

Where to Begin? The Impact of a Local Band on a Budding “Punk Rock” Kid from NW Georgia. PART 1

What follows (in multiple installments) will be my recollection (to the best of my knowledge) of the years seeing The Unsatisfied, befriending The Unsatisfied, and playing in The Unsatisfied from the early-to-mid 1990s to 2004. I haven't seen or spoken to any of the band members in over 20 years, but I thought some of you readers might get a glimpse into a world and a time of my life that can never be duplicated or outdone.

I think it must have been sometime in 1993 or 1994 when I first heard the name The Unsatisfied. I was a Sophomore or Junior in high school and trying to get my own band started. I had befriended a guy by the name of Chris Smith who was a year or two ahead of me in school. Coincidentally, Chris and I would eventually form a band called Sick Smiles, which would later play around town with The Unsatisfied.

Anyway... being that Chris was older than I and able to drive, unbeknownst to me, he had been going to an all-ages club in East Ridge, TN called 20 Below. One day at school, Chris told me about going to this club and proceeded to tell me about a band he had seen called The Unsatisfied. Everything he said sounded like the magical/mythical combination of so many bands we loved and listened to and aspired to be with our own band. He told me that I had to come with him the next time they were playing. And so it finally happened. The Unsatisfied were playing at 20 Below and I was able to ride along with Chris to witness something I didn't know would have an effect on me for the next 30+ years.

As far as live music goes, I had previously only seen a handful of shows, which were bigger name bands in larger venues (e.g. Metallica at UTC Arena, Danzig at the Roxy in Atlanta, and the Ramones at the Roxy). So, this was to be my first time going to see local music in a local venue. As far as local clubs go, I wasn't sure what to expect from 20 Below. It was located above another business, so you had to walk up a flight of stairs to get up to the actual club. All I remember is that it was dark. From my recollection, I took a right through a doorway which opened up into a larger room.

When the band finally got on the stage, I couldn't believe what I was seeing... right here in a local all-ages club. Over the years, the comparisons of Eric and the band have become ad nauseum... Lux from The Cramps, Iggy Pop, Stiv from the Dead Boys, James Brown, and on and on. The comparisons were all true, though... and they were on a 2-foot high stage with no barrier or bouncers right in front of my teenage eyes. Being my first encounter with the band, this particular lineup has always been my ideal version. You had Eric on vocals, of course, who was everything any teenager could want in a frontman. On guitar, you had the mysterious and soft-spoken Johnny Stockman. On the bass was Jeremy Nolan who came off as the younger, snottier punk rock dynamo in the band. Last, but certainly not least, was the incomparable Tony Byers on drums; no one hit harder than Tony. The details of this first encounter with The Unsatisfied are fuzzy, at best, these days and possibly run together with many other shows I saw them play at 20 Below, but there's no denying the impact they had on myself and Chris at the time. It wouldn't be until the second time seeing the band live, though, that we got up the nerve to talk to anyone in the band.