

## 'THE BRITISH BLUES ARCHIVE GOES TO THE COLNE BLUES FESTIVAL 2012'

### The Great British R & B Festival 2012 - A personal diary

As the Lancashire rep for the [British Blues Archive](#), and host for the [Lancashire Blues Archive](#), it was appropriate for me to be part of this [Great British R & B Festival](#), that takes place in Colne, Lancashire every year over the August bank holiday. Winner of the 'Best British Blues Festival' for several years, Colne hosts this great 'all round' event which the towns people fully embrace. The town is alive and electric for the duration of the four day event, with many venues becoming the 'Road Houses' for artists and bands, with the Pendle Leisure Centre hosting the 'British Stage' and the 'Acoustic Stage' at the Muni completing the 'Trail' venues and providing platforms for all genres of the 'blues'. Plenty of buskers also perform throughout the town, which adds to the 'party' atmosphere.

The main 'International Stage' is held in the main auditorium at the Muni, and provides a perfect venue for the variety world class acts that appear throughout the festival. It also provides excellent acoustics and lighting..... and the food in there is not bad either!!!

This year we opted, for the first time, not to visit the International Stage, but remained on the 'Trail'. The 'Pledge Badge' allows you entry to all the 'Trail' venues, including the 'British' and 'Acoustic' stages. With so much to see it was not possible to catch everyone, so this is a 'snapshot' of my time there.

### Friday

Arriving early on the Friday, we were able to pitch our tent on one of the 'less' soggy bits of the field at the Rugby Club (many weren't quite so lucky!!) Later we headed down into town for a bite to eat and get a 'feel' of what was going on, deciding to pop into the Crown for a quick pint. We caught the warm up or sound check of one of the bands, the [Cliff Brown Band](#), which was a great way to start the festival. The guys were just enjoying playing great blues, so this really set the scene.



The Cliff Brown Band

We headed back to the Rugby Club to catch the first act of that evening, [Cry Baby and the Hoochie Coochie Boys](#). A great Chicago style blues band from Stoke who never fail to get the crowd moving and on their feet. Rob 'Cry Baby' Wilkinson provided hell raising harmonica in his usual form, (he also has a great voice!) Graham Sells plays a 'mean' guitar and with his gravel voice provided a great 'raw' sound. With the rest of this six piece band playing their all, it was a really great set to kick start the weekend.



Graham Sells and Rob 'Cry Baby' Wilkinson....and me!



Cry Baby and the Hoochie Coochie Boys

Next on, at the Rugby Club, were [Fuschi4](#), a great young band from Manchester. Blues with a funky edge and a dash of jazz! They played a great first set with plenty of fine guitar work from Paolo Fuschi and Tim Moscroft, joined by the pounding rhythm section of Dave Lloyd on bass and Adam Dawson on drums. Sadly the second half had to be cut short because of 'time' constraints from the venue. These guys will be out on the circuit, so well worth a check out if you get the chance.



Fuschi4

## Saturday

Hit the British Stage today to catch [Rhythm Zoo](#), a delightful band from the Shrewsbury area. With a relatively new line up, Andi Jones fronts the band and sings the blues with great passion. Young

Adam Richards plays a great lead guitar and with the addition of Sophia Perruzza on sax they have a great sound, completed by the rhythm section of Dermot Hall on drums and Pete Betts on bass. They played a superb set, with great stage presence and received justified appreciation from the audience. We will hear lots more from these guys I'm sure.



Rhythm Zoo

After a short break [Poorboy](#) took to the stage. A terrific harp driven band from Leeds, fronted by excellent blues harp player and vocalist Paddy Wells. A great sound, blues through and through. They played a brilliant set, much enjoyed by everyone. I hope people get out to see them if they are in your area, you won't be disappointed!



Poorboy

We next headed for the acoustic stage to see another favourite band, [Babajack](#). An acoustic trio based in Worcestershire. They play roots blues... but with a difference, writing much of their own material. Becky Tate's exceptional vocals, were sung from the heart, she also provided the pounding rhythm section with the cajon and African drum. Trevor Steger played great slide on his acoustic and home made winebox guitars and also played harmonica and supported vocals with a 'gravel' voice Marc Miletitch on double bass, complemented the rest of the band using a variety of finger plucking

and bow. The band were nominated in the British Blues Awards 2012 for the 'British Acoustic Act' and Becky was nominated for 'British Instrumentalist', a well deserved accolade for this refreshingly original band. If you like the acoustic side of the blues then these guys are a must!!



Babajack

It was now back to the British Stage to catch [The Treatment](#). From Manchester the band is fronted by Franny Eubank who provided a 'raw' blues sound on harp and vocals and Tom Attah who is renowned in his own right for his solo acoustic expertise. The band played a great electric set, taking us back to the Mississippi Delta and up to Soul City, describing themselves as a 'Red hot rocking rhythm and blues band' they certainly had an 'edge' and are well worth a check out as a band and individuals.



