

Review for UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL @ Upton on Severn, Worcestershire 21-23 July 2017

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



Arriving on the Thursday before the event was a good idea, especially as the camping field was already half full, telling me it was going to be a busy few days. The town was already buzzing with music going on in the pubs and the atmosphere was set.

Award winning Upton Blues Festival, just gets better and better and this year was no exception, despite some inclement weather. Even though the rain set in, it didn't dampen the spirits of the many blues enthusiasts.

Friday

With three stages and a plethora of music throughout the town in the many pubs, it was difficult to catch everyone. The first outing was to the Meadow Stage where **Bluesman Mike Francis** was playing traditional and contemporary acoustic blues to a good crowd, showcasing his current EP 'Song For Emelda May' and other numbers from his repertoire of his 40 years on the road.

Next on the Meadow Stage, Leamington Spa based **Folly Bros** brought their own exciting flavour of bluegrass and Americana. With brothers Mark Roden on acoustic guitar, Jonny Roden on banjo and Wes Stanton on double bass they gave a up tempo performance, stomping and rootsy, to liven up the day as the rain set in.



The Folly Bros <http://www.follybrothers.com/>

Brolly at the ready, we moved on to the Riverside Stage in the centre of town, where the London based **Laura Holland Band** was giving it large with class vocals and big band sound of blues and soul.

Continuing to brave the rain, we caught Alabama blues guru **Debbie Bond** on the Riverside Stage. Over on an extensive tour of the UK and Europe, the singer, songwriter and guitarist, with life partner Radiator Rick Asherson on keys, played a great mix of Southern flavoured music with blues, soul, jazz and country, from her current album 'Enjoy The Ride' along with tracks previous albums.



Debbie Bond <http://www.debbiebond.com/>

Heading to The Star Inn and expecting to see the **Maz Mitrenko Band** outside in the courtyard, we happily found the band had been moved upstairs, which as it turned out was a much drier option! The Birmingham based blues rock band have been a firm favourite at Upton and they played three blinding sets to a full house. With a leaning towards Rory Gallagher, Maz, as a seasoned guitarist and well established in the Midlands blues scene, was ably supported by charismatic Phil Brittle on drums with a guest bass player for this evening. A great way to end the first day of the festival.



Maz Mitrenko Band <http://www.mazmitrenkoband.co.uk/>

Saturday

On the Riverside Stage the Midlands based band the **Official Receivers** gave us a classic taste of Northern Soul. With a full on high energy big band sound, it was a great way to kick start the afternoon.

Moving to the Swan Hotel we caught some rockin' blues from **Jack The Biscuit**. Then it was time to mosey on down to the Meadow Stage for the delights of the Midlands based **Mumbo Jumbo** and their definitive style of acoustic blues roots. They are Oliver Carpenter, Chris Lomas and Phil Bond and with a mix of instruments - piano, accordion, trumpet, percussion, bass and ukulele, they gave a great performance which was enjoyed by the growing crowd.



Mumbo Jumbo <http://www.mumbo-jumbo.biz/>

As the rain set in, yet again, we made our way back through the town, sadly missing the **Big Wolf Band** at the Social Club, who from all accounts went down a storm, especially showcasing their new CD 'A Rebels Story' which had been recently launched.

On the Riverside Stage a rising star from Bristol, **Elles Bailey** and her band, gave a polished and informative performance. On vocals and keys, her husky voice is made for the blues and she describes her music as 'rootsy blues, country and soulful rock'. The debut album 'Wildfire' is due for release shortly.



Elles Bailey <https://www.ellesbailey.com/>

Heading for the river, we boarded the boat for the Blues Cruise with Birmingham based **Tom Walker Trio**. This young man is growing in stature and at the tender age of twenty two is certainly a force to be reckoned with his mix of blues, rock and funk. With Tom on amazing vocals and superb guitar he was ably supported by Deano Bass on bass and Nathan Anderson-Barr on drums. The whole set was pumping funky rhythms, with plenty of dancing going on. Just excellent!



The Tom Walker Trio <https://www.tomwalkerofficial.com/>

We headed to the Social Club to catch the **Zoe Green Band**, another band from Birmingham. Zoe gave a raunchy full on performance with her excellent band, to a packed house. With a mix of blues, rock and funk and fantastic vocals, Zoe is certainly one to look out for on the circuit.



The Zoe Green Band <http://www.zoegreenband.com/>

Sunday

Opening the afternoon on the Riverside Stage were the **Birmingham Community Gospel Choir**, breathing life into to Sunday morning with uplifting songs. Moving onto the Swan Hotel, Worcestershire based Mister Wolf were giving it large with some well played blues, rock and pop classics.

Time to take a wander to the Meadow Stage for **The Swaps**, from Leamington Spa, with their own take of folk blues. Excellent vocals from Beth and harmonica playing from Tomo. They also did a set on the Acoustic Stage later in the afternoon.



The Swaps <http://www.theswaps.co.uk/>

Back to the Riverside Stage for some rockabilly from **The Reelers**, a roots rock 'n roll band from London.

Returning to the Meadow Stage we caught the excellent **Trafficker**. Fronted by renown guitarist, singer songwriter Tommy Allen, they blasted out their own unique style of blues rock, with Emil Engstrom on bass and Damon Clarridge on drums. A brilliant set that was well received by the enthusiastic audience.



Trafficker <http://www.trafficker.rocks/>

Following were the new fresh approach line up of **Babajack**, with their individual rootsy folk blues and rock. Continuing to front the band on vocals, cajon and African drums was Becky Tate, with Tosh Murase on drums, Adam Bertenshaw on bass and joining the band for this tour, replacing Trevor Steger, was Troy Redfern on guitar. Plenty of gritty slide from Troy and great vocals from Becky with a selection of old and new, but with a more rocky slant on the whole set, which seemed to go down well with the crowd.



Babajack <http://www.babajack.com/>

Back to the Riverside Stage for the piece de resistance of the evening and a great way to end this fabulous festival. Singer songwriter **Hamilton Loomis** from the USA, on superb vocals, guitar and harmonica, gave an accomplished performance of funky blues in true 'Loomis' style. He was ably supported by Fabian Hernandez on first class saxophone and keys, Armando Aussenac on drums, with guest, UK's own Roger Inness on bass. With plenty of audience participation, Hamilton did a balancing act round the edge of the stage and along the flood wall, to the delight of the crowd. A brilliant set throughout, with one of the best takes of Purple Rain I have heard.



Hamilton Loomis <http://www.hamiltonloomis.com/>

Well that was the end of another incredibly enjoyable and successful festival, despite the rain. Well done go to the organisers, volunteers and the plethora of sponsors who made the festival possible and I shall look forward to doing it all again next year.

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