

Richie Arndt – Blues Masterclass

Checking Richie Arndt's work – on stage and behind the studio glass panel – you quickly realize: The man is the complete deal. Maybe *the* German blues hero! Says who? The public: Richie's currency is audience reaction, turnout and record sales. But just for the record, the man was named **Best Contemporary Artist** at the **Blues In Germany Award 2015**. A year later, he got the **German Blues Award 2016 – Best Album**. Before Covid, he was honoured for the third time: **German Blues Award 2018: Best Voice / male**. And just a few days ago, on September 10, Richie received the **German Blues Award 2022: Best Guitarist!** Early on, it became clear to Richie that he was influenced more by the axemen on the British Isles rather than stateside – role model at the start was Rory rather than B.B.! A beginning that inspired Richie to develop in 3 dimensions:

Guitars: In a band context, you get the assured rhythm player that makes Keef seem almost a poser. The Arndt lead guitarist makes Eric take note. Let him take out that bottleneck – he'll provide a mean & moody slide as if that's what he's been doing all his life. (He has). And that's still not the whole spectrum: Richie's acoustic guitars can tell tales without a word sung or spoken. Whenever he combines these articulated skills with the Martins and Gibsons of others – like Gregor Hilden – six- and twelve-string conversations evolve that please the mind.

Vocal expression: Some singers drink whatever hooch they find to appear hoarse & heavy – anything to sound "authentic", beaten by some "hard life", and good luck to them. Richie's vocal chords work assured, in pitch, as mild or wild, melancholic or untamed as the particular song demands. But it's always Richie's own inimitable timbre, not a fake persona. That's how his followers recognize him, and treasure his pure, unpretentious reading. He's his own man, and his voice another calling card.

Story-Telling: Richie travels. He will tell you all about it, in his stage patter as much as in his special presentations like his "Train Stories" and "Mississippi" showcases. But the best stories can be found in his versatile song-writing. Dive into his vast catalogue of 16 albums: "How Can I Win (Your Love Again)" grabs your imagination so deeply, it must be a cover version – it isn't: he wrote it with his long-time sparring partner Felix Janosa. Next on that album AT THE END OF THE DAY, "My Brother Jake" sounds very much like Richie – only Reggae-fied, but it's the old Free nugget by Andy Fraser and Paul Rodgers. It's just that Richie tells Jake's tale in a way that he makes it his very own.

Background? Experience tells Richie that musical styles overlap: "The Blues" contains jazzy elements as well as gospel, rock and pop, Reggae is Caribbean R&B. Watch out: B.B. King listened to Country all day on his Japanese transistor: that's all there was! Versatility, the freedom of putting into the musical stew whatever pleases you, characterizes all of Arndt's projects. It culminated in his current Richie Arndt Band, established 2018, often enriched by American singer/songwriter power house Kellie Rucker. Richie's music isn't about homage, it's the real thing. Domestic fans between Sylt and Salzburg needn't travel any further for their blues – the touring is done by Richie himself: the blues ambassador has played in almost all the European countries between Moscow and Memphis.

One again: How can Richie Arndt be a German blues hero? Richie was born in East Westfalia, nowhere near the Mississippi! Well, Clapton was born in Ripley, Surrey – which isn't Atlanta, Georgia either! Southern England is nearer to Cliff Richard than to Little Richard. So shut up about Westfalia – you don't need to pick cotton to play the blues – all you need is guitar, voice & stories, off you roll!

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