

Review for THE GREAT BRITISH R&B FESTIVAL @ Colne, Lancashire - by Rosy Greer
26th-29th August 2016 (British Stage, Acoustic Stage & Trail) <http://www.bluesfestival.co.uk/>

The Great British R&B Festival in Colne, Lancashire, has to be one of the biggest and best blues festivals in the UK. Twenty seven years of great live music throughout the town over four busy days, with four stages, five roadhouses, busker stations and numerous unofficial venues.

Friday

Pitching the tent at the very adequate, if a little damp, Rugby Club camp site, we popped into the Roadhouse on site to catch Angelino Palladino & The Street Hawks, kick starting the evening with their own flavour of sax driven country blues.

Heading off into town to the British Stage - now in its great new home of the Pendle Hippodrome and going out live on BBC Radio Lancashire tonight - the first act on stage was the northwest's own Boogie Bill Roberts & The Billionaires. Fronted on piano by Bill Roberts, they gave us 50's rockabilly, jump jive with some classic rhythm & blues. A great full on sound with vocalist Emma, upright bass and brass.



Boogie Bill Roberts & the Billionaires

Nick Dow & Dave Calvert with a guest on beat box, provided an acoustic blues interlude between sets.



Nick Dow & Dave Calvert

Next to hit the boards was The Tony Auton Band. A four piece from Manchester, they gave their own taste of blues with Southern rock overtones. Fronting the band on excellent guitar and vocals was Tony Auton, supported ably by his band including some great sax playing.



The Tony Auton Band

The highlight of my evening was Chris Bevington & Friends. Showcasing many of the tracks from their excellent current album 'Better Start Cooking', plus many more, they played to an enthusiastic audience. The band, from the Stoke-on-Trent area, are a collective band of high class professional musicians. As a nine piece tonight and playing a mix of blues based music, they were fronted by great guitars and vocals from Scott Ralph and Jim Kirkpatrick, with George Glover on keys and Chris Bevington on bass, with superb brass, drums and backing vocals. If you get a chance to see them, I would certainly recommend you do!



Chris Bevington & Friends

Back to the Rugby Club we caught the second set of the Sharpees. From London, the band played their own taste of blues rock. Then it was off to bed.

Saturday

Walking down into the town on this wonderful sunny afternoon, we came across one of the official busking stations, conveniently situated by the Bus Stop Bar on a bus. The 'Intercity Blues Band' from Liverpool were giving it large and entertaining the transient audience. A fantastic blues band with 'Lightning' Archie Moore on vocals and harmonica, 'Mississippi' Will Withers on guitar, Thomas 'Sugarcane' Schultz on double bass and bass guitar and new member Tim 'Redeye' Reddy on drums. Plenty of good classic blues with the likes of 'Smokestack Lightning', with the addition of the interesting antics from the German bass man! Great harmonica playing and guitar work, it would be good to see these guys on the British Stage next year.



Intercity Blues Band

Couldn't get into the Crown Roadhouse to see Manchester based Junkhouse Dog Blues Band as it was packed. From all accounts the harmonica driven blues band went down a storm.

We headed for the Acoustic Stage at the Muni for the rest of the afternoon, catching the final few numbers of Dave Kelly's acoustic blues set. Dave is a member of the Blues Band and often works as a duo with Paul Jones. He plays a mean slide guitar and is a great solo artist.



Dave Kelly

An interesting duo the Hokum Hotshots were next, with their individual take of blues, county and jazz. Hailing from the North East they are Jim Murray on vocals, Dobro, and other strings and Peter Mason on vocals, guitar, kazoo and other string instruments. A refreshing change with plenty of humour. A well played and well appreciated set.



Hokum Hotshots

Unfortunately Katie Bradley was unable to play with Tom Attah because of illness, but Tom, as a solo acoustic artist, was one of the highlights of the festival. He introduced his 'loop station' which lays down a backing sound, giving his music a new dimension. Based in Yorkshire he is an excellent vocalist and guitar player and his style of blues certainly bites the bullet. He also played a tribute to the late Cliff Stocker which was warm and heartfelt. An excellent set throughout and a well recommended artist to see.



Tom Attah

The last artist on the Acoustic Stage today was Dave Ferra. As a solo blues acoustic player he excels on the resonator slide guitar with the addition on a stomp box and harmonica. Playing traditional blues of his own plus covers he created a good sound.



Dave Ferra

Time for us to take a visit to The Admiral Lord Rodney Roadhouse to see Dinners & The Dog. A band of friends made up of Mike Bowden (Blue Swamp) on vocals and acoustic guitar, Luke Shaw (Junkhouse Dog) on harmonica, Big Vern (Blue Swamp) on percussion and Chris Roach (ex Dr Truth) on electric guitar. What a brilliant set in such a small space, with a great mix of harp laced blues and wonderful vocals from Mike.



