

Review for 'SCARBOROUGH 'TOP SECRET' BLUES FESTIVAL' - 20th - 22nd March 2015
@ The Spa Complex, Scarborough, N Yorkshire <http://www.scarboroughbluesfestival.co.uk/>



It was one of those festivals with a line up to die for, so was definitely not to be missed. As this was our first trip to Scarborough, our expectations were open. Travelling over to North Yorkshire from Lancashire after watching the eclipse of the sun, proved a bit of a trial for our Sat Nav, but we did sample some of the county lanes and moors and we finally reached our destination on Friday evening, if two hours late!

After settling into our hotel, we made our way down the 'cliff' to the Spa Complex, which was to be the home of the '**Scarborough 'Top Secret' Blues Festival**' for the weekend.

Friday

Kicking off in the Ocean Room and the Main Stage were the charismatic '**Blue Swamp**'. As a duo tonight, with Mike Bowden and John Williamson, they played a mix of tracks from their new album, 'Voodoo Soup' with some exquisite guitar playing and vocals. This was interspersed, as usual, by Mike's great humour. A really 'must see' band for a live performance. <http://blueswampband.co.uk/>



Blue Swamp Duo

We managed to catch **'Lucy Zirins'** second set in Prom Lounge, which was providing the Acoustic Stage for the festival and our Lancashire lass didn't disappoint. Playing a mix of acoustic blues and folky numbers, some taken from her album 'Chasing Clocks', she captivated the audience as only Lucy can, with her sweet voice and excellent guitar playing. <http://www.lucyzirins.com/>



Lucy Zirins

Back to the Ocean Room and the Main Stage, to take in the delights and amazing voice of **'Kyla Brox'** and her superb band. From Manchester, Kyla is a brilliant vocalist, giving blues, soul and jazz in her repertoire. Her band are all high class musicians in their own right and I'm always surprised why her profile is not higher within the music scene. <http://www.kylabrox.com/>



Kyla Brox Band

The final band for the evening on the Main Stage were the '**Jon Amor Band**' and 'wow', what a set! Jon has many fingers in different pies but brings to the table his own definitive style of playing. A superb group of musicians playing an eclectic mix of music, some self penned from previous albums and some new takes, blues through to rock and Americana. An excellent end to the first evening of this excellent festival. <http://jonamor.tumblr.com/>



Jon Amor Band

Saturday Afternoon

Starting the session on the acoustic stage was '**Al Hughes**', a last minute stand in for Johnny Dickenson who was ill. From Scotland, he did a great job with a finger picking blues style and some super slide guitar. http://www.al-hughes.com/Al_Hughes/Home.html



Al Hughes

On the Main Stage a new artist to me, '**Leila Dee**', with guitarists Sam and Glen in support. With a mix of folk, blues country and jazz, she has a super voice and sang some sultry blues with some great sax from one of her 'guests'. We were given a magic take of 'Wade In The Water' and finished off the set with Eva Cassidy's 'Autumn Leaves', just beautiful. <http://www.leiladeemusic.co.uk/>



Leila Dee

Down to the acoustic stage again for a favourite of mine, '**Steve 'Pablo' Jones**'. Artist and musician, Steve, from Wales -with guests on cajon and guitar - they gave a class performance of roots, folk and hillbilly blues. Steve played acoustic guitar, harmonica and banjo and included some self penned work in the excellent set. <http://artpablo.com/>



Steve 'Pablo' Jones

Back on the Main Stage the '**Guy Tortora Band**' took to the boards. From the US, but now living in the UK, Guy Tortora on guitar and vocals with his band Janos Bajtala on keys, Costa Tancredi on bass and Pete Hedley on drums, gave us some brilliant Americana with blues, jazz, folk and roots. Guy, a talented songwriter, plays acoustic finger picking, bottleneck and electric guitar in a style that is his own. There was also a treat with some 'lead' input from the amazing bass player Costa Tancredi.

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



Guy Tortora Band

A treat of one of the most exciting bands on the circuit at this time, with '**Wille & The Bandits**' on the Main Stage. They are Wille on vocals, lap slide and guitar, Matt on vocals, electric and stick bass and Drew on drums and percussion. Playing mostly a selection of their own songs taken from their three superb albums, they are not a band that can be pigeonholed into one genre. I could describe their music as roots rock with blues overtones, but it certainly has a different take from the norm. They played an epic version of their acclaimed 'Angel' and finished the set with an encore of 'Black Magic Woman' in the Wille & The Bandits own style. With amazing bass from Matt, technically superb drums and percussion from Drew and Wille's awesome slide and sound effects, it puts them, as a band, a cut above the rest! <http://www.willeandthebandits.com/>



Wille & The Bandits

Food beckoned so we sadly missed **'MG Greaves'** on the Acoustic Stage, but were treated to the highest tide of the century and a strong north easterly gale, I thought we may be doing some swimming!!

