

played like demons possessed, whilst young Marcel Scherpenzeel delivered a potent mix of RG songs, runs, riffs and guitar solos with an edge as Gerry and Ted never let him play religious note for note RG, but create an aura that is the essence of RG but never an absolute. This makes it all the more exciting, interesting and enjoyable. This performance was my Linton Festival 2013 favourite.

**Hayseed Dixie.** Well I seemed to have missed seeing these guys for ever until now! Thank God I did catch them, as I thoroughly enjoyed their off the wall humour, tongue in cheek asides and non politically correct political comments! Their parody of Queens' *Bohemian Rhapsody* and Motorhead's *Ace of Spades*, along with the likes of Alien Abduction etcetera, they proved to be a good laugh as well as demonstrating extremely talented and accomplished musicianship. Four men of varying hirsute appearance beguiled us with their chosen ditties (often dirty, whoopee!) All the while they impressed with outstanding instrumental virtuosity. I swear I heard faint strains of Hobart Smith and old timey rap as well some Scruggs and Flatt in foggy mountain breakdown mode in there, and perhaps a Bill Munro hoe-down refrain here and there. Lastly there was a definite airing reminiscent of Ralph Rinzler there somewhere. Great Stuff! Vocals too were magnificent and their wonderful harmonious output put me in mind of an old vinyl album of mine by The Greenbriar Boys. A wonderful ending to another Linton festival.

Once again Linton did us proud. From humble beginnings they have built up a spectacular programme of artists appearing each year, improved on site facilities, raised monies for local charities, remained calm and professional through difficult times and as a result have given us 'A great Little Festival', one not to be missed!

## KAZ HAWKINS STRAND ARTS CENTRE, BELFAST AUGUST 31ST, 2013

**Kaz Hawkins** emerged on the Belfast blues scene a few years back fronting a trio who rejoiced in the name Mama Kaz (a somewhat lame pun playing on her supposed physical resemblance to The Mamas and The Papas singer Mama Cass), and playing heavy blues rock. Her decision to dissolve that band seemed bizarre as the band's popularity was growing apace.

But, now trading as a solo artist, backed by a quartet and two backing vocalists, it transpires that Hawkins knew what she was doing for, launching her new incarnation, she blew the audience away with her soulful, intense and expressive singing of a repertoire almost entirely comprising outstanding original compositions. Hawkins' songs are typically inspired by her dramatic life experiences which have included cocaine addiction and having her children taken into care, followed by rehabilitation and having her children returned to her.

*Lipstick And Cocaine*, for example, was a harrowing ballad on which Hawkins reflected on her addiction and her victory over it; *Drink With The Devil* was about a diabolical, hard-drinking boyfriend; and she introduced *Colliding Into One* as a song 'about the past', adding, 'I'll never be ashamed about my past'. The one cover was of the standard *Feeling Good*, which was sung with tremendous authority and sensitivity.

Hawkins has largely moved away from blues into singer-songwriter territory but her charisma and exuberance are irresistible and the gig ended with a standing ovation and Hawkins, overwhelmed, in tears. In support acoustic guitarist Joby Fox, a serious-minded singer-songwriter, performed songs, including *Republican & Loyalist*, which were often dismayed

reflections on the Troubles. Belfast, once an Irish hit for his band Energy Orchard, suggested his ambivalence towards the city. Two short films were also shown: the atmospheric *Lost Commandos*, directed by Joby Fox and Sophie Rasmussen, was enigmatic but seemed to be about terrorists giving up their campaigns; the avowedly inspirational *Believe* – the theme of the evening – was directed by James Rea Jr. and featured talking heads, including Hawkins, reflecting on success, failure and regrets.

TREVOR HODGETT

## ZOE SCHWARZ BLUE COMMOTION REGENT THEATRE, CHRISTCHURCH SEPTEMBER 13TH 2013

On a wet Friday 13th evening and on the day Christchurch was announced as the latest annexe to God's waiting room, the Dorset town clearly needed cheering up. Step up Zoe and Blue Commotion for the launch of their new CD *The Blues Don't Scare Me*. Dressed in a spangly top, Zoe was in great form from the opening *Something's Got A Hold On Me*.

You soon realise how Zoe's voice blends in with her tight band, as if she's another instrument in the band. She feels each emotion that's felt in the songs, placing it firmly in the audience's lap. Having mentioned the band, have to give them a heads up too.

Husband/guitarist Rob Koral is what I call a steady 'old school' player. By that I mean no histrionics or posing during solos, he also acts as a splendid musical director. Keyboard player Pete Whittaker quietly gets on with his job, again outstandingly. Bassist Bas Terraz debuted with the band tonight and laid down some great lines, having a brilliant understanding with drummer Paul Robinson (Nina Simone's touring band member

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