

## Overview for THE GREAT BRITISH RHYTHM & BLUES FESTIVAL @ Colne, Lancashire - August 2018



Yet another great line up over three days, for this big and bold Blues Festival in Colne, Lancashire. With four main stages this year and a wealth of Roadhouses hosting over a hundred and thirty acts, plus the numerous Busker Stations throughout the town, the **Great British Rhythm & Blues Festival** have excelled themselves. In only their second year under new management, we have seen the festival grow and evolve into one of the biggest and best in the UK.

### Friday

Kick starting the Festival for me in the Hippodrome, was the American master **Guy Tortora** and band. A superb set with a mix of acoustic, slide and electric guitar, treating us to Americana with folk, rock, jazz and some off the wall blues.



Guy Tortora - <http://www.guytortora.com/>

Down the hill in the Muni were Northwest based band **Slack Alice**, who used to be a regular feature at previous festivals. Catching the last few numbers, the band played a mix of classic Slack Alice numbers written by the late Cliff Stocker and more country influenced tracks written by front man Des Horsfall. The band has seen a total change, over the last couple of years, but the excellent guitarist Chris Preston has remained constant.



Slack Alice - <https://www.facebook.com/slackaliceband/>

Continuing at the Muni were the amazing award winning blues band **Catfish** from Sussex. They always give their 'all' in a performance and today was no exception. Heartfelt blues with exemplar guitar wizardry from the young Matt Long.



Catfish - <https://www.catfishbluesband.co.uk/>

Back in the Hippodrome the exceptional band, **Xander & The Peace Pirates**. From Liverpool they have certainly been taking the country by storm. With their definitive style of slide guitar, acoustic guitar and superb lead guitar, making this band stand out from the crowd, playing Southern rock laced Americana.



Xander & The Peace Pirates - <https://www.xanderandthepeacepirates.com/>

To end the evening at the Hippodrome, the Queen of blues, Liverpool's very own **Connie Lush** and her band. What a class performance of blues and soul, which had the audience captivated, playing many tracks from her current and previous albums. Connie is always engages with her audiences and the vibe in the Hippo' was electric.



Connie Lush Band - <http://www.connielush.com/>

Last stop at the Rugby Club Roadhouse to see the iconic **Welsh T Band**, who have played at every festival as long as I can remember. Maybe not the best blues band in the world, but they believe in having fun and that certainly rubbed off on the audience with plenty of dancers enjoying their style of infectious rocking blues.



Welsh T Band - <https://www.facebook.com/TheWelshTBand/>

### Saturday

Two excellent bands, the raw roots of **J-Bear & The Giants** from Colne and super soul blues of **Dan Burnett Band** from Harrogate opened the day on the Muni and the Hippodrome stages.

I managed to catch the young **Robert J Hunter** and his band at the Muni. A very exciting three piece with a raw and vibrant edge of blues and blues rock in their own style. Robert from the far away Channel Isles, has a fabulous voice and their stage presence sets them apart.



Robert J Hunter Band - <http://robertjhunter.co.uk/> (photo courtesy of Nicki Vinall)

From Peterborough, another young artist **Chris King Robinson**, following in the footsteps of Laurence Jones, played an excellent set of classic and modern blues. Chris was also one of the entrants for the Jessica Foxley Unsigned.



Chris King Robinson - <http://www.chriskingrobinson.com/>

A treat to see **Lisa Mills** next. Hailing from Mississippi, USA, her distinctive style of blues, gospel, soul and Americana was made all the better with support from **Sam Kelly's Station House**. She has a fantastic voice with a funky edge, just brilliant.



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

Up at the Hippodrome, **Charlotte Marshall & The 45's** were certainly going for the big band sound as a seven piece, including trombone, sax and keys. An interesting band with Charlotte's voice a cross between Amy Winehouse and Sari Schorr but with her own stamp.



