



Left: CocoRosie at London's Bush Hall. Right: D alek and Michael Rother in Birmingham

## COCOROSIE LONDON BUSH HALL UK

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

During the encore to tonight's performance, a fan throws a white trilby hat onto the stage. Sierra Cassidy delights at the offering and puts it on before playing the precipitately erotic "Tahiti Rain Song". The bohemian dash she cuts under its brim is fitting. Nor is it a surprise that a hat named after the girl singer hypnotised and haunted by the mesmeric Svengali in George Du Maurier's novel should fit so well. CocoRosie's world is one made of dark undercurrents of power, the apparent innocence of the playful and childlike, the appearance of beauty that hides something malevolent, menacing, tales of what happens behind doors that are always locked and never opened.

The Bush Hall's antique music hall arches and chandeliers create a deliciously salubrious ambience in the July heat. The hall's low stage is perfect for seated audiences and standing acts. Tonight, however, the audience stand and CocoRosie sit. The theatricals of the Cassidy sisters, exorcising their demons over their toys, pianos and guitars, are only occasionally glimpsed through a heaving and excitable crowd of decadently elegant teenagers whose collective delicacy seems at odds with the dense scrum they combine to create.

Consequently a projected backdrop — a heavily treated loop of film hewn from *The Care Bears Movie* — dominates the visual tone of the performance. Its saturated hues slow and blur into psychedelic mandalas, the crass and simple tokens of childhood obsession and affection morphed into patterns that tug and tease. The

second song tonight, taken from the forthcoming *Noah's Ark* album, is called "K-Hole", in tribute no doubt to the dissociative timeless near-death experience Ketamine users embrace as the drug's narcotic boon. The boombox beats and echoes of tortured toy instruments propel CocoRosie's trip, chemical or otherwise, into a subconscious world of vicious and perversely transmuted symbols, each lurking around the corner or in the shadows to terrify those who are lost in the funhouse.

Performing live, the sisters are joined by Patrick Wolf on violin for a rendition of the recent download track "Beautiful Boys". However, it is vocal beats provided by Parisian rapper Spleen that dominates the sound tonight, and his solo rap on "Candyland" is warmly and joyfully received by the summer crowd. With the beats and electronic adornments more pronounced in

the mix, CocoRosie are a far less frail and fra proposition than they are on their recordings. Certainly their live robustness mocks the frequent description of them as a folk duo. Tonight is closer to Portishead than Pentangle. The new album cover shows a unicorn copulating with a horse that, in turn, is mounting a vomiting zebra. It's this intoxicated collision of the magical and carnal that CocoRosie seem possessed by and seek exorcism from in tonight's performance. The unspoken bond between the sisters gives a sinister mythical edge to their anguished and tender caterwauls. There's a perverse language of adult urges and impulses in children's bodies, or innocent mir trapped in adult form, and the music is of capricious and vengeful gods, grotesque because childlike, terrifying because of the corrupting knowledge it holds. □