

CARLISLE BLUES ROCK FESTIVAL November 2012

This is my personal take on the now - '[Carlisle Blues Rock Festival](#)'

As the host for [Lancashire Blues Archive](#) and rep for the [British Blues Archive](#) it's good to get 'out and about' in the neighbouring counties. The festival is in its sixth year and I've been to the last four at the Hilltop Hotel. Not much change there...except the new name of 'Carlisle Blues Rock Festival'... but I suspect this is a sign of the times!

It's not the best venue in the world, but what it lacks in 'glitz' it makes up for in the enthusiasm and dedication of the festival team and the whole hearted support from the punters.

I have noticed that most of the clientele that attend have 'age' on their side...so it's sadly lacking in the youth of today being present. But saying that, I think everyone who was there was out to have a good time...and age is just a number!!!!

Friday 9th November

As we were staying at the Travel Lodge in town, (we won't be next year!) we trundled the car up to the Hilltop Hotel ....and actually managed to get a parking space...this is where the car will stay for the duration of the festival! It was nice to get into the venue a bit early and catch up with friends old and new.... familiar faces.

After queuing to get a seat ....why do we do this, there were plenty to go round ... we sat with a group of friends to enjoy the Friday evening of music.

MC Mark Singleton introduced the first act of the night, which came as a pleasant surprise... '[Gerry Jablonski & The Electric Band](#)', from Scotland. I had not come across these guys before and it was evident from the first number that they were a good choice to kick start the festival. A band with energy and audience charisma .... Gerry fronts the band with superb vocals and guitar playing and what a brilliant harmonica player, Peter Narojczyk, surely a contender for 'Best Harmonica Player'? The whole band were 'rockin' and certainly got the feet tapping.

Gerry Jablonski and Peter Narojczyk



Photo courtesy of [Jan Fialkowski](#)

The next band to hit the stage were **Grainne Duffy** and her band. A young and refreshing female blues soul artist from Ireland. As a guitarist, singer, songwriter, her voice was reminiscent of Bonnie Raitt and she was well supported by her excellent band. The set provided a mix of blues, soul, country with a dash of rock n' roll ... Grainne is certainly a firm member of 'The Women of the Blues'

#### Grainne Duffy and Band



Photo courtesy of [Jan Fialkowski](#)

The highlight of the evening was the return of Mr **Ian Siegal** to Carlisle. He came with a young and talented band, fresh in from the US, the Mississippi Mudbloods. Ian was on top form and was well supported by the band. Having gained two awards for male vocalist and acoustic artist, at the British Blues Awards earlier this year, he showed he was a worthy winner. Playing tracks mainly from his current albums, he demonstrated his 'leaning' towards county blues. A brilliant performance all round.

#### Ian Siegal and The Mississippi Mudbloods



Photo courtesy of [Jan Fialkowski](#)

The late night session was hosted by the Groove-a-Matics. A classic blues band that won the prestigious New Brunswick Battle of the Blues 2012. All seasoned musicians with an impressive front man on sax. We only stayed for a couple of numbers, but it was a great sound from what I heard.

The Groove-a-Matics

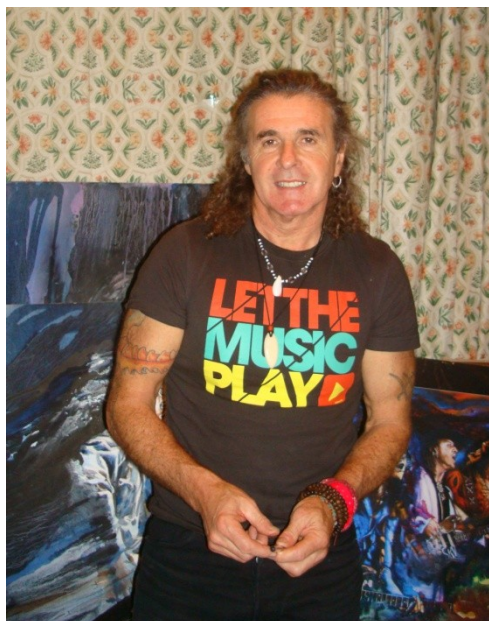


Courtesy of FB New Brunswick Battle of the Blues

Saturday 10th November

Having got up late, we sadly missed **Steve 'Pablo' Jones's** acoustic set. Pablo is ever present at blues festivals all over the country with his amazing art work and he also enjoys making music in great acoustic style. We bought his CD... so some compensation and took his picture for posterities sake!

Steve 'Pablo' Jones



We managed to catch the next act .. **Cherry Lee Mewis**... the great little lady with the big voice! She gave a superb performance and her band were first class. Not stuck in one genre of 'the blues' they played a range from Janis Joplin to Django Reinhardt , acoustic blues to rock n' roll. Some great slide guitar and double bass playing and Cherry being her versatile self! Excellent!

Cherry Lee Mewis and Band



After a quick turn round, **Geoff Achison** and The Souldiggers took to the stage. Hailing from Australia Geoff played a mix of blues, funk and soul. Backed by the UK Souldiggers the sound was immense. The great **Sam Kelly** was on the drums...one of the finest drummers about...and the rest of the band played a tight set. Geoff had a great rapport with the audience with some good Aussie humour and provided good entertainment as well as good music!

Geoff Achison & The Souldiggers



**The Paul Cox Band** was next to take the stage. A great blues and soul vocalist, Paul and band of highly professional musicians, including amazing young French guitarist, Charlie Fabert, gave an outstanding performance of rocking blues with a dash of soul.

Paul Cox Band



After a good long break for food...which I must say was pretty good.... the evening session kicked off with the **Mick Ralphs Blues Band**. Mick, a man with 'history'.. ex Mott the Hoople and Bad Company.. was well supported by his excellent band...including Sam Kelly yet again, on drums. Performing some standard blues classics of the 'old style' blues men he and his band gave a good historic performance.

Mick Ralphs Blues Band



The next band to hit the stage were **Martin Turner's Wishbone Ash**. I'm not sure where they fitted into a blues festival....but I suppose variety is the spice of life! Never one of my favourites first time around, they played some standard, old, prog rock numbers. Martin Turner, as the bass player seemed a little out of place, but the rest of the band were extremely competent musicians.

Martin Turner's Wishbone Ash



The final band on the main stage tonight was **Larry McCray**. Hailing from Arkansas, USA, Larry is the cousin of the late Michael Burks, who played the Carlisle Blues Festival a couple of years ago. What an amazing set .... class musicians and class music. Playing a mix of hard hitting guitar led blues interspersed with soul and funk, it was a great way to finish the evening on the main stage. Magic moments!

Larry McCray



The audience now retreated to the late night session in the bar area and were pleasantly entertained by blues duo **Tommy Allen and Johnny Hewitt**. Playing an acoustic blues set with Tommy on guitar and vocals, with a bass drum amongst other instruments and Johnny on harmonica and vocals, they played Chicago style thumping blues. It gave people who fancied a dance, the opportunity to do just that!! What a great end to wonderful day of wall to wall music.

## Tommy Allen and Johnny Hewitt



Sunday 11th November

Packed up our stuff at the 'delightful' Travel lodge and wheeled our cases all the way up to the Hilltop...Phew! After planting the cases in the car we went to join the audience (queuing already) for the Sunday afternoon entertainment

First on the stage today were a fine acoustic duo...but today they were a trio ... **Bowden and Williamson**. Mike Bowden, from Manchester has been on the circuit for many years...at present he is the front man for Dr Truth amongst other projects. John Williamson has a chequered history with many prestigious bands, most recently and for the past 12 years he has been touring with The Animals. They were joined on stage by friend Big Vern on percussion for this exceptionally good set. Mike is the champion of linking a story to a song and he did not disappoint...with a great sense of humour too. He has a superb voice...true to the blues and supported John on acoustic guitar. John provided the lead guitar in true professional style. They are to change their name to 'Blue Swamp', so watch out for these guys at next year's round of festivals. What a great start to buzzin' afternoon.

Bowden and Williamson



Photo courtesy of Diane Stephenson

Next to get the adrenaline pumping were the Jon Amor Blues Group. A favourite of mine with hard hitting R&B... and with the edge of youth. Superb guitar work from Jon Amor and Dave Doherty with the power drivers Chris Doherty on bass and Simon Small on drums giving a performance that was a highlight of the festival. They played a few older numbers, but the band were flag shipping the release of their new album...some exciting stuff. They had brought some CD's with them....but didn't quite expect the interest would be so strong...I think that says it all!!! A brilliant band and a 'must' to see if you get the chance.

Jon Amor Blues Group



Photo courtesy of Diane Stephenson

From Mississippi, Lisa Mills was next to take the stage. Acoustic guitar player and singer, she was supported for the set by talented UK double bass player, Ian Jennings. She has a great blues and soul voice, reminiscent of the late Janice Joplin and Etta James and gave a stunning performance, re-working old classics plus many of her self penned tracks. Lisa and Ian have played together many times over the years and have appeared at a plethora of festivals in the UK. An outstanding set with two class musicians. Watch out for them at next year's round of festivals.

Lisa Mills and Ian Jennings





The final act for the festival came in the shape of **Andy Fairweather Low** and the Lowriders. A blast from the past with a chequered history, having played with so many artists over the years. Andy played with and toured extensively with Eric Clapton's band, played regularly with George Harrison and was a regular member of Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings to name but a few. He gave a great performance, linking it with his own history, interspersing some old and some new tracks... he did play 'Wide Eyed And Legless' and 'If Paradise Is Half As Nice', to the delight of one of my friends! I must say I was not sure what to expect from the band, but it proved to be a most informative and entertaining set and considering Andy had a bad cold, he did incredibly well. A great end to what had been a brilliant festival...yet again!

Andy Fairweather Low and the Lowriders



Photo courtesy of **Jan Fialkowski**

Well another year over....and another success! Many thanks go to the hardworking Nick Westgarth and the **Carlisle Blues and Rock Festival** team for putting it all together. I shall look forward to the delights of next year.....and maybe actually stay at the venue next time!!!!

Rosy Greer - **Lancashire Blues Archive**

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