



NO KIDDING

EIGHT YEARS INTO THEIR CAREER, THE COCTEAU TWINS ARE STILL PERCEIVED AS CULT ECCENTRICS. LIZ FRAZER AND ROBIN GUTHRIE WANT TO SELL AS MANY RECORDS AS DIRE STRAITS, BUT AT THE MOMENT THEY'RE BUSY WRESTLING TOILET BRUSHES OFF THEIR BABY DAUGHTER, REVEALS ALAN JACKSON

ROBIN GUTHRIE, LIZ FRAZER AND THEIR BABY daughter Lily are newly back from a European promotional jaunt and bristling with a sense of injustice: the Press in Norway and Sweden has The Cocteau Twins neatly filed as Goths. Meeting the proud parents at their Twickenham studio, you have to wonder how this image problem arose. They dress with a happy disinterest in any fashion, let alone that of early Siouxsie Sioux. And as for wanting to talk about sorcery and summer solstices...they're far too busy showing you their baby pictures.

"Maybe six years ago some twisted people could construe us as being Gothic, because we did have a lot of that sort of people coming to see us live, but that doesn't make us The Mission, for f***'s sake," fumes Guthrie over a calming mug of tea. "It's 1990. Simon (Raymonde, the third Cocteau, absent today on honeymoon leave) and I are 28, and Liz is 26. We've progressed as people, which is what makes the music different. Yet sometimes these journalists actually ask me when the band is arriving. They can't believe we're it - they expect us to be wearing capes."

You have to smile. Those Scandinavians who still clutch copies of 1982's debut 'Garlands' to their hearts and proclaim it the best Cocteau LP ever receive short shrift if put face to face with the obscure objects of their desire. Robin and Liz (and, for that matter, Simon were he here) have very little

time for their own back catalogue, let alone its deification. Having the last album self-destruct on the exact release date of its successor is a marketing policy all three would gladly subscribe to.

But the image problem goes beyond getting advertised alongside bands like Dead Can Dance in the European music press. Eight years into their career, The Cocteau Twins are still perceived as cult eccentrics - able to chart consistently and respectably with each new album, without ever threatening to cross over into the big league of

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mass awareness. For that they blame their record company, 4AD.

"They're not good - they're not good at all," frets Guthrie, reluctant to indulge in public linen-washing but unable to stop himself. "They're good for breaking new bands and getting them to a certain level,

but then they don't know what to do with them at all. That can be the only reason for us not selling more records than Dire Straits."

The pair sensed a marked lack of inspiration when it came to unleashing 'Heaven Or Las Vegas', their newest album, on the music-consuming public. "Our ambition has outstripped theirs," Guthrie observes. "We got to a certain level and then they lost interest. We're there now, a money-making machine for them, a very dependable source of income..."

Frustratingly for its makers, the album (although short on Gothic imagery) is probably their best yet, unmistakably Cocteau-esque but richer and more accessible. The reason, they say, is organic - new life-experiences and the like - rather than a deliberate change of policy. And though they admit to being influenced by everything from Patsy Cline to X to Roxy Music, they're unable to pin-point the effect such eclecticism has had on their own unmistakable sound. All they know is that they could try to make a heavy metal album and it would still sound like the Cocteau Twins.

"What I would like is for us to be accepted for what we are and not for what people who heard us in 1983 think we are," decides Frazer. "To be known for who you are and not somebody else's weird notion would be nice. Just as they are seven years older, so are we. Maybe people do realise that, maybe they give us a lot more credit than I think they do, but somehow I get the impression they don't."

This prompts Guthrie to address himself to the question that has been lurking, unasked, in the background. "How long do you think we can go on?" he demands. "What do you think? I don't know how to do anything else and I'm quite enjoying this."


It's hard to answer for a band which resents the limitations of its independent label, yet dismisses the possibility of changing to a major for fear of losing any degree of artistic control. The question is largely rhetorical anyway.

"I'm as pleased with this record as I was with any of the others, yet already we're picking holes in it," concludes Guthrie, an endearingly inept self-publicist. "I think Side One is totally unlistenable and Side Two is not too bad. We can do better and we will."

Perhaps baby Lucy represents the best chance of disturbing the status quo. "We took her to Europe and she trashed every hotel room we were in," reports Frazer, while Guthrie recalls being woken early one morning to find his daughter pushing the bristled end of a bathroom implement into his mouth. "Cocteau Twins In Bog-Brush Frenzy" could be exactly the sort of publicity they need right now.



Robin Guthrie, Liz Frazer and Simon Raymonde: will they cross over into the big league one day?



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Pic by A J Barratt