soul sub-culture. Leading the way then was The Golden Torch, a club in the back streets of Tunstall which drew fans from all over the Midlands and the North West. Such was the influence of The Torch that its logo, of a silhouetted hand holding a smoking torch aloft, became a national symbol of the whole movement.

DJ and promoter Kevin Roberts has staged Northern Soul all-nighters in Stoke-on-Trent since 1996 and claims the scene is bigger now than ever before. And the makers of *Souled Out* found plenty of suitable locations for filming in Stoke-on-Trent...as well as up to 1,000 extras for the dance scenes.

"Northern Soul is still very much alive and kicking in Stoke-on-Trent," says Tourism Manager Julie Obada, adding: "We're pretty sure that we'll receive a new wave of visitors once the movie hits the screens in the Autumn. And we'll be ready to point them in the right direction – whether they want to go to all-nighters, or simply visit some of the locations used in the filming of the movie."

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