Saturday Evening

Yet another band on the Main Stage, to take us away from the norm were Kent based **'David Migden & The Twisted Roots'**. Having a jazz influence and almost a Zappa-esque approach to the music, this talented multi instrumental band didn't take any prisoners. David Migden fronts the band on deep velvet vocals, trumpet and megaphone, with Graham Mann on keys, percussion, and trombone, Joe Gibson on guitar, Phil Scragg on bass and James Sedge on drums. A brilliant take of 'Rougarou' from their current album 'Animal And Man' with trumpet and trombone giving a '30s rag band feel and a favourite in 'Rev Jack Crow' from the acclaimed album 'Killing It'. A selection of other tracks were taken from the bands three excellent albums, with a mix of Americana and described as a "*crossover of rock, blues and twisted American roots*". A brilliant performance from this group of talented musicians. <http://www.davidmigdenandthedirtywords.com/>



David Migden & The Twisted Roots

Down on the Acoustic Stage our MC changed places to become a musical performer. **'Rich Adams'** with guest, gave us some classic acoustic blues as a duo. <http://www.richadamsmusic.com/>



Rich Adams

On the Main Stage next, a class performer in the form of **'Jo Harman'** and band. As a soul diva and Female Vocalist of the Year in the British Blues Awards, the expectations were high. There is no doubt this lady can sing and she gave a great performance supported well by her 'class' band which included female guest bassist. <http://joharman.com/>



Jo Harman

The acoustic break with solo '**Benjamin Bassford**' from Nottingham, playing a great mix of blues, roots, folk and country, with finger picking guitar and slide.

<https://www.facebook.com/BenjaminBassfordMusic>



Benjamin Bassford

The final act for the evening on the Main Stage was the charismatic '**Pat McManus Band**'. Hailing from N Ireland they had the audience hooked from the off with their great stage presence. With Pat McManus on guitar, violin and vocals, Marty McDermott on bass and backing vocals and Paul Faloon on drums, they played some great blues rock with the addition of an Irish jig. Pat also played the violin with an Irish flavour. It was a great fun way to end the evening and with some 'class' musical input. <http://www.patmcmanus.co.uk/>



Pat McManus Band

Sunday Afternoon

Not new to Scarborough, 'Joel Fisk' from Essex, played an excellent solo acoustic set on the Acoustic Stage. With a mix of classic covers, superb guitar playing and slide, Joel was also highlighting his newly released CD, 'Joel Fisk and the Breakdown'. <http://joelfisk.co.uk/>



Joel Fisk

Next on the Main Stage another new face for me, '**Goldie Reed**' and band from Kent. They performed a variety of vaudeville and Americana numbers and Goldie has a great voice. <http://www.goldiereed.com/>



Goldie Reed

A treat on the Acoustic Stage with the up and coming **'Matt Woosey'**, singer songwriter from Worcestershire, playing a solo acoustic set. With excellently executed roots based blues numbers, some taken from his current and first live album entitled 'While The Cat's Away', he performed a class set. <http://www.mattwoosey.co.uk/>



Matt Woosey

On the Main Stage, some true Chicago blues with an eclectic mix of old blues standards from **'TC and the Moneymakers'**. From York, they are Tom Cocks on vocals and harmonica, Karl Moon on guitar, Giles Checkitts on bass with Doc Brown on drums. Tom fronts the band with brilliant vocals and harmonica playing and the band work with tight precision, harmonica driven, playing back to the roots of blues. <http://www.tcmoneymakers.com/>



TC & The Moneymakers

Out of the ashes of Hokie Joint rose **'LaVendore Rogue'**. On the Main Stage with all the theatre as one would expect, LaVendore Rogue are JoJo Burgess on charismatic vocals, Joel Fisk on excellent guitar and vocals, Warren Lynn on keys, Rob 'Tank' Barry on bass and Stephen 'Cupsey' Cutmore on drums. They gave an amazing performance with numbers from their new album 'Light Up With .. LaVendore Rogue' and some from the past. With hints of Americana they have a sound that is wholly original and are certainly an unforgettable experience! <http://lavendorerogue.com/>



LaVendore Rogue

Sunday Evening

Missed **'Tony Devenport'** on the Acoustic Stage as food was needed, but **'The Jar Family'** next on the Main Stage certainly brightened up the evening. From the north east they are a six piece folkly band with added earthy rock extras and elements of Americana. With shades of Dylan and some great harmonies, The Jar Family are a definite 'must see' band, as the performance and entertainment value were paramount. Great musicianship throughout and the versatility to change instruments was brilliant. A great band for a festival as they thrive on audience participation and there was plenty of laughter which lightened up the evening. Much enjoyed! <http://thejarfamily.com/>



The Jar Family

The Final act on the Main Stage of this superb festival was the '**Ian Siegal Band**'. Ian is not a stranger to Scarborough and brought to the table some explosive blues, funk, Americana, bluegrass and Mississippi hill country music. With a group of musicians from Holland supporting Ian, the level of showmanship was high. A great performance from a great singer, musician and songwriter.

<http://iansiegal.com/>



Ian Siegal Band

Winding down with an after show party. Many headed downstairs to have a boogie to the '**Leeds City Stompers**', a great three piece rock 'n roll outfit with upright double bass, guitar and drums. A great way to end, what had been, an exceptional festival. <http://www.leedscitystompers.com/>



Leeds City Stompers

A big 'well done' to '**Mark Horsley**' for putting all this together, '**Rich Adams**' for being the MC for the whole event and to all the volunteer staff who made the festival possible. It was cracking venue at the Spa Complex and I hope we can repeat the experience next year.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive