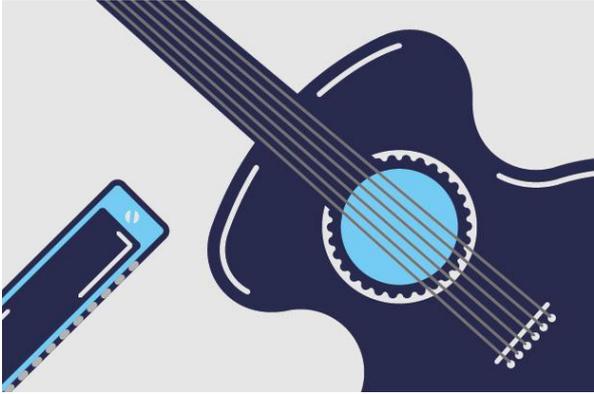


Review for THE BIG BLUES FESTIVAL @ The Atkinson, Southport, Merseyside
7th & 8th October 2016 www.theatkinson.co.uk/ Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive



What a fantastic venue at The Atkinson Arts Centre, Southport , perfect for the second sell out Big Blues Festival. With a great line up and three stages, this year the festival boasted extra support from media sponsors, Blues Matters Magazine who hosted The Little Blues Stage for acoustic acts with great success.

Friday

Opening the Festival on the Theatre Stage were the Liverpool based, Jon Casey Blues Band. Without a doubt, one of the hardest jobs is opening, especially in a theatre setting, but these guys carried it off in style. With electric blues at its best, fronting the band on superb vocals and guitar was Jon Casey. With a maturity of style, the young Jon was in charge with incredible guitar solos and fantastic vocals. Steve Faulkner on bass and Jimmy Mack on drums formed the backbone of the band, highlighting the power of experience in a rhythm section. Dave Goldberg on keys, wowed us with some classic Hammond solo playing and is a great asset to the band. Playing a mix of self penned and classics, including tracks from their excellent new album 'Riot At The Wall' they certainly were a crowd pleaser. With a great take of the ZZ Top classic 'Le Grange', mega compilation based on the Peter Green classic 'Oh Well' and finishing the set with Chuck Berry's 'Nadine', gave them a well deserved standing ovation. They certainly made their mark at the festival and were a brilliant support act for Dr Feelgood. Watch out for these guys in the future!! nwb.co/joncaseyblues



Jon Casey Blues band

The headline act for Friday were the long lived Dr Feelgood. Playing many of the classic Dr Feelgood numbers hosting energetic front man Robert Kane on vocals and harmonica. With Steve Walwyn on guitar, Phill Mitchell on bass and Kevin Morris on drums, they created the authentic sound of the original band, but with an edge. A great performance from an iconic band. www.drfeelgood.org/



Dr Feelgood

Saturday

Throughout the afternoon acoustic artists had the opportunity to perform in the foyer on the Little Blues Stage. Ben Bassford from Nottingham, kicked off the afternoon with some classic roots blues and excellent vocals, finger picking and slide guitar. Charlie Hicks played some raw acoustic blues, entertaining folk visiting other areas of The Atkinson as well as festival goers. A seasoned acoustic player Michael Woods played some fine finger picking blues and a young lady, Joni Fuller played with a loop station, electric guitar, keyboard and violin giving with quite an impressive indie sound with some excellent vocals.

On the Studio Stage for the afternoon - less formal than the Theatre Stage - Dan Burnett from Harrogate, opened and played a brilliant solo set with superb vocals and piano. Nominated for Keyboard Player of the Year in the British Blues Awards in 2015 and 2016, Dan was well received at the festival with his fantastic voice, playing a mix of blues, soul and boogie woogie.

www.danburnett.co.uk/



Dan Burnett

Next on stage with a new line up, were Rosco Levee and Friends. Hailing from Kent, they played a mix of new material of southern country rock, with a leaning towards soul and blues rock. Plenty of well augmented slide guitar from both front men. <https://www.facebook.com/roscolevee/>



Rosco Levee and Friends

A treat from Alabama in the form of Lisa Mills was next to hit the boards. As a solo act today, she gave us superb country blues and gospel playing songs from Her current and previous albums Lisa has a fabulous voice with the ability sing the blues with raw power then turn on to a ballad with perfect pitch, especially when singing unaccompanied. An excellent set from a class performer. She has a new album on the table, 'Mama's Juke Book', country music taken from her mother's day. <http://lisamills.com/>



Lisa Mills

The jewel in Liverpool's crown, the Connie Lush Band, were next to grace the stage. Award winning Connie is a highly acclaimed singer of the blues and with her exceptional band she gave a performance par excellence. With a mix of Connie's well known numbers and songs from her fantastic new album 'Renaissance' she certainly gave a performance to remember. Songs included the classic 'Lonely Avenue' , a beautiful but sad song 'Lonely Boy' with a finale of 'Blame It All On Me', the set also included many more wonderful numbers that all gained Connie and the band a standing ovation. All I can say is 'superb'!!! <http://www.connielush.com/>



Connie Lush Band

The headline act for the evening were the long serving Andy Fairweather Low and The Low Riders. On the Theatre Stage for this set, it was a trip down memory lane with many of the songs that Andy had been involved with for the past 50 years being performed, ranging from rock 'n roll, blues to pop classics. With the seasoned musicianship and experience of the band, it was always going to be a crowd pleaser. <http://andyfairweatherlow.com/>



Andy Fairweather Low and The Low Riders

The final bit of icing on the Atkinson's cake, came in the form of Michael Woods, playing exceptional blues, finger picking on acoustic resonator for a second time, but this time in the bar. Also another

set from the highly talented young acoustic blues player Ben Bassford in the Foyer, which was also a great move. Ben was joined briefly by Connie Lush, who gave an impromptu performance all adding to the magic of the festival and ending it in style <http://michaelwoodsmusic.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/BenjaminBassfordMusic/about/>



Michael Woods



Ben Bassford

Well done to all who helped put this fantastic festival together, the volunteers, sponsors and especially Emma Lloyd who was the main organiser of the event and also took on the role of MC. I am looking forward to next year's Big Blues Festival already!!!!

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

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