

# THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH

with RIGSY & TAYLOR JOHNSON



(Taylor) was mindlessly scrolling my life away recently, when I came across a new musical scheme that would have left an 18-year-old me in raptures.

Cursing my luck at the passage of time, I read about "Uncharted Sounds" a scholarship program for emerging, unsigned artists from Northern Ireland – based in the Oh Yeah Music Centre in Belfast.

The principle was beautifully simple.

They were looking for the new generation of artists here to send them their demos, live videos or anything they have to show what they could do.

No need for flashy recordings or beautifully-shot sessions, which made the whole thing seem admirably accessible. Basically, if someone could point a phone at you or your band in action you'd be all set.

Every entry would then be listened to by a panel of industry experts, a shortlist announced and – eventually – a winner chosen.

A winner which receives pre-production and songwriting sessions for a new single, a recording and production session and a full press package, including photos and the like.

It's an incredible offer, which comes as no surprise given who is hosting.

Since opening their doors in 2005, the Oh Yeah Centre (based in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter) have been helping youngsters kick start their musical dreams.

I have a warm connection with the place – my band having spent our formative years in their rehearsal rooms before I myself spent some time annoying people in the reception as part of some hugely helpful work experience.

My sister and band-mate Lauren was part of their Volume Control team, helping to host and promote underage gigs alongside the many industry professionals based in that building.

We always felt welcome and energised every time we entered Oh Yeah – and that energy endures.

These days, that building acts as a record label headquarters (as in Third Bar Records, run by David Matchett and a certain Mr Gary Lightbody), a management company headquarters

(New Champion Management – who currently have on their books the incredible Joshua Burnside) and a record shop (shout out Starr Records).

Oh, and it's a top music venue with a built-in museum.

But back to Uncharted Sounds.

The industry panel – which somehow included yours truly – recently got together to debate and fight our corner, hyping our favourite acts from a shortlist which took us all over the country and across multiple genres.

As a reminder of just how vibrant the creative community is in this part of the world, there were indie bands formed in classrooms, bedroom songwriters yet to play their first gig, soundcloud rappers and the occasional metal band.

After some near rucks and plenty of extremely careful deliberation – the shortlist ended up as follows:

Disorder – an indie band from Belfast with traces of Inhaler/The Vaccines



Jacob Taylor – a young singer/songwriter in the mould of John Prine, Bright Eyes or Townes Van Zandt

Floss Morris – a mysterious and adventurous cellist with no social media presence

Oisín O'Hare – an extremely talented songwriter with Kurt Vile/Alex G energy, and

Kylda – an emotional indie band who take their cues from (the now Grammy-winning) Boy Genius and Big Thief.

Why tell you about this now – between shortlisting being announced and a victor crowned?

Well, the overall winner doesn't really matter to anyone but them.

For us, as music fans – the above shortlist is an excuse to plant five boxfresh acts on your radar.

If new music is your thing, this is a chance to learn and then talk about someone it's likely no one you know will have ever heard of.

Best of all, if even one of these five acts breakthrough, you can lord it up from a prime front row seat on the bandwagon.

And that's always fun, right?

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