FESTIVAL FEVER

Sunday Afternoon
The biggest surprise of the festival took place at the start of the final session. Unlisted and largely unknown, Marcus
Barfanti took the stage by storm — without any warning. He was one of the guitarists who had supported Earl Thomas
on the previous evening, but his relatively subdued role in the band had given no hint of his true potential. His powerful bass-
taboe vocals and his deuce acoustic guitar playing, wrapped in wonderfully offbeat and self-deprecating imagery, was
a revelation. Combining songs from his brilliant debut album, Hard Times, with a selection of songs from his forthcoming
second album, and all of his most recent hits, he confirmed for the first time the extent of his impact. Marcus was
the surprise of the festival, and the crowd loved it. He repeated the act on the final day, and the audience was
overjoyed.

Next up were the recently reformed Seatbelts, fronted by the hugely talented Harry Skinner on guitar and vocals, and
completed by former member of the Dave band, Saunders, on bass, and the newly recruited Ray Drury on organ and
drums. The crowd was a great mix of reformed seatbelts and old favourites, and the reaction of the crowd made it very clear
that their return to the UK blues scene is very warmly welcomed. Harry Skinner is undoubtedly one of the classiest
guitarists in British blues.

The final surprise package came in the form of the Washington, DC-based trio, Tom Principato's Powerhouse, on their
first visit to the UK. Despite their Eastern seaboard location, their music is in perfect tune with the spirit of the
festival. Tom Principato is a legendary musician, with the legendary Roy Buchanan as one of his influences. He
switched between Strat and Telecaster to provide a stunning set with 'Too Damn Funky' off his latest album, Rooling
Rock, particularly well-received.

The marvellous and aptly named 'The Blues' took to the stage, led by festival-favourite Ian Siegal, who began with a splendid solo set on
steel and acoustic guitars, including his popular rendition of 'Gallo Del Cielo.' He was then joined on stage by bass player
Andy Graham, and drummer, Nicola Bjuré, to perform a substantial selection of songs from their excellent, latest album,
Broadsides. It was a wonderful and a memorable weekend, which left everyone fully contented and already looking
forward to next year.

No praise can be too high for organiser, Nick Westgarth, and his tireless team. The quality of music and the organisation
of events were top class and the atmosphere relaxed and friendly. The Carlisle Blues Festival is among the very best in the
country and long may it continue.

Lionel Roos

SKEENESS ROCK‘N’BLUES FESTIVAL

29/01 - 31/01/2010

When Bluntiss promised something different for this year's festival, no one envisaged that they would be arriving in a blizzard that would turn the hot into a winter wonderland for the weekend! It might have been freezing cold outside but there was plenty of hot rhythms and Rock and Roll going on inside! It was a weekend of plenty of new bands and different styles of blues being added to the mix.

Rock n Roll was also on the agenda with a stack of great bands playing. It was a weekend of bracketing and new bands added to the mix. Some of the highlights included:

The Blues Matters Stage was a hit with a great weekend of music with a classy performance by The Bare Bones Boogie Band. The Mick Rutherford Band took over next and then had the crowd a dancing and singing along. The Blues Brothers and the Rockin' to their repertoire including a debut of their latest number, 'Liverpool Lullaby.' The title turned out to be somewhat of a

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vocal power of an opera singer. If this was not enough for the punter, down at Jack's Bar
Gary Boner had organised another of those traditional Late Night Jams. To a packed house, Roadhouse and guests were rocking the joint to the rafters, much to the delight of the punters. The set got a lot of praise from punters and musicians alike as one of the highlights of the weekend. The festival is complete now, and the party is over, but music memories
are sure to last a lifetime.

The Jay Tamblin Band started the session. Jay had the crowd enthralled not only with his band and the bands' musical talent but also their showmanship, almost a modern twist to back stage show phase of blues history. Jay was followed by a Blues 'princess' Chantelle McGregor and her band. Chantel's performance was probably one of the most striking of the weekend and a packed house took this young lady to their hearts. Not just because of her beauty and superb stage persona but her soulful heart wrenching voice and that stunning guitar work on top. Mick Rutherford was watching and was not pleased. "You look like you could do better." He then joined in on stage with his band and
was later invited to perform a duet with their lead singer on a cover of "I Saw Her Standing There."

The weekend was a huge success with a great line-up of bands playing and new bands added to the mix. It was a weekend of nostalgia and new bands added to the mix.

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Carol Berrington