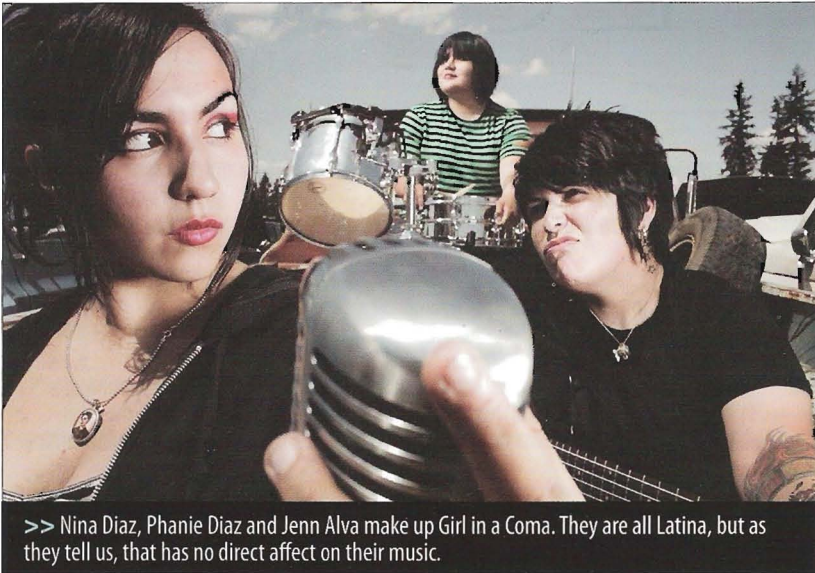


The Beat w/Becky Carman



>> Nina Diaz, Phanie Diaz and Jenn Alva make up Girl in a Coma. They are all Latina, but as they tell us, that has no direct affect on their music.

Photo by Michael Rubenstein

Young and Genreless

This San Antonio-based all-girl dynamo was recently in OKC performing with the True Colors Tour at the Zoo. You've heard them, and now you love them.

What's in a name? For San Antonio's Girl in a Coma, well... nothing, really.

Longtime best friends Phanie Diaz (drums) and Jenn Alva (bass) formed Girl in a Coma eight years ago. After years of wanting to form a band, Girl in a Coma finally came to fruition when Diaz's 12-year-old sister, Nina, worked up the courage to sing them a song she'd written, accompanying herself on guitar. The girls were as surprised as they were unaware Nina could even play the guitar, and impressed by the maturity of her voice. The girls got to work that very day and spent the next several years earning a fan base at home.

Named after the Smiths song "Girlfriend in a Coma," the band features Nina's powerful vocals. Her voice has drawn relentless comparisons to acts as versatile as Patsy Cline, Karen O and — yes — Morrissey himself, for whom Girl in a Coma has opened two tours. While it may seem like a dream come true, this constant association is something of a double-edged sword. All three girls bristled at the mere mention of Moz.

"When we came up with the name, we were just huge Morrissey fans," Phanie said. "We didn't know what was going to happen with the band. It kind of bit us in the ass, because the first thing people think is, 'Oh, they're trying to be The Smiths.'"

"In a way, though, if they hear that, it makes them interested in us," Nina said. "But we're influenced by so many different styles."

Indeed, when asked to name the records that ignited their passion for music, everything from Nirvana's *Bleach* and Jeff Buckley's *Grace* to Elvis Presley and Glenn Miller was fair game.

"I think it's half and half. Interviewers tend to get a lit-



tle lazy. As for fitting us into a category, we have a hard time ourselves. There are a lot of genres," Alva said.

In 2006, Girl in a Coma was chosen to play on SI TV's docu-series *Jammin'*, and flew to New York to perform. Afterward, they were surprised by Joan Jett, who signed the band to her label on the spot.

The band recorded its debut, *Both Before I'm Gone*, for Blackheart Records in May 2007. The album is a timeline of sorts, drawing from six years' worth of material with all bases covered. From melodic punk rock to twangy ballads, every song is delivered with equal conviction and highlighted by Diaz's sometimes snarling, sometimes sweet, always powerful voice. And no, there are no Smiths covers.

Recently in Oklahoma City on the GLBT-awareness "True Colors" tour, Girl in a Coma is all too aware of pigeonholing. They are all women. They are all Latina. There is a lesbian in the band. Throughout the band's career, media has largely overlooked the simple truth that not one of those things directly affects how the band sounds. Still, the girls remain surprisingly stoic.

"We're proud to be Latina, I'm a proud lesbian and we're proud to be girls. We'd love to inspire — that's really the goal, but when it comes to categorizing, we don't really touch base on it," Alva said. "I think we probably annoy people who interview us. They really want us to get down on a subject, but we just want to be known as musicians."

Land, Water & Fire

My Brightest Diamond pales in comparison, while Girl Talk makes a hell of an album and the Watson Twins stand out.

My Brightest Diamond *A Thousand Shark's Teeth*



>> Mere minutes into *Shark's Teeth*, Shara Worden demonstrates the difference a touch of delicacy can make. The opener and potential hard rock track "Inside a Boy" becomes a classical, haunting score showcasing her operatic range and composition. As often shrill and over-articulated as gentle and beautiful, the record treads near fellow fairy princess Joanna Newsom's polarizing footsteps. But where Newsom's crooning is forthcoming about how inaccessible it is from the first note, *Shark's Teeth* is exciting at first and becomes tiresome further in. The distance between the pop composition and Worden's theatrical vocals becomes an increasing hindrance.

Record Label: Asthmatic Kitty
—released June 17, 2008

Girl Talk *Feed the Animals*



>> From the opening of the Spencer Davis Group's "Gimme Some Lovin'," intertwined with UGK's "International Player's Anthem" and The Unicorns, it's evident that *Feed the Animals*, Gregg Gillis/Girl Talk's follow-

up album, is as lovingly spliced as its predecessor. Designed to be played as a 53-minute gapless track, *Feed the Animals* sees everyone from Sinead O'Connor and Rod Stewart to Avril Lavigne and Jay-Z fall prey to Gillis' dance party methodology. This is another party record, and half the fun is recognizing the pop and rock classics mixed behind hip-hop vocals. *Feed the Animals* is currently only available via Illegal Art's website.

Record Label: Illegal Art
—released June 19, 2008

The Watson Twins *Fire Songs*



>> As pretty, twin vocalists who got their big break flanking Jenny Lewis on her solo record, the odds of successful independence are stacked against Chandra and Leigh Watson. *Fire Songs*, then, is a pleasant surprise in its strength and versatility. The country-tinged acoustic pop songs are delicately played and sung. The songs are more poignant and less in-your-face than Lewis's highly-stylized accent changes. Overall, the album's genuine, purposefully vintage-sounding folk is slow and steady with a couple of standout songs. Album closers "Old Ways" and "Waves" are particularly heartbreaking, and The Cure cover "Just Like Heaven" is spot-on.

Record Label: Vanguard Records
—released June 24, 2008