

THE VOODOO-EROS FAMILY

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Militia Shimkovitz (aka ShimCo.) and Bianca Casady (aka RedBoneSlim) – both brilliant artists-of-all trades – started their radically psychedelic and cosmically subtle record label Voodoo-EROS in early 2005. Although Bianca – part CocoRosie – comes from the wilds of the Great American Desert and Militia from the Plains, the label is stationed in Brooklyn and Paris, creating magic for the people of the world. When asked about the motivation behind this gentle spawn of talented endeavours, the answer was: 'Boredom. We also had a folder with a label on it that said 'Voodoo-EROS' – so it was just easier, organizationally, to file everything in it'. Voodoo-EROS is an arsenal of varmints and visionaries – and a few vandals – operating mostly from the same Brooklyn zip code. It is often described as an 'archival cannon'; more of an art collection – or a collection of plastic bags, or a gay-art collector – than an actual art collective. Voodoo-EROS has been in existence for generations, but has recently been invoked as a base for a vast archival project: picture a damp basement workshop full of scribes writing their family bible. Video, paper, coloring, booty bass, lighting, lightning, astral surfing. From monthly fried-chicken/R&B happenings to weeks-long culture-creation lock-ins, members of this procreative family can usually be found eating chicken sopos, collecting artifacts from dollar stores, or wandering the mesas of New Mexico. Most publicly recognized for their international recording releases, the musical congress of Voodoo-EROS includes *The Enlightened Family* (2005), a collection of lost songs from Devendra Banhart, Jana Hunter, Sierra Casady, Vashti Bunyan,

Nomi, Patrick Wolf and more; Diane Cluck's *Countless Times* (2005); the Metallic Falcons' *Desert Doughnuts* (2006); and this year's banger from Bunny Rabbit – *Lovers and Crypts*. What follows is a conversation with Militia Shimkovitz, Bianca Casady and Sierra Casady responding to questions about the Voodoo-EROS Family posed by M'Lord, one of their biggest fans and heroes.

Militia: It's already started?

M'Lord: Yeah, it's already going.

Bianca, Sierra, Militia: Whoaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! God damn it – that's amazing! Did you get the joke on there? Good. You guys got everything you need! Done. Go home. Go!

Militia: Before you have a business meeting with us, you have to get jumped into our family.

Bianca: Is this a business meeting?

Sierra: This is real serious.

Militia: I offered them truffles, man. But I guess it's more of an interview-meeting. Actually,

I wanted it to be more of a tattoo-meeting but—
 Sierra: Where does the word 'interview' come from? Is it Latin or Slavic? Can you tell what the root of it is, Shimmy? Please help me.

Militia: Yeah the root of 'interview'; it's a Platonic... Can I offer anyone a bonbon?

Sierra: Is it Latin-based or Greek?

Militia: I was startin' to tell you that it's Greek, man.

Bianca: Interviewski!

Militia: Interviewski. I was trying to tell you the Platonic term in it—

These questions are about the Voodoo-EROS Family. That's what it's called, right?

Militia: Sure, spelled out in rope letters.

So, how does the Voodoo-EROS in-rope-letters Family compare to the average nuclear



BIANCA CASADY



MILITIA SHIMKOVITZ AND SIERRA CASADY

family?

Militia: Nu-cleeeeeee-ar.

Bianca: You know what a nuclear family is right?

Militia: Yeah, I know what a nuclear family is. OK, I'm going to do a 'compare and contrast'. Here are the things that are the same about the nuclear family: 1) They both live in the United States – but only for a little bit longer – and sometimes they go on vacations to France. 2) They all involve a grandpa, but not necessarily one that lives there. That's me, I'm the old guy. 3) Most of them are two-car families – and we have two band vans in our family actually. 4) Dogs and cats, one of each. 5) Luggage racks on top of the cars and vans. We have those, too. 6) There are children, which is mostly, you know, this. And 7) There's usually one gay aunt or uncle. And, well, that's how we contrast; we actually have three gay aunts and uncles. We don't have a mom or a dad. We do have some

baby mamas and some daddies. So that's a little bit different – but also kinda the same in another kind of way. Um, 4)...

Bianca: 4? You were on, like, 18.

Militia: No, no, I'm on the *contrast* part now.

Sierra: We all have hairy nuts, come on.

Militia: OK, we all have hairy nuts and the mom and the daughter and the cat in the nuclear family don't have—

Bianca: Sex.

