INSIDE:

BRIGHT EYES: EVEN FURTHER FROM BUSHY-TAILED

EL-P: DONE THROWING GARBAGE ON YOUR HEAD

GRINDERMAN: NICK CAVE’S NEWEST DWELLING

CRIME MOB: ESTROGEN AND JUICE

ON THE VERGE: PIERCES, MIDNIGHT MOVIES, DAWN OF MAN, SECRETARY BIRD, LET’S GO SAILING, URSULA POINTS

COCO ROSE
A GHOST IS STILLBORN
CULTURE SHOCK 6
No, Ace Frehley isn’t dead. Just his career. Plus, we’ve got some hilarious content from the latest entrant in the online-video fray, Ourstage.com, an introduction to Tuscaloosa, Alabama by the Dextereens and a look at one of the strangest punk tributes in recent memory.

QUICK FIX 8
The (sintro) has finally cleared for Bill Callahan. Also, the Ponys knock critics off their high horse. Mando Diao Luc Robiarlille’s one on; Tracey Thorn proves she is many other things aside from Everything But The Girl; and Crime Mob’s acid-tongue teenagers give punch-crunk love to other ladies of hip-hop.

ON THE VERGE 12
The Pierces, Midnight Movies, Dawn Of Man, Secretary Bird, Let’s Go Sailing, Ursula Points

BRIGHT EYES 18
Conor Oberst has longer hair, less introspective lyrics and a more stable full-time band surrounding him for Cassadaga. In short, he’s all grown up. Rebecca Raber got up close and personal with the near-iconic songwriter.

EL-P 20
Kenny Herzog stopped by a Vietnamese restaurant in Manhattan to meet up with the underground hip-hop legend and talk music, life, politics and El’s latest, I’ll Sleep When You’re Dead. But mostly, to observe his way around a spring roll plate.

GRINDERMAN 22
Nick Cave’s Grinderman takes the best of The Bad Seeds and sprouts the resulting foursome into a sex-obsessed beast of middle-aged manhood. Kory Grow bravely entered the Cave-man’s den.

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM 24
Just when Kory thought he had enough male-musician eccentricities, he wandered into the mind of James Murphy, aka LCD Soundsystem. What he got were several semi-cogent tangents about everything from committing Suicide to Mick Ronson’s latent homophobia.

BLONDE REDHEAD 26
KINGS OF LEON 27
ANDREW BIRD 28
ON THE COVER: COCO ROSIE 30
It took a phone call to France for Brian Yaeger to catch up with sisters and kindred musical spirits Bianca and Sierra Casady. Ever-nomadic, that’s where they wrote The Adventures Of Ghosthorse And Stillborn, though they traveled to Iceland to get it laid-down and fine-tuned. And once in a while, they return to Brooklyn to spread the spirit of collaborative art and music with compadres in the Voodoo-EROS roster. Feeling bored at your day job yet?

ON THE CD 34
CocoRosie, Brother Ali, Secretary Bird, EL-P, Ursula Points, Soular, Pela, Kristoffer Ragnstam, Dead Heart Bloom, Crawling With Kings, Neurosonic, Porcupine Tree, Blackfield, All Smiles, Fiction Like Candy, Ojos De Brujo, The Don’ts.

REVIEWS 38
Our reviews section has AIDS… Wolf that is. Not to mention other, less-offensive all-capitals artists like DNTEL. Also, Willy Vlautin tries his hand at novel-writing and the near-iconic songwriter.

CHARTS 45
In case it isn’t enough that we insist on what’s worth listening to, now you’ve got to absorb what a bunch of college DJs somewhere in the Midwest are spinning for stoners at 3 a.m.?

DEEP COVER: PANDAR BEAR 50
Who can even pay attention to the music on Person Pitch when distracted by Agnes Montgomery’s Highlights-meets–National Geographic artwork?
A whole lotta Rosie: Bianca and Sierra get personal through storytelling on their ambitious new album.
In late 2006, Sierra and Bianca Casady lit out under a cool French moon to record animal calls and other earth songs as the foundation for *The Adventures Of Ghosthorse And Stillborn* (*Touch And Go*). When Sierra says that she and her sister are constantly “recreating [their] personal myth,” it is no understatement. The half-Cherokee siblings have a litany of aliases apiece, with a corresponding biography to boot. Chief among them are Coco (Bianca) and Rosie (Sierra), hence their band name. Rather than settling into any pair of alter egos established on their previous two albums, CocoRosie dig their hands deep into the fertile Mediterranean soil to uproot new personas on their musical storybook.

“*The idea is that we created a legacy for people that had very short lives or others who were living an active afterlife,*” explains Sierra. “*But we developed the stories for a bunch of characters that maybe came from the underground but a lot of their stories took place above ground, on earth.*”

The moonlit recording sessions for *Ghosthorse* took place not in a bathtub, but on their mother’s farm in Saintes Maries De La Mer in the French province of Provence, famed as a Gypsy pilgrimage site. The howls and neighs and the songs of the spirits found their way onto most of the album, as if seeping...
WE'RE NOT REALLY DOWN WITH THE IDEA OF ADULTS.

The idea of Ghosthouse was born when a steed came to Sierra in a series of dreams about a dying horse. Upon arriving at the farm, they began fleshing out its story. Whether the Casadys develop their myths to give these souls new life or perhaps simply to pay their last respects is uncertain. And it’s not vital either way. “It’s who we are right now,” Sierra offers.

