

backstage pass



THE PIERCES

LIVE AT THE MERCURY LOUNGE, NEW YORK CITY

You've seen them in *NME*, *Rolling Stone*, *Interview*, *The New York Post*, and *Playboy* (though not a pictorial). However, in this day and age of media deception and fake news, can a pop music fan actually believe anything they read nowadays? "Well, there is a bit of truth in every tale..." says Allison Pierce with a hint of evil irony. Her sister Catherine concurs.

The pretty, perky and precocious debut disc by The Pierces, *Thirteen Tales of Love and Revenge*, is rife with stories of passion, murder, deceit, lesbianism, ménage à trois, and random acts of mayhem. Rendered in a folk rock fashion that in some way harkens back to the early 1960s' sounds of Joan Baez, The Kingston Trio, Ian & Sylvia, and heck, even the hallowed Peter, Paul & Mary with a menacing twist (the lyrics), the torrid twosome are not adverse to a bit of electric eccentricities (the music) to abet the bells, whistles, glockenspiels, mandolins and other organic instruments which decorate their songs with a contemporary veneer.

The Pierces were born and raised in rural Alabama by bohemian parents. "They were hippies," notes Catherine, "but they were also Christians, so that still gave us something to rebel against." Now residing within the chic environs of lower Manhattan's East Village, the sultry sister act has emerged as a hot topic in the ever-burgeoning New York acoustic indie rock scene. "We were too drunk the first year we moved here to notice any cultural differences" laughs Allison. "But when we woke up in the gutter in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, yes, we were quite shocked!" Though Catherine is romantically linked to a local rock deity (The Strokes' guitarist Albert Hammond Jr.) the Pierces have forged their own identity and fan base.

Backed by a tight ensemble, Allison and Catherine were gracious hosts on their home turf, encouraging the male and female fans alike to inch closer and closer to the stage to better

bask in the glow of the Pierces' presence. Unlike most of the artists who make the same request at the tiny Mercury Lounge, the attendees obeyed without hesitation, shuffling forward with an enthusiasm not seen since *Night of the Living Dead*. After an obligatory drink and some string tuning, "Boring," their mocking homage to the Big Apple jet set, was rendered by both sisters in a monotone delivery that would have made Grace Jones green with envy (think back to Ms. Jones' '80s deadpan reading of Iggy Pop's morose anthem of the doomed, "Nightclubbing").

Evoking light-hearted lascivious comparison to Randy Newman's classic "You Can Leave Your Hat On," "Lights On," which weaves images of cross-dressing and sex under bright lights, vacillated from torch song verses to outrageous disco beat choruses. "That was Prince inspired," confesses Allison. In Vaudeville mode, Catherine's campy performance of "Boy in a Rock 'n' Roll Band" may or may not have been in reference to Mr. Hammond, as she emphasized the lyric "I swore I would never fall in love with a boy in a rock 'n' roll band." We report, you decide.

The waltz vamp "Turn On Billie," a kinky yarn which professes a desire to "paint the town blue because red is so passé", afforded Allison and Catherine an opportunity to harmonize as the band punctuated every coo and whisper with staccato rhythms and grinning faces. The ladies' rustic roots shone through on the tearful ballad "Run", with Allison pining for a lover to come crawling back a la Lucinda Williams at her most desperate.

Whether *Thirteen Tales...* will bring The Pierces fame and fortune remains to be seen, but they have a contingency plan — just in case: "We are putting one million copies of this record in a time capsule for future generations to enjoy." Judging by the public's response to the sisters' music so far, that hardly seems necessary. 