

Review for THE 'TOP SECRET' BLUES FESTIVAL, Scarborough, Yorkshire. 21<sup>st</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019



This year, for the first time, 'The 'Top Secret' Blues Festival' in Scarborough, opened its doors on Thursday evening with 'The Sca Americana Night'. There was also a change of venue for the whole festival, although still in the Spa Complex, the main stage was now in the splendid Grand Hall and the acoustic stage in the Sun Court Café next door.

**Thursday – Americana evening**

The evening was opened by MC for the weekend, **Rich Adams** and his lovely daughter **Maddy**. Performing as a duo young Maddy captivated the audience with her magical voice.



Rich & Maddy Adams

The first main act on stage was Rotherham based singer songwriter **Lauren Housley**, ably supported by **Thomas Dibbs** on guitar. This Americana duo entertained with perfect harmonies and superb guitar playing, including a lovely rendition of a Robert Plant & Alison Krauss number.



Lauren Housley with Thomas Dibbs

Kings of the stage **Tortora & Tyzack** next. No strangers to the festival Guy Tortora and Ben Tyzack never fail to deliver, great comradery and music.



Tortora & Tyzack

**Kyla Brox and Danny Bromley** needed no introduction. Superb as a duo and never fail to cause a stir, just perfection. Magic vocals from Kyla and faultless guitar playing from Danny.



Kyla Brox with Danny Bromley

The final band of the evening were **The Hangings Stars** a classic county folk Americana band.



Hanging Stars

## Friday

Opening the evening on the Main Stage and going out as a solo artist today, was **Aynsley Lister**. With guitar and stomp box he played a mix of self-penned and classic blues. This was a demonstration of how talented Aynsley is, with guitar playing to die for.



Aynsley Lister

**Dali** on the Acoustic Stage gave his second performance after entertaining at the Welcome Party



Dali

One of my favourites **Sam Kelly's Station House**, who certainly didn't disappoint. A brilliant mix of blues, funk, jazz and ska. As a six piece, with a female vocalist sharing the front line, played some classy Cuban style vibes and smooth blues in Robert Cray style plus a dash of reggae. One of my highlights of the festival.





Sam Kelly's Station House

**Angelo Pallandino Trio**, on the Acoustic Stage, entertained us with a very Cajun style performance with guitar, double bass and accordion.



Angelo Pallandino Trio

The Finnish whirlwind slide guitar player **Erja Lyytinen** and her band, closed the evening on The Main Stage.



Erja Lyytinen

## Saturday

Wow! **Martin Harley** opening the afternoon and what a player, master slide perfection. Great vocals and acoustic player and all round entertainer. As a solo artist on the Main Stage he held the attention of the audience throughout. Certainly a highlight for me.



Martin Harley

**Jess Gardham** on vocals and guitar, performing with **Karl Winn** on beat box played the Acoustic Stage with a flavour of Joan Armatrading meets Tracy Chapman.



Jess Gardham with Karl Winn

On the Main Stage, **Southbound** played their own individual style of bluesy rock with soul. A well put together performance with a big sound.



Southbound

Another competent acoustic blues player **Matt Woosey** on the Acoustic Stage. Well know at Scarborough blues, it was good to see him back.



Matt Woosey



Blasting onto the Main Stage next, was the high energy **Will 'Harmonica' Wilde**, with harmonica driven rock and shades of the 70's.



Will Wilde

The happy go lucky blues duo **George Shovlin and George Lamb** next on the Acoustic Stage, always a pleasure to hear.



George Shovlin and George Lamb

**Kaz Hawkins** as a solo act supported by **Sam York** on piano, captivated the audience with her powerful story. Such great engagement with the audience and what a voice. With thoughts of Etta James need I say more.





Kaz Hawkins with Sam York

The **Rainbreakers** performed an unplugged session on the Acoustic Stage. Superb guitar playing from Charlie and captivating vocals from Ben. It was good to see them perform on a smaller but more intimate stage



Rainbreakers

The rising stars **Catfish** on the Main Stage next, fronted by the extremely talented Matt Long with voice and guitar playing that beggars belief. A heartfelt performance including one of their poignant songs 'Make It Rain' which could reduce you to tears.



Catfish

The young singer songwriter **Gus Munro** a solo artist, followed on the Acoustic Stage. An excellent performance from this Scottish whirlwind, playing electric and acoustic guitar.



Gus Munro

The final band on the Main Stage are one of my favourites. **Wille & The Bandits** were flying the flag for their new album 'Paths', but also included some of their popular tracks from their other albums. The highly original trio are not genre specific with their individual slide drenched roots rock. They finished the set on a 'rockin' favourite '1970'.



Wille & The Bandits

### Sunday

Opening on the Main Stage were the Yorkshire based **John P Taylor Band**, a well put together Americana blues roots five piece.



John P Taylor Band

Well known at festivals for his superb art work, **Steve 'Pablo' Jones** is also an accomplished musician. Pablo and Friends as a three piece, played plenty of high class folk blues with a variety of instruments all well received by the audience. A fun and entertaining set with a great versions of 'Paint It Black' and 'King of the Swingers'.





Pablo and Friends

On the Main Stage country Americana from the **Lucy Grubb Band**. A six piece with a Cajun influence, including electric and acoustic guitars, banjo, keys/accordion, drums and bass and a leaning towards the 'red neck' country.



Lucy Grubb Band

Fun now on the acoustic stage with solo artist **John Carroll**. A light-hearted acoustic set with blues and humorous entertainment.



John Carroll

More country Americana, crossing over with blues on the main stage, with **Dean Owen's Whisky Hearts**, a five piece band from Scotland. Plenty acoustic and electric guitars with added violin.



Dean Owen's Whisky Hearts

The masters of 'the blues' **Mat Walklate and Tom Attah** on the Acoustic Stage. Always a superb performance and today was no exception. Harmonica and vocals from Mat with guitar and vocals from Tom the masters of their game.



Mat Walklate and Tom Attah

The **Kyla Brox Band** opened the final evening of this magic festival. What a star Kyla is with her band growing from strength to strength. She has the most amazing voice singing the blues how it should be sung, all interspersed with jazz and soul. Representing the UK in both the International and European Challenges how long will it be before she crosses into mainstream? She received an undeniable standing ovation at the end of the set, One of the highlights of the festival.



Kyla Brox Band



After the raffle the final band on the Main Stage were German based **Henrik Freischlader Band**. With a mix of funk and jazz fusion and a dash of smooth blues in the pot, this five piece played a blinder. With superb vocals, guitar, sax, keys, drums and bass, they were a well rehearsed, extremely tight band. Finishing on an epic slow number for the encore it was a good end to the Main Stage events.



Henrik Freischlader Band.

Party time now with the amazing **Revolutionaires**, kings of jump jive. They certainly got the dancers to the floor, completing what had been a most enjoyable festival.



Revolutionaires

Thanks go to **Mark Horsley** and his amazing band of volunteers, with all their hard work that keeps the wheels of the festival moving. Also thanks to all the sponsors that help keep the festival afloat and lastly to the bands who have provided such varied entertainment across the whole weekend. I shall look forward to doing it all again next year.

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