

Fly Life

By Tricia Romano

The Bored and the Beautiful

The Pierces are enjoying themselves a little more than their biggest hit would suggest



Your karaoke experts have arrived.

Tricia Romano

In the wee hours of a recent Thursday night, the Pierces popped my cherry. I'd never done karaoke before. While super-foxy sisters Catherine and Allison strut down New York City's streets like a catwalk in their video for the lounge-pop hit "Boring"—purring jaded lyrics like "Sexy boy/Girl on girl/Ménage a trois/Boring!" while wearing glamorous outfits and disaffected pouts—in reality, they really like to do something outrageously normal: sing songs by Fleetwood Mac and Eminem.

But first, I had to razzle-dazzle them. When we had a date one recent evening, I worked hard to keep the girls entertained. First stop, the ultra-glittery Goldbar, opened by Cain's owners at Broome and Mulberry, where the gilded walls are lined with fake gold skulls, and shiny gold chains hang from the ceiling. The boîte's fictional backstory involving an Italian count is enhanced by Morten Smidt's lush, traditional portraits of the "Royal Court"—including familiar faces like Jenny and Lauren (those blonde, big-haired twins-about-town) and club fixture Desi Monster. We sipped luscious Ginger Highballs and ate porcini mushroom ball appetizers befitting kings and queens. I nervously

hoped they weren't, you know, bored.

Shot for \$500 in luminous black and white by a friend, Steve Birnbaum, the "Boring" clip depicts the girls reclining luxuriously on beds and couches and lounging in bars, their faces lit like '50s movie stars as they deliver their deadpan lyrics. Despite the fact that it's clearly poking fun, some people haven't quite caught on. "We wanted it to be funny and ridiculous," says Catherine. "The director said, 'They'll get it, if it's really over the top.' But some people didn't get it. They think we're being serious."

"They think it's, 'Oh, look how pretty we are!'" Allison pipes in. "'Love of my life/Bury your child/Everything I've ever wanted/Boring,'" she repeats in her thick Southern accent. "People thought we were being serious? Oh, I dunno."

"Idiots!" giggles Catherine.

My companions were so pretty, talented, and charming. This seems like a major label's dream, so how come, with two major-label albums under their belt, I'd never heard of them? Turns out they got lost in the industry shuffle, scrambling to find the right sound on 2000's *The Pierces* and 2005's *Light of the Moon*. "I think everybody kind of thought, 'They're sisters who can

sing, write their own songs, they're cute, whatever,'" Catherine says. "I guess when you think it's going to be easy, it never is."

"We were just young and didn't know what we wanted, so we were easily molded," Allison adds. "We had just been playing acoustic shows and that's all we knew," says Catherine. "We just knew the sound of our voices and an acoustic guitar."

For 13 *Tales of Love and Revenge*, they signed to Lizard King to make the record they really wanted to make all along. Rife with hooks and carried along by the duo's delicate harmonizing, the record's sound is both stripped and lush, all sweetness and light, infused with a healthy sense of humor and whimsy and cartoonish menace, as though an **Edward Gorey character** met **Alice in Wonderland**.

The response has been anything but boring—the "Boring" video is a bit of an Internet sensation, spurring critical raves from *Rolling Stone* and *Blender*. "It's all about timing and luck and being in the right place at the right time," says Allison. "It definitely feels different this time."

"A lot of the reviews say that this is our debut record," Catherine notes. "Which is fine," adds Allison.

We finish up our drinks and head to the

next destination: Bowlmor Lanes. There, the girls call some friends to come join us, including club-kid extraordinaire **Jackson Pollis**, who has a cameo in the "Boring" video. (He's about two minutes in, Jackson fans.) But he was already tucked in, so we're left to fend for ourselves against the Pierces' publicist, **Andrew Steinthal**, who is kicking our ass so easily, he gets a strike *while talking on the phone*. I finish dead-last, and Catherine takes second place.

The two sisters are so close, they finish each other's sentences and hang out every single day—now complicated by the fact that Catherine has new digs in Williamsburg, making it harder to meet up in the East Village near Allison's apartment. Unlike their high-gloss video counterparts, they shop at the cheaper stores (they're partial to thrifting, as well as H&M, Target, Forever 21, and my favorite, Joyce Leslie), love to eat Italian at Supper, and favor downtown watering holes like Mama's Bar and the East Side Company Bar.

Growing up, the Pierces claim they were nerds—Catherine gawky and skinny, Allison pudgy with glasses—which might explain why they aren't at all like the distant and self-absorbed girls they portray in the video. Instead, the aspiring ballet dancers were part of a big born-again Christian family in Birmingham, Alabama, and were home-schooled during their teenage years—"We were really popular in high school!" jokes Allison.

As we're about to start a second game, a fire breaks out, and Allison panics at the thought of perishing in Bowlmor Lanes—"We have to leave now!" she says, shaken. A smoky fireman strolled by and told us the fire was contained. We swooned. Two of their friends turned up—including their drummer, **Russell Simins** (no, not that one). But the smoke from the fire starts to bother everyone.

The time has come: The Pierces want to karaoke.

Lucky for them, I am now drunk enough that singing with two professionals seems like a reasonable idea. We head over to Sing Sing Karaoke on Avenue A ("I love learning the real lyrics," says Catherine in the cab) and rent a private room,

For the gripping finale, the two vixens trade verses on Eminem's 'Lose Yourself.'

wherein they ply me with alcohol. I do a shot, and it works—the next thing I know, I'm warbling along with Catherine to **4 Non Blondes'** "What's Up?" Later, I muster up the courage to sing **Pat Benatar's** "Fire and Ice" solo, making everyone wish they were deaf. The entire room then turns in an off-key, truly awful version of **Bon Jovi's** "Living on a Prayer," and the sisters perfectly perform **Fleetwood Mac's** "Dreams." (Suddenly a karaoke expert, I think, "Beyotches—that's my song!") For the gripping finale, the two vixens trade verses on **Eminem's** "Lose Yourself." We leave victorious, and I feel like I need a post-karaoke cigarette. Thanks for the fabulous time, ladies. Promise you'll call?

flylife@villagevoice.com

Addendum: Like a desperate date, I called them. Next Tuesday, the ladies are headlining Fly Life's five-year anniversary party at the Box, along with Fly Life regulars Murray Hill, Tommie Sunshine, Larry Tee, Julie Atlas Muz, Mike Albo, and more.