

Review for CARLISLE BLUES & ROCK FESTIVAL 2017 @ Carlisle, Cumbria - Sept/Oct 2017

<http://carlislebluesfestival.com/>



It was great to have the **Carlisle Blues & Rock Festival** back, after an absence of two years. This year it took place in two cracking venues in the town, on Friday evening and all day Saturday.

Friday

At the purpose built concert venue 'The Venue' in central Carlisle the festival kicked off with **'The Eddie Martin Band'**. As a trio, the front man singer song-writer, Eddie Martin gave a slide guitar driven performance interlaced with harmonica, championing many tracks from the album 'Black White & Blue'. A hard working rhythm section for this blues rock trio with the main man Eddie certainly in charge.



Eddie Martin Band <http://eddiemartin.com/>

A major force in the form of **'Sari Schorr & The Engine Room'** blew people away with her raw Janis Joplin flavoured vocals and her bands hard hitting playing. With a mix of blues and rock Sari and the band certainly gave their all, from a Lead belly number 'In The Pines' to Zeppelin's 'Rock 'n Roll'. She completed the set with her distinctive version of 'Black Betty'.



Sari Schorr & the Engine Room <http://www.sarischorr.com/>

The highlight of the evening was the amazing song-writer and blues rock guitarist '**Bernie Marsden**' (ex Whitesnake). BB King rated him as one of the best guitarist alongside Eric Clapton, which is some accolade. On vocals and guitar, he was backed by a band with another talented guitarist and slide guitarist Jim Kirkpatrick, who also shared the vocals. Playing a mix of self penned works from the current album 'Shine' and popular classics, it was a unique experience on the ear. Superb guitar interplay between Bernie and Jim on the Albert King classic 'Born Under A Bad Sign' which continued on other numbers, such great guitar playing from them both. A fabulous version of Peter Green's 'Oh Well' and Bernie's own 'There's A Place In My Heart', recorded by Joe Bonamassa. A taste of super raw rock for the finale, a great end to a brilliant set. Bernie has recently published his auto biography, which I'm sure will make a fascinating read.



Bernie Marsden <http://www.berniamarsden.com/bjm/>

Saturday

The Crown & Mitre Hotel was the host for the rest of the festival, in the impressive ballroom. Opening the afternoon were local Cumbrian/Scottish band **'Redfish'**. With good time rhythm and blues, a wild keyboard player, they played some down to earth blues. Brian Harris fronts the band on vocals, Martin McDonald on excellent guitar and slide guitar, Fraser Clark on keys, Rod Mackay on bass and Sandy Sweetman on drums. Working hard on their short set they set the scene for the days entertainment and also appeared later, opening the evening session and hosting the 'Jam'. They have a new EP in the mix that should be released next year.



Redfish <http://www.redfishband.co.uk>

Next some very loud Southern rock in the form of Scottish based **'Gerry Jablonski & The Electric Band'**. Fronting the band on guitar and vocals was Gerry Jablonski, with a driving harmonica player Peter Narojczyk. Grigor Leslie on bass and Lewis Fraser on drums and vocals, completed the line up of this high energy rock blues band. With vocals reminiscent of Rod Stewart and some heavy stuff in the mix they were popular with the audience, but were a bit too loud for me. They have a new single 'Heavy Water' that will be released in December.



Gerry Jablonski & The Electric Band <http://gerryjablonskiband.com/>

'Del Bromham's Blue Devils' played some well put together blues rock and classic covers. Del, on excellent guitar and vocals, is a member of the 70's rock band Stray, a great front man giving lots of interaction with the audience. A superb rendition of 'Ballad Of JD' and getting up close to the audience on 'Sing The Blues', pure showmanship. A fabulous well deserved encore with the classic Traffic number 'Fantasy'.



Del Bromham's Blue Devils <http://www.stray-the-band.co.uk/delbromham/>

Finishing the afternoon session were the award winning Northern Irish, 'Kaz Hawkins Band'. Certainly a band that have taken the UK and Europe by storm this year. They were winners of both the UK and the European Blues Challenge, also reaching the semi finals of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis USA. This sadly was one of the last few performances of the band, as Kaz will be launching a solo career in the new year. With a great opener from the band, Kaz, as large as life bounced onto the stage with 'Drink With The Devil'. Her voice has a unique quality and range and can belt out raunchy raw blues to full feeling ballads. The superb 'Halleujah' was a brilliant example and the piece de resistance 'Lipstick and Cocaine', when Kaz was joined by keyboard player Fraser Clark for a powerful self penned solo ballad. Kaz sang with such passion it brought tears to many eyes. Changing the mood the band rocked it up on 'I Just Want To Make Love To You' and an up tempo blues 'Can't Afford Me'. A superb performance throughout.



Kaz Hawkins Band <http://kzhawkins.com/>

Opening the evening were **'Redfish'** again. Following them in the 'fishy' vane were **'Catfish'** from Sussex. Way above the average blues band, they gave us Hammond drenched blues and epic guitar solos. Sharing the front of the band were Paul Long on keys and vocals, with the young and talented Matt Long on guitar and vocals, ably supported by Derek White on bass and Kevin Yates on drums. Playing many tracks from their excellent current album 'Broken Man' and previous album 'So Many Roads', plus some blues classics, they showed how blues rock should be played.



Catfish <http://www.catfishbluesband.co.uk/>

The talking point of the festival, new to many of the audience, was a band from Denmark. **'Thorbjorn Risager & The Black Tornado'** came with a great pedigree, as a seven piece with brass and keys and fronted on main vocals and guitar by Thorbjorn Risager. Playing a mix of blues, Americana, boogie and a dash of funk they were one of the highlights of the festival. Great showmanship from the whole band with fantastic musicianship from all the players.



Thorborn Risager & The Black Tornado <http://risager.info/>

The final band of the evening needed no introduction. This collective of top class musicians are something of a 'super group', '**The Boom Band**'. With Marcus Bonfanti, Jon Amor, Matt Taylor and Mark Butcher fronting the band, all on amazing guitars and vocals and each giving their own flavour of blues, Southern rock and Americana, with the backing of keys, bass and drums. An excellent set and a great way to end this wonderful festival.



The Boom Band <https://www.matttaylor.info/the-boom-band>

Time for '**The Jam**' and what a star studded event. The host band Redfish invited guests to jam and there were plenty of takers. These included the fabulous Connie Lush, Kaz Hawkins, Jon Amor, Matt Long, Roz Sluman and many more, great fun and a night to remember.



The Jam

Thanks go to **Nick Westgarth** for daring to put the festival on again and to all the volunteers who kept the wheels turning for this highly successful event. Thanks also go to the many sponsors the venues and well done to all the bands who performed and made it a festival to remember.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer
<http://www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive> <http://www.ukblues.org/>