

European at Blues Heaven

In recent years, the Blues Heaven festival in Frederikshavn has grown bigger and bigger and is a favorite destination for Norwegian blues fans. Many Norwegians have this festival on their blues calendar, and many have booked accommodation and ferry tickets a long time ago. But this year, we are probably many who have looked at the poster for the festival and thought - can this go well?

TEXT: NINA HANSEN

This year, the original program was only big blues names, mainly American artists. Many have looked forward to seeing and hearing Bobby Rush, John Primer, Johnny Rawls, Li'I Ed and Daniele Nicole, + many others. But then came this pandemic, then, and threw around everything.

Bluesnews spoke with festival director Peter Astrup to hear what is happening with this year's festival.

In Denmark, the situation (at the time of writing) is a little different than here in Norway. The Danish authorities approve up to 500 people, as long as they are seated and safety distance. It was expected that it would be possible to have up to 1000 people in August, but this has not yet happened. If this happens, the capacity of the festival will increase accordingly. Peter says that he hoped for a long time to get his American artist over, but in the end, he realized that it would not work. But there will be a festival!

Arena Nord is still the concert venue. There will be only one stage, in the large central hall. There will be tables and seats, and there are also seats in the stands. There will also be a separate area for those who have bought VIP tickets. This year's artists come from

Europe, and Peter Astrup has worked hard to get his artists signed quickly. And it has become a varied list: Guitarist Kirk Fletcher, who has been to Norway many times (Kirk is admittedly American, but currently lives in Europe), French Fred Chapellier, Spanish Travellin' Brothers, German Kai Strauss & The Electric Blues Allstars, Italian Groove City with Daria Biancardi, Swedish Mr. Bo & The Voodooers with Lollo Gardtman, as well as Trickbag and Kokomo Kings. As many as three bands come from Norway, Vidar Busk & His True Believers, Joakim Tinderholt, and Jelly Roll Men.

- I look forward to going out with the names, says an always enthusiastic Peter, it will be nice!

Many had already bought tickets for this year's festival. Peter says that they can choose between getting the ticket refunded, transferring the ticket to the festival in 2021, or using it at this year's festival. You can also choose to donate the purchased ticket for 2020 to a hard-hit festival, which has not received any Danish government's crisis packages.

- It is essential to treat our regular guests with respect, says Peter. We have many guests who return year after year.



Kirk Fletcher er headliner på årets Blues Heaven. (Foto: Rick Gould).

As many may have noticed, Stena Line has its ferry route between Oslo and Frederikshavn has been closed down. DFDS now sails past Frederikshavn on its way to and from Copenhagen, so a direct boat from Oslo is still an option. Dan-Hostel in Frederikshavn, a place where many have lived during the festival, went bankrupt this spring, but has now gained new owners and is open again. Peter goes on to say that most things are as usual in Frederikshavn.

Freddy's Pub has been a popular daytime venue during the festival, with fantastic intimate concerts, and Freddy's is also part of this year's program. They will accommodate 120 people inside. They also have an outdoor stage in the backyard, but concerts will presumably not be there. November can be sour and cold in Frederikshavn. The artists who will perform at

Freddy's during the festival are Travellin' Brothers on Thursday, Kai Strauss on Friday, and Mr. Bo & The Voodooers on Saturday.

Tickets for Freddy's are on sale on their Facebook page. Around 400 tickets have been sold for this year's festival. Peter thinks that some of them will be changed for next year's event, so more tickets will go on sale!

Those who had been looking forward to seeing the artists who were booked for this year's festival must be patient until next year. The plan is to get the same artists next year, but things can happen, and who knows what the world will look like in over a year.

- It will be nice, it will be Europe's most significant blues and soul sitdown party this year. Tells Peter about this year's festival and welcomes his Norwegian guests to Frederikshavn on 6 and 7 November.

