

## LANCASHIRE BLUES ARCHIVE GOES TO SHREWSBURY

### The Theatre of Blues Festival, Shrewsbury - April 2013 - A personal Diary



As a strong supporter of all genres of 'the blues' and host to the [Lancashire Blues Archive](#) which is part of the [British Blues Archive](#), I like to get out and about to as many blues festivals as I can throughout the year .

As spring tried to make an appearance, we headed off to Shropshire on a cold April afternoon to the second year of a 'cosy' festival in the historic town of Shrewsbury. This year the ['Theatre of Blues'](#) festival was held over two days, kicking off on the Friday evening at the Lion Hotel, with a full day on the Saturday at Theatre Severn in the heart of the town.

#### **Friday 5th April**

After getting settled into our hotel and having a bite to eat, we headed through the town ... which is full of half timbered houses ... to the magic Lion Hotel which was to be the venue for the evening. Getting there reasonably early ... plenty of people had already had the same idea... the place was 'buzzin' which was great for the organisers, Andrea Jones and Dermot Hall. I was also able to have a brief chat with some of the bands prior to kick off.

After the introduction from Andi, the first act to take the stage was the amazing 'Miss Dynamite' herself .. [Jenna Hooson](#) supported by her new band, with charismatic Paddy Maguire on guitar, Dave Burns, on bass and Nick Ezzard on drums, who was from the original Hooson line up. What a great way to start the evening. Jenna, who was nominated for the best female singer in last years British Blues Awards, gave a sensational performance. She continues to pull out all the stops with her powerful voice, but proved the point that she can sing with melodic sweetness when appropriate. With a mix of blues, soul and rock it was a memorable performance and worthy of the enthusiastic encore.



Jenna Hooson Band

Next to hit the boards were Cliff Stocker's Legendary [Slack Alice](#). Cliff is a legend in himself , having gloried in the 'fame' in the 70's with the original Slack Alice. The band gave an outstanding performance with Cliff on vocals, harmonica and acoustic guitar, the highly talented Chris Preston on lead and slide guitar, Colin Redmond on guitar, Alan Sagar with his unique style on bass guitar and hard hitting Liam Barber on drums. Some memorable moments with Cliff's gravel tones that 'rocked' the venue. Great showmanship and the crowd showed their appreciation, demanding an encore.



Slack Alice

The final band of the evening were [24 Pesos](#), who are continuing to grow in stature within the British Blues scene. The band were nominated several times in the prestigious British Blues Awards and in 2011 won the New Brunswick Battle of the Blues and went on to play at the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival in Canada. Julian Burdock fronts the band on vocals, guitar and harmonica, with Silas Maitland on bass, Moz Gamble on organ and backing vocals ...what a great player ... and Mike Connolly on drums. Their style of music pulls together blues, funk and soul and with the 'rhythm and groove' had the audience up on their feet . Great presence from all the band and versatility of guitar styles from Julian. Plenty of shouts for 'more' at the end of the evening ...so I rest my case!!!



24 Pesos



Julian Burdock & me

### **Saturday 6th April**

After a good nights sleep and a hearty breakfast, the 'hang over' seemed to wear off (remind me next time to limit the number of Bacardi cokes I drink!!) We had a pleasant wander round the town before heading off to Theatre Severn for the second day of this unique festival.

A nice catch up with a few of my Facebook buddies in the flesh, in the palatial lounge area in the very modern Theatre Severn and then into the Walker Theatre venue for the 'action'. It is a superb venue and the lighting, sound quality and stage are immense. This year some 'round the edge' seating was provided .... and taken straight away .... it's so much better to have a seat base for a full day of music!

Andi, as compere, introduced the first act of the day, a local Shropshire band [The Drivetones](#). They had been selected to open the day, following a 'Battle of the Blues' competition. What a great start to a fantastic day. Fronted by singer Cleo Hill, with Ieuan Edge on harmonica, Willy Robinson on guitar, Dean Titchen on guitar and keyboard, Pete Attwood on bass and Phil Griffiths on drums. They got straight in there with some well presented classic blues. Cleo has a fantastic voice and sang like she'd been doing it for years. Definitely a band to watch out for on the circuit, they are certainly in a class of their own. They heralded a unanimous encore with well deserved support from the enthusiastic crowd.



The Drivtones

A short 'beer' break then on to the 'lady of the blues', [Bex Marshall](#). Bex, as a solo artist for this gig, came with her resonator guitar and captivated the crowd with her slide and voice with shades of Janis Joplin, roots and rockabilly.



Bex Marshall

The final programmed act of the afternoon session were the sensational [Tim Aves & WOLFPACK](#). With Tim on vocals, guitar and harmonica, Joel Fisk on guitar, Rob 'Tank' Barry on bass and Paul Lester on drums, they certainly livened up crowd. Tim is a great character and has a great rapport with the audience, apart from being an ace vocalist and guitarist. Joel showed just how to play the guitar with seamless solo's and excellent slide. The band had everybody 'rockin' with great renditions from their favoured old bluesman Howlin Wolf, what a great way to spend an afternoon!!



Tim Aves & WOLFPACK

A special treat was in store, as [Blues Boy Dan](#) took to the stage to make a guest appearance. We nearly missed him as we had disappeared upstairs for a bite to eat, rushing back down to catch him in mid song, there is no doubt that this young man is going 'all the way'! It is such a privilege to have seen this rising star, such a captivating vocalist and guitarist, once seen never forgotten. Having now been taken under the wing of Mick Fleetwood of Fleetwood Mac, Dan was heading off for Nashville with lots of exciting gigs to come at home and abroad, so watch this space. If you get the chance to see him... do it!!!!



Blues Boy Dan



Blues Boy Dan Owen and me

One of my favourite bands on the NW circuit today, Manchester band [Fuschi4](#) now took to the stage, to kick start the evening session. Fronted by Italian Paolo Fuschi on vocals and guitar, Tim Moscrop on guitar, Dave Lloyd on bass and backing vocals, and Adam Dawson on drums they gave a powerful performance. Playing a mix of blues, funk, jazz and even a bit of reggae, they provided 'something for everyone'. They have great stage presence and each time I see them they just get better and better. A 'must see' band if you get the chance, all are 'class' musicians and the tightness of the set proved that point. They have a cracking album out at the moment 'Can't Hold Out'.



Fuschi4



Fuschi4 and me

A young lady and her band were up next. From Brighton, [Dani Wilde](#), is a world class performer, but she has never lost sight of what is important and will play to small and not so small audiences with equal presence. A fantastic performance with essences of Bonnie Raitt. She will be playing blues clubs and festivals this year so catch her if you can. She'll be playing at [True Blues Club](#), Newton le Willows on 7th June 2013, if you are in or around Lancashire ... you'll not be disappointed!



Dani Wilde and Band

The final act of the festival was the great [Buddy Whittington](#). From Texas, Buddy is not a stranger to the UK and has played along side the greats of British blues, including John Mayall and Eric Clapton. He gave a brilliant performance with a mix of blues, soul and rock n' roll. It was very difficult to keep your feet still and he had the crowd 'a boppin' to the delight of many. I think he was enjoying it too, and could have gone on longer, given the opportunity. After mega encores, Buddy drew this fantastic festival to a close.



Buddy Whittington

Many thanks go to Andi and Dermot for organising such a brilliant event and to the staff of The Lion Hotel and Theatre Severn for providing such splendid venues. Let's hope it all happens again next year!

Rosy Greer ([Lancashire Blues Archive](#))