Militia: They don't have hairy balls. At least, I guess not.

Bianca: Oh, OK.

Militia: Same as nuts, right? They have hairy balls and we have hairy nuts. Maybe that's it. 5) What else is different is that we are not a two-income family. We do not have voting power, don't have health insurance, and we also don't have a driveway. Or stairs. Excuse me, I'm being consulted right now. Ahh, we do have each other. And that's what all families have in

common. Did you hear that?

Bianca: And that's just the answer to one question.

Well, you basically answered all the questions that I was going to ask, so... although many families start by falling from genitals, how did the Voodoo-EROS Family originate?

Sierra: This is a sentimental question. I want you to be truthful. Bianca. Talk about the juices, think about the essence, the seed...

Bianca: Oh man. Juices. Seed. The whole thing started with 'Watermelon Juice'. That was the conception of it.

Sierra: Totally. Keep going...

Bianca: I think that Melish thought that it was 'Watermelon Jews', as in J-E-W-S.

Militia: I liked it. I only signed on board 'cause I thought that was the name of the project.

Sierra: That is some story; that is how they met and fell in love.

Militia: That's it. That's the whole misunderstanding.

Bianca: That's how we got involved.

Sierra: That is so cute, you two. You are breaking my heart.

Bianca: Aren't we going to have a two-year anniversary this month or something?

Militia: That is so sweet. We are. I can't believe you remembered.

Happy Anniversary! So, who's involved in your family right now?

Bianca, Militia: Sierra?

Sierra: Is this speech time?

Militia: Go for it, Harpo.

Sierra: Well, you know, it's been a long time since I had an opportunity like this to thank you guys for such a beautiful world. I just wanted to say that publicly.

Militia: Just to really let us know that you really care about us as a family?

Sierra: The whole world can know. Everyone!

Militia: Puppy love.

Bianca: The thing about the family is that, um... like I was just looking at Sierra, for instance, and I was thinking: 'Well, how is Sierra in the family?' And you could kinda divide her into her artistic accomplishments or whatever...

Sierra: Whoa whoa whoa!

Bianca: Excuse me!

Militia: She means her gymnastics trophies...

Bianca: Or whatever name she might have given herself, or some sort of costume she likes to adorn herself with – and then all those different faces of Sierra are aspects of the family. So, all of the members have many different faces. The family is only a few actual people in one sense. Often just the three of us.

Militia: But in another way, there's always pretty much hundreds of us here.

Bianca: Kind of like a spawning pool; like all these tadpoles and pollywogs are just cloning themselves, changing colors.

Militia: Pollywogs, man!

Bianca: Pollywogs, man, that's a good word.

Sierra: Pollywogs, baby! Fuckin pollywog that baby. See how it works in motion? Someone strikes a pose and the other one just like feels it.

Bianca: What did you call it? Action in motion?

Militia: The spirit motion. You're in motion.

Sierra: The spirit, man.

Militia: I wish we had this on video

Bianca: This thing is actually a video tape?

Militia: This is new technology.

Sierra: That communication is nowhere, you can't capture time.

Bianca: "She looked to the nowhere."

Sierra: You know that? That you can't capture time. This is like a fantasy into that.

Militia: You actually can capture time.

You cannot capture time!

Militia: I know, jokes, jokes, OK!

Whoa, but you can really run against the sun.

Militia: I was going to make a joke about it but... what?

So this is the deal. In gym class, they're like, run with the sun, so you run to the right in a circle. To run against the sun you run to the left. But some claim that it's not how it really works in the solar system; that the sun does not actually go to the right. Either way, I just personally cannot run against the sun.

Militia, Bianca, Sierra: Thanks for clearing that up – interview over!

Anyways, what types of family affairs do you handle?

Militia: You told me to be quiet. Now I'm letting

you guys speak.

Bianca: Somehow now, I feel vulnerable.

Sierra: Just 'cause your sister is grabbing your boobs.

Militia: And now she's trying to get at mine.

Bianca: You got boobs too?

Militia: I do. Don't put that in there, though. Don't tell anyone that; we got non-boob reps to worry about.

Bianca: What kinda affairs we have goin' on? Breast reduction...

Militia: Is that the family affairs' scandal?

Bianca: Tattooing, yes I know.

Militia: OK, basically we have specific—

Sierra: Things that we should not say right now – but we're about to.

Militia: If you mean social engagements, yes.

