



## COCOROSIE BOARDS NOAH'S ARK

Text: Kendra MacLeod Photo: Shawna Elyart

Cocorosié is deceptive. At first glance their name evokes sugarcupums and fairies, their cover art capricious would-be fans with a Crayola rendition of unicorns and rainbows that are reminiscent of your own hedge-worthy elementary school masterpieces. On further investigation, one might notice these mythical creatures are caught in a three-way unicorn tangle that any Peapods would envy. The message: innocence intertwined with penitence, an idea symbolic enough for the entirety of Cocorosié's repertoire.

Sisters Blanca and Sierra Cassidy (once sworn enemies), discovered themselves in the scolding eye of music critics after they released their debut album *La Maison de Mon Réve*, forged from a surprise reunion between the two in Paris. They produced the album on an eight-track from the bathtub of Sierra's Parisian apartment. "We weren't thinking in terms of an album in the first place," explained Blanca via telephone from the sisters' shared Brooklyn apartment. "My approach to art making has always been very non-studio in the sense of the word. We also weren't trying to make an album exactly, we were just recording some songs and didn't have any plans for it. Our approach in the first place is very handmade."

Although the girls may not have created what later became *La Maison de Mon Réve* with the intention to produce and distribute an album, they mysteriously linked up with Touch and Go records, who released the album, which was quickly noted as one of the most innovative and pure albums of 2004. While touring heavily with Bright Eyes, TV on the Radio and others, Blanca and Sierra began fashioning the new songs that would eventually become their highly-anticipated sophomore release, *Noah's Ark*. "It appeared impossible in moments, but I think that was more to the fact that we were touring so much and we didn't really give ourselves as much space to make it. [Noah's Ark] but each song kind of came in a natural way when

we were ready for it. I figured we just prolonged the process by being so busy on the road," Blanca noted. Although many of the songs on Noah's Ark were created and recorded in the same improvisational recording venues as the first record, several songs were recorded within the realm of his studio—the difference barely discernible from their more low-tech tracks. "It was much more experimental and explorative in the sense that we tried out being in some studios and we did a lot of stuff the same way, and we did some stuff even more low-tech than we did in the first album," Blanca said.

Like *La Maison de Mon Réve*, providing an early haunting imagery pervades the song lyrics on Cocorosié's Noah's Ark. Simultaneously countering contradiction and controversy throughout most of their album, "Armageddon" mimics ideology espoused on their first album's track "Jesus Loves Me" which is sung as chorus, followed by the line, "but not my nigger friends or their nigger lives." On "Armageddon" the girls sing, "What a shame I don't have blue eyes/God must have been color blind/I'll make the world it would be all white." "It's just this kind of extreme contradiction," Blanca explained. "It's like Hitler's syndrome or something, here's this brown eyed tall Jewish guy who did all these really extreme things and really glorified this image of a blue eyed German person. It's about the absurd hypocrisy in racism and Christianity often kind of using it to back up their position, but that in itself even being a contradiction—but it can be a very real perspective."

Often adopting surreal, dream-like images with suffering and turmoil, the sisters manage to create a patchwork of life that rings true for people who are exposed to pleasure and pain in the most mundane sense of survival. "I guess that's what I look for when I listen to music and experience art is to experience new feelings in myself or

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to be carried to new territories in my imagination. I don't know if it's a goal but it's something I'd like to think that we're doing and there's no specific message but there's kind of multi-dimensional messages happening in each song and a lot of it has room for individual interpretation," Blanca said.

While Blanca and Sierra can see more records in the future together, they both are equally hard at work on side projects that feed their individual creativity and ambition. Sierra performs in another band, Metallic Falcon, while Blanca has created her own label, Vococo-EROS, on which she will release *The Enlightened Family* in unison with Noah's Ark. "I actually had this idea for this particular record and had to start my own label to do it. I wanted to archive all these personal songs of people that were unreleased and I didn't want to give the idea to someone else to do it," said Blanca. *The Enlightened Family* includes unreleased tracks from Devendra Banhart (Blanca's rumored romantic interest), her sister Sierra and several other close friends and respected musicians including J.H.1., Patrick Wolf, Euro folk icon Veshti Bryan, Diane Cluck, Spleen & Zan, Jara Hunter, Nomi and Island Folk Lora. "I think because of technology and all this overly produced, really creepy mainstream music without a personal story, it's a very DIY, at home kind of thing and that alone allowed all these different artists that didn't have big record deals to create something and put it out there."

Although Cocorosié have become two of the hand-crafted music scene's poster children, the two sisters don't fully grasp the idea of such a scene even existing. The roster of guest appearances on Noah's Ark include several artists who are commanding quite a bit of attention in certain musical circles, but the girls maintain their choice to include people who inspire them occurred very organically. "People were around, literally hanging around, while we were recording, but we have in this small kind of musical community, that has been a really big part of our lives within the last year so they're [contributors] all sort of close friends," Blanca said.

Noah's Ark certainly exhibits a noticeable musical evolution for Blanca and Sierra, with a pace and variety of songs that evoke a tempered pastel wash of rainbows fading slowly into the darkness of an inevitable impending storm. Although Cocorosié, and many of their indie brethren, have been hailed as championing the return of folk music—the bands' own album and sound falls far outside such a literal comparison. A disarming psychedelic adventure through the sacred and profane, Cocorosié melodically blends an array of indulgent, beautifully harmonizing songs to create Noah's Ark, manipulating language and tinkering with sound to deliver a novel brand of American-lo-fi.

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