

## Where to Begin? The Impact of a Local Band on a Budding “Punk Rock” Kid from NW Georgia. PART 2

I have to begin by giving 20 Below its proper due. Being that it was an all-ages club, I can't imagine a better place for my sixteen-year old self to be able to visit. Even though I had already been dabbling in playing music for a few years, going to 20 Below was one of those defining moments that made me realize that I could actually play music out live in front of actual people. Not only did I first see The Unsatisfied at 20 Below, I also saw a number of other great local, and local-adjacent, bands at the time. I can't recall it all, unfortunately, but a few bands still stand out in my memory. Bands like Nillah, Cabrini Green, and Necropolis seemed to play regularly while a band like NeoWizard (Knoxville) would play there occasionally and a band like Fun Girls from Mt. Pilot (Nashville) would come down, as well. Chris Smith and I, along with his friend Bruce, quickly became semi-regulars of attending shows at 20 Below. If you don't know, Scott Henson, who used to run sound at 20 Below and also played guitar in Fist Carousel, now has a YouTube channel called 20 Below Radio, which features uploads of many local area bands from the mid-80s through the early 2000s. I encourage everyone that reads this to check it out. And now on to the show.

Like I mentioned previously, it wouldn't be until seeing The Unsatisfied a second time that Chris and I would get up the nerve to talk to anyone in the band. I can't recall anything about the show, but I do recall standing around after the band played and talking to Eric. We were both probably nervous but I remember Eric being talkative, friendly and excited that we were into the band. I feel like there was some type of sign-up sheet on the table where you could write down your name/address (obviously, e-mail wasn't a publicly available means of communication, yet) with the knowledge that the band would occasionally mail out flyers for upcoming events and shows. Little did we know that we were signing up for a collective known as the P.O. Punks, or Post Office Punks. For my sixteen-year old self, this was cooler than I could have imagined, which I'll discuss a bit later. I believe we left the show that night with a cassette copy of the band's demo, *Lustcraft*. I remember putting it into the cassette player of Chris' Chevrolet Impala and we were both stunned that it didn't sound like the same band we had seen perform live. We weren't even aware, though, that it was a completely different group of musicians on the recording... and Eric's vocals sounded different... very smooth and pure sounding. However, we *did* recognize a few of the songs (The Pusher, U Won't Believe What I Want, and Angelic Wall) from the live performances. It took us a moment to acclimate to the recording but *Lustcraft* quickly became something that we would listen to over and over and over.

As previously mentioned, Chris was older than I by a couple of years... and he could drive. So, after the conversation with Eric and signing up for the mailing address, we attended as many shows as possible. If The Unsatisfied were playing at 20 Below, we were there. If the band were playing a free outdoor show, we were there. In the late 1990s, Chris and I did the best we could to see every show The Unsatisfied played in the Chattanooga area. Of course, the more shows we attended, the more we were engaging with the band members and becoming familiar faces. We were also being introduced to becoming friendly with other established fans, friends, and family of the band. It was that sense of community and belonging that a lot of younger people are looking for when they're trying to find their way in the world. We felt like we were on the inside of the coolest crowd and seeing the internal workings of an incredible band that the world didn't know about, yet.

Being on the mailing list for The Unsatisfied felt like another way of being a part of something that was underground and cool. Not only was it our lifeline for staying in touch with the band and finding out

about shows but it was also a treasure trove of goodies. In addition to flyers for upcoming shows, the band (aka Lysa) would mail out stickers, copies of older artwork, lyrics, etc. As Chris and I were becoming more knowledgeable of the band's history, we were always excited to get something in the mail from an era that we were too young to witness. Early on, if we would write a letter to the band asking questions, within a week we would receive a handwritten letter back from Eric or Lysa with more information into the lore of the band. If my memory serves me right, when the movie *The Crow* was released in 1994, the band mailed out information about everyone gathering at the Hamilton Place Mall theater for a screening, but it's one of the few opportunities I was regretfully not able to attend.

In the next installment, I'll try to remember moments from some of the shows I saw and begin the journey of my own band, Sick Smiles, and its relation to *The Unsatisfied*.

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