



## SHORTCUTS

# CocoRosie: Mystical Sounds

By John Schacht

Things you might encounter in a small graveyard in the South of France:

Werewolves, black poppies, caged bees, warm kittens, crystal ships, oceans of tears, black-magic wielders, diamond skulls, baby dinosaurs—and, conjuring all that magic and some found sounds out of the Provence air, the Casady sisters of CocoRosie.

Bianca and Sierra Casady blend environment into their glitchy trip-hop and operatic musical collages the way other musicians add bass or guitar to theirs. (Portions of CocoRosie's debut were recorded in their Parisian bathtub.) But the graveyard and nearby family farm proved more than just a musical setting for portions of the sisters' latest record, *The Adventures of Ghosthorse and Stillborn* (Touch and Go).

"It's about ghosts and subterranean communities, spirits and ancestors," says Sierra, also alluding to the Casadys' Native American ancestry.

CocoRosie's previous two records were inspired by outside influences ranging from Jean Genet to the Old Testament, but the wellspring for *Ghosthorse* turned out to be far more personal, Sierra says. "We went more into our own world, using fewer resources and involvement with anything outside of our imagination." She calls the record's narrative a journey, with the title characters forging bravely through a dreamscape of playful but often savage imagery. Entering the surreal world of *Ghosthorse* is like finding yourself in a Roald Dahl children's story, or waking up inside a Chagall painting.

Musically, the sisters' sensibilities are practically telepathic at this point, but they retain their individual voices: Bianca's coy Billie Holiday-meets-Betty Boop vocals and Sierra's operatic soprano reflect off each other like mirrored sunlight; the beat-box and house rhythms provide a grounded foil for airy harps, tinkling bicycle bells and music-box melodies; sensual themes add adult dimensions to the nursery-rhyme poetry, while sonic murk coats it all in textured audio bliss.

What to make of CocoRosie's musical dreams depends on your own vision as much as the sisters'. "We really try to give listeners enough space to have very individual experiences with the record," Sierra says. "I don't think there are any wrong answers."