Dinners & The Dog

A brief visit to the British Stage to catch Toriah Fontaine and her band. With a powerful voice, her sound is reminiscent to that of blues woman such as Etta James. An intense performance with a great amount of passion.

Heading back to the Rugby Club Roadhouse, we caught the second set from the one man blues band Andy Twyman. A great performer and entertainer and much enjoyed by the audience.

Troy Redfearn was next with good down to earth set of blues rock.

Sunday

A big day on the British Stage as it was transformed into the Cliff Stocker Stage, as a tribute to the late Cliff Stocker who had brought so much to the festival over the years, booking bands and his support for young artists. Having known Cliff, it was particularly poignant for me.

First on today were the fabulous Tipitina from Preston with Debbie Jones on excellent vocals and guitar, Justine Randall with super fingers on keys supported by the rest of the band. They have a great New Orleans sound and Debbie has a fantastic voice. Playing a mix of jazz to Gospel, blues to soul they gave a fantastic performance.



Tipitina

The young and talented band Red Butler to follow, giving a whole new meaning to blues rock. From Brighton, they have been taking the country by storm with their high energy performances. Fronted by vocalist Jane Chloe Pearce, who was certainly on form today, was ably supported by Alex Butler on guitars and master of the blues shuffle, Mike Topp on bass, and Charlie Simpson on drums. They were exciting and entertaining and have a new album on the table 'Nothing To Lose', which I'm sure will capture this unique talent.



Red Butler

A walk to visit the Jessica Foxley Stage outside, to catch a Clitheroe based band, the young and talented 'Good Foxy'. After their successful performance last year on the British Stage, for the Jessica Foxley Unsigned, they were invited to return. They have continued to explore and generate a personal sound that has become Good Foxy's own, playing a mix of self penned rock and blues with a touch psychedelia. There are roots taken from the 70's, but having a total freshness of sound. George Banks fronts the band on wonderful vocals and guitar with Henry Crabtree taking fine lead on guitar, Freddie Bruhin-Price on superb bass, James Robinson the wizz on keys and synth and Callum Sykora the rhythm maker on drums. An excellent performance, they are a pretty special young band and I hope and wish them deserved success in the coming years.



Good Foxy

Back to the Acoustic Stage for Tom Doughty. With his unmistakable style on lap slide, he played a mix of past and present numbers from blues to folk orientated works. Tom has been a regular at Colne for many years and always pulls a crowd with his superb performances.

A favourite of mine, the wonderful Blue Swamp Band. With the charismatic Mike Bowden on superb vocals and acoustic guitar, John Williamson on electric guitar and Big Vern on percussion, they gave a great performance of blues based numbers with a touch of Americana. Mike is also a story teller with plenty of humour to keep the audience entertained.



Blue Swamp Band

Returning to the British Stage, the Swing Commanders were in full swing. Based in the North West they were a well put together five piece, playing an exciting mix of 1940s classics, boogie-woogie, western swing, 50's jump jazz and more. With violin, keys, saxophone, upright bass, guitar and drums they produced a great sound and gave a cracking performance.



Swing Commanders

The Rebecca Downes Band hit the stage next. Rebecca is the powerhouse in a small package from Birmingham. With incredible vocals and her fantastic band, they played many of the numbers from the excellent current album, 'Believe' . An excellent set of soulful blues.



Rebecca Downes Band

The next hour was power packed as Slack Alice and guests took to the stage for a tribute to the late Cliff Stocker ,who had been the charismatic front man and founder of the band. Slack Alice are Chris Preston and Colin Redmond on lead guitars, Alan Sagar on bass and Liam Barber on drums. The guests who shared the classic music of Cliff were Will Edwards from Wille & The Bandits, Pete Barton from The Animals, Connie Lush, Elles Bailey, Angi Preston, Rebecca Downes, Nick Garner on harmonica, Del Bromham on guitar and Maddie G on saxophone. Playing to a totally full house it was a brilliant evening and I think the band and the guests did Cliff proud.



Will Edwards & Slack Alive



Nick Garner, Pete Barton, Maddie G & Slack Alice



Connie Lush & Slack Alice



Angi Preston & Slack Alice



Del Bromham, Elles Bailey, Maddie G & Slack Alice



Rebecca Downes & Slack Alice

The final act for the evening was the Connie Lush Band, Liverpool's Miss Dynamite. Connie played many of the songs from her excellent album 'Renaissance' with great rapport with the audience. She certainly is a powerful blues singer and was ably supported by her excellent band. A superb set and a great way to finish what had been a particularly special evening.



Connie Lush Band

For us that was the end of the festival, but I hope everyone enjoyed the Monday's activities. Many thanks go Alison who had a particularly hard job this year and to all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to keep this festival alive. Well done to all the bands and artists who played on the various stages and venues. Let's hope we will see the 28th Great British R&B Festival next year.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

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