

Review for THAMESFEST Music Festival at The Crawley Inn, Crawley, Nr Witney, Oxfordshire 17th – 19th July 2015 <http://www.thamesfest.co.uk/>



Thamesfest, now in its fourth year, pulled out the stops with a plethora of great bands and artists. Having had the plug pulled by the original venue only days before the event, Nick and Annette Clack did an amazing job finding another venue to host, what is a great little festival, at such short notice. The **Crawley Inn** at Crawley near Witney in Oxfordshire did an amazing job and gave the festival a new dimension plus the glorious weather helped to set the scene.

Friday

On Friday evening of the festival, kicked off with a local duo, '**Asterox**', playing a mix of alternative music. With acoustic guitar, drum machine, vocals and harmonica, the music had a Dylan-esque flavour.



Asterox

Next to take to the stage were the excellent '**Matt Edwards Band**'. Playing a mix of funky blues rock, with tracks taken from their previous album, 'Follow The Plan' and the brilliant current album 'Four Berry Jam'. Matt Edwards - a competent singer songwriter and multi instrumentalist from the South of England - fronts the band on vocals and guitar, with Andy Norris on drums and Pete Thomas on bass. Moving away from their self penned work, they played an wonderful take of John Hiatt's 'Feels Like Rain', a song from Cream and awesome version of Hendrix's 'All Along The Watchtower'. It was great to see and hear a 'live' take of their music, putting the studio versions into context. A great band, so watch this space!

<http://www.mattedwardsmusic.com/>



Matt Edwards Band

After a quick turn round, it was the turn of Oxford's own '**Missing Persians**', who are Chris Cox on vocals, acoustic guitar and mandolin, John Keston Hole on vocals and electric guitar, Chas Maguire on vocals, electric and stick bass and Nick Clack on drums. Their music is not steeped in one style, so keeps the interest, with an eclectic mix of blues, country blues, Americana, rock, funk and rock 'n roll. All are superb musicians in their own right and they played a mix of self penned music from their current album, 'The Missing Persians' and some new material they are preparing for the next album, plus a couple of covers. They had a great reception from the audience and played an excellent set. Having had a successful tour of the Netherlands recently, it would be good to see these guys grace the Northern climes of the UK, so watch this space.

<http://www.themissingpersians.com/>



Missing Persians

The final band of the evening were the amazing '**Sam Kelly Band**', featuring drummer extraordinaire Sam Kelly on drums and vocals and tonight the legendary Giles Hedley on vocals, guitar, slide guitar and blues harp and Andy Hodge on outstanding bass. With 'rootsy' blues firmly on the table, they played an amazing set with slide guitar, harmonica and vocals with that Howlin' Wolf flavour from Giles, Sam with his usual 'with ease' drumming in a class of its own and Andy keeping that bass line going. They gave us a mix of classic Delta blues which had an edge on any of the blues bands around today. Just excellent!

<http://www.sam-kelly.co.uk/sam-kellys-band/>



Sam Kelly Band

Saturday

Opening the afternoon were 'The Sedatives', a local duo who are **Ian 'Mogadon' Jackson** on electric guitar and **Merlin 'Mandrax'** on acoustic guitar and vocals. They gave us some easy listen music with a mix of blues, a touch of Americana and some popular covers. They did a particularly good take of Christy Moore's 'Ride On'.



The Sedatives

Livening up the proceedings were **'Rebel Station'**, a punk rock 'n roll band, based in Swindon and Gloucester. The line up are Monkey on lead guitar and vocals, Major Tom on bass and Captain Impetuous on amazing drums (he reminded me of a young Ginger Baker!) Influenced by bands such as The Ramones and Eddie and the Hotrods, their music is self penned and full on high energy.

<http://www.rebelstation.uk/>



Rebel Station

A treat next with the magic **'Nik Barrel'** from Brighton. Playing an excellent solo set outside in the courtyard, he gave us some blues, vaudeville and more, with some self penned works from his album 'Southern Cross' and also some classic covers. Superb acoustic guitar playing and vocals from this young man, who spends a great deal of his time busking.

