

Review for the 'Scarborough 'Top Secret' Blues Festival' @ The Spa, Scarborough.
11th-13th March 2016 <http://www.scarboroughbluesfestival.co.uk/>
Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive



After a slow drive to Scarborough from Lancashire, we finally arrived much later than expected. Checking into the Grand Hotel, we made our way down to the amazing venue of the Ocean Room at the Spa for the second **Scarborough 'Top Secret' Blues Festival** to be held there.

Friday Evening

We only managed to catch the last couple of numbers from **Rebecca Downes** amazing set, but all I can say is ... what a voice!! She has been consistently growing in musical stature over the past year and her new album '**Believe**' has received high acclaim. She was well supported by her excellent band



Rebecca Downes - www.rebeccadownes.com/

On the Prom Stage, **Karl Moon & Jen Lowe** an acoustic blues duo.

Welcoming **Marcus Malone** and his band to the Main Stage, for an all entertaining set with a mix of blues rock, soul and funk. Opening with '**Hear That Train**', a touch of rockin' soul, the charismatic Marcus captivated the audience, which set the scene for the rest of the performance. There was some great slide guitar and superb power drumming, funk'n' it up on '**Paradise**' or slowing it down with some 12 bar blues on '**Jealous Kind**'. Great vocals from Marcus throughout and finishing the excellent set with '**Christine**', a popular choice, there ending the Friday of the festival for the Main Stage.



Marcus Malone - www.marcusmalone.com/

Down on the Prom Stage a superb late night Jam session, with Tim Aves, Joel Fisk, Jon Amor , Miles Gilderdale and many more, for the late night revellers.



Jam Session

Saturday

Opening on the Main Stage, super acoustic solo player **Matt Woosey**, with some excellent bluesy takes. An entertaining set with some fine guitar playing on acoustic guitar and slide, with superb vocals. A great end to the set with some classy lap slide on '**Little Red Rooster**' and a great rendition of '**Back Door Man**'.



Matt Woosey - www.mattwoosey.co.uk/

A class blues duo on the Prom Stage, **Chris James** - vocals and guitar and **Martin Fletcher** - harmonica and percussion. Many self penned blues numbers with a real feel of the Delta.



Chris James & Martin Fletcher

Get down and dirty with the Wolf man, aka front man **Tim Aves and Wolfpack** on the Main Stage. Tim strutted his stuff with some good down to earth blues and the coolest guitar playing from **Joel Fisk**. Tim is the ultimate performer and larger than life and well supported by the rest of the band.



Tim Aves & Wolfpack - www.timwolfpack.moonfruit.com/

Acoustic solo performer **Benjamin Bassford** on the Prom Stage, with some good honest blues. www.facebook.com/BenjaminBassfordMusic/

In the top ten of bands to see live, **Wille and The Bandits** stole the show on the main stage. Hailing from Cornwall they produce music in a range of genres from roots fusion and rock to blues and world music. Fronting the band, was Will Edwards on strong and raw lead vocals, excellent lap slide and guitar with a pedal board to die for. He was supported by the incredibly gifted bass player, Matt Brooks on sculptural upright bass and six string electric bass, with the power house and rhythmic genius of percussionist Andrew Naumann on drums, tom tom and glockenspiel. Playing a mix of numbers, including 'Got To Do Better', 'Gypsy Woman' and the haunting upright bass of 'Forgiveness', to the beautiful 'Mamon' with acoustic guitar, African drum and upright bass. They brought the set to a close with their classic 'Angel'. An incredibly talented band that is once seen, never forgotten.



Wille & The Bandits - www.willeandthebandits.com/

Next on the Prom Stage, it was a delight to see **Marcus Bonfanti** again, especially playing a solo acoustic set. As an award winning blues artist, he always gives a great performance and played a selection of tracks from his albums, including 'Layla' and the wonderful 'Devil Girl'.

www.marcusbonfanti.com/

Back to the Main Stage for another class duo in the shape of **Jon Amor and Joel Fisk**. Both Joel and Jon are extremely competent guitarists and complement each other whether playing acoustic or electric guitars. They performed some excellent classic blues covers and a few Hokie Joint numbers, plus a mix of their self penned works. They were also joined on stage for the last couple of numbers by **Marcus Bonfanti**, so bonus!!



Joel Fisk & Jon Amor, guest Marcus Bonfanti - joelfisk.co.uk/joel-fisk-jon-amor-electro-acoustic-duo/

The MC left the Main Stage and became a performer on the Prom Stage with the **Adams and Greaves Band** with a mix of country blues.

