

Review for Carlisle Blues and Rock Festival - 2013

Lancashire Blues Archive goes to Carlisle - by Rosy Greer

This was my fifth year at Carlisle Blues and Rock Festival and what a line up this year!!! Some faces we had seen before and some who were new to the Carlisle forum.

Arriving on Friday afternoon we booked into the IBIS (we didn't manage to get a room at the venue) but this was definitely going to be a more comfortable experience than last years, at the Travel Lodge! Then it was time to meet up with friends and head up to the Swallow Hilltop Hotel for the start of this exciting festival.

Friday

After the introduction by the resident MC , **Mark Singleton**, Friday evening kicked off with the familiar face of **Jon Amor**, now doing a solo set as the Blues Group have gone their separate ways. It's a difficult job to be first on, but Jon captivated the audience from the start, with some acoustic and electric guitar playing and his distinctive voice. He's had a busy year touring with the Hoax again, but obviously enjoyed his solo role in this excellent set. He was briefly joined by a bass player friend for an 'added extra'!

<http://jonamor.tumblr.com/>

JON AMOR



Photos courtesy of Jan Fialkowski

Next to grace the stage were the **Stevie Nimmo Trio**. Great to see Stevie back on track with his new project , having its first airing at Carlisle Blues and Rock Festival. What a fantastic sound, blues rock as it should be played! A tremendous set and superb guitar solos. Jon Amor was also invited on stage to guest with the band for a couple of numbers, it just gets better!

<http://www.stevienimmo.com/>

STEVIE NIMMO TRIO



Photo courtesy of Jan Fialkowski

The next band are Lancashire hero's, hailing from Preston they are described as "*a red-hot and rocking six-piece band who are all about live rapturous Chicago style rhythm & blues*" which just about sums them up. **The Stumble** have gone from strength to strength over the years, with their individual R&B sound from vocalist Paul Melville, superb guitar solos from Colin Black and Rob Livesey, dynamite sax playing from British Blues Awards nominee Simon Anthony and the astounding rhythm section of Cam Sweetnam on bass and Boyd Tonner on drums. They gave an excellent performance playing many of the Stumble classics. I'm sad I didn't get to have a chat to the guys before they left.

<http://www.thestumble.com/>

THE STUMBLE



Photo courtesy of Alan White

To round off a fantastic evening, a great band from the US, **Bernard Allison**. Steeped in 'blues' culture, Bernard and his band gave a hard, hitting performance with influences of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimmie Hendrix being evident. Very much on the 'rock' side of blues and virtuoso guitar solos in abundance.

<http://www.bernardallison.com/flash.html>

BERNARD ALLISON



Photo courtesy of Alan White

Now for the late night session, a band who gave good down to earth R&B with a pinch of 'Feelgood' thrown in. **The Mustangs** did a great session for the afterhours die hards. Hailing from Hampshire the band rocked the night away into the early hours. We stayed for the first few numbers but the Guinness got the better of me!!! Reports from others who stayed up in to the wee small hours, confirmed it was a great set.

<http://www.themustangs.co.uk/>

MUSTANGS late night session



Saturday

Kicking off the afternoon, a favourite at Carlisle, the now, **Blue Swamp**. Formally Bowden & Williamson with the ever present Mike Bowden on acoustic guitar, comedy input and vocals, John Williamson on electric guitar and vocals and Big Vern on percussion. A charismatic performance yet again, with many self penned songs from Mike. Hailing originally from the Manchester area, Mike has now moved further north to Scotland. Both Mike and John have a long history within the music business and they continue to show that true professionalism which always goes down well with the audience with the added entertainment of great humour from Mike. A superb set from these lovely guys.

<http://www.bowdenandwilliamson.com/>

BLUE SWAMP



Photos courtesy of Diane Stephenson

Another great Lancashire based band, the Legendary **Slack Alice**, now graced the stage. Fronted on vocals by the charismatic Cliff Stocker, who was part of the original Slack Alice back in the 70's, they gave a great down to earth performance. Supported by two extremely versatile guitarists, Chris Preston and Colin Redman and an exceptional bass player Alan Sagar and drummer Liam Barber it was a 'no frills' honest R&B show. They have recently released a new CD, 'Never, Ever, Ever, Give Up, that included guests Zoot Money and Snake Davies, several of the tracks from the album were played during this set.

<http://www.slackaliceband.moonfruit.com/#>

SLACK ALICE



Now moving on to a 'big band' sound with **Steve Roux & the Brass Knuckle Blues Band**. A great 7 piece band hosting trumpet, trombone and sax for the brass section, mixed with the classic guitar, keys, bass and drums set up. Fronted by Steve Roux on excellent guitar and vocals, they played a mix of swing, blues, funky soul and blues funk, giving a really full on sound.

<http://www.bkblues.com/>

STEVE ROUX & THE BRASS KNUCKLE BLUES BAND



Next, a firm favourite at Carlisle, were **Ian Parker** and his band who hail from the Birmingham area. They lean towards Southern Rock, or 'blues and roots', but what a tight band with some stunning guitar solos from Ian. The band has a class line up with the impressive Morg Morgan on keys, Dave Jenkins on superb bass and hard hitting Colin Finn on drums. Ian does the main vocals and lead guitar, with surprising ease, but for the classic Cream number, Tales Of Brave Ulysses, he past the vocals over to Dave Jenkins on bass. This was just brilliant and some great wah, wah too. It was an excellent set, Ian just does his stuff, with no airs or graces and they had a great response from the audience. I hadn't seen the band before, but I will be watching out for them at the round of festivals next year. One of the highlights of the festival this year.

