

Sierra wears dress
by Burberry. £1,375

T W I S T E D S I S T E R S

WATCH OUT – ARTY POP DUO
CocoRosie ARE UP TO
NO GOOD AGAIN!

'I feel like I've always been a child,' announces Sierra Casady of peculiar pop duo CocoRosie. 'I'm not so interested in what it typically means to be an adult. Real estate, pornography, tying your shoelaces straight... I'm more into how enlightened the child is and just trying to retain that.'

Today, Sierra and her sister and fellow group-member Bianca seem to have retained their inner children all too successfully. In fact, the pair could do with a good stint on the naughty step. Phoning them in Paris where they're preparing a European tour, Bianca first puts the

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interview back half an hour, then complains that the phone she's using is costing her too much money so can I call her on another one (whose number she conveniently forgets to supply). Sierra, meanwhile, attempts to conduct the interview while brushing her teeth. The phone keeps cutting out at awkward moments – for instance, when I ask Sierra about the time she was given peyote by her father at the age of eight. Oh, and they played up at the POP photoshoot too, the studio echoing to protestations of the 'I'm not wearing that!' variety. >

Bianca wears hat by
Marc by Marc Jacobs,
made to order; jacket
by *Sonia Rykiel*;
£718, trousers by
John Richmond, £270

So why should we bother about this strop-
 pair? Well, they've made three beguiling
 albums of wonderfully beguiling and
 bonkers pop, of which this year's *The
 Adventures Of Ghosthorse And Stillborn* is
 the best yet. It welds together Sierra's
 operatic tones with Bianca's peculiar
 bluesy rasp over ethereal and psychedelic
 folk-hop, with lyrics about werewolves,
 death and schizophrenia. They've got a
 cool famous fan – ex-Talking Head David
 Byrne, who invited them to perform at
 Carnegie Hall in New York, the pair's
 adopted home city. And they've collaborated
 with the illustrious likes of Antony (of 'And
 The Johnsons' fame), acid folkie (and
 Bianca's ex-boyfriend) Devandra Banhart,
 and French kistchmeisters Pierre et Giles,
 who shot their latest album cover. ('They
 capture the idea of fantasy and reality
 challenging one another – something we
 really relate to,' says Sierra.)

The cover shows off their current,
 rather fabulous look. Formerly a model
 and fashion designer, the younger (by two
 years) Bianca is dressed up as a 19th-
 century French soldier, complete with
 facial hair. 'There are different ways to
 wear a moustache,' she announces. 'I
 definitely can pass as a guy.' Meanwhile,
 Sierra is depicted as twins looking
 'Victorian, mad, slightly gothy: in the past
 year I've done a lot of vintage shopping
 and revamping and reconstructing old
 stuff.' CocoRosie don't like to work the
 same look for too long, however, so
 Bianca's now planning 'a beard that just
 follows my jawline, hanging down like a
 half circle. Separate stringy pieces, but
 four inches long and maybe even a collar
 to make it more surreal and alien.'

As the 'tache tomfoolery suggests,
 CocoRosie have always been very enthused
 by genderfucking and 'fluid' sexualities.
 Their record label Voodoo-EROS releases
 records by underground bands (Bunny
 Rabbit, Nomi, Black Cracker) that Sierra
 describes as 'tranny heroes'. The pair also
 hate using guitars because 'they're just too
 dude-ish. A dude is a type of masculinity
 which is challenging for us. It's very
 hetero-normative, so we're looking for
 really transformative energies and presence
 and things that are either homosexual or
 not very heterosexual.'

So tightly bonded are the sisters that
 they're considering adopting a child
 together. 'We've talked about it a lot
 recently,' Sierra confirms. 'We're very
 serious about it.' But things between the
 two sisters weren't always this harmonious.
 Born to an artist mother and a father who
 was interested in shamanism and had 11

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children with several women, they never
 lived in the same place for more than a
 year. 'I really didn't talk a lot when I was
 younger,' admits Sierra. 'I had some mild
 autistic qualities – I was really, really into
 mathematics and not so into
 communicating.' During the summer, their
 father (who split up with their mother
 when Bianca was a baby) would drive them
 across America eating roadkill and taking
 peyote: in termtime, their mother forbad
 all pop music – so Sierra would 'sneak out
 of the house and find neighbours I could
 listen to pop music with. I was obsessed
 with New Kids On The Block, who have
 scarred me forever. I'm deeply connected
 to Joey and in guilty moments daydreaming
 I find myself striving to be like him,' she
 adds, sarcastically.

By the time she was 14, their mother
 couldn't cope with Sierra (her constant
 singing, for one thing) and sent her away
 to a reform school in Minnesota. The
 sisters didn't see or speak to each other for
 the best part of a decade, until in 2002
 Bianca decided to go to Paris and find her
 sibling, who by this time was studying
 opera. After an awkward start, the sisters
 bonded and started working together – in
 some ways, they've said, CocoRosie is the
 story of how they became reunited.

Though the woozy weirdness of their
 sound and the song 'K-Hole' on *Noah's
 Ark* makes one assume the pair must be
 considerable drugs fiends, their upbringing
 in fact made them very anti-narcotics. 'We
 had a lot of time to develop our imagination
 and learned very quickly that we didn't
 need the assistance of drugs,' says Sierra.
 'We saw so much disaster and darkness
 overcome the people around us through
 drugs. I try not to be a real Nazi about it,
 but I don't think it's something that's
 necessary, for art and for living.'

Indeed – who needs drugs if, like both
 sisters, you're regularly visited by ghosts?
 'We've had a few experiences,' laughs
 Bianca nervously. 'I was in a really old
 hotel in New Orleans on our first tour and
 there was the ghost of a man in my bed.

He didn't look too special – kind of middle-
 aged – but it was very real, very human
 flesh. I turned on the light and nobody was
 there any more, but it kept happening.'
 Sounds terrifying, but CocoRosie enjoy the
 spookier side of life (or death). To gain
 inspiration while making their album in
 the south of France, they hung out in the
 graveyard in the grounds of the studio.
 'I've started to study the stage of
 consciousness where I've seen ghosts on
 many occasions,' continues Bianca. 'It's
 when your brain is still completely on but
 you're letting your body fall into a sleep.
 But you're still in control, you can decide
 to get up. For me it's a very creative stage
 of consciousness as well.'

The album was also coloured by the fact
 that one of their half-brothers died while it
 was being made. 'There's a lot of dark
 topics and moments but I think generally
 the album is very transformative,' says
 Sierra. 'That's what really kept us going.
 I think we were in quite a pagan ritualistic
 phase and really working with the earth a
 lot, and it felt in that spirit.'

Not that this spirit is confined to music.
 Bianca is also a visual artist and will soon
 have a show at Manhattan's illustrious
 Dietch Projects gallery under her alias Red
 Bone Slim. Her pictures have decorated
 CocoRosie's album covers, such as the
 naive watercolour of three horses having
 group sex which appeared on the front of
 2005's *Noah's Ark*. Then there's the pair's
 gallery/shop called The Museum Of Nice
 Items, which used to be on the Lower East
 Side and 'sold books, paintings and
 clothes, and there was also a hair-cut shop
 – Bianca is fairly well known for being a
 haircutter for girl/boys,' divulges Sierra.
 'Then once in a while they'd have parties
 and they'd have psychic readings there.
 It's more of an online thing right now...'
 'A travelling trunk show,' clarifies Bianca.

In fact, a travelling trunk show neatly
 describes CocoRosie's bizarre world. It's a
 hermetically sealed environment that
 admits only them and fellow eccentrics
 like Antony and his 'really wonderful'
 friends, 'like a woman called Kembra
 Pfahler, who's also known as The
 Voluptuous Horror Of Karen Black,' raves
 Bianca, 'and a composer named William
 Bazinsky as well.' Strangers are there on
 sufferance, particularly if they're adults:
 Sierra has admitted that she hasn't really
 dealt with people her own age until
 recently, preferring children. In the song
 'Animals', CocoRosie sigh: 'Maybe I should
 go and live among the animals.' And when
 the results are so deliciously strange, who
 are we to intrude? ●