<http://nikolasbarrell.bandcamp.com/>



Nik Barrel

'**Bewarethisboy**', a local Oxford based band, gave a great performance of folk rock which could be likened to 'Fairport Convention meets The Clash'. With Simon Meakin on guitar and vocals, Dave Shepherd on bass and keys, Sue Mallett on fiddle and Stewart Manley on drums, the band played a selection of self penned works which were full of energy.

<http://www.bewarethisboy.co.uk/>



Bewarethisboy

Turning back to some classic blues with '**Barrelhouse**', who play material from artists such as Freddie King, Elmore James and Mose Allison. They performed a great take of the classic 'Walkin' and 'Rollin' and Tumblin' with some super slide guitar and harmonica input.

<https://www.facebook.com/Barrelhouse.GB>



Barrelhouse

The brilliant '**Beard of Destiny**', from the Oxford area, provided us with their own style of music, which I would describe as swamp boogie blues and something like Seasick Steve meets ZZ Top! With great meaty slide guitar and pounding drums, it's hard to believe the guys are just a duo, excellent stuff!

<https://www.facebook.com/THEBEARDOFDESTINY>



Beard of Destiny

For some good, down to earth, rockin' rhythm and blues, it was great to see the return of Oxford's favourite rockers '**Steamroller**', who are Robert Wakeley on guitar, Roger Warner on bass and Steve Winstone on drums. With some well put together classic blues rock standards, the well seasoned musicians did a great job and are always a crowd pleaser.

<http://www.steamroller.moonfruit.com/>



Steamroller

The final act of the evening was the amazing '**Debbie Bond and the TrueDats**'. From Alabama in the USA, Debbie, on guitar and vocals, is part way through an extensive tour of Great Britain. She has been touring with her partner in life and music, Rick Asherson, who plays keyboard and was joined for part of the tour, this evening by the wonderful Sam Kelly on drums and Ray Carless on sax. She played a great mix of Southern blues and with the great musicianship of the band the sound was immense.

<http://www.debbiebond.com/>



Debbie Bond and the Trudats

Sunday

Opening the afternoon was the alternative and slightly off the wall '**Twizz Twangle**'. Supported by other musicians on Cajon, bass and drums, Twizz described as a 'musical maverick', played guitar and trumpet with some interesting poetry interspersed with rapping rhythms.



Twizz Twangle

Next, 'Factory Lights' with a flavour of Americana with acoustic guitar, electric guitar, accordion, bass and drums giving the band a great sound.



Factory Lights

All the way from the Netherlands were the amazing '**Tape-iT**'. A seven piece band with a big sound. With a mix of acoustic and electric guitars, two saxes and a charismatic front man, they wowed the audience playing a mix of bluesy, rocky numbers, mostly taken from their current album. Let's hope we see them back in the UK again.

<http://www.reijnierse.nl/tape-it/index.html>



Tape-iT

The penultimate act of the afternoon were an occasional band, **'Crayfish'**, made up of seasoned musicians from the Oxford area. They gave us a mix of blues and Americana covers with two guitars, upright bass, drums and harmonica. A classic sound from these well established musicians. They did a superb take of a Freddie King number.



Crayfish

The final act of the festival were the brilliant **'Backbone Blues Band'**. Making their second appearance at Thamesfest, they are a high class blues band hailing from the Thames Valley. Fronting the band is Duncan Hight on amazing vocals and bass, Tony Seaman on guitar and vocals, Martin Jezzard on drums, Frank McConnell on guitar and Steve Pearce on keys. They are - "Influenced by the old blues men and inspired by the new, their music is threaded with soul, rock and country and delivers a style that's both eclectic in its construction, but unmistakably "Backbone" in its delivery." - which is a good summary for this excellent band, who are tight in their delivery and spot on musically. They played a selection of self penned works from their previous album 'Made in Britain' and some new material from their forthcoming album. Having played at a prestigious blues festival and other venues in the Southern states of the USA for the last 4 years, plus numerous festivals and gigs in the south of England, it would be good to see these guys up in the north of England sometime soon, so watch this space!

<http://www.backbonebluesband.co.uk/>



Backbone Blues Band

A great end to a great little Festival, so let's hope it will all happen again next year.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer
www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive



Nick and Annette Clack