

Tramore Ska Festival proves a great success



The Selecter, fronted by Pauline Black, produced a fantastic set at O'Shea's, Tramore.

The fourth Ska Festival in Tramore proved a great success over the Easter Weekend and plans are already in place to potentially extend the event over four days next year.

Hotels, hostels and guest houses were full in the town for the event, event organiser Owen Kavanagh told The Munster Express, with Mark Dunne also assisted in its organisation.

Visitors came from, Dublin, Cork, Limerick as well as the UK for the event and we met some regular attendees who described it as their favourite music weekend of the year.

Local band Skazoo, reformed for the weekend and with lead Singer Mark Graham they were on flying form at midnight on Good Friday/Easter Saturday in The Sands Hotel with Owen Kavanagh, Kieran Eaton on sax, Pauline Travers on trumpet and Doxie Kiely and Owen Corrigan on keyboards.

They pumped out many hits from the Beat, the Specials and other famous band from the Ska era.

Earlier, Olas Boss from London's East End did some brilliant DJ work, he would later play on Sunday afternoon and at the main event in O Shea's the previous night.

Olas is a great West Ham fan, full house again in Sands for the final gig and finale with the Hacklers

The Selecter from Coventry in England flew in specially for the lead headline €22 per head gig, which saw O'Shea's packed with 400 attending .

It was like the 1980s again down there as music fans lapped up all the hits. Many of you reading this will know 'On my Radio', 'Too Much Pressure', 'Missing Words', 'Gangsta from 1979/1980', 'Celebrate the Bullet', plus later tracks like 'London Burning'. Arthur 'Gaps' Hendrickson was also on vocals.

Pauline Black, who is Afro Caribbean, started the group in 1979 but there's been a number of personnel changes over the years; nonetheless they put on a storming set that will be talked about for years to come.

She mentioned how Irish emigrants and West Indians had much in common and also faced racism in Britain, telling the audience how much she liked playing in Ireland. For a woman that started the band in 1979 (reforming in 1991), she had still exuded great energy.

Let's hope they come again and those that missed it will want to see them return; they performed no less than four encores at the end of their one hour 40 minute set.

Earlier in the evening, the Dublin-based Bionic Rats played a very strong set in the while a younger band the Dodgy Few got the crowd really going in the Raglan on Sunday.

"They were fantastic," said Owen Kavanagh, "as were The Explojans...it was a great weekend."

Earlier in the day there was an outdoor market with various food and gift stalls, including Ska Fest tee-shirts and hats.

Traders did well on Easter Sunday with the fine weather food but Saturday wasn't so busy- but we expect visitors to flock back for the Prom Fest!

A scooter display also took place with the Waterford Scooter Club and was filmed by Irish TV.

On Sunday, between 3,000 to 4,000 visitors came to Tramore, with up to 5,000 estimated to have visited over the weekend. Plans are already being made for next year .

This year the budget rose from €10,000 to €20,000 and another increased could well be in store for next year, according to event organiser Mark Dunne, who said the re-opening of the Grand and HiB shall help in terms of additional venues. He thanked all the pubs, food outlets and accommodation providers who supported them and how the town got behind it.

The development of a busker trail on Strand Road on the Sunday afternoon has already been floated and the prospect of extending the Festival into Monday, with free public events will extend the event's appeal to families.