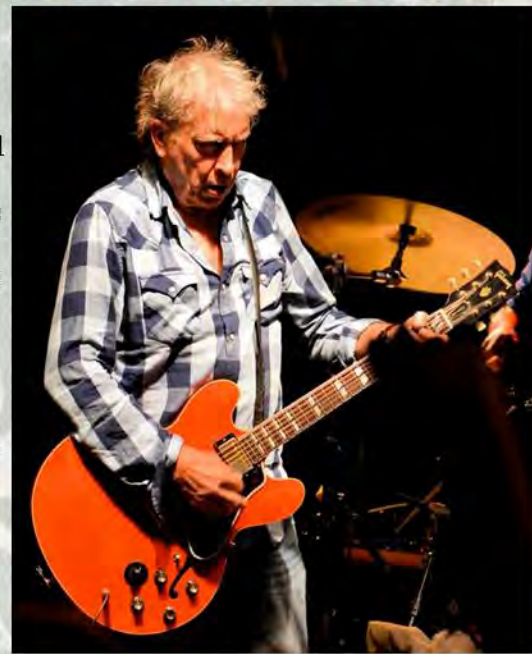


# Fargo Blues Festival



If I was to make a list of my top 5 favorite Blues Festivals, Fargo Blues Festival would be on that list. Talent chosen for the festival is always superb. Dan Bredell has the golden ear when it comes to picking out the bands, and he never forgets the locals. He takes care of his own and fills the stage with some of the best the world has to offer. This years lineup included Elvin Bishop, Coco Montoya, Trampled Under Foot, Guitar Shorty, John



Nemeth, Shawn Holt & The Teardrops, Laurie Morvan Band, Annie Mack Band, James Armstrong, Soulmates, Blue Dog and Fargo's own Blue Wailers.



I ran into a few folks that had festivals going on much closer to home. They chose the longer drive just because of the lineup; it was quite simply better. One of the main reasons I choose going to Blues Festivals all summer long is the friends I meet along the way. They are



my unofficial family, so to speak. Going to Fargo is a little bit like a family reunion for me. Jon Lovold, who takes care of the backstage, treats me like a king. Along with his right hand man, Bob Belheumer, he makes sure no one wants for anything. Those two, along with the rest of the volunteers, work their butts off, so others backstage can have a care free day. The meals are superb as well. My hat's off to that crew also. The stage crew is Chaz Productions. Chaz along with Steve Matzke run the stage like a Swiss watch. No delays here folks; everything is on time. M1 Productions are the people in charge of the sound. They delivered a sonic masterpiece!

This festival is held on the plush outfield grass at Newman Field; the place were Roger Maris played minor league ball. The stage is against the left field wall, and the rest is for the festers. The grass is so green you can smell it. There is lots of great food; the vendors rock and the prices are reasonable. If it gets a little too warm for you, (like it did for me on Saturday), you can retreat to the bleachers for a little shade, as well as a hand crafted beer, hot dog, some ice cream or even a cup of hot coffee. That is what I chose on that hot afternoon; I know, I know.

The folks I hung out with was my first Canadian connection, Brenda Richtig and her friends Rob and Rick. They are as cool as they come. Brenda and I share the same B-Day and we have been FB friends for a few years now. It looks like we will till the day we die. I just need to find a way to get to Canada. I hear the Thunder Bay Festival is one of the best in the land. Elvin Bishop was way cool to me, and everybody else as far as that goes. He posed for me a couple times. I talked to him after the show. He looked me in the eye and said "You do good work". His bass player was kind of tucked away in back of the stage. He looked at me then glanced over to her. I got the message and got about twenty pictures of her. How cool is that? Elvin Bishop wants everybody involved. I liked





him a lot; he's a down to earth guy that gave everyone the time of day. So did Guitar Shorty. But you people know that. He always stays and signs autographs till the last dog is hung. At 74, the man has plenty of gas left in the tank.

Blue Dog started the festival off on Friday afternoon. They did their job and then some; this is a great band. I think it's important to have a top flight opener. It sets the tone for the rest of the festival. By the time they finished, they set the bar high. The Soulmates showed up and rocked out. There was a couple of technical glitches to start with. Once that got ironed out, it was business as usual with this rock solid band from the Twin Cities. Like I said, Dan Bredell gives the local bands a shot every year; and every year they come through. The Blue Wailers

proved that the musical talent in Fargo ND, is alive and well.

It was great to see Trampled Under Foot one last time before they call it quits as a band. I believe they are done in October; but that doesn't bother me a whole lot. I am more excited to see the directions they are all going to travel. The music hasn't stopped. Something tells me it's just beginning. Yes, they were a hit. For a lot of folks, it was a first time viewing of this incredible band. They have the word 'talent' stamped all over each and every one of them.

I got to stand five feet from Coco Montoya while he did "Am I Losing You". It is one of my favorite Blues songs. He lit it up with the guitar solo and made my hair tingle.

John Nemeth was just flat out fun to be around while he was performing and afterwards. He has a great sense of humor intertwined with a down to

earth heart. Don't you just love people like that. I know I do.

Shawn Holt is living proof that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, (he's the son of the late Magic Slim). I love those thick, rich types of Blues. It's the kind that stays with ya long after the shows over. It was also great to see my brother from another mother, Christopher Biedron. Great bass player, dynamite friend.

It was a first for me to see James Armstrong. He had broken his foot stepping off stage a week or two back, and had to do this show sitting down. I could see where it was a big pain in the butt; oops! I mean foot. It was the first time ever attempted. James pulled it off with flying colors. James is a true Bluesman from head to broken foot.

Annie Mack took over the stage at the hottest time of a hot day; and turned up the heat while remaining cool. It was been a pleasure to watch Annie's rise to one of the most sought after Blues act in the country. She's earned it! There's no stopping this determined gal. She has worked hard and put together one of the best bands in the country.

With each performance, I see her confidence grow. I am proud to tell people that Annie Mack and her band are from my area.

I knew Laurie Morvan was going to put a charge in the crowd. I saw her in Memphis at the IBC a couple of years back. She had the 152 Club on Beale St. in a frenzy. She thoroughly entertained the crowd in Fargo. She's a ripping guitarist with vocals to match. Laurie leans a bit to the rockier side of the Blues and that is just fine with me. She made a little trip into the crowd and had the folks eating out of her hand. She has a great stage presence and knows how to transfer it to the audience. It was quite evident from the first ten feet into the crowd, she has a special gift. She fit like a glove. I would put some miles on to see this lady again; she's a pro.

I had a blast all weekend long. Thanks to Dan, his crew, and everyone for the hospitality. I can't wait to see what's in store for 2015!

