

**Review for The Great British R&B Festival (British Stage and Trail)
@ Colne - 28th - 31st August 2015
Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive**



Here it was again, one of the most prestigious blues festivals in the country, **The Great British R&B Festival** based in Colne, Lancashire

With a great line up on the International Stage and The Matthew Clarke British Stage, a varied array of excellent bands and artists on the Acoustic Stage, Outside Stage and at the Roadhouses it all made for a full on four days of amazing music and fun.

Friday

Opening the festival on the Matthew Clarke British Stage on the Friday evening, were the **Black Circles**. They are a dynamic three piece, full on rock blues band with an amazing sound. Hailing from Warrington they are Sam Bratley on incredible guitar, Martin Saunders on impressive bass and Phil Wilson on pounding drums. Playing a mix of self penned works and covers they did an excellent take of BB King's 'Every Day I Have The Blues' and an epic 'Going Down'. They are certainly a band to watch out for, especially as they are a band based in the Northwest, a definite 'must see' if you get the chance. <https://www.facebook.com/theblackcirclesuk?fref=ts>



Black Circles

Lucy Zirins, the Lancashire lass and well established singer songwriter and guitarist, is a familiar face at Colne. Appearing with her band, this was a first for me. It was a great change to hear Lucy alongside other musicians and it worked brilliantly. She has a natural charisma and each time I hear her play she has upped her game and this performance was no exception. With the backing of keyboard, double bass and drums to complement Lucy on acoustic guitar and vocals, they played an excellent take of the classic 'Wade In The Water' plus many of Lucy's own material . Her style now has a leaning towards Americana, which suits the music she writes. An excellent set and I will be looking forward to hearing her new EP due for release sometime in November.

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



Lucy Zirins and Band

There was a certain 'wow' factor with this young rock blues band from Clitheroe. **Good Foxy** were one of the six acts chosen to appear at the festival, by The Jessica Foxley Unsigned, who support young players. They were picked from many bands and artist from across the country who applied. Fronting the band on excellent lead vocals and guitar was George Banks, with Henry Crabtree on guitar, Freddie Bruhin on confident bass, Callum Sykora on incredibly proficient drums and James Robinson on keys. They showcased some of the excellent new material that will appear on their debut CD that is soon to be released, finishing off the set with an absolutely brilliant Good Foxy take of Hey Joe. For such a young band they have an incredibly well put together sound and I heard influences of the Doors, but with a uniqueness that is unmistakably Good Foxy. They are a truly exciting band to see live, as they are full of high energy and with great musicianship, I can see this bands profile raised considerably in the coming year, so watch this space.

<http://www.goodfoxy.co.uk/>



Good Foxy

From North Manchester, the well established **Lol Goodman Band** gave some standard blues rock. With Lol Goodman on guitar and vocals, James Horrocks on bass, Jon Frith on drums and Phil Barrett on keys and guitar, they gave a good down to earth performance.

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



Lol Goodman Band

On the Acoustic Stage, a favourite at Colne, **Blue Swamp** captivated the audience yet again. With Mike Bowden on acoustic guitar, vocals and humorous banter, John Williamson on electric guitar and vocals and Big Vern on percussion and vocals, they played some excellent self penned music from their current album 'Voodoo Soup' interspersed with classic humour. They are always a band that you need to see live to get the whole package. <http://blueswampband.co.uk/>



Blue Swamp Band

Saturday

Opening the Matthew Clarke British Stage on Saturday and playing to a packed house, were **The Revolutionaires**. From the North East they gave a brilliant performance and are a favourite with the crowd. With their own individual 1950's R&B, rock & roll, jump jive style they had the audience bouncing from the off. Fronting the band on guitar, keys, harp and vocals is the charismatic performer Ed Stephenson, with Rich Stephenson on double and electric bass, Gary Hoole on super sax and Mark Matthews on drums. They finished off the set with a brilliant Big Joe Turner number, 'Jump For Joy'. <http://www.the-revolutionaires.co.uk/>



The Revolutionaires

Some great New Orleans blues from the charismatic band from the Midlands, **Stomp & Holler**. With the introduction of tenor and bass sax, flute and trumpet, full on keyboard, drums and well rehearsed vocals, they are well away from the normal run of the mill blues bands. An excellent set and a great band to see live. <http://www.stompandholler.co.uk/>



