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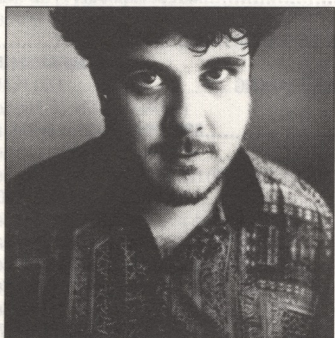
COCTEAU TWINS ➤

Their past and the present LP

ANNOUNCEMENTS: NICK CAVE, FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, BOMB THE BASS, CHESTERFIELDS + MORE

COCTEAU TWINS

The Cocteau Twins are one of the handful of the UK's independent artists to have crossed-over to international success, the history of their career on 4AD Records directly reflecting and contributing to the development of the independent sector as a vital force in the UK record market. Here, we quote 4AD's creative director Ivo Watts-Russell on his discovery of the group, record their career and Martin Aston reviews the new LP "Blue Bell Knoll", their first album in 2 years.



Robin Guthrie



Elizabeth Frazer



Simon Raymonde

THE BEGINNING

Robin Guthrie and Will Heggie saw Elizabeth Fraser dancing at a club in their home town of Grangemouth in Scotland and figured if she could dance that well she must be able to sing.

So, as young people do, the three got together as the Cocteau Twins. On the advice of The Birthday Party, who were touring in their vicinity, Robin sent a tape to 4AD's Ivo Watts Russell:

"When they sent me their first tape, it was a very rough rehearsal recording. Very powerful - incredibly powerful. I vividly remember hearing it for the first time. I'd been at Cambridge at the studio where Dance Chapter had been recording their 12" EP. Things weren't going well, and I'd driven away slightly depressed. Slightly depressed? Pretty pissed-off! Got in the car and had some demos with me that I had taken, and sort of popped this thing into my car's cassette-player. It was a wonderful feeling to hear that so instantly. But funnily enough, on that tape you could barely hear Liz's voice. So after I had contacted them and they came down from Scotland and I met them, we went into the studio. We were going to record a single, 'Speak No Evil' and 'Perhaps Some Other Aeon', so it was quite a revelation for me, with the power of the group, when Liz actually opened her mouth and sang, because I had no idea that she was going to be able to sing as interestingly as she did. I had asked the Cocteaus to come down and record pretty much on the basis of their instrumental capabilities, so Liz was just like this incredible bonus at the time. It was a good, good day."

"I'd worked with the Cocteau Twins for about a year before we entered into a longterm contract. I thought it was important that they have a certain standard of living. Plus I desperately wanted to work with them forever, or as long as it is appropriate."

THE PRESENT

THE COCTEAU TWINS: BLUE BELL KNOLL (4AD CAD807)

There was a time when it felt like The Cocteaus had got so caught up in their silky cobweb veins, their fluffy feather pillow dreamtime, in their tingle tangle tangle toodle twaddle (continued Beatrix Potter annual), ie. in their beautiful onomatopoeic state of musical flux, that they were in danger of becoming impenetrable. That time was precisely 40 minutes ago as "Blue Bell Knoll" glided ever so neatly over me, 10 absolutely perfect equations of prime Cocteau material later. Why the revisit? Because The Cocteaus have gone back to a preciseness, to a state of 'pop', away from their stretched-out 'progressions'. Again, as with 1984's "Treasure" which "Blue Bell Knoll" most resembles, the trio's strengths - Simon and Robin's circumventing guitar tantrums, like musical prayer wheels, fueling Liz's pass-the-smelling-salts incantations - have a fantastic light and lightness in the material, with such a clarity and brevity that I do declare The Cocteaus ache for the first time with the abandonment of perfect three minute pop. Of course, nothing has changed their songtitles, which include The Itchy Glowbo Blow, A Kissed Out Red Floatboat and the best yet, Ella Megalast Burls Forever. This record does just that. A hit.

MA

Quotes from Ivo Watts-Russell reproduced by kind permission of: The Offense Newsletter, PO Box 12614, Columbus, Ohio 43212, USA and

Emigre, 48 Shattuck Square #175, Berkeley, California CA94704, USA (Emigre issue 9, available in the UK through Rough Trade, is a 44pp A3 special issue devoted to the history of 4AD and its artist roster, including an extensive interview with Ivo Watts-Russell and in-house designers Vaughan Oliver and Nigel Grierson of 23 Envelope, who also provide specially-designed pages, including 2 from latest recruit to their design team. Chris Bigg)

4AD, 17-19 Alma Road, London SW18 tel: (01) 870 9724. Exclusively distributed in the UK by Rough Trade/The Cartel

THE PAST

GARLANDS / (CAD211) LP / JUNE '82

The results of the "Speak No Evil" single sessions, entering the UK Independent Top 10 after two weeks, peaking at No. 2

Later issued on cassette (CADC211) with bonus tracks from a Radio 1 John Peel Show session (Jan '83), and more recently issued on CD with Peel session and two previously unreleased tracks (CAD211CD).

LULLABIES / (BAD213) 12" EP / OCTOBER '82

PEPPERMINT PIG / (B/AD303) 7/12" / MARCH '83

After this release, produced by Alan Rankine, the Cocteaus toured Europe with OMD, during which Will Heggie left the group, to be later replaced by Simon Raymonde.

HEAD OVER HEELS / (CAD313) LP / AUGUST '83

Topped the Indie albums chart and introduced them to the National chart for the first time. Subsequently issued on tape (CADC313) and CD (CAD313CD) with bonus tracks from:

SUNBURST AND SNOWBLIND / (BAD314) 12" EP / SEPTEMBER '83

Topped the Indie singles chart and entered the National chart at 86.

PEARLY-DEWDROPS' DROP / (B/AD405) 7/12" / APRIL '84

Reached No. 29 in the National singles chart.

TREASURE / (CAD/C412) LP/TAPE / OCTOBER '84

Independent chart-topper, reaching No. 28 in the National album chart.

AIKEA-GUINEA / (B/AD501) 7/12" / MARCH '85

TINY DINAMINE / (BAD510) 12" EP / OCTOBER '85 AND ECHOES IN A SHALLOW BAY / (BAD511) 12" EP / OCTOBER '85

Released together on CD (BAD510/511CD)

THE PINK OPAQUE / (CAD513CD) CD / JANUARY '86

A CD-only compilation, initially intended only for American release

VICTORIALAND / (CAD/C602) LP/TAPE / APRIL '86

Reached No. 10 in the National album charts. Subsequently issued on CD (CAD602CD)

LOVE'S EASY TEARS / (B/AD610) / OCTOBER '86

THE MOON AND THE MELODIES / (CAD/C611) / NOVEMBER '86

A collaborative recording with ambient minimalist jazz pianist Harold Budd.

Also available on CD (CAD611CD)

BLUE BELL KNOLL / (CAD/C/T807/CD) / SEPTEMBER '88

Simultaneously released in vinyl, tape, CD and DAT formats, with limited-edition triple-gatefold sleeve album version.