

Album Review: 47Soul Balfron Promise [Cooking Vinyl; February 2018]

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It was in Jordan's capital city of Amman where 47Soul formed in 2013, bringing together Jordanian and Palestinian members from the Levant region of Bilad al-Sham to produce their debut album *Intro to Shamstep*, a set of 5 tracks fuelled with high-energy synthesizers where traditional Dabké and hip-hop verses in Arabic and English amalgamated.

After their acclaimed performances on big stages, including WOMAD UK and Glastonbury, 47Soul are set to break the scene again with *Balfron Promise*, their second studio album recently released on independent British label Cooking Vinyl.

Balfron Tower, the iconic London building, made famous for appearing next to some of the '90s top Brit-pop acts such as The Verve and Oasis, and once temporary home to 47Soul, couldn't be a better location to inspire the band's new soundscape. This landmark building in Tower Hamlets formerly witnessed the eviction of longstanding tenants as gentrification was taking hold. Stories of displaced people, homelessness and oppressed souls, plus tales of not belonging are things that 47Soul's members have experienced first-hand in their flesh as they defied border restrictions to go on tour.

While still infused with urban genres such as dubstep and hip-hop, *Balfron Promise* has taken the band's sonic identity to a higher and more ambitious level, with analog synths and relentless guitar lines growing along this eight-track album, which inaugurates with hypnotic 'Machina', followed by 'Move Around' and its faint dancehall beat, bursting into ecstasy at any unexpected point, and then slightly relaxing (not for long) with 'Marked Safe'. If the intros progressively unfolding in their songs are often epic, their outros do not fall short either, as the last track of the album demonstrates, 'Ghazal (Promised Outro)'.

Not only are 47Soul fuelling the Middle Eastern music scene with their electronic take on Middle Eastern popular rhythms, but a wave of other artists agglutinate around this increasingly thriving music phenomenon of electro chaabi (Arabic for 'popular', and 'of the people'), including Egyptian experimental producer Maurice Louca, Cairo-based rave-artist Rozzma, and the by-now widely-known Omar Suleyman, who debuted bringing Syrian wedding songs to the mainstream club crowd.

Source: <http://www.rhythmpassport.com/articles-and-reviews/album-review/album-review-47soul-balfron-promise-cooking-vinyl-february-2018/>