

Words and Deeds

THE SUNDOWNERS

Sankofa – She Drew the Gun – Marvin Powell

EVOL@ the Kazimier

The superb line-up for this gig meant much counting of days before the appointed hour arrived. Headliners THE SUNDOWNERS are part of Liverpool music royalty – not only with Alfie Skelly (Lead Guitar) and Fiona Skelly (Vocals/Tambourine/Rhythm Guitar) but also Jim Sharrock (Drums), channelling the drumming prowess of uncle Chris (The Icicle Works, Robbie Williams, etc). Completed by Niamh Rowe (Vocals/Rhythm Guitar) and Tim Cunningham (Bass), the band are back home after a short tour. However, before they appear, three other acts grace the stage.

MARVIN POWELL, a singer-songwriter with a guitar and a double-bass player, has good early support for his opening slot. Songs such as Buried showcase his intricate guitar-playing and delicate, folky vocals.

Louisa Roach, aka SHE DREW THE GUN is up next. A talented poet as well as singer-songwriter, she opens with new single If I Could See, backed by guitarist Jack Turner. The Kazimier's stage had been graced by another dazzling female poet and songwriter only two nights previously (Kate Tempest), and, on this evidence, Roach can certainly 'hold her own' in such company.

In our political situation (general election looming, 'none of the above' looking like the best option), the remarkable If I Could See illuminates a way we can express ourselves: 'I picked up my pen/I drew the gun' – and a link to Roach's stage name. Then, explaining that "Sometimes life's about fighting for what you want to, sometimes it's about love", she slips into some "soppy" numbers. She also demonstrates that she can dial up the pace with foot-tapping, chugging tunes; it is just unfortunate that the chattering crowd often drown out her words. Collaboration and interaction are key to Roach's vibe and, in her hook-up with Skeleton Key Records, she has a supportive base from which to continue her assault on the apathetic.

Next up are five-piece SANKOFA – upping both sound and tempo, although they mix the pace well. Tracks include new single Slow Killer City and its B-side, Vanishing Point, to be released on Record Store Day (19th April). They are an assured band, but seem a little subdued tonight, only really letting rip in the bluesy jam with which they finish their set, singer Stephen Walls' sister Jodie joining them for Got My Mojo Working, made famous by the inimitable Muddy Waters.

The Sundowners, playing to a packed, enthusiastic crowd, start their set with Wild As The Season, the first track on their eponymous debut album – a lovely piece of vinyl, by the way. Tight harmonies, evocative lyrics, fuzzy guitar and accomplished tambourine-playing follow, accompanied by the thrill of seeing two women with Rickenbackers fronting a band – heightened when Rowe slips on an Epiphone for a kaleidoscopic trip Into the Light.

Half a dozen or so perfectly modulated tracks later, the reverb and distorted guitar sounds of single Medicine close the set, further evidencing that the Sundowners are not just one-trick ponies. From the sweet harmonies of Hummingbird to the driving energy of Soul Responding, this band have it all. My advice: follow the Sundowners as they dance from star to star.

Let me turn your deeds into words