

Review for **BOWNESS BAY BLUES WEEKEND @ Bowness on Windermere, Cumbria.**
18th - 20th March 2016 www.bownessbayblues.co.uk/ Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive



Set in one of the most beautiful locations in the country, **Bowness Bay Blues**, in its fifth year, has grown from strength to strength. The promise of good weather made this weekend even more appealing and with a class line up, the festival continued to fly the flag for British Blues.

Friday

Opening the Festival at the Lake District Boat House, was an excellent acoustic blues set by no stranger to Bowness, **Tommy Allen**. He was joined on acoustic bass by **Emil Engstrom** performing some great rooty blues. Even though this was the first act of the festival it was well attended in the very recently refurbished Boat House, which had been under four feet of water during the recent floods.



Tommy Allen & Emil Engstrom

It was then time to head up to Hydro Hotel for an evening of class music, kicking off with singer songwriter **Al Hughes** from Scotland, with his own style of acoustic blues. Some proficient finger picking on a variety of guitars.



Al Hughes - al-hughes.co.uk/

From Liverpool and certainly a great find for me, were **Xander and the Peace Pirates**. Playing a combination of self penned soul, blues and rock, the whole band made a fantastic sound. With Mike Gay on slide and Stuart Xander on acoustic guitar with Keith Xander fronting the band on main vocals and incredible lead guitar it was a 'wow' from the start. Supported by an able rhythm section on bass and drums it was certainly a show and a half, receiving three encores and a standing ovation! They have toured extensively, have shared the stage with some of the modern guitar greats and with a new album in the mix, I hope we will hear much more from these guys from the Northwest in the future.



Xander & the Peace Pirates - www.xanderandthepeacepirates.com/

The final act for the evening was the re-birth of the highly rated **Trafficker**. With singer songwriter Tommy Allan fronting the band on impressive guitar, they gave a full on blues rock performance with Swedish bass player Emil Engstrom and Damon Clarridge on drums. Certainly a night to remember and what a great end to the evening.



Trafficker - www.trafficker.rocks/

Saturday

A talented young blues man, **Dean Newton** from Maryport, kicked off Saturday afternoon sessions playing at the Quayside. Dean's usual musical forte is fronting a blues rock band, but his acoustic playing was excellent with a mix of traditional classics with a contemporary edge.



Dean Newton

With the sun shining at the superb Hole in the Wall pub, a local band the **Elderly Brothers**, played a classic set of rhythm and blues in the open air. It was a great atmosphere and the place was rockin' as these veterans of R & B strutted their stuff, one of the highlights of the festival and great fun.



The Elderly Brothers

Much interest had been shown for the newly introduced **Blues Cruise** on Lake Windermere, so much so, a larger boat was commissioned for the event. With the talents of **Jon Amor and Sean Webster** on board, what could have been better! They gave a fantastic performance with acoustic and electric guitars, with some self penned works and blues classics. Sean did his amazing take of the classic Etta James number 'I'd Rather Go Blind' to a spell bound audience. What a fabulous afternoon cruise in glorious weather, I hope this will be a regular event at festivals in the future.



Jon Amor & Sean Webster - jonamor.tumblr.com/ www.seanwebsterband.com/

Raising the tempo at the Lake District Boat House were the **Secure Unit**, with some classic blues rock. Fronting the band on guitar and vocals was the young and very able Dean Newton, with a guest saxophonist of high standard, Roz Sluman. With plenty of John Mayall influence the local Cumbrian band certainly hit the spot!



Secure Unit

Hitting the Wheelhouse for the final acts of the evening, we had some full on country blues and rock 'n roll from **Simon 'Honeyboy' Hickling** and his band. Some great blues harp playing and up tempo numbers got the dancers to hit the floor.



Simon 'Honeyboy' Hickling - www.honeyboyhickling.com/

The final act for this excellent Saturday evening was **Sean Webster and The Deadlines**. They didn't disappoint with a unique flavour of classic blues rock with the added buzz of the fantastic vocals from Sean. With two lead guitarist in the frame, Sean, plus the amazing Ash Wilson, it all added to the exceptional performance. With Greg Smith on bass and new to the band, Canadian Joel Purkess on drums they certainly nailed it. The added bonus was the guest appearance of **Jon Amor** which delighted the audience for the last few numbers. What a way to end the Saturday night, just brilliant!



Sean Webster & The Deadlines with guest Jon Amor - www.seanwebsterband.com/

Sunday

Chris James & Martin Fletcher from Carlisle, were playing their own excellent flavour of acoustic blues in the Quayside with Chris on vocals and guitar and Martin on harmonica and percussion. They played many self penned blues numbers with a real feel of the Delta, while we sat outside enjoying a beer in the sunshine. - chrisjamesmartinfletcher.bandcamp.com/

Back at the Lake District Boathouse, **Sean Webster** was performing a solo acoustic set. Such guitar excellence is great to hear. Sean had the added extra of a loop station with acoustic and electric guitar which added to his fantastic performance.



Sean Webster - www.seanwebsterband.com/

At the Wheelhouse for the wind down afternoon, were the **John Verity Band** with super loud blues rock. Some great covers and self penned works with a dash of Hendrix and Peter Green and full on classic rock, with the addition of stomping rock 'n roll.



John Verity Band - www.johnverity.com/

The final band for us in the Wheelhouse at this wonderful festival, were **Wille & The Bandits**. From Cornwall they are in the top ten of bands to see live, they produce music in a range of genres from roots fusion and rock to blues and world music. Fronting the band, was Will Edwards on strong and raw lead vocals, excellent lap slide and guitar. He was supported by the incredibly gifted bass player, Matt Brooks on bespoke upright bass and six string electric bass, with the power house and rhythmic genius of percussionist Andrew Naumann on drums, tom tom and glockenspiel. Playing a mix of numbers from their excellent albums, including '**Got To Do Better**', '**Gypsy Woman**' and the haunting '**Forgiveness**', with the wonderful '**Mamon**' with acoustic guitar, African drum and upright bass and '**Angel**'. They are an incredibly talented band that is a 'once seen, never forgotten', certainly one of the highlights of the festival.



Wille & The Bandits - www.willeandthebandits.com/

Although we didn't manage to see all the bands throughout the town, from all accounts all the bands and venues were well supported. The festival provided something for everyone, with money raised going to worthy causes. So thanks go to the organisers Kelly Davies and Sandra Walling, the Rotary Club and all the volunteers and venues who's hard work made it possible. Also thanks go to all the bands who played and made the **Bowness Bay Blues** weekend, a festival to remember!

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

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