

BENIDORM SOUL WEEKENDER 2027

14.15.16 MAY

THREE NIGHTS OF SOUL, DIVERSITY AND SERIOUS DANCE FLOOR ACTION

When I first heard that Tony Matthews, Simon Van Os and Steve Kite were coming together to create their own event, I already had a feeling that the Benidorm Soul Weekender was going to be something special. With three DJs who have such a deep knowledge and love of black music, the musical possibilities were always going to be exciting. What I didn't quite expect was just how much ground they would cover - or how relentlessly busy the dancefloor would be across three unforgettable nights.

Held from 15-17 May at The Marina Resort Benidorm, formerly Hotel Marina Benidorm, the weekend was perfectly located for a soul weekender. A vibrant hotel known for its energetic party atmosphere, it sits just a four-minute walk from Levante Beach and right in the heart of Benidorm's entertainment district. In other words, the perfect setting for a weekend where music, sunshine and good times were very much on the agenda.

From the moment guests arrived, there was a real sense that this was more than simply a weekend of DJs playing records. The organisers had clearly thought about the whole experience, and communication was excellent. The dedicated WhatsApp group became the hub for keeping everyone updated, with information, timings and important announcements shared throughout the

weekend. It was a small but important detail that made everything feel organised and reassuring for those attending.

That attention to detail was particularly evident when there were rumblings of rain. Rather than allowing the weather to potentially put a dampener on proceedings, the organisers acted quickly and changed the venue arrangements to ensure the good vibe of the weekend continued. It demonstrated the experience behind the event and, more importantly, showed that the team were determined that nothing was going to spoil the party.

I also had some time with Tony Matthews during the weekend, and he gave me an insight into the story behind how this whole adventure began. As Tony explained, it was only a year earlier that the three amigos - Tony, Simon and Steve - had been together in Benidorm when the idea of creating their own weekender first came about. Fast-forward twelve months and that idea had gone from a conversation between three friends to a fully-fledged event, with a packed dancefloor and a growing following.

It was fascinating to hear Tony talk about the journey, particularly given his long history within the music industry. During our conversation he also shared another great piece of musical history with me. Back around 1975, Tony was Pete Tong's first roadie and even took a photograph of him during those early days. Tony also introduced the young Mr. Tong to "Blues & Soul", creating a lovely connection between his own musical journey and the magazine's long-standing history of documenting black music and culture.



It's these stories that remind you that behind every DJ, every set and every event, there is usually a much bigger story - and Tony's history in the industry certainly adds another layer to what the Benidorm Soul Weekender represents.

Musically, the event brought something genuinely different to the soul scene. Rather than restricting itself to one particular sound or era, the weekend celebrated the sheer diversity of black music - with 80s soul, 70s classics, reggae, Motown, 60s soul, R&B, The Sound of Philadelphia, soulful house, modern anthems and old-skool hip hop all finding their place.

And it worked.

By 9pm on the opening night, the venue was already lively and packed, with the crowd clearly ready to forget about the outside world and dance. The 3 Amigos opened proceedings with an 80s soul welcome set, immediately establishing the musical quality that would become the hallmark of the weekend.

Penny B and Roni O'Brien then brought their own unique energy to the decks with a wonderful selection of 70s soul and reggae. Their presence was one of the real highlights of the weekend for me. Affectionately dubbed the "Dos Chicas", their back-to-back sets added another dimension to the event and demonstrated just how important it is to have women represented behind the decks at soul events.

There are still relatively few weekenders that can boast two such talented female DJs playing such a prominent role, and Penny and Roni certainly made their mark. Moving effortlessly through 70s soul, reggae, R&B and modern anthems, they brought a distinctive touch to proceedings and had the dancefloor responding every time.

The opening night continued with Chris Brown taking us through Brit-funk before Tony delivered a set of 80s soul classics. Steve Kite then switched things up with 70s disco before Simon Van Os closed out the night with soulful house. It was quite a musical journey - and one that demonstrated the depth and versatility of the DJs involved.

Saturday's "Dress To Impress" night raised the bar even further. Penny B and Roni O'Brien opened with R&B before Simon took us into new jack swing and old-school hip hop. That set was serious damage on the dancefloor! The response was incredible, and I found myself jumping around non-stop. Chris Brown followed with Motown and 60s soul, before Tony brought the unmistakable sound of Philadelphia to the room. Steve then rounded things off with his "House Resurrection" set.

What struck me throughout the weekend was the attention to detail. Everything felt extremely well organised, yet never over-produced or lacking in atmosphere. The team worked brilliantly together, constantly ensuring that everyone was happy and that the weekend ran smoothly. Their collective experience of the music industry, events and DJing was evident in every aspect of the organisation.

Most importantly, though, the music was allowed to take centre stage.

VENNA SOMERSET HOUSE 23/07/26

For the last few years there's been a quiet revolution unfolding in British music.

Well, not always that quiet. An exciting wave of young jazz artists have taken the genre in new directions, creating something unique to this island.

Acts like Kokoroko, Ezra Collective, Sons of Kemet, Yussuf Dayes, Nubya Garcia and Moses Boyd have sculpted sounds nowhere else has, drawing influences from around the world.

And Malik Venner is an important part of that conversation. The saxophonist and vocalist has been an exciting up-and-coming star for some time, and his 2025 LP "Malik" leaves absolutely no doubt he's the real deal.

The stunning Gothic setting of Somerset House was the setting for a London show. The performance, part of the

There was a real sense of freedom. You could hear a favourite 60s classic followed by 80s soul, then find yourself dancing to house or old skool hip hop minutes later. It was a celebration of black music in all its forms rather than an event confined by genre.

Across the three nights, the dancefloor was consistently on fire. It genuinely felt like one enormous marathon dance session, with the crowd refusing to let the energy drop.

Overall the Benidorm Soul Weekender succeeded because it had personality, diversity and - above all - a genuine love of music running through it. Tony, Simon and Steve have created something with a real identity, while Penny and Roni added another hugely positive dimension to an already impressive musical line-up.

A massive thank you to the entire team for making me feel so welcome. The attention to detail, communication and willingness to adapt when

needed demonstrated just how much experience and passion sits behind this event.

The buzz for next year's Benidorm Soul Weekender is already causing a frenzy on the soul scene, as already it is a sell-out! For more information on how to bag your wristband, visit www.benidormsoulweekender.com. There are plenty of hotels to choose catering for all budgets, and flights are really reasonable too. Don't miss out on this fantastic weekender! Make sure you sign up!

WORDS: CLAIRE DANIELL

REVIEW | @ @vennagram

historic venue's always-impressive Summer Series, highlighted just why there's so much hype around him. Looking effortlessly cool as he strode onstage, the Londoner fell into an early

groove that quickly placed the audience in the palm of his hand.

"Numero Uno" and "Prophet" sounded majestic on a beautiful warm evening next to the Thames, and an early version of "Zazu" hammered home the pedigree of musicians up on the stage.

Venna, whose work with Burna Boy earned him a Grammy when he was just 21, has been on course for the top for a long, long time.

The high point of an excellent show was a brilliant rendition of "My Way", a sublime track that helped propel the album to greatness. The rhythm, the melody, the vocals... it all fell into place beautifully.

Venna and the British jazz wave are one of the best movements around at the moment, and on the quality of shows like this, will only go from strength to strength.

WORDS: CLAIRE DANIELL

