



## Review for BOWNESS BAY BLUES @ Bowness on Windermere - April 2014

### Lancashire Blues Archive goes to Bowness Bay Blues by Rosy Greer

Windermere lake is a perfect backdrop for what turned out to be a magic festival. With an exceptional all British line up, the festival was a flagship for the very best of British Blues.

Arriving in plenty of time on Friday afternoon, we settled into our hotel and had a few beers before heading off to the Hydro Hotel to catch North West band 'Blue Swamp'. They played to a packed house as a trio this evening, with Mike Bowden on acoustic guitar, John Williamson on electric guitar and Big Vern on percussion, giving us the blues and a bit of storytelling. A great set from these lovely guys. <http://blueswampband.co.uk/>



Headlining at the same venue, were 'Midnight Train', a blues soul band fronted by Debbie Giles, with the great Sam Kelly on drums. Playing to an overly packed house, it got a bit too hot to linger, so we retreated to the bar and listened to the excellent set from there. A relaxing end to the first evening of the festival. <http://www.midnighttrain.co.uk/>



On Saturday we were up bright and early, ready to catch the first artist of the day, 'Dan Burnett', doing a solo set at the Burn How Hotel. Dan, from Harrogate, is a singer songwriter and master of the piano and keyboard. He played an amazing mix of sultry blues, soul, boogie woogie, a bit of Ray Charles and shades of Stevie Wonder. Dan has a superb voice and I'm sure we will be hearing a lot more from him as a solo artist and with his band when his debut album 'Storyville' is released later this year. An outstanding and memorable performance from this very talented musician.

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



We decided to hike up the hill early, to the Hydro Hotel, to get a seat and to catch one of the best bands on the circuit at this time, 'Brothers Groove' from Birmingham. They play a mix of blues funk and are four of the most talented musicians I have seen for a long while. Shaun Hill, on exceptional guitar and vocals, has written most of the songs on their incredible album 'Play The Game', released earlier this year. Nige Mellor another superb musician on guitar and vocals, Deano Bass on groovin' bass and vocals with Jim Simpson on powerhouse drums gave an amazing performance, all from the heart. The highlight was Shaun's heartfelt vocals and playing of outstanding guitar solos on 'Another Girl', with such passion and emotion that you needed to get a hankie out. The band have deservedly been nominated in Blues Band and Emerging Artist categories of the [British Blues Awards](#) 2014, and all I can say is they are just brilliant!!! <http://www.brothersgroove.org/>



After that whirlwind performance we headed back down to the Lake District Boat Club, where another great Midlands band were playing. 'Slowburner' are a blues rock four piece, fronted by

outstanding vocalist Paul Bridgwater with Mike Bannister on superb guitar, Rob Newell on belting bass and the charismatic powerhouse that is Dave Small on drums. They played a brilliant set with some of their own material and some covers, blues rock as it should be played!

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



The Wheelhouse next door was filled to bursting with those eager to see the long awaited return of the amazing 'Sean Webster Band'. Sean is 'an inspiring guitarist, vocalist and songwriter'. From all accounts he didn't disappoint, providing the crowd with 'class' blues rock with his rich and poignant vocals and fiery guitar solos in his own individual style. A great way to end the day!

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



Recovery Sunday and a slow start for us today. At the Stag Head Hotel, 'The Swaps' from Leamington Spa, gave an interesting set. Fronting the band is Beth and her wonderful voice, with James on acoustic lead guitars and the raw earthy blues harmonica from Tomo. With Chris and Dave on bass and drums, the band played classic blues, leaning towards folk in their own very individual style.

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



We then headed back to get in the 'groove' with some more of 'Brothers Groove', at the Lake District Boat Club. Just awesome!

For the penultimate session this afternoon, we braved the packed Wheelhouse to see the 'Marcus Bonfanti Band'. He played to a full house giving us his own take on rockin' blues and as always, he managed to give a one hundred per cent performance. Great vocals and guitar playing, as one would expect from this 'class' musician and was well backed by the rest of his band. Marcus has been nominated in the Male Vocalist and Acoustic Artist categories in the [British Blues Awards](http://www.britishbluesawards.com/) for 2014. <http://www.marcusbonfanti.com/>



The last stop today was the Hole in the Wall for the 'Blues Duo', who are Tommy Allen and Johnny Hewitt. They hail from the Chester area and played to a packed house for over an hour longer than they were booked for. They showed great showmanship with their Chicago style stomping blues interlaced with rock n' roll. Tommy is the master of the guitar and added stomping drums, while Johnny is just the coolest blues harp player I've heard for a while. Just brilliant! <http://www.thebluesduo.com/>



What a great end to a great festival. My only regret is that I couldn't get to see everyone, so apologies for those who don't get a mention in this review. Well done to all the organizers, volunteers and venues for putting the festival together, it's a hard job, done well and may we all continue in 'Keeping Live Music Alive' and supporting live music throughout the region. Roll on next year!!!

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