

“A Uniquely Touching Live Act”

The Maccabees, supported by The Cribs

Bristol Ampitheatre, Siren Sounds,

23.07.26

To kick off Bristol AmphiTheatres Siren Festival, The Maccabees took Bristol by storm following a 14 year absence - and they have certainly made their mark. A fabulously curated evening of DJ and live sets, this show proved that 2000's indie rock will never go out of fashion, and the sold-out show is a credit to the bands re-emergence onto the scene.



With the late-afternoon heat blazing, Kay Russant gives us a pre-emptive taste of Thekla Thursday with a fabulous selection of pure indie bangers. The Cure, Interpol, Klaxons, The Stone Roses (to name a few) mixed perfectly to settle the Amphitheatre into a long evening of dancing. Despite Russant's effortless skills on the turntable, it felt as though the crowd were rather hesitant to jump in, perhaps a credit to the mega-heatwave at present. What was shocking was the ability to translate an indie-club set to an expansive space such as this, but it was handled fabulously both thematically and sonically, even previewing Russant's own material as an artist herself.

Bristol's iconic hot air balloons set the backdrop to another, more surprisingly, electric DJ set by Idles bassist Adam Devonshire. Leaning towards a much darker, spoken word-driven electronic sound was certainly a jolt both from the previous Pressure set, Idles post-punk nature and the festival's drive towards a much more classic indie sound. Despite this, Devonshire's set was masterfully paced and as the crowds gently gathered, we dissolved into club classics like Deceptacon by Le Tigre and Smalltown Boy by Bronski Beat - even a shout to the audience to get out of the shade and 'Let's Dance'.



Next to take the stage was the cult band The Cribs, formed in 2001 and noted as one of the “20 best Indie Rock Bands of All Time” by the Evening Standard (2023). Boldly millennial, dressed in skinny blue jeans and sunglasses, they stepped the audience into a world straight from the early 2010s. That perfect simplicity of indie, taking its roots from post-Brit pop and alt-pop of its predecessors, was a thoughtfully chosen support act. Bassist and singer Gary Jarman carries catchy rhythms for the guitar and drums to pick and tease apart with solos and bridges whilst the audience recite the words with the accuracy of a devoted fanbase. Although not boldly inventive, the Cribs certainly got the crowd going despite a sub-par sound setup, as

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it was extremely hard to understand the lyrics despite being located close to the barrier.

After 4 hours, the crowds were in no way ready to leave and buzzing for The Maccabees return to Bristol after 14 years of waiting. All hands were in the air to welcome the band onto stage, a London based indie rock group formed in 2004. It was a relief to note the sound levels were adjusted for the set, accompanied by a fabulous lighting design, making this the perfect headliner to end the day. Every song was delivered with recording-like accuracy, and their ever-looming themes of aging and childlike bliss such as in 'Grew Up at Midnight', 'Toothpaste Kisses' and 'Latchmere' ring true to the band's growth and re-emergence. There was a certain feeling of utter joy, hard to put into words, which took my breath away: holding the ones you love, singing 'let's take our precious time about it' and feeling as if the world had stopped to enjoy this moment - this is truly what live music can create. It's an ode to the Maccabees in how they balance tone in songs, placing massive tempo changes in between lovers rock-esque riffs and lyrics make for a uniquely touching live act. The not-quite mosh pit further added to this kindness and community spirit which is so exclusive to their fans, and I would go as far to say the true spirit of Bristol at its best.

To round off this fabulous event, Jamie T joined the stage for their most popular song 'Marks To Prove It', solidifying their status as not only indie icons, but those with a history deeply influential to artists of their ilk and further stretching. There are few gigs as precious as these, and Thursday the 23rd at the Amphitheatre is a time I am certain the crowds will hold with gentle gratitude.

