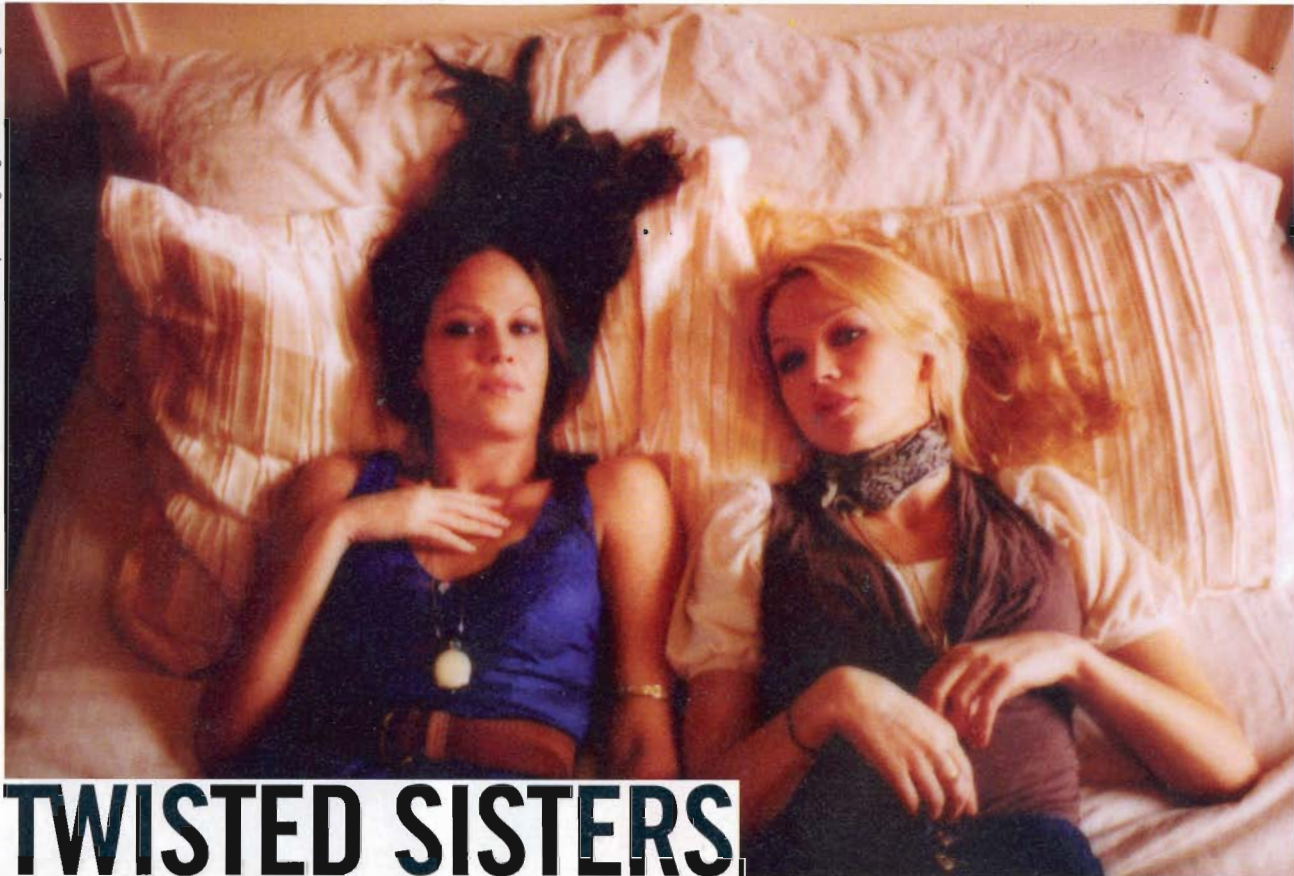


hair and makeup: kristin gallegos for see management.



TWISTED SISTERS

SOUTHERN-BORN SIBLINGS **THE PIERCES** ARE NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.
BY AMELIA MCDONELL-PARRY. PHOTOGRAPHED BY AHNDRAYA PARLATO

"The last 10 articles about us have started out saying, 'I didn't want to like them,'" says Catherine Pierce, the platinum blonde half of the New York-based sister duo, the Pierces, who release their third record *thirteen songs about love and revenge* this month.

"Because we're pretty," pipes up Alison, the brunette yang to her younger sister's ying. "They always mention that." She's right. The press has often drooled over the Alabama-born sisters' good looks while still expressing skepticism about their talent. "But by the end of those articles, they've always said we've won them over," sighs Catherine.

So how have you not heard of the Pierces? Probably because *thirteen songs about love and revenge* is the first record the sisters are happy with.

The band's MySpace bio references "slick suited men" who urged them to sell their souls to the devil during the production of their self-titled debut and its follow-up *Light of the Moon*—a tale that's only sort of exaggerated.

"We never felt like we had a voice," Catherine explains. "We spent more time searching for the hit song and being told that our ideas were stupid."

"There are so many people you have to please that the end product is washed out," agrees Alison. "We might as well have just showed up to sing."

Recorded without label backing, the lush and lovely *thirteen songs about love and revenge* is the Pierces' best material to date, in which they cast off pop folkiness in favor of an orchestra's worth of instruments and creative vocal harmonies.

"People listen to their iPods on shuffle," explains Alison. "When you go to a club, they play one song, followed by something totally different. We thought it would be really interesting to make a record with a little piece of everything that we like." The album's lyrics touch on heartache (the sing-songy "Kill! Kill! Kill!"), mistrust in relationships (the romping "Lies"), and Prince-inspired sexual fantasies (the come-hither "Lights On").

The first single, "Boring," is a snarky assault on jaded scenesters. Catherine deadpans, "Sexy boy/ Girl on girl/ Ménage a trios/ Boring/ Marijuana/ Cocaine/ Heroin," backed up by Alison's lounge-singer croom, "Nothing thrills us anymore/ Nothing kills us anymore/ Life is such a chore/ When it's boring."

"Some people have taken it so seriously," says Catherine. "Like, 'Those bitches! They should go to Africa and starve and then they'll know what boring is!'"

"But that says something about our society," says Alison. "'Love of my life/ Bear your child/ Anything I've ever wanted/ Boring'? That's so clearly a joke. But we've become so jaded that the song isn't totally off-base."

The Pierces didn't grow up surrounded by the excesses that can often turn Upper East Side kids into elitist adults. Raised in Birmingham, Alabama by their "hippie" parents—Mom is a painter and Dad plays guitar—the sisters were devoted ballet dancers and were home-schooled. After a hip injury at 18 put a stop to Catherine's pirouettes, the sisters moved to

New York and formed the band, having loved music since Joni Mitchell, Sam Cooke, and Fleetwood Mac came blaring out of their parents' stereo.

After a lackluster reception to their first two records, Catherine and Alison sought inspiration from bands like the Strokes—in which Catherine's fiancé Albert Hammond, Jr. plays guitar—deciding not to record another until they could do it their way. Now signed to Lizard King, the girls are optimistic that *thirteen songs about love and revenge* will win over all their critics.

"Catherine and I will always play music together," says Alison. "We love being onstage, expressing ourselves, giving the audience a part of who we are."