As for channeling Stillborn, in memoriam to her would-be sibling, Bianca says her voice “tends to be childlike. It’s not a stylistic choice, but the nature of my voice. It comes through as extremely young,” and she feels it complements the “little, tiny hero” that is the character.

But what of the other characters on the album; who are the people Ghosthouse and Stillborn encounter in their adventures? They can be found in song titles like “Rainbowwarriors,” “Bloody Twins” and “Werewolf.” Rainbowwarriors are “anti-war and anti-dictatorship,” says Sierra. They stand for “following one’s own rainbow trail.” Their namesake song is a polyphonic tune, replete with frogs croaking and DJs scratching—a soundtrack for marching through an enchanted jungle.

All literary license aside, “Werewolf” is the track that Bianca calls the most autobiographical, as it deals with the sisters’ relationships with various men, from their father to boyfriends to their half-brother who passed away last year. With dim piano notes as fireflies guiding the way through this gloomier world, Bianca chants, “A young brother skinny and tall/My older walks oceanward and somber/Slumber, sleeping/Flowers in the water/But I’m just his daughter,” followed by Sierra lilting encouragement to Werewolf, or possibly Stillborn, to get back on his horse and ride into the sunset.

The girls took their album to Reykjavik and, hesitantly at first, put it—and themselves—in the hands of Iceland’s most famous producer/mixer, Valgeir Sigurðsson (Björk, Sigur Rós). Though Sigurðsson is accustomed to working with international, innovative artists, Sierra and Bianca weren’t quite comfortable at first. After all, not only were they in his studio and not their bathroom or field, but would he really get them?

Committing to working in a “contrasting environment with distance during the final process,” Sierra says that “the beauty of his studio enchanted us” and that Sigurðsson gave them both the respect and freedom they needed. “He created a solitary environment where we got to play, be childish if needed. We could be uninhibited around him.”

Indeed, youthful, self-indulgent behavior characterizes the Casadys most. “We’re not really down with the idea of adults,” Sierra declares, claiming that she and her sister are prone to playing pat-a-cake when they want to, or not brushing their teeth when they don’t want to. Presumably, however, they don’t put themselves on “time outs.”
But for all their faux-innocence, the sororal songwriters have launched some impressive projects to propagate their guiding aesthetic. Two years ago, Bianca and Melissa Shimkovitz launched the Voodoo-EROS label, signing artists like Bunny Rabbit and Quinn Walker, and releasing a compilation titled The Enlightened Family: A Collection Of Lost Songs, which features Devendra Banhart, Antony (from Antony And The Johnsons) and Vashti Bunyan, among others. Voodoo represents a true collaborative, with everyone on its roster sharing what Sierra calls “a group soul,” the cornerstone of what makes CocoRosie tick.

“I feel like it’s my job, in a way, to present these underdog types of artists,” adds Bianca.

When it comes to their own music, the sisters aren’t reaching for any sort of commercial success, but rather for a record that fits into this particular sonic phase of their lives. “If there are elements that come across as accessible,” cautions Sierra, “we could easily return to something more abstract.” What abstract is, in comparison for them, remains to be seen.

As for the Voodoo clan, while they may not all record and tour together, there are certainly ideological roots to their ideas about a collective spirit. Frank Zappa’s Mothers Of Invention broke out with the ultimate hodge-podge of freak rock, 1966’s seminal Freak Out, which featured upstarts like Dr. John and Paul Butterfield. George Clinton assembled Parliament/Funkadelic, which introduced us to Bernie Worrell and Bootsy Collins. Keeping in line with this tradition is the Wu-Tang Clan, who CocoRosie are particularly inspired by.

“They are modern Shakespearean writers,” says Bianca, who studied linguistics and expresses a desire to collaborate with any of the members. “They are reinventing language, personalizing it, and building their own mythology and terminology.”

It’s no coincidence then that Jim Jarmusch, who’s worked with Wu members on both Ghost Dog and Coffee And Cigarettes, is also fanatical about CocoRosie and was inititally attached to the first music video for Adventures (Kai Regan has since taken the reins). Sure, it might be a stretch to toss all these individuals into the same creative stew, but these concepts and souls are assuredly interconnected, in space and time.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-REPEATIN’

Of course, all art still has an earthly source. And, eschewing being from any one place or time, perhaps Bianca and Sierra draw from the well of the Verismo movement, which developed in late-18th century Italian opera. Italian verists (realists) believed that art should reflect the true, often alarming, nature of a character, from its inner fears to the scenery that informs it. Puccini’s La Bohème is a shining example, and a suitable comparison to The Adventures Of Ghosthorse And Stillborn specifically, and CocoRosie in general.

“That makes a lot of sense to me,” concurs Sierra. “I was seduced by the classical world, by Italian operas. There is a lot of death and suicide. A lot of discipline, training and perversion, too.” If life imitates art, she sees opera as a world where “human and a-human qualities constantly come through.”

Sierra’s opera training is just one piece of Coco’s cumulative creative puzzle though. The sisters aren’t merely musicians and poets, but also seamstresses and painters. Bianca, in fact, has her drawings and visual art on display in the nomadic Museum Of Nice Things, a part-Brooklyn-based gallery, part-globe-trotting installation for the Voodoo family and their friends.

“All art springs from the same well,” Bianca offers. “It is just being expressed in different languages.”

Are Sierra and Bianca, as a unit, capable of achieving as much for their idiosyncratic take on folk as Parliament did for funk or Wu did for hip-hop? As Louis Armstrong famously said, “All music is folk music. I ain’t never heard no horse sing a song.” Then again, ol’ Satchmo never heard the ghost-folk of CocoRosie.