

## COCTEAU TWINS

### GLASGOW

### BARROWLANDS

"LIZ! LIZ! He wants to give you his T-shirt! He does! HE DOES!!"

"Och, calm down, Robin!"

Yikes! Sod bleedin' Aqua Libra and fluffy wuffy bunny rabbits of incandescent spendiferousness, this is the Cocteau Twins' monster on-the-road machine in full effect, wrenching the hotel bar open after midnight, guzzling McEwans and Champers and, in the case of Robin 'Hagar' Guthrie, attempting to relieve innocent young hacks of their cherished Carter USM-cum-Pet Shop Boys shirts for the rather spurious reason that Liz Fraser keeps "bumping into" Neil Tennant in her local Marks & Spencer. All this in between bellowing about seriously unpublishable subjects which would make your pubes straighten and bring independent music to its knock-knocking knees.

Yup, tonight the cuddly, cloud-hugging Cocteauss successfully shatter (again) all the idiotic ideals they've never adhered to. Their first tour for four years kicks off in their hometown and from the soccer-style crowd response to the shambling arrival of the ban onstage, with nary a wiff of dry ice let alone an Armageddon-type build up, the evening attains a bizarre slant. Imagine Mega City 4 thrashing out fraggle rock in the Notre Dame Cathedral. Turn the concept on its head, and you'll envisage the Cocteauss travelling down to *Terra Firma*, the angels sanctifying the Barrowlands hellhole. Really.

The expanded line-up does little to lessen the bewilderment. With Guthrie and Raymonde supported by two extra guitarists and the rhythms remaining locked away in technology, like a wicked spirit entrapped in *Ghostbusters*. I particularly admire the light which occasionally explodes against the backdrop and thus silhouettes four giants at the front, surrounding and dwarfing the deliciously incomprehensible Liz, who's a deadringer for my Auntie Norma if ever one existed. Oh, (g)lamour.

And for the most part it's a *stubborn* show, a self-pleasuring

evocation of idiosyncratic touches and hang-us-if-you-dare disdain. They neglect to introduce any songs, predictably enough, because "titles are irrelevant", so I'm going to refrain from listing any. Suffice to say the bulk of the set is culled from the 'Heaven Or Las Vegas' and 'Blue Bell Knoll' albums. And you won't hear the likes of 'Pearly Dewdrops Drop' or 'Sugar Hiccup', because "they're too old to play". Obviously.

According to the spidery scribbings on the bus tickets which leap out of my back pocket the following morning, the Cocteau Twins tonight are dreamy, languid, 60p return, dramatic, sensual, lilting, hypnotic, graceful, effervescent and pulse-racingly attractive. Which means to say they sound exactly, impeccably as one expects them to. As one *wants* them to.

It could be a sanitised soundscape for health-kicking suburbanites. It may be a gloom-infested frolic for confused, disenfranchised goffs. It may simply be a shagfrenzy fandango for locals who got so plastered at The Pogues recently they were incapable of carnal indulgences. Who cares? Whatever the occasion, whatever the fashion, the Cocteauss can be there, making complete (non)sense of each particular environment.

Which is why they're still 'here' today ten years on, floating above the baggy flotsam with joyous serenity, elevated above the maelstrom by persevering — blinkered and snowblinded — with weaving waves of illogical beauty. So the drum machine jogs along like the Rover balloons in *The Prisoner*. The three guitars are inextricably entwined, melting into the synthetic flow and forming an *ersatz* trampoline for Liz's acrobatic opinions.

It's brooding and tranquil. Implausibly massive yet self-consciously crushed. And it's infinitely, magnificently larger than the sum of feeble critical parts.

"It's f—ing brilliant!" beams an onlooker, insanely. "It's . . . It's . . . It's like dolphin music!"

Eureka! Not very rock'n'roll though, is it?

**Simon Williams**