

Blues and Booze Festival: Bangor on Dee, North Wales

12.4.2012

For the second time The Buck House Hotel was the site of the aptly named "Booze and Blues" festival. Although downsizing from last year's two day event, there was no shortage of fine artists on display, all organised by the 'Goin up the Country' blues club organizers Pete Evans, Paul Taylor and Ian Williams.

The proceedings were kicked off by the hit of last year's festival Blues Boy Dan who performed an impressive set including 'Black Cat Bone' and 'Little Red Rooster', but the highlight was the magnificent cover of Bruce Springsteen's 'Atlantic City', which earned a standing ovation from the receptive crowd. Blues Boy Dan seems to improve with every performance and it's clear to see that he has a very promising future in store. The second act was the Miami-based guitarist John Emil who was appearing on his first European tour and whose set featured songs from his album *Roots Future Sounds* and impressive covers of 'Can't be Satisfied' and 'Dust My Broom' but the highlights of the hour long set were the covers of Mississippi John Hurt's 'Payday' and The Allman Brothers' 'Midnight Rider' both performed on lap steel guitar.

The first band to set foot on the stage were the fantastic Guy Tortora Band. The four piece consists of Guy Tortora - guitar and harmonica Pete Hedley - drums, Janos Bajtala - keyboards and backing vocals and Costa Tancredi - bass, who performed mainly self-penned numbers including the incredible 'When Cotton was King' and rounded off their set with a superb cover of The Rolling Stones' 'Honky Tonk Woman.'

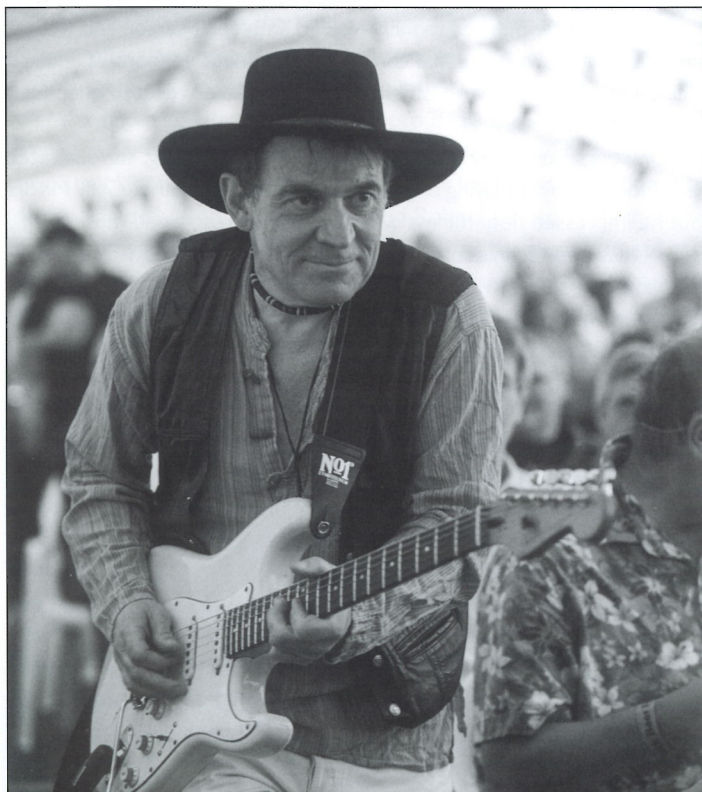
The evening featured The Robin Bibi Band's hard rocking set. The band featured Robin Bibi - guitar and vocals, Craig Bacon - drums and Tony Martin - bass. The set featured several instrumentals and self penned numbers as well as impressive covers of Stevie Ray Vaughan's 'Couldn't Stand the Weather' and 'Cold Shot'. The impressive, slow-paced, 'Under Your Spell' was the definitive number of the set which was

followed by crowd walkthroughs and impressive guitar playing from Bibi. The penultimate act of the evening 'Cry Baby and the Hoochie Coochie Boys' featuring Rob Wilkinson - harmonica and vocals, Graham Sells - guitar and vocals, Vince Cutcliffe - guitar, Trevor Pinson - bass, Andy Carr - Drums and Freddy Pirotta - keyboards. They kicked proceedings into overdrive with their own brand of feel-good blues featuring tracks from their superb debut album *Sweet Thing* including the tracks 'Don't Lie to Me' and 'Burlesque Dancer', as well as impressive covers of Bo Diddley's 'Who Do You Love?' and 'Hoochie Coochie Man'. By the end of their set the dance floor in front of the stage was packed as they performed their encore of 'One More Shot.'

The headliners of the event needed no introduction. The Stumble (Paul Melville - lead vocal, Colin Black - lead guitar, Rob Livesey - lead guitar, Boyd Tonner - drums, and Simon Dixon - saxophones) set foot on stage and delivered their impressive set of tracks many of which are set to be released on their new album *Lie to Me*, on the 2nd of June, as well as well known favourites such as 'The World is Tough' and 'All over again' (which featured the ever-present crowd walkthrough by Simon Dixon on saxophone.) They closed the evening with the new track '360 degrees'. With the event being an unequivocal success many blues fans in the North West will no doubt be pencilling in next year's 'Booze and Blues Festival'.

John Taylor

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ages: Ian Williams