The Treatment

A short break then the amazing [Kyla Brox](#) Band took to the stage. From Manchester, Kyla continues to create an impact on the music scene when performing with her band or as a duo with her partner Danny Blomeley, giving powerful blues, soul and jazz overtones. The performance tonight was absolutely spell binding. She was nominated for the 'British Female Vocalist' and 'British Instrumentalist' in The British Blues Awards 2012 and to me she was a very strong contender. The audience were captivated by her renditions of tracks from her albums and it was very tight

performance with this very professional band. Towards the end of the set she invited a special guest to the stage.... Mr Victor Brox! It was wonderful to see father and daughter performing together, another great 'blues' man of his time. All in all a 'must see' band.... while they are still on the festival circuit.



Kyla Brox Band with guest Victor Brox

## Sunday

The first band to kick off at the Rugby Club today, were [The After Hours Blues Band](#). Playing in a 'pond' it was certainly 'wellie' time, however the guys did there 'stuff' and did it well. From Preston, this three piece band is fronted by brilliant lead guitarist and vocalist Lee Wharton who takes blues rock to another dimension. He is supported by the pounding bass of Doug Long and the raging rhythms of Ann Batty on drums. Despite the conditions in the marquee they played a brilliant set and prompted two...or was it three encores. They predominantly play in the NW of England but have spread their wings further afield of late. A great band to see if you enjoy the blues rock genre with plenty of classic blues standards within their set. A band well worth seeing.



Lee Wharton, Doug Long and Ann Batty of The After Hours Blues Band

We now headed back into town to the British Stage for the [Hexmen](#) from Liverpool. They are a hard hitting, high energy R&B band, fronted by harmonica driven George 'Hexmen' Wickstead. They gave a great performance.... I don't know where George gets his energy from! The enthusiasm from the audience was obvious and the auditorium was literally 'bouncing'. A great act with plenty of showmanship...we could do to see more of this band on our festival circuit. Once seen never forgotten....so catch them if you can.



The Hexmen

The next band to hit the stage were [Idle Hands](#) from Chesterfield. A great blues rock band fronted by talented vocalist Phil Allen. They are a band made for the 'big' stage, with great presence and showmanship. This four piece band featured original songs and some expertly reworked covers from influences such as Zeppelin, Gallagher, Hendrix and also included the Delta blues. Some excellent guitar work from Dave Robinson, and was well supported in the rhythm section by Jamie Burns on bass and Paul Heydon on drums. Also one of their original compositions was nominated in the 'Song Writer of the Year' for the British Blues Awards 2012. A class act so well worth checking out.



Idle Hands

Had a short 'food' break, then back to the British Stage for the brilliant [Hooson](#). Primarily from Halifax, the band is fronted by the extremely talented lady, Jenna Hooson, who provided the amazingly powerful vocals. A really well received performance and a great showcase for their new album 'Sugar Rush'. Jenna absolutely had the audience transfixed as she belted out the numbers supported by Richard Kershaw on excellent guitar, Jono Moorhouse on bass and Nick Ezard on drums. They played a great mix of soul and blues and it is noted that Jenna was nominated for the 'British Female Vocalist' in this year's British Blues Awards 2012, so watch this space! A great performance from this up and coming band.



Hooson

A short break then onto a band new to me, the [Lyndon Anderson Band](#), from Newcastle upon Tyne. They played a great mix of blues and blues funk, fronted by vocalist and ace harmonica player Lyndon Anderson, backed by Davey Dormand on guitar, Christine Wilson on bass, and Kev Hodge on drums, they played a refreshing take on the blues. I shall definitely be looking out for these guys in the future.



The Lyndon Anderson Band

The final act for the evening on the British Stage was [Chantel McGregor](#) and her band. This young lady from Bradford, proves that the 'Women of the Blues' have a firm place in the 'New Generation' of British Blues and will not be out classed by 'the boys'! Chantel plays a 'mean' guitar which is complemented by her soulful voice. She was also been nominated for the 'Best Female Vocalist' in the British Blues Awards 2012. A superb performer and an outstanding talent.



We headed back to the campsite at the Rugby Club and caught the tail end of the set by the [Welsh T Band](#). The last band of the festival for us as we had to head back home on Monday morning. The guys were in the throws of recording the live set. A great sound, undeterred by the 'soggy' environment!



A fantastic end to what had been an outstanding festival for us, it was just a shame we didn't catch more of the bands and artists that were performing throughout the town. The trail this year had been one of the best and was well supported. There had been mixed feelings about the artists booked for the International Stage, but from what I heard all went well and was much enjoyed by those who opted to pay for the privilege.

Once again the festival introduced us to some new, great, blues bands like Hooson, Rhythm Zoo and Fuschi4, as well as established artists such as Chantel McGregor and Kyla Brox, who in my opinion are some of the best of the new generation of 'Women of the Blues'. The festival showed just how



exciting, fresh and talented British Blues artists are in 2012, in my view British Blues has never been so healthy.

Let's hope the Great British R & B Festival will continue for the foreseeable future and provide a platform for the many blues bands and artists out there on the circuit.....rain or not!!!!

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