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Birmingham band Stone Foundation talk Paul Weller, their new album and shows in the Midlands

By [Andy Richardson \(/news/authors/andy-richardson/\)](/news/authors/andy-richardson/) | [Entertainment \(/entertainment/\)](/entertainment/) | Published: Sep 8, 2017

If you were to ask Paul Weller to name his favourite band of the past 12 months, he'd shoot back a simple answer: Stone Foundation.

The Birmingham soul boys made such an impression with *The Modfather* that he offered to produce their album – and play on it.

The result was *Street Rituals* – a number 25 hit – that has propelled the band into the mainstream. They're supporting it with a major UK tour, including a gig at Birmingham's O2 Academy on October 18, and a forthcoming live album.

Frontman Neil Jones still can't believe the band's fortune that after slogging it out for three albums and countless years, their luck has finally turned.

He's back in Birmingham today. He's made the trip into town to get his hair cut – as the smartest fellas do. He's visited Ace Place Barbers, in Bristol Street, to see Craig for a trim.

He's thrilled with *Street Rituals*, a record that began at the start of 2016. "Paul got in touch with us to say how much he'd loved the last couple of records. We were amazed that he'd got in touch. We weren't chasing him.

"He asked if we wanted to co-write a song with him – *The Limit of a Man*. We sent him back the demo of the song, completed. We'd worked on the chorus and he loved what we'd done."

The mutual appreciation society stemmed from there. Weller invited Stone Foundation to his studio, in Woking, and they played in the Black Barn for three days, stopping over and trading stories. They became good friends, bonding over music, and before they knew it, Weller was sitting with them in the control room, marvelling at what they'd done. "We'd got six or seven songs on the desk. Paul said we were half way to a record. So he invited us back to do more to see where we were."

It was a fruitful start to the year.

Street Rituals later emerged and earned the band long-overdue attention from the music press and their peers. Their recent tours have sold out and when they played a London gig, at Islington, Weller turned up to play live, alongside Dr Robert, from Blow Monkeys, and Danny Champ, from Danny The Champions of the World.

Stone Foundation recorded the show and it will be released as a live album in the middle of October.

"I've just been listening to the mixes. It's great."

And yet Stone Foundation remain firmly in touch with their roots. A first flush of success has done little to turn their heads.

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Neil adds: "All my family is in Acock's Green and Ward End. I was born in Sutton Coldfield and most of my life has been lived in Tamworth. Now I'm nearer Coventry, it's the way things worked out. But I can't wait to play in Birmingham in October, it's been about two years since our last gig.

"I love coming back to the city, it's like coming home. It's my favourite city. As soon as you're on the Aston Expressway you're on your way – you're going home. We haven't played for a long time."

Paul Weller effectively joined the band for *Street Rituals* and remains in touch. He was happy to collaborate, rather than impose his ideas. "We wanted to keep our honest sound. We also want to give it that English element. We're heavily influenced by Stax but we always want it to have that English vibe to it. Spencer Davis and Steve Winwood are among my favourite artists. Steve kind of epitomises how to keep your identity but also have your influences on your sleeve."

The effect of Paul's endorsement has been profound. Stone Foundation have gone from being a well-kept-secret to being a must-hear band.

"It's mad. The last couple of records have been growing. But working with other people is what we like to do. We've done stuff with Carleen Anderson and Andy Fairweatherlow. For a long time, we've had a small following and it's built and built. This album has kind of gone through the roof for us really. It's been a steady slow gradual build-up. We've done things the opposite way to most bands – we're in it for the long term."

It's not just Paul who's marvelled at the Style Council-esque polish of Stone Foundation. Steve Craddock is another avowed fan. "I know Steve really well. He's been really great with us."

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