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A local record company founded on revealing amazing, underrepresented music, has possibly found its greatest gem yet with the release of "Twin Cities Funk and Soul: Lost R&B Grooves from Minneapolis/Saint Paul 1964-1979."

On Sept. 25, Secret Stash Records released the 21-track compilation of tremendous funk and sugary soul. The album is available in CD and vinyl formats; and available for download via www.secretstashrecords.com.

The project's creators spent the better part of a year researching music, interviewing local radio DJs, musicians and writers of the time to develop the compilation of amazing Minnesota musical talent.

Why has it taken so long for something like this to occur? Well to be frank, African-American musicians were simply not presented with the same opportunities to flourish in the industry as their counterparts during the time the music was being made. Much like Jackie Robinson had to be a representation of his race in the major leagues, few African-American musicians were allowed to really push through the narrow holes that existed due to racism of the time. It wasn't the music that was the issue; it was the musicians (whether or not the music itself faced its own adversity during the era is another story). Top R&B, as well as funk, became accepted nationwide as a genre, however area Black artists were left without much choice but to play wherever they could manage.

The music of the era reflected the changing times. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law. This was during the times of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Although the music made signaled a great change, clubs and radio stations were not allowing for a smooth transition. In the majority of Minnesota venues, it was rare for African-American music

to be played.

This music was pre-punk, pre-rap, pre-pop. All aspects of the music that moves you today drew inspiration from the music these people made. Even the lyrics reflect issues of the time.

"You can't fight it if you're undecided," sang local pioneers, Prophets of Peace as they harmoniously preached to the people. "You can be what you wanna be/you can make life better/got to get ya head together."

Bands such as Prophets were willing to put forth their opinions on subjects such as civil rights through a medium that was capable of reaching thousands. Music was more powerful than ever before.

Rather than succumb to intimidation, certain clubs and radio stations still found a way to push the magical music forward.

Eric Foss is the founder of Secret Stash. When discussing some of what got him to take it upon himself to unearth some of the funk and soul gems he noted that many bands with white musician have received attention and credit for the music they've made, but it wasn't the same for African-Americans.

"There's a reason why Black music hasn't been chronicled here," said Foss. "It's not right."

King Solomon's Mines was one of the few downtown clubs willing to book African-American bands on a regular basis.

"It's funny because one of the first clubs that would book Black bands regularly had ties to the Jewish mafia," said Foss. "They only cared about one color, not white or black, just green."

KUXL was the only radio station that featured African-American programming.

Part of the challenge for Secret Stash has been finding the artists – some who have not surfaced for more than 20 years. On top of that, finding musicians from the time who were still willing to reunite and put aside their former glory for a new collective.

Many of the artists featured on the album still perform today. Jimmy Wallace, sax player from the Prophets of Peace, plays in several groups and is part of the newly-formed Twin Cities Funk & Soul All Stars, a collective of funk, R&B, soul and jazz.

The album is not only a one-of- a-kind compilation of pivotal soul music; it also shines a light on the rich history of Minnesota music, showing that we did get funky before Prince. This is a chance to commemorate those local artists who really paved the way for the sound of Minneapolis. Chronicling all aspects of African-American music – R&B, funk, soul, and jazz – should have been done sooner, but we can make up for lost time with the proper attention, appreciation and acceptance of these local heroes. This is history in the remaking.