

# Rolling Stone

**BREAKING...**

**NEW ARTIST TO WATCH**

## The Pierces

Home-schooled Alabama sisters hit New York, craft pretty folk rock

**W**HEN FOLK-ROCK sister act Allison and Catherine Pierce look back on their childhood in Birmingham, Alabama, they remember how big a stickler their music teacher was for singing practice. "He'd get out his guitar pretty much every day and try to get us to sing with him," says Catherine, referring to their musician dad, who home-schooled the girls with their painter mom. "We'd be like, 'No, Dad, we don't feel like it!'" But all the singing has paid off for the New York-based duo, who released their third album, the critically acclaimed *Thirteen*

*Tales of Love and Revenge*, in March. **SOUND** *Thirteen*'s harmony-heavy blend of waltzy ballads, country-tinged pop and cabaret-influenced tunes grew out of sessions in a Brooklyn studio, where musician friends would drop in bearing ukuleles, glockenspiels and bassoons. "If we wanted an oboe on something, our producer would find an oboe player within half an hour," says Catherine. The result is whimsical and dark, a grown-up's fairy tale that touches on hipster ennui, heartbreak and the lure of bad boys. And no, "Boy in a Rock & Roll Band" isn't about Strokes bassist Albert Hammond

Jr., Catherine's ex-fiancé (the pair split this past winter). "It was just a funny idea," says Catherine, 29. "But if you want a good boyfriend," reminds Allison, 31, who's married, "don't date a guy in a band."

### RED-STATE BLUES

"Being from the South probably held us back a lot musically," says Catherine. "It took us a long time to break out of that Southern mentality of not stepping on toes, and to realize we don't have to be polite to get what we want." While the sisters—who have lived in New York since 2001—aren't easily rattled, their born-again parents are. "At first when they saw our new video 'Boring' [where the girls sport risqué minidresses and stilettos], they were like, 'Oh, my God!'" says Catherine. "But they're pretty open-minded—they realize

we're still the same people and they love us."

**BREAKUPS TO MAKE-UPS** After their second major-label album flopped in 2004, the Pierces parted ways. "I thought we were getting the wrong results because we couldn't make decisions together," says Catherine, whose solo career

ended halfway into recording her first song. "I was like, 'I can't do this!' We broke up for, like, a day." Though happily reunited, the sisters still prefer to write alone. "We get really precious about our songs," says Catherine. "When we try to write together, we usually end up fighting." **NICOLE FREHÉE**

Sister 2 Sister:  
Allison (left) and  
Catherine Pierce



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