The Queen of Liverpool, **Connie Lush**, made a vibrant entrance to the Main Stage with a superb performance of her classic soulful blues. She played some standards including **'Love Me Like A Man'**, **'Lonely Avenue'**, **'Rollin' And Tumblin'**, in the true Connie style and was well supported by her excellent band Also showcasing her new album **'Renaissance'** - described as *"An emotional drenched blues soaked delight"*- her performance certainly did that. With numbers including **'Lonely Boy'**, **'I Don't Say Goodbye'**, **'Falling Down Like Rain'** and **'Blame (It All On Me)'** she finished the set with a Nina Simone classic **'It's A New Day'**. An excellent set from the lady with a world class voice.



Connie Lush - www.connielush.com/

Tom Attah has remained a favourite in and around Yorkshire and beyond. Playing a solo set on the Prom Stage, he gave us some earthy blues with a 12 string guitar experience. Always blues at its best interlaced with humour, great entertainment and class music.



Tom Attah - www.tomattah.com/

On the Main Stage the **Revolutionaires** from the Northeast, brought in some lively 50's style rock 'n roll with a full on performance. If you haven't had the experience of seeing these guys you have missed a treat, with down 'in the ground sax' and a totally unstoppable front man on guitar, vocals and keys. Even if you weren't up dancing it was hard to keep still. Certainly a 'foot tapping' energetic performance and a great way to finish the evening on the Main Stage.



Revolutionaires - www.the-revolutionaires.co.uk/

Down to the Prom Stage (for those with the energy) for the Jam. Hosted by the Wolfpack and friends - there were plenty of them, fun was had into the wee small hours.

Sunday

A smaller crowd for the Main Stage this early afternoon to catch **Till Bennewitz**, a young German singer songwriter, playing a solo acoustic set. Not a stranger to Scarborough, his music strays away from the blues, but has a lasting appeal. In the realms of pop rock his acoustic guitar playing, with a finger picking style, was exceptionally good. www.tillbennewitz.de/

Adam and Greaves Band played another set on the Prom Stage.

Kyla Brox, as a duo today with **Danny Blomeley** on the Main Stage, was superb with fabulous vocals and acoustic guitar work. With her own flavour of soulful blues she was showcasing tracks from her forthcoming album, '**Throw Away The Blues**'. The set was amazing and I still wonder why she has not received the recognition that she deserves.



Kyla Brox - www.kylabrox.com/

Back to the Prom Stage for a return of **Tom Attah**

It was great to catch up again with the ever busy drummer **Sam Kelly**, playing this afternoon with **Sam Kelly's Station House**, his own band giving us a mix of blues soul and funk. They are a group of talented musicians in their own right, but as a five piece band they certainly gave an excellent performance.



Sam Kelly's Station House - www.sam-kelly.co.uk/

It was a real treat to see the class acoustic duo of **Tortora & Tyzack**, who are Guy Tortora and Ben Tyzack on the Prom Stage. Both are great musicians in their own right as guitarists and singer songwriters. They played a brilliant set of traditional roots blues, just how it should be played!



Tortora & Tyzack - www.guytortora.com/

The youth of blues hit the Main Stage in the form of **Red Butler**. This young band from Brighton have been taking the country by storm and proved to be an exciting band of high energy, classic blues rock. Fronted by a female vocalist, who could certainly strut her stuff, they were refreshing and entertaining. **Aynsley Lister** made an exciting guest appearance, towards the end of the set, to the delight of the band and the audience. With a new album in the mix we shall be hearing a lot more from this young band.



Red Butler - www.redbutlermusic.co.uk/

After the raffle the final act for the Main Stage, 'Artist in Residence' the **Aynsley Lister Band** hit the boards. Aynsley is an award winning artist and deservedly so. He gave a superb performance of epic blues rock and finished the set with his pièce de résistance of '**Purple Rain**', what a way to end this magnificent festival.



Aynsley Lister Band - www.aynsleylister.co.uk/

All was not quite over yet, as we headed to the Prom Stage for the Finale Party hosted by York based band **TC & The Money Makers**, with some great harp driven rhythm and blues.



TC & The Moneymakers - www.tcmoneymakers.com/

A fabulous finish for what had been a really well run and friendly festival. The weather was kind and the venue was superb. Thanks go to **Mark Horsley** and the band of volunteers and the sponsors who made this excellent festival possible.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

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