Charlotte Marshall & The 45's - <http://www.charlottemarshall.com/>

Following were **The Chris Corcoran Trio** featuring **Katie Bradley**. A standard instrumental rhythm and blues band supporting Katie Bradley, blues singer and harmonica player.



The Chris Corcoran Trio featuring Katie Bradley - [www.facebook.com/chriscorcorantrio/](http://www.facebook.com/chriscorcorantrio/) - <http://katiebradley.co.uk/>

Changing the mood we headed to The Little Theatre Acoustic Stage to see the charismatic **Jack J Hutchinson Band** doing an acoustic set. Jack is originally from Burnley, but now lives in the South East. What an excellent mix of material, including Peter Green's 'Oh Well', shades of Led Zeppelin and BB King. He was joined on stage briefly by **Lucy Zirins**, who was in charge of the Acoustic Stage this year, and other guests. A refreshing performance, Jack has a great voice and is a stunning guitar player.



Jack J Hutchinson Band - <https://jackjhutchinsonmusic.com/>

Back to the Hippodrome, **Sam Kelly's Station House** were hitting the boards with a certain Latino feel in the music. A fabulous and powerful female vocalist in this five piece band with Sam on drums. Lisa Mills was invited up as a guest to sing with her and what a duo they made!!



Sam Kelly's Station House - <http://www.sam-kelly.co.uk/>

We stayed to watch the 'off the wall' Dutch band **My Baby**, the final band of the evening at the Hippo'. A swampy blues band with psychedelic overtones and a funky edge. Fronted by a female guitar playing vocalist, as a three piece they were certainly refreshingly different.



My Baby - <https://mybaby.bandcamp.com/>

Heading to the Muni we caught the final numbers of **Simon McBride**. An incredibly tight three piece playing a mix of funk, rock and modern blues.



Simon McBride - <https://www.simonmcbride.net/>

Up at the Rugby Club Roadhouse, buskers extraordinaire, **Intercity Blues Band** had been giving the audience a treat with their harmonica driven blues. Drafted in at the last minute after a band had pulled out, they certainly hit the spot for the late night revellers.

### Sunday

Opening at the Muni were one of the highlights for me, **The Adrian Gautrey Band**. Adrian, from Southport, has quietly over the last few years, been raising his game. He has appeared in many unexpected places including his appearance on BBC Four's The Old Grey Whistle Test Live : For One Night, in February this year and his continuing seat on Hammond with 70's rock band Atomic Rooster. As an exceptional guitar player as well as his keyboard skills, Adrian and his band played a fantastic mix of blues, funk, soul and country blues. A 'must see live' for any festival bookers.



Adrian Gautrey Band - <https://www.facebook.com/Adrian-Gautrey-Band-267376656606922/>

Continuing at the Muni another young band which oozes with talent. **Red Butler** from Brighton, are certainly a tight band and gave an exciting set with some well done covers and original material.



Red Butler - <http://redbutlermusic.com/>

Onto the Hippodrome for another of The Jessica Foxley Unsigned. **Katy Hurt** and band played some excellent country blues. She has a great voice, fronting the band on vocals and acoustic guitar.



Katy Hurt - <https://www.katyhurt.com/>

Back at the Muni and the final Jessica Foxley Unsigned band, **Carl North & The Lonely Hearts** from Manchester. Normally playing as a five piece they had a guest female sax player today. A great variety of music was played including blues, funk, country and jump jive. Fronted by Carl on acoustic guitar and vocals with electric guitar, bass and drums and a backing vocalist, they are certainly a young and vibrant band to watch out for.



Carl North & The Lonely Hearts - <https://www.facebook.com/carllonelyhearts/>

Staying in the Muni a superb set from **Trevor Sewell** and band. Trevor, a singer songwriter who hails from the North East, is also a multi music award winner in the USA. With Americana, country rock, blues and stomp there was no time to get bored. Trevor played a variety of guitars - Fender, Cigar Box, and Electric Acoustic with a gravelly voice, not unlike that of Mark Knopfler. He had a guest sax and harmonica player who also played the bodhran, so a wide variety of sound, showcasing his current album 'Calling Nashville'. Excellent!



