

## Surface Unsigned Festival Bristol 14/4/10

So here we are a mild sunny Wednesday night half way down the bath road in Bristol in a lovely little venue called the Thunderbolt, we're here for the 1st stage of the Surface Unsigned Act festival 2010 southwest heats. After hearing this event was happening I was keen to get there early, not that I was over keen don't get me wrong it was just an excuse to leave work early. But as it happens when we got there the door was locked. &nbsp;Once in&nbsp;though I was pleasantly surprised&nbsp;what a little gem of a venue it was, there was a nice little stage one end and a nice little bar directly opposite (Max 4 persons!). &nbsp;Being the first in we witnessed the wide eyed and unexpected acts arriving in the drones of equipment and family members and after about half hour the 1st of the 6 acts started to set up. It was an 18 year old by the name of Chloe Cooke who is a Welsh singer/songwriter of great talent. On 1st impressions though I thought Avril Lavigne with Chloe being stood there with a white Stratocaster low down over her shoulder, but 4 bars into her 1st song I immediately changed my mind and continued to do so as she performed. She seemed to be singing from the heart with this zest of an American adolescent singing about an old boyfriend but doing it with her own sound and style. I think personally she was great for the opening slot and with only a handful of people there she brought in the crowd with her engaging lyrics. &nbsp;Next up couldn't be more different 5 local lads called Batsaboutbats, looking at them I could sense what sound to expect but what I didn't expect was the attitude and performance they were about to show. Like I thought and hoped, they sounded like a post hardcore punk band with this teenage belief of what they were doing, with each member not looking like the other this added to their appeal and the fact these 17-18 year olds knew their way around an instrument meant it was a real sight to behold. But I must take my hat to the lead singer Paul Collier who at 1st sight doesn't look like he sounded but he knew how to entertain, jumping into the crowd of all ten people and screaming out vocal chords&nbsp;which instantly got our crowd's energy levels up. &nbsp;After the come down of Batsaboutbats next up it was the Night at the Circus, a 4 piece act for Bristol who were the first older act to perform that night. They or shall I say their singer gave out a feeling of warmth from the start which brought the crowd even closer to the stage. With a good combo of drums and guitar and singer sounding reminiscent of Shirley Manson they produced the direct noise, which was quite enjoyable to hear. &nbsp;Once the applause died and the compare finished dishing out the numbers we needed to vote three very bubbly looking girls two of which had acoustic guitars hopped on stage, these were the Sound of Cirens. A three-piece folk/rock act from Exeter, after the mics were set so the tallest was stood in the middle, so it looked like how a child would draw a roof on a house which worked tremendously well from a spectacle point of view they began to play. Off the bat you got a that k t tunstall sound but somewhat heavier and less generic and with the shortest of the three stamping her feet like sea sick sea on acid it came apparently clear that these girls knew how to put on a show, which if I'm being truthful helped with some songs. Even though some songs deluded me overall they were just how I hoped given the different styles of acts before them, they had that &ldquo;sisters doing it for themselves&rdquo; kind of vibe which was really good to see. &nbsp;By this time the place was full with punters like me and my two mates Pete and Adam, members of the bands, their families, o yeah and a old guy dressed in a black suit wearing Raybans like something out of the Blues Brothers! All of which now waited for the next act to blow our little minds and it couldn't come from a better next band,&nbsp;The Alien Stash Tin. These four guys seemed to be veterans of the local gigging scene and unlike the other acts they came out from behind the stage, which was probably the best way they could have entered. The lead singer and guitarist who how can I say this politely was a larger man with a Gandalf type white beard who was wearing an all white gown and a headband. &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;He had appeared and everyone who hadn't noticed him in the crowd when he was wearing combats now stood in awe, this dude had presence and I was hoping due to the headband I would be in for maybe some 60s 70s influence sounding stuff. And it's exactly what I got! With the second guitarist holding a flying V and the drummer looking like he'd come back from a rodeo these guys played catchy riff driven tunes, but what summed it up for me was the way they got the audience involved. A room full of 50 people shouting &ldquo;f\*\*k you f\*\*k you!&rdquo; back and forth is always a highlight in my eyes. It was just a shame they weren't last on the bill. &nbsp;Unfortunately the last on the bill I don't want to talk about &nbsp;So now then the results, after each act the audience were given a number to text if they wanted an act to go through (X Factor style) and after the last act there was a 20 min intermission where they added up the scores. And at precisely at 10:48 the compare jumps on stage and reveals a very deserved winner, The Chloe Cooke Band! &nbsp;Overall it was a good thought out bill in competition terms and every act held their own and entertained, but I feel the fact that the 18 year old can sing, play and ultimately connect with the audience was the factors in why she was a deserved winner, but you defiantly can't take anything away from the other acts. &nbsp; &nbsp; &nbsp;

### About the Author

Michael Palmer is a 22 year old from Bristol who is&nbsp;fairly new to reviewing but&nbsp;has a keen interest in writing about music, especially in unsigned local musicians and to quote "these are the one's who need to be heard by the masses"

Source: <http://www.gigreviewer.com>