Stomp & Holler

An outstanding solo acoustic performance on the Acoustic Stage from **Sean Webster**. Playing many of his electric works, but on the acoustic guitar including the renowned Etta James track 'I'd Rather Go Blind', he had the audience spell bound. <http://www.seanwebsterband.com/>



Sean Webster

As a four piece, **BabaJack** gave a superb performance of blues, folk and roots music. With Becky Tate on vocals, cajon, and African drum, Trevor Steger on wine box guitars, harmonica and vocals, Tosh Murase on drums and Adam Bertenshaw on bass, they played some old classic blues numbers including an epic 'Death Letter Blues', plus many self penned songs from their albums, including some from the soon to be released new live album, 'BabaJack Live' . <http://www.babajack.com/>



BabaJack

Catfish were another of the six artists to be chosen for the Jessica Foxley Unsigned. From the south of England, the highlight was the young and competent guitarist Matt Long, who was definitely from the school of Bonamasa. They played a superb set with tracks taken from their debut album, 'So Many Roads', including an epic 'Make It Rain'. This band have been on the rise this year, playing at many festivals and supporting named artists, they were also finalists in the British Blues Awards 2015 in the Emerging Artist category. Keep an eye out at next year's festivals for these guys, giving us the cream of blues rock. <http://www.catfishbluesband.co.uk/>



Catfish

Masters of their trade, **Slack Alice** were on top of their game for this session. Local to the Northwest the historic blues rock band is fronted by the legendary Cliff Stocker on amazing vocals, joined by two class guitarists, Chris Preston and Colin Redmond, with exceptional bass player Alan Sagar and drummer Liam Barber. Cliff gave his all with his superb gravel voice, playing songs taken from many of their excellent albums. They performed a fantastic rendition of 'Preacher' with Colin playing the banjo and Chris on superb resonator guitar, master of the slide and 'Conversations' with the classic bass solo from Alan Sagar supported by Liam on drums. They were also joined on stage for a couple of numbers, by the incredible twelve year old saxophonist Maddy G, who gave a performance well beyond her years. The 'buzz' in the hall was brilliant and Slack Alice definitely 'kept us a rockin' with this superb set.



Slack Alice

From the Northwest, **The Kyla Brox Band**, gave a brilliant performance as usual of blues, soul and jazz, in true professional style. Kyla was joined on stage by the forever young Victor Brox, who I find it hard to believe is in his 80's, such was the electricity between father and daughter. With Victor on vocals and keys and Kyla on vocals and flute, supported by the rest of the band of total class musicians, it made for a mega performance. I still don't understand why the Kyla Brox Band are not on 'world class' view, such is the level of the musical expertise. <http://www.kylabrox.com/>



Kyla Brox Band with Victor Brox

Closing the Saturday evening on the Matthew Clarke British Stage, were the superb **Sean Webster & The Dead Lines**. Sean brought his own dynamic style of blues rock to the table with incredible vocals and the benefit of two excellent lead guitars and awesome bass and drums. Playing many of the brilliant tracks from the current CD 'See It Through'. They finished the evening with the funky rock number 'Hold On' and set the room on fire. An amazing set from an amazing band!!!

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



Sean Webster & The Dead Lines

Sunday

Seen briefly at the Rugby Club Roadhouse on Saturday night and on the Acoustic Stage on Sunday, **Andy Twyman** is a one man band with an edge. This young man is an excellent, versatile, contemporary singer songwriter that gives the 'blues' a new take with humour and a total multi instrumental experience. He played his classic and unforgettable track 'Eating Pot Noodles With A Plastic Fork' and he has a new single out at the moment 'Try To Stay Alive'. A great live entertainment experience. <http://www.andytwyman.com/>



Andy Twyman

The **Sharpees** are a three piece blues rock band with an Americana flavour. They played a good honest set with original material, influenced by the likes of Feelgood, Gallagher and the Stones et al, with many numbers taken from their current CD, 'Mississippi Thrill'. Hailing from Surrey, the band are Bill Mead on guitar and vocals, Baz Payne on bass and Brendan O'Neill on drums.

