



“The Scene Club was set up and owned by Ronan O’Rahilly and his business partner Lionel Blake. Ronan was a very bright entrepreneur whose Irish family had money. Lionel was South African, a big man, a real nice guy. The Scene opened in May ’63 and had an all-R&B music policy - everyone played there, the Stones, Diddley. Guy Stevens played records on Monday nights. It was small, dark, unprepossessing, not a pulling or posing club, no drinks licence, it was all about digging the music. Modernists, musicians, young music biz people, kids off the street, anyone and everyone who dug rhythm & blues. Then when Ronan realized how restricted UK radio was he set up Radio Caroline. The government stopped UK companies advertising on it but Caroline still made money: pay to play. When the Scene got busted in ’65 (they said you could hear the pills dropping on the floor from up the road in Piccadilly Circus) Lionel took the rap for Ronan and was banged up. If Ronan had gone inside it would have been very difficult for Radio Caroline. There were rumours about Ronan’s “Irish agenda” - he was political, an idealist - and he certainly loved the Kennedys, which is why he named the ship after JFK’s daughter.”

Norman Jopling

[Photo: Pete Meaden at the Scene club, July 1964]

NORTHERN SOUL STORIES #1

As the follow-up to their mega hit cover of Gloria Jones’ “Tainted Love” Soft Cell recorded a cover of Franki Valli’s Wigan floorfiller “The Night” but it was rejected by record label bosses. The duo released their slant of Judy Street’s “What” instead!