

you'd just been delivered some of the best Blues to be had!

The Idle Hands. They are the best unsigned rock band in the UK, so the publicity says. That could well be true as they impressed many old fans there in the audience and by the time they had finished their set quite a few new ones. They are a popular gigging band and have a stream of good mentions in the rock press. I saw them at Colne last year for the first time and they seem to have been everywhere else since. Good luck to them. Long may they rock – and if you buy enough of their CDs their lead singer may be able to buy some shoes! They are a good fun Rock'n'Blues outfit enjoying themselves and pulling good crowds. Can't be bad.

Sandie Thom. What came next was somewhat of a disappointment to me – I and it seems others with me were expecting an electric set from Sandi Thom and her band, but it was an acoustic set from an all seated band and so those who were not in the front rows, stage wise, could not see a thing, and yes, the opening harmonica and first few songs sounded promising, but I'm afraid to say not what you need at this stage of proceedings! After the jubilation and tour de force of Eugene this slowed the programme down. People around me spoke of how nice a voice Sandi has but said they needed the momentum to be kept going and perhaps catch a glimpse of the band a little more animated, as, alas, an acoustic moment such as this failed to meet up with expectations. I will go catch her with her band and see how their electric set shapes up.

Ruby Turner Band. This band finished the evening off in fine soulful bluesy style for everyone. She has matured into a great singer of international standing in her own right as well as with the Jools Holland Band. I can remember her as a fine lady of soul fronting her own band at The Kings Hotel

in my home town, Newport, some years back, when she still had her day job in an office! She was a powerful vocal force then, and even greater now, and her repertoire has expanded since coming under the influence of Holland, and other notable musicians she has performed with. This evening she was just as sensational and took the audience by storm, despite a few hiccups with the sound! Having got that sorted and put to rest, she went on to give a belter of a set and had everyone dancing and singing along to the last dying hours of Saturday night. It was a grand finale to the day's proceedings.

SUNDAY

Laurence Jones Band. The day started with an extraordinary band that had everyone talking before and post performance. And, what is more, the first standing ovation I have witnessed for a debut act at Linton! This young outfit drew much admiration from the punters by giving us an awesome, non-stop, high-octane hour or so, of soul-drenched rocking good blues. Much of their programme was drawn from their new CD *Thunder in the Sky*, and I have no doubt sales of this album did well afterwards. Watch out for this young gun and his bunch of bluesters. Their version of Dylan's [via Hendrix] *All Along the Watch Tower* was impeccable, and their own songs stood up well to the classic numbers within the set list. Just as Ben Poole won hearts and minds over on the Friday by sheer guts determination and pure professionalism, so too did Laurence and his crew. Both bands should go on to much greater things in the future. I'll be following them in earnest over the coming years.

Grainne Duffy Band. Now here's a young gutsy lady with a voice to match and also talented guitar work to boot! She and her band are joined at the hip, and gel so well they make a formidable

group of musicians with that 'must see them again' factor for the audience. Grainne's voice has often been likened to that of Bonnie Raitt, and again with that of Rory Block. It's been some time since I heard Block live, but had only seen Bonnie a week or two before and yes, she's like her, but her skilful and subtle craft is her own and gives a beautiful uplift at times to well-chosen blues anthems in the set list.

Her band are all excellent and given show time, where they each flourish and perform to perfection. They are riding a British and international blues festival high these days and long may it continue. People around me talk of her version of *I'd Rather Go Blind* as second only to Etta James. Here I must reserve judgement as I have, over the years, heard many fine renditions of this all time classic and I don't like to put anyone's version above others, as I find circumstances have great bearing on emotions as well as time and place, but having said that, Grainne's version was divine and compelling listening.

Band of Friends. If I just said 'I danced myself into oblivion', or just 'Wow what a band!' you may know what I meant, but that doesn't do true justice to the three members of this fantastic band, who sang, played and wove a magical rousing Rory Gallagher 'happening' in a field at the back of a country pub in the idyllic bucolic County of Herefordshire one summer evening. The county road signs say **HEREFORD** and underneath the first four letters (HERE) they put **YOU CAN!** Well, Band of Friends did! And what's more, so did the whole of Linton. It was getting dark, the stage lighting was on and a cool breeze picked up – just as well, as the whole field was awash with people dancing, singing and having a mighty fine time. Gerry McAvoy and Ted McKenna (rhythm section)