<http://sharpees.webs.com/>



The Sharpees

This young man has caused quite a stir on the blues music scene of late. **Laurence Jones** from the Midlands, is on top form musically and his performance at the Festival was no exception. Playing to a packed house on the British Stage, he played blues rock as it should be played. With Laurence on superb guitar and vocals, Roger Innis on bass and Miri Miettinen on drums, the band gave a great performance including some classic BB King and even a bit of Hendrix. A worthy set from some excellent musicians. <http://www.laurencejonesmusic.com/>



Laurence Jones

Tales of Two Counties, from Lancashire and Yorkshire, were one of the six acts to be chosen for Jessica Foxley Unsigned. A great band at what they do, with a leaning towards folk rock with some stomping bluegrass on the table, they produced a great sound.

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



Tales of Two Counties

Having seen these guys on a number of occasions, I would say that the set **Rosco Levee & The Southern Slide** performed on this evening was one of their best. They took command of the stage from the off, with some rockin' self penned works. Hailing from Kent and fronting the band, was Rosco Levee on vocals, lead guitars and slide, with Andy Hayes on guitars and mandolin, Steve Watts on keys, Simon Gardiner on bass and Dave Tettmar on drums. The band are a powerful well precisioned machine, giving us British blues fused with American southern rock and soul. An excellent band with a 'full on' sound and superb musicianship from all. <http://roscolevee.com/>



Rosco Levee & The Southern Slide

The magic harmonica lady **Dana Dixon**, with a great voice, gave a superb performance on the British Stage with her band, giving us some down to earth blues. Dana on amazing blues harp and vocals is supported by her band, with Dave Dixon on guitars and slide, Gareth Jones on bass and Al Murray on drums. Playing a mix of West Coast, Texas & Chicago blues, interspersed with self penned numbers they gave an authentic take from the blues masters of yesteryear. <http://www.danadixon.com/>



Dana Dixon Band

Moving from the British Stage we sampled a bit of the trail, catching the band **The Alfie Ibbotson's Popular Beat Combo**, from the Preston area, at the Crown Roadhouse. They played some honest blues rock covers with fantastic vocals from front man Tony Wardle and certainly had the pub 'a rockin'. <http://www.alfieibbotson.com/>



Alfie Ibbotson's Popular Beat Combo

I think the ambient buzz of the Mathew Clarke British Stage continued throughout the evening and that set the scene for the excellent **Aynsley Lister Band**, who gave one of the best performances I have seen. Most of the material in the set was the multi award winning Aynsley's own material, with a dash of Freddie King for good measure. The final number was the iconic Purple Rain, which was played to perfection. <http://www.aynsleylister.co.uk/>



Aynsley Lister

Monday

Opening the Monday afternoon on the British Stage, with excellence and professionalism were the Scottish blues rock powerhouse, **Gerry Jablonski Band**. Fronting the band on superb vocals and master class guitar was Gerry Jablonski, with harmonica player extraordinaire Peter Narojczyk giving a new dimension to blues harp playing. With Grigor Leslie on bass and Lewis Fraser on drums and vocals they gave an impressive performance, even though the crowd was small. Gerry did a walk about into the audience with his guitar in pure showman style and Lewis the drummer was invited to the front to do a vocal solo. It was a great way to open the last day of this brilliant festival with a class band of musicians. <http://www.gerryjablonskiband.com/>



Gerry Jablonski Band

Our final act to see before heading home, were **The Blues Swamp Band** again, this time at the Admiral Lord Rodney Roadhouse. In the small and intimate venue Mike's humour was on top form, as was the music. An excellent set. <http://blueswampband.co.uk/>



Blue Swamp

So now it was time to hit the road, sadly missing **The Little Devils, Ardenland, Roadhouse, George Shovlin & the Radars and Laura Holland Band** on the British Stage. From all accounts the afternoon and evening were buzzin', so it was well done to the bands I missed.

Many thanks and well done go to the organisers of the festival, particularly Cliff and Alison, and to the many volunteers, sponsors and Roadhouses, who, without their continued support, the festival wouldn't be the mega event it is today.

Looking forward to next year's Great British R&B Festival 2016

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

www.facebook.com/lancsbluesarchive