

TasteOfFortCollins2006CivicCenterParkFortCollinsTextTVS

Taste of Fort Collins, Civic Center Park, Fort Collins, June 11, 2006.

By Tim Van Schmidt

It's not officially summer yet, but Fort Collins got a good dose of hot summertime sun for the 10th annual Taste of Fort Collins in Civic Center Park on June 11. This was my first time attending the event and thanks to an infectious set of savory rock by the BoDeans, I'll be back to check it out again next year.

Of course, the Taste of Fort Collins is a street fair that not only pushes food, but also beer, crafts, art, games and rides. Oh, and entertainment too, mixing prominent regional bands with national headliners.

On Sunday, I was able to catch three bands. The first was Something Underground and they were impressive indeed. This four man band, fronted by two brothers, played an energetic progressive pop rock that achieved a more exotic sound when the bass player shifted to cello. Less convincing was the next band, Brethren Fast, a longtime rockabilly unit that probably is much more comfortable in a nightclub rather than in the bright sunshine in the middle of the day.

But then the main attraction, the BoDeans, came through with a good chunk of their powerful combination of close harmony vocals and simmering rock grooves. But this was not accomplished without a special effort. Two songs after the BoDeans took the stage in the crowded park, the set was interrupted by a power glitch that had killed the PA. The twenty minute or so wait temporarily put a damper on the festival's finale performance. A friend in the audience told me "I'm starting to lose interest." Meanwhile the sound people in the backstage area were frantically trying to restore power. But it turned out that the wait was worth while.

When the BoDeans finally took the stage again, it seemed to me that they were instantly ready to play- no more warm-up, no getting your bearings, just straight rock business. Soon the area in front of the stage began to fill with dancers and the celebration was in full swing. The BoDeans- featuring longtime musical partners Sam Llanas and Kurt Neumann plus a three-piece band- underscored their veteran rocker status by maintaining a perfect pace, moving fluidly from tune to tune, slower to faster, eventually filling the dance area and rousing a lot of the crowd on the grass to their feet.

But more than just professional pacing and some instantly listener-friendly songs in the classic rock vein, what the BoDeans- or more specifically Llanas and Neumann- offer is that same close blend of vocals that has made some other famous pairs of singers- like the Everly Brothers and Lennon and McCartney- stand out. In the case of Llanas and Neumann, when their voices mix together, a strong, warm and distinctive sound is the result. That mix is not just good harmony, but a special timbre that can rise above all else- the rest of the band, the grooves and even the songs themselves.

By the time the BoDeans played their buoyant encore, “Good Things,” it was clear that this band survives for a reason. They have something- at the bottom basic a distinctive vocal sound- and it strikes listeners in a positive and even inspiring way. That, even despite the power glitch- reflected well on the downtown festival. A good taste of the BoDeans made for a good Taste of Fort Collins.