Bianca: If you mean adultery and coitus...

Militia: Also yes.

Sierra: Do you mean plucking and honking?

Militia: Yes. I mean it all! Sometimes we hang out at the park, sometimes we play basketball late at night...

Sierra: Oh, you didn't just say that!

Militia: I totally did... just gave away all our secrets. Sometimes we take – I don't know – there are some weird affairs I feel I can't speak of.

Bianca: It's dirty business.

What kind of magic are you planning on making?

Militia: Magic? I would say that the Quinn thing is kinda magical.

Bianca: He is kinda like a warlock.

Militia: He is a warlock and the way he summoned us—

Bianca: He summoned us by leaving—

Militia: Dead crows on our window sill. But it worked, it worked, all those dead crows. We're talking about Quinn Walker, our long-lost, newly-found spirit bro.

Bianca: He brought the howling werewolf into the neighborhood; it's like Transylvania with dogs around him.

Militia: He didn't bring it into the neighborhood; he just happens to live in the neighborhood so obviously... it's here.

Bianca: His thing... it's not a New Yorky thing. He's from the woods.

Militia: Are you thinking about that story he told us about when he was sitting in the tree and he saw the pack of baby foxes?

Bianca: No. I didn't hear that story.

Militia: Yeah, he was jamming himself while sitting high up in this tree – on some wild trip – all alone. Then a family of foxes walked by and he got all quiet – but didn't stop jamming or anything; just kinda watched them stroll by. Or were they baby coyotes?

Sierra: Wow.

Bianca: I never heard that before: *'jamming himself'*? That's pretty cool.

Militia: Well, I just said it right now because I was trying to use—

Bianca: Well, I was *jamming* myself in the closet, hoping that no one would notice that I was gone for a few months.

Sierra: *Jamming* in the closet.

Bianca: Anyways, that was about the magic.

Militia: And that was magical.

Bianca: He's like the new voodoo in town.

Militia: He is THE new voodoo-hero in town; there's no more room in the family now that we've found Quinn. And that relates back to the nuclear family, he is like the—

Bianca: Powerhouse son.

Militia: The football star.

Bianca: He's bringing home the trophies.

Militia: He's the breadwinner; he's the meal ticket. We knew that he was going to be a part of our family somehow, so we just told him to show up to the photoshoot. And when he walked up, I was like: 'Who is that wild beast walking up here in that Yankees hat?'

Bianca: It was love at first sight

Militia: It was love at first sight *and* not only did he let me put makeup on him, he was disappointed that I wasn't using enough – and not enough different colors.

Do you feel that it is indeed the family that can salvage any great nation? And, more specifically, how can your family?

Militia: You're talking about family values.

Bianca: This is a politician, right here. Family values, baby. Nothing to hide here, folks, nothing to hide.

Militia: I've actually spent a lot of time thinking about this, so allow me to say a few hundred

words. The people that speak about 'family values' are speaking to me. Now, they might not be talking about my specific kind of nuclear family – I know that they are probably not. I talk about family values everywhere. This is because my belief is not that a nation can be salvaged by a family – but the only way that any of us will survive in the coming years is if we form our own families. And by 'families', I mean 'gangs'.

Sierra: We need to create, we need to build our community.

Militia: The best thing you can do is get a bunch of homies together – each with a special, specific power. That way, everyone in the family has a place.

Sierra: I'll say a prayer.

Militia: If you are a whole alone, your crew can come together and make a greater whole. Then if anything happens, you can turn your backs towards each other, stand in a circle, and pull out your fucking swords. I mean, you gotta find a gang... let me tell you about *my* gang.

Bianca: Everyone's got different swords. Some people got flesh swords, some people got sock swords—

Militia: Sierra *takes* us there, Sierra takes us *there*. Bianca is the one who has the moon and the action and the motion to go there; to motivate even letting us go there. And I am the one who makes sure that we're always wearing clean underwear.

Sierra: She's the steering wheel. And I'm the headlights.

Militia: You are the headlights, you are the brightest star shining out there.

Are you familiar with John F Kennedy's saying: 'It's not what you can do for your family, but what you—'

All: — family can do for you!'

And how do you relate to these wise words?

Militia: So, what's the family done for me lately? Mostly the family reminds me – wait, you want me to say not nice stuff?

Bianca: No, just what it has done for you lately.

Militia: It supports me by doing things. The family really pushes me forward by showing up at my house when they are not invited, having their mom text me things sometimes.