<http://ianparker.biz/>

IAN PARKER



Photo courtesy of Jan Fialkowski

Now this was a bit special!!!! **Jon Amor** returned for his second set of the festival, but this time invited a special guest to join him. Class guitarist and singer songwriter, **Sean Webster**, with Sean's bass player **Acor Bommer**. Sean received a warm welcome back, from the Carlisle crowd, as he has been in Australia for a number of years and is now living in Holland. He performed an exceptional rendition of the Etta James track 'I'd Rather Go Blind' and had the whole audience spell bound. I don't think there was a dry eye in the house ... just superb!!!

<http://www.seanwebsterband.com/>

SEAN WEBSTER - JON AMOR - ACOR BOMMER



The lady with 'legs', **Jo Harmen**, now took to the stage. She gives her own take on the 'soul' of blues and has a great presence. I think Jo has done more festivals this year than anyone else, but has managed to keep her performances fresh.

<http://ioharman.com/>

JO HARMEN AND COMPANY



The young man and his band who erupted on the stage next were the **Ryan McGarvey Band**. From the US, these guys are heading for the heights. Ryan is a superb guitar player in the blues rock forum, with seamless solo's and is well supported by his talented band.

RYAN MCGARVEY BAND



Photo courtesy of Jan Fialkowski

A great way to end the Saturday evening with the 'master' and his band, British Blues Award winner, Ian Siegal and the Mississippi Mudbloods. What a brilliant set. Playing a mix of country blues, Ian and the guys had great rapport with the audience, especially when playing some of Ian's classic tracks. He has been recently joined by Duane Betts on guitar, who is the son of Dicky Betts, one of the founding member of The Allman Brothers Band. So there endeth the Saturday main stage line up! But wait more to follow ...

<http://iansiegal.com/>

IAN SIEGAL AND THE MISSISSIPPI MUDBLOODS



The main venue emptied and most people found a space for the late night session in the bar. Tonight it was hosted by the excellent **Tom Townsend Band** and what a treat was in store. Running a jam session can be hard work, but with the 'class' musicians who were taking centre stage, it was a very memorable evening. Some of the guesting musicians were Mike Bowden from Blue Swamp, Jon Amor, Ian Siegal, Sean Webster and even the ever present MC Mark Singleton took a turn on the skins. A great jam session and a perfect end to a perfect day!!

<http://www.tomtownsend.co.uk/>

TOM TOWNSEND BLUES BAND -Jam



Sunday

Many a 'bleary' eye joined the crowd for the final day of this fabulous festival. On stage first today were the local band **The Deluxe**. A great down to earth rockin' blues band, they describe their music as *"The Deluxe sound is blues with an edge. More rhythmic emphasis. We give the audience something new to take away, something to get their toes tapping."* They certainly did, with their emphasis on the British masters of blues. A great set.

<http://thedeluxeblues.weebly.com/>

THE DELUXE



Photos courtesy of Diane Stevenson and Jan Fialkowski

Next a band who I had been looking forward to seeing again. **David Migden and the Dirty Words**, just pure brilliance! A five piece band, these guys were winners of the prestigious New Brunswick Battle of the Blues 2013 and flew to Canada in September to perform on the main stage at the New Brunswick Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival. David fronts the band on vocals, megaphone and even a trumpet ... I like something a bit different! He is a charismatic performer and engaged with the crowd from the off. He has a great voice and was a nominee for the best male vocalist in this year's British Blues Awards. On guitar and backing vocals was Joe Gibson. He plays a great lead guitar and a mean slide. On keys, trombone and backing vocals was Graham Mann .. I like a bit of versatility! James Sedge on bass and Phil Scragg on drums provided the powerhouse of the rhythm section .They played a variety of styles in the set, from a standard blues number to funk, jazz, rock, Americana, roots and more ... it's so good to have a bit of variety and extend the genre of the blues. David's voice is low and mellow and some of the music in the set wouldn't be out of place on a Zappa album! All in all a great performance from these class musicians they have a superb album out, 'Killing It', well worth a listen. A 'must see' band if you get the chance!!

<http://www.davidmigdenandthedirtywords.com/>

DAVID MIGDEN AND THE DIRTY WORDS



Ian Siegal and the Mississippi Mudbloods returned next, for their second set of the festival, this time acoustic. It turned out to be an improvised set with no particular set list which added to the informality. A great Sunday afternoon session and a crowd pleaser. Some super slide guitar playing from Ian and input from the versatile Mudbloods. I loved the percussion work from Cody with the use of a wash board. It felt more like a session in a small intimate bar rather than a main stage festival show, but it all added to what was a great performance.

IAN SIEGAL AND THE MISSISSIPPI MUDBLOODS - Acoustic set



The final act for the afternoon and to round off the festival, were the **Royal Southern Brotherhood**. From Southern US, they are a five piece super group of extremely talented musicians. Fronting the band on soulful vocals and percussion was the infamous Cyril Neville, on lead guitar the burning sounds of Devon Allman, son of Gregg Allman of the Allman Brothers, on guitar and master of blues Mike Zito, on bass the highly talented and award winning Charlie Wooten and finally on drums hard hitting Yonrico Scott who has also played with the Allman Brothers. They describe themselves - "*The Royal Southern Brotherhood drag their thrilling new brand of blues-rock and white-hot musicianship from the Southern States onto the world stage*" Well they certainly did that with a powerhouse performance. What an ending to a great festival.

<http://www.royalsouthernbrotherhood.com/>

ROYAL SOUTHERN BROTHERHOOD



Well that was one of the best yet, with a line up better than none!! A huge thanks goes to **Nick Westgarth** and the team for their tireless efforts putting on this superb event. It was so good to see a full house, which says something about the quality of this event. Let's hope it will continue for many more years.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive -

<http://www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive>