

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE DABBLES IN DADA

PSYCHEDELIC CONCERT AT THE ROSELAND HAD UPS
AND DOWNS, BUT WAS AN OVERALL SUCCESS

BY MATT ROWNING



Illustrated are the three album covers of Animal Collective's latest release, "Painting With." From left to right are the band's Avery Tare, Panda Bear and Geologist.

Saturday evening's Animal Collective concert at the Roseland Theater was the biggest challenge I've had as a critic. The band did well. The set hit all the big songs off their new album "Painting With" along with some old classics covering the band's ten-album discography. The stage show was cool, with awesome lights and set pieces that complemented the aesthetic of the album. Karmic balance struck Animal Collective on March 5, though. There were things about this concert that were terrible, and as a critic I struggled with how to divide the good from the bad.

On the other side of the scale was the worst opening act I've ever seen, the hip hop duo Ratking. They were completely mismatched from the bubbly pop that is Animal Collective; their set was more like a less offensive Death Grips (see the graphic cover of "No Love Deep Web" for elucidation). The rapper of the duo was unintelligible, though whether that was his fault or the Roseland's notoriously boomy audio is anyone's guess. After suffering through 45 minutes of a single bass note with a guy hitting the same six drum patches over it, the duo finally left the perplexed audience to wait for the headliners.

Animal Collective started up, and the show got off to an awesome start. "Lying In The Grass," the second single from "Painting With" got the audience moving. People were excited. There was a girl in a panda hood, a reference to the band's own Noah Lennox, who uses the pseudonym Panda Bear. People pointed to her and smiled as the band took the stage.

Things turned sour again. A third through the concert, an aggressive audience member pushed and displaced me from my spot in the crowd. The woman behind me, standing at about 5' 2" would not stop complaining about my girlfriend's purse and how she "couldn't see the fucking ceiling." We had to leave our spot in the crowd, and ended up relocating twice as the same aggressive guy found us again.

Meanwhile, the drummer pounded out some incredible rhythms, and the harmonies of dual lead singers Panda Bear and Avey Tare were in perfect intonation. The band's effects wizard Geologist really jammed out, providing the show with a good portion of its physical energy. Animal Collective is famous for its jamming and improvisation

in live shows, and they didn't disappoint. They took the songs on the record and stretched them out. When most successful, the songs turned into sprawling landscapes of pure melody and harmony. The best moment was in the encore, when the band played "Daily Routine" off 2010's "Merriweather Post Pavilion." It was the very epitome of "sparkle pop."

The incredible light show was inspired by the Dada/surrealist works of the 20s. Three Picasso looking giant head statues on stage flashed in rhythm to the music. "Painting With" has three album covers, and the Dada style works really well with the psychedelic sound of the band.

So there it is. As a critic, how do I conclude? The negative aspects of the show were not related to the band's music or performance. If the opener, acoustics and audience of a show — three things that a band has no control over — are terrible, and the experience of the concert suffers for it, the responsibility of a critic is to be objective enough to separate those failures from the band's success. I didn't go to see the opener or go to chill at the Roseland; I went to see Animal Collective. As for them, they did great, and I hope to see them again in the near future.

