

Review for the 'MINI CRUISE BLUES REVUE' @ P&O Ferries, Hull to Rotterdam/Amsterdam
4th - 6th Nov 2016 by Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive



I'm always up for trying something a bit different and crossing the north sea in November is one of them! This was our first trip on the infamous 'Blues Cruise' and what a spectacular event it turned out to be.

Boarding was a slow process, but with the addition of the Leeds City Stompers at the check in, the entertainment began early with some country blues, ragtime and swing.

One could get a touch of cabin fever if stuck in a windowless room with bunk beds, so an upgrade seemed the solution. After settling in it was time to see what delights were in store for us.

On Friday evening the music kicked off as the boat set sail, with the wonderful Lisa Mills from Alabama, USA. Lisa, playing a solo set, gave us superb country blues and gospel, playing some songs from her current album 'Mama's Juke Book' and previous albums. With superb and powerful vocals, from sweet to raw with earthy guitar, she wowed us with 'Son Of A Preacher Man' and a tribute to Freddie King. Kyla Brox was invited to the stage and the girls performed the Etta James classic, 'I'd Rather Go Blind'. Considering this was the first time they had met, there was an immediate rapport. The excellence continued with a Sam Cooke number 'Bring It On Home'. Lisa finished her set with some audience participation on 'This Train'. What a great start to this fabulous weekend.



Lisa Mills - <http://lisamills.com/>

Next were the Norman Beaker Band. Norman, hailing from Manchester, has had a chequered career and played and toured with many of the blues 'greats' over the years, including Graham Bond, Jack Bruce, Chuck Berry, BB King, Alexis Korner, Buddy Guy and more. As a four piece today, with Norman fronting the band on guitar and vocals, John Price on bass, Nick Steed on keys and Steve Gibson on drums, they played some excellent classic electric blues. With a mix of blues shuffles, a touch of funk and a dash of rock 'n roll, including the great Jack Bruce number 'Sitting On Top Of The World' and a Chris Farlowe classic 'Tough On Me, Tough On You', it all set the scene for the rest of the evening.



Norman Beaker Band - <https://www.facebook.com/normanbeakerband/>

Lancashire born Kyla Brox returned to the stage for her complete set, supported by the Norman Beaker Band. With her flute she opened with a great blues shuffle and continued with a mix of slow soulful and funky blues. With vocals that would take a lot of beating with velvet blues and soul overtones, the numbers included the great Etta James classic 'I Just Wanna Make Love To You' and '365' from her new album 'Throw Away The Blues', a classic blues shuffle. Daughter of the renowned

Victor Brox, she has a presence on stage and the air of total professionalism that would not be out of place at the Royal Albert Hall. I still can't understand why she doesn't have a higher profile.



Kyla Brox - <http://www.kylabrox.com/>

Larry Garner , backed by the Norman Beaker Band again, was next to take the stage. Larry is a guitar playing, singer songwriter and blues master from Louisiana, USA, giving us a mix of flavours from swamp blues to raw funk, Americana to even a bit of rap!



Larry Garner - <http://www.larrygarnerbluesman.com/>

The final band tonight were the excellent Revolutionaires. Hailing from the North East they blasted onto the stage with their own hard hitting style of jump jive and rhythm and blues . Fronting the band on vocals, guitar, keys and harmonica was the charismatic high energy performer Ed Stephenson. With the talented Gary Hoole on various saxes, Rich Stephenson on excellent double and electric bass and Mark Matthews on drums. Playing a great mix of up tempo numbers from 'Keep a Knockin' to 'Tequilla' and 'Burnt Toast And Black Coffee' in a Ska style to a rockin' blues shuffle, all made this a fantastically exciting set and a great way to end the first evening of the Blues Revue.



Revolutionaires - <http://www.the-revolutionaires.co.uk/>

Saturday brought an early start as the boat docked at Port Rotterdam. The Blues Revue audience were transported to Amsterdam by coach, to one of two private shows with the great Ian Siegal at the Waterhole in central Amsterdam that afternoon. It was great to see Ian doing a solo acoustic set in such a relaxed atmosphere, with plenty of delta blues, country blues and gospel, all performed in the unique 'Siegal' style. It was much appreciated that he took time out as he is on an intensive solo tour 'Celebrating 25 years Touring' in the UK and Europe.



Ian Siegal - <http://iansiegal.com/>

After a wander around Amsterdam we were brought back to the boat ready for the Saturday evening session of great music. First to kick off tonight were The Revolutionaires again, who got the party started in style!

The next band, Little Steve and the Big Beat from the Netherlands, gave a fiery big band performance with rhythm and blues at its best. Fronted by the incredibly talented guitarist and vocalist Steven van der Nat, with Martin van Toor on tenor sax, Evert Hoedt on baritone sax, Bird Stevens on bass and Jody van Ooijen on drums, they gave us a mix of swing and blues. A great take of the Otis Rush classic 'Double Trouble' and on the Ike Turner number 'One More Time' the band were tight with superb vocals. Little Steve on an accomplished blues guitar solo, made the hairs stand up on the back of your neck - an outstanding performance. The band have a new CD out at the moment 'Another Man', let's hope we see this band in the UK soon.



Little Steve & The Big Beat - <http://www.littlesteveandthebigbeat.com/>

More from the Norman Beaker Band and Kyla Brox. Kyla performed amazing versions of the Eta James classics 'At Last' and the mighty 'I'd Rather Go Blind'. It was then the return of Larry Garner.

For the final leg of the set there was an epic 'Jam' with Kyla, Ed Stephenson on harp and Little Steve on guitar, with the Norman Beaker Band. Steve wowed us again with his superb guitar playing. What a fantastic way to end the brilliant experience.



The Jam

Thanks go to M/C 'Cowling Wolf' and to P&O Ferries for hosting and all those involved in putting the event together. I will be booking again for next year !

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

<http://www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive>