

TEGAN AND SAKA + RA RA RIOT + THE JOY FORMIDABLE

VARIANCE

THE SIGHTS + SOUNDS YOU LOVE



CAN THEY "HO HEY" THEIR WAY TO THE GOLD?

THE LUMINEERS

2013 GRAMMYS!
NEW FACES &
INDIE FAVES RULE:

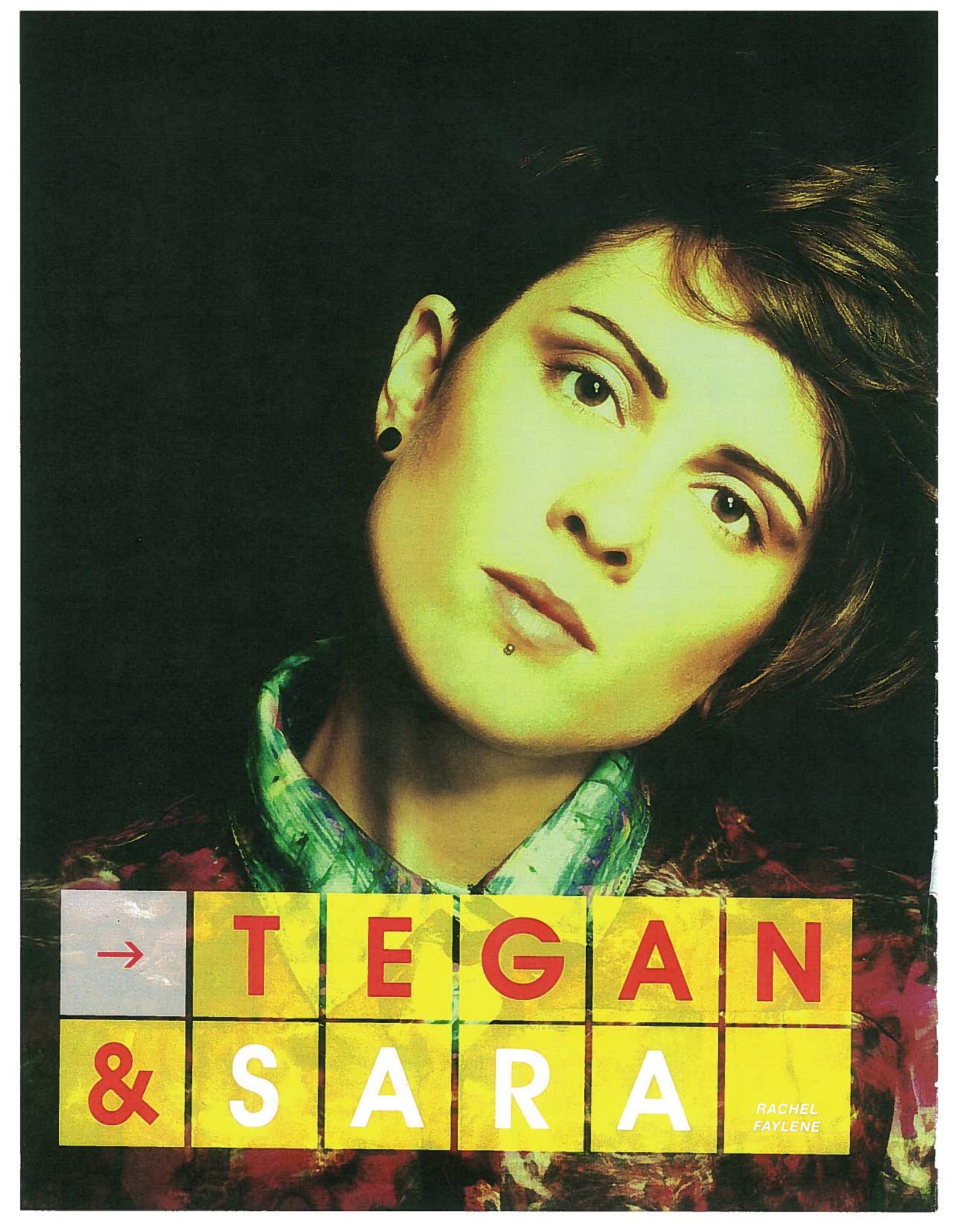
FRANK OCEAN
MUMFORD AND SONS
ALABAMA SHAKES
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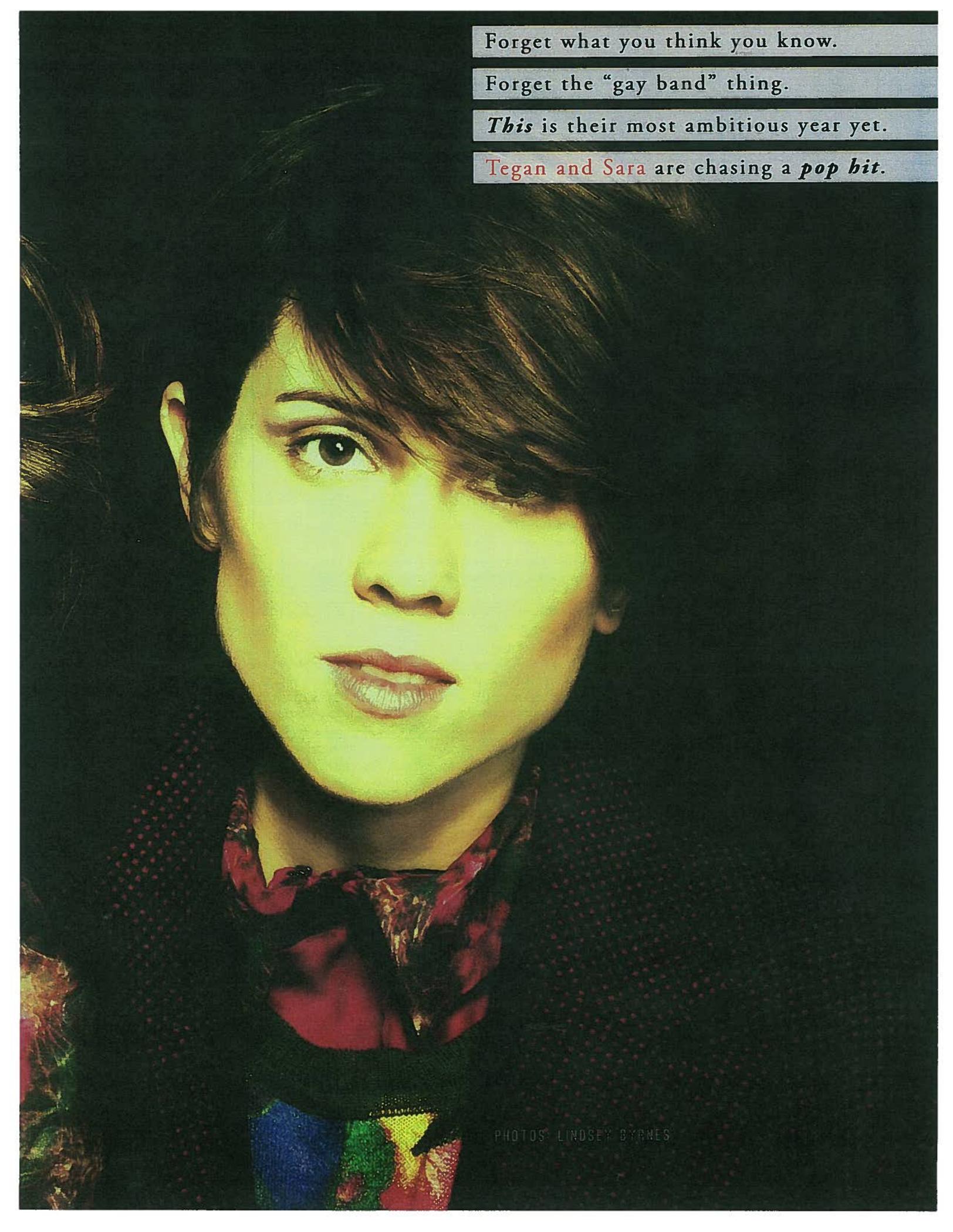
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PARENTHOOD'S MAE WHITMA

LOCAL NATIVE



→	T	E	G	A	N
&	S	A	R	A	RACHEL FAYLENE



Forget what you think you know.

Forget the “gay band” thing.

This is their most ambitious year yet.

Tegan and Sara are chasing a *pop bit*.

PHOTOS: LINDSEY BYRNES

“I HOPE THAT, WITH THIS RECORD, WE WILL GET RADIO PLAY. . . NOT EVERYBODY AROUND THE WORLD IS LISTENING TO INDIE ROCK OR READING PITCHFORK.”

Indie rock veterans Tegan and Sara share more than just the stage and a spotlight. The identical twin sisters formally known as Tegan Rain Quin and Sara Keirsten Quin share a bond that can't be broken, even through diverse music dynamics. The group was formed in 1995 and has since changed and grown in many ways. While the expansion of Tegan and Sara has been significant, there are substantial aspects that have remained the same.

“I think we realized early on that the significant element of our band that couldn't change was our voices,” reveals Sara. “It didn't matter if we were doing a band song, an acoustic song, or we were doing a punk rock song; at the end of the day, the thing that sort of identifies the track as being Tegan and Sara is our vocals.”

The sisters are true to themselves as much as they are to their music, and the voices of these women are heard in more ways than one. With gay rights being such a topical issue in the United States, both Tegan and Sara find being lesbians in the music world to be bittersweet in terms of the band's limitations.

“It's complicated because we are twins, and we are gay, and it is a huge part of our identity. We always say that the press and the public make a bigger deal out of it than we would,” Sara conveys without hesitance. “In the beginning of our career, we felt that a lot of people used those things to reduce us or exploit us in some way, and our career has changed and grown—we've accumulated more of a story. I feel like the emphases of those signifiers and descriptions have changed and, as a queer person, I feel like it's important to be a physical minority.”

During a time where opinions and discussions on sexual orientation can either be overexposed or pushed aside, she admits that it's not always an easy road for the band's popularity.

“Especially at this time and in this day,

I'm not embarrassed to have people refer to us as gay, or as a gay band, but I don't necessarily think that's accurate or always fair,” Sara admits. “I don't think it's done us any favors in terms of us cracking into the mainstream or having a more diverse, ambiguous audience to like us. I would love to get to a place where the things that are different about us, or special about us, aren't limiting us from reaching a broader audience.”

The size and range of Tegan and Sara's crowd has, in fact, expanded since the start of the group. The two have continued to release music rather tirelessly and have gained a dedicated following over the years.

“As an artist, when you're making music and you're touring for a living, you start setting all these goals for yourself,” says Sara. “Tegan and I have accomplished the many things we wanted to accomplish. We've been all over the world and we've seen our audience grow from a handful of people, to a hundred people, to five hundred people, to now.”

Together the girls have experienced every level of touring and every level of obscurity. And while the group has a career playing in front of thousands and headlining festivals, there is still something on the to-do list for Tegan and Sara.

“We still haven't had a big radio proper hit,” she confesses. “There's a part of me that [says] that's still kind of on the list of things to accomplish with this band.”

In 2005, a track called “Walking with a Ghost” from their fourth album, *So Jealous*, was hitting commercial airwaves, taking the band beyond college and satellite radio. Sara pinpoints this time frame as a pivotal moment in their careers.

“We were still very much what I would consider a cult band. We didn't receive a lot of mainstream media and we hadn't done a lot of stuff with television or anything like that. All of a sudden, between touring with The Killers and having a song on alternative rock radio in the Unit-



ed States, we really saw our audience grow and started to see opportunities that we hadn't in the past.”

Indie rock bands are beginning to see more mainstream radio play as a path to gaining bigger fan bases. In the past, this wasn't as attainable for artists that weren't on major labels with million dollar backings. Collaborations and remixes, however, have played a significant role in combining the two worlds and giving exposure to some of these smaller artists.

This has proven true for Tegan and Sara while working with world famous DJ, Tiesto. Originally remixing “Back in Your Head,” Tiesto found himself collaborating with the girls for “Feel It in My Bones.” Both works received notable airplay internationally and have created a new playing field for the girls to conquer.

“I think it's interesting,” she says. “We weren't necessarily having radio hits off our own albums, but we've been able to cross over into more public radio and pop radio with some of our other efforts, which has been really cool because it's allowed us to create relationships with [the right] people.”



The sisters are looking for their seventh studio album, *Heartthrob*, to be the key to the one door they have yet to open, which brings up the issue of just how relevant radio is for lesser-known bands. The trail of radio play for Tegan and Sara has been sparse, but may soon be well-traveled with the release of their newest album.

"I hope that, with this record, we will get radio play," Sara says. "For us, the idea was to spend more time thinking about how the music sonically and aesthetically would sound and reach a broader group of people. On our past records, we were happier playing our music, and doing what we wanted, and sounding the way that we wanted, not necessarily thinking about how that sound might limit us."

During the writing process, Tegan and Sara discussed the

potential of *Heartthrob* and the vision of furthered success with this unfamiliar territory. Wanting to move forward with their achievements, both girls aimed to write tracks that appeal to already dedicated fans and those who are tuned into popular radio.

"We did actually talk about that on this record—and not in a mainstream, selling out kind of way. But not everybody around the world is listening to indie rock or reading Pitchfork," she says.

"You start to realize, wow, there's a whole part of the world that wouldn't even know about us because we're more of an indie rock band. The art of collaborating and remixing is fantastic, and it's been a wonderful way for Tegan and me to get out to a lot of different people and a lot of different types of audiences. We'll continue to do those things in order to expand the magic."

Heartthrob is destined to captivate a new audience and gain an even bigger following, all while maintaining that old-school Tegan and Sara vibe. The writing process and inspiration behind the creativity was a familiar journey for the ladies, combining similar tasks and outlooks that they both took on as always.

"We write totally individually. We live in different cities, so you know the majority of our songwriting is done kind of independently on our own at home," Sarah explains. "With this record, I did a little bit more writing with Tegan, still living in different cities, but she would send me a song that wasn't totally finished and she would be like, 'Can you throw down an idea for the bridge?'"

Taking on artistic duties in different locations and time zones can test a band's ability to agree or collaborate well

together. For Tegan and Sara, their independence from each other doesn't deter their ability to find a common theme for their work.

"We sort of laugh and say that as you get older, your lens changes through which you view relationships and different perspectives," she shares honestly. "You know, the general idea is still the relationships that we've experienced and maybe the relationships that we're seeing around us. There're a few songs on the record that explore more of just getting older, life and mortality."

Even with years of experience and success, Sara humbly confesses her excitement and hopes for the future. "I just like the idea that we're not a new band; we're not a band that doesn't have experience, and this is our first big record."

***Heartthrob* releases Jan. 29.**