We are going to do the speed round. I ask

fast questions, and you give fast answers.

Ready?

Bianca: Is this a contest?

Yes. Do you attend PTA meetings?

Bianca: No.

Militia: Yes.

Sierra: PTA?

Where would you go on a vision quest right now?

Bianca: Bathroom.

Sierra: Twelve cyber islands.

Militia: I'm there right now: I just closed my eyes.

How many dares would it take for you to eat a rattlesnake's face?

Sierra: Oh, is this it? The dare? Four.

Bianca: Too many.

Militia: You're makin' it sound pretty good right now. One. Yeah. Half-one.

Are you into the latest trend of wearing two pairs of designer jeans at the same time?

Bianca: No.

Militia: How many pairs of pants are you wearing right now? Just for the record...

Bianca: I'm wearing one pair of pants.

Militia: And one big pair of shorts over it.

Sierra: What's a designer jean?

Who do you see when you look in the mirror?

Bianca: A fat pumpkin.

Militia: Who'd I tell you I looked like this afternoon? I thought people were recognizing me and thinking that I was this person... from 90210... oh yeah, Brian Austin Green!

Who would you like to see in the mirror?

Militia: Luke Perry!

Bianca: Jordan from New Kids on the Block.

Sierra: Oh! You totally took my answer.

Have you ever made out with yourself?

Bianca: Yes. I mean we are right now – all of us – just by talking. Isn't talking just like making out with yourself? Think about it...

Would you ever make love to a minotaur?

Militia: Have we or will we?

Bianca: Is that a dude horse?

It's the bull head

Sierra: What's a minotaur?

Militia: No it's not.

Yeah it is. It's the horse body and the bull

face.

Militia: Oh, I was thinking of a centaur.

Sierra: My ex-boyfriend was a minotaur.

Do you have any questions for each other?

Bianca: Yeah. How come you won't let me sleep in your bed?

Militia: She wants to know why she can't sleep in my bed.

Bianca: This is gonna hurt.

Sierra: I know why. Because if you leave your smell in her bed she'll fall in love with you, and she doesn't want to do that because you guys are other kinds of partners.

Militia: That's an interesting theory and I'm not denying it, but—

Sierra: Don't lie!

Militia: I do sleep in a bed with you all the time on tour. You're a good person to sleep with – you don't kick, you don't snore, you don't talk in your sleep, you don't do anything weird. You barely move. You fall asleep quick. You wake up alright. You aren't too hard to wake up – like some other people I know who do weird things in the night and can't wake up in the morning. You're totally fine and can sleep in my bed whenever. You just come over here to my house and – before you even say hello – you take a shower in my tub, you put on my clothes, you spray yourself with anything you can find; your feet are up and you're drinking tea. So I don't know why you haven't slept in my bed. Probably 'cause I have a nice couch for sleeping on.

Bianca: Alright.

Militia: I have a question: you guys want to be like best friends with me forever or what?

Bianca: I think that if Sierra and I get married, you would be our best man.

Militia: Oh wow, that's like the nicest thing.

Bianca, that's like the nicest thing you've ever said to me. You've said a lot of nice things but that one meant something. Lets do it! Lets get you guys married. I want to be your best man. I think we could work that out. I think you guys could have a nice marriage – you guys already do have a nice marriage. I really do feel that maybe this is part of the nuclear family – maybe I'm just the gay uncle and I get to hang out.

Sierra: Marvin!

Bianca: You're not the gay uncle – you're just

gay.

Tell us about your projects outside the Voodoo-EROS family?

Bianca: The *products*?

Militia: The *projects*.

Bianca: Nothing's outside of it.

Militia: No, everything is inside of it. There were maybe projects that came before Voodoo-EROS—

Bianca: But it enveloped them like a blob.

Militia: Like a big fucking virus. Like a virussy blob of ectoplasm.

Bianca: Voodoo-EROS, that's a good definition for it.

The future, how does it relate to you?

Bianca: We're gonna have more cars, more riches, more real estate!

Sierra: We're gonna have beards down to the fuckin' ground, gonna be fuckin' ridin' lowriders and our beards are gonna be fuckin' swingin' way back in the wind!

Bianca: Right now there are MTV Music Awards, but there will be Voodoo-EROS awards. We'll roll out the red carpet, you know. What I'm sayin' is here comes fuckin' Quinn Walker in a white suit...

Militia: