

Review for UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL 2016 @ Upton-upon-Severn, Worcs 15th-17th July 2016
<http://uptonbluesfestival.org.uk/> Highlights by Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive



Attending this award winning Festival after three years away was a delight. Upton Blues Festival has continued to grow in stature especially after winning the title of 'Festival of the Year' in the 2015 British Blues Awards and deservedly so.

With a great line up on three stages, a Blues Cruise and a plethora of great bands and artists in the pubs throughout the town, the weather decided to be kind, making this one of the most enjoyable and well supported festivals in the country.

We kicked off on Friday evening, arriving to see Kat & Co on the Riverside Stage, giving their own take on blues and soul.

It was then into the courtyard of the Star Inn to see some classic rock and blues with The Maz Mitrenko Band from Birmingham. Playing a mix of self penned and classic covers, the band has a definite leaning to the school of Gallagher, which was certainly a crowd pleaser. Maz Mitrenko on guitar and vocals, along with bass player Pete Vickers and charismatic drummer Phil Brittle, were joined on stage for a couple of numbers by vocalist Paul Steadman, also from Brum. A great evening was had by all, including the band! <https://www.facebook.com/The-Maz-Mitrenko-Band>



Maz Mitrenko Band

Saturday rolled in with the big band sound of Big Mac's Wholly Soul Band on the Riverside Stage. An 11 piece outfit playing classics from the likes of Wilson Pickett to Sam Cooke. Certainly a band to get the day started big style.

Moving onto the Sports Field Stage with it's more relaxed atmosphere, we took in the delights of the competent duo Mat Walklate & Paolo Fuschi. From Manchester, the pair have been making quite a name for themselves with the release of their album 'Kicking Up The Dust'. With Mat on blues harp and vocals and Paolo on excellent guitar and vocals, they played self penned numbers and classic traditional blues covers with style. A highly recommended duo to see.

<http://www.matwalklate.co.uk/mat-paulo.html>



Mat Walklate & Paolo Fuschi

Back on the Riverside Stage one of my favourite bands of the moment, Chris Bevington and Friends from the Stoke on Trent area. With a full on big band sound with brass - going out as a nine piece today, they showcased many of the tracks from their brilliant current album 'Better Start Cooking', as well as tracks from the previous release. They are a collective band with some high class musicians within the fold. Playing a mix of blues based music, they were fronted by great guitars and vocals from Scott Ralph and Jim Kirkpatrick, with George Glover on keys and Chris Bevington on bass. The Riverside Stage sound was awesome and the band are certainly well suited to play to a large audience. A brilliant set from an exceptional band. <http://www.chrisbevingtonmusic.co.uk/>



Chris Bevington & Friends

Another favourite of mine LaVendore Rogue from Essex, hit the boards on the Riverside Stage. Once seen, these guys would never be forgotten. Fronting the band on vocals and pure theatre was JoJo Burgess, with Joel Fisk on amazing guitar - both these guys are nominated in the British Blues Awards this year. Rob 'Tank' Barry on bass, Warren Lynn on keys and Stephen 'Cupsey' Cutmore on drums all added to an amazing performance. Leaning more towards Americana they played a mix of self penned ballads and up tempo numbers, from their current album 'Light Up with LaVendore Rogue' with a few Hokie Joint tracks thrown in for good measure. They were on top form and certainly a crowd pleaser. <http://lavendorerogue.com/>



LaVendore Rogue

The blues cruises have always been popular at the festival , with no exception this year. We caught the delights of the Tom Walker Trio, from Birmingham, on a trip up the river. Fronting the band on exceptional guitar and vocals was Tom Walker, a young man who is destined for a bright future. Supporting him on bass and drums were masters of their trade, Deano Bass and Jimmy Simpson, both from the acclaimed Brother Groove. They played a mix of blues, rock and funk with self penned material and popular classics also highlighting numbers from the new EP that is due for release 'The Strangers Face' . A most enjoyable trip with some of the best music of the festival.

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



Tom Walker Trio

We briefly caught Aynsley Lister on the Riverside Stage performing in his usual form, but it was difficult to take in too much as it was crowded for this popular performer.

Sunday was a day of 'chill' as we headed to the Sports Field Stage. After the hustle and bustle within the centre of town, it was refreshing to be able to sit on the grass in the sunshine and enjoy the amazing music on offer. Half Deaf Clatch, a superior country blues acoustic player, gave a great performance to an appreciative crowd. The Creole Brothers gave an uplifting and humorous show with a Cajun feel and the very best of folk /roots.

The highlight of the day for me were Wille & The Bandits, from Cornwall. Although I have seen them many times before, I never get bored and each performance is unique. Fronting the band, was Will Edwards on strong and raw lead vocals, excellent lap slide and guitar. 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 -Matt and Andrew have been nominated in this year's British Blues Awards . They produce music in a range of genres from roots fusion and rock to blues and world music. An incredibly talented band that is once seen, never forgotten. <http://www.willeandthebandits.com/>



Wille & The Bandits

After the Bandits mega performance we headed back into town to take in the ambiance of the music throughout the town before heading home. Upton Blues Festival has certainly upped its game since we were last here, so it's well done to all those involved in making this one of the best blues festivals in the country.

Rosy Greer - Lancashire Blues Archive and Independent Reviewer

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