Trevor Sewell - <http://www.trevorsewell.com/>

Off to the Little Theatre Acoustic Stage, for the young and talented **Benjamin Bassford**. Playing classic self penned acoustic blues on acoustic and resonator guitar he has a fabulous voice and is certainly something special. Beautiful music and an exceptional player, certainly a solo artist I would certainly recommend.



Benjamin Bassford - <https://www.benjaminbassford.com/>

On again to the Muni for the **Mike Ross Band** with his guest Jack Hutchinson on guitar. Southern rock at its best. Mike and Jack from the South East, have a chemistry playing together and certainly gave a performance that was par excellence. Later in the set Elles Bailey joined them on stage to add to the enjoyment.



Mike Ross Band - <http://www.mikerossmusic.co.uk/>

Back to the Little Theatre Acoustic Stage for Gloucestershire's **Trevor Babajack Steger**. A classic sound with Trevor's gravel tones, cigar box and resonator guitars, harmonica and stomp box. Great raw roots from this stalwart of the blues.



Trevor Babajack Steger - <https://www.trevorbabajacksteger.com/>

In the Muni the talented bassist **Lisa Mann**, from the US, played a set of blues very much in the style of Bonnie Raitt with overtones of Etta James, but in her own distinctive style.



Lisa Mann - <http://www.lisamannmusic.com/>

A quick visit to the Mini Muni Stage for the energetic swampy blues rock players, travellers **Tensheds**. With just keys and drums, they certainly had a pounding drive with a punk edge. Watch this space I think we may see more of them.



Tensheds - <http://www.tensheds.com/>

Up to the Hippodrome we caught the **Johnny Max Band** from Canada playing their own take on what they describe as blues, R&B and roadhouse soul



Johnny Max Band - <http://www.johnnymaxband.com/>

A bit of history for the next act at the Hippodrome, with the iconic **Mike Vernon & The Mighty Combo**. Mike was renowned in the 1960's as one of the eminent producers, having been involved with the likes of John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Peter Green, David Bowie and many more. Now fulfilling his dream of fronting his own band - who are an impressive bunch of high class musicians, with Mike Vernon on lead vocals, Kid Carlos on guitar, Ian Jennings on upright bass, Mike Hellier on drums, Matt Little on keyboards and Paul Tasker on saxophone. They played a mix of upbeat traditional rhythm and blues with rock 'n roll boogie and swing. A great big band sound with super vocals from Mike, that certainly got the audience dancing. This was a showcase and part of the tour for Mike Vernon & the Mighty Combo's debut album '**Beyond The Blue Horizon**'



Mike Vernon & The Mighty Combo - <http://www.mikevernonandthemightycombo.com/>

The last band for us at the festival, was the superb Kyla Brox Band. Hailing from Manchester, Kyla Brox continues to grow in stature within the music industry and gave an exemplary performance of mostly original songs. She has the most incredible voice and stage presence, supported by her excellent band. Playing her flute on some numbers and also being joined on stage by her sister was wonderful. Her dad, the renown Victor Brox, also joined her on stage for a couple of numbers with his trumpet, reminding us what a talented family they are. I think Kyla is an artist that should be in the mainstream and I am always surprised that she has never crossed that line. A wonderful performance all round, with a heart stopping version Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah', one of her only covers. Truly magical.



Kyla Brox Band - <https://www.kylabrox.com/>

Having missed the highly commended blues baby **Elles Bailey** and the ground breaking award winning band **King King** on the Muni stage, our festival was over for this year. A big thank you has to go to **Paddy Maguire** and **Jason Elliot**, as well as the **Colne Town Council** with all their volunteers, plus all the generous sponsors, who without them, there really would be no festival. A well done to all the artists and venues throughout the town who embraced the festival to make this one of the best in the UK.

Roll on next year which will be a biggie as it's the **30th Year Anniversary !!!!**

**Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer**