

# 47Soul: Balfron Promise review – high-energy shamstep and cheerful protest tunes

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There has long been a link between music and resistance in Palestine, with hip-hop playing a major role in recent years. The best known exponents, DAM, are still angry and active (their new single – a treatment of Jerusalem – begins with the Blake/Parry anthem and veers off into a furious rap reaction to US president Donald Trump's policies) but the band likely to have more crossover appeal in the UK are their label colleagues 47Soul.

Formed in Jordan five years ago, with members from Palestine and Jordan, they specialise in a style they call shamstep, a cheerfully wide-screen fusion of electronic hip-hop and traditional *dabke* dance music, mixed in with a dash of reggae, with sturdy melodies and chanting vocals from the four singers. They play synthesisers, drum machines, guitars and Arabic percussion, and are impressive live performers, as they proved at 2016's Womad.

This is high-energy music with a message that's delivered in both Arabic and English. For the last two years, they have been living in London, and their first full-length album is a reflection on problems in the UK as well as the Middle East. Balfron Promise (Cooking Vinyl) refers in part to the Balfour Declaration, just over a century ago, and also to the Balfron Tower in Tower Hamlets, where they once lived, and from where longstanding tenants were evicted as the block was gentrified. So the theme of the driving, half-spoken Moved Around or the angry and chanting Mo Light is that of homelessness, on both a national and local level. But it's delivered with confidence and good humour. The most unlikely song, Locked Up Shop, describes "getting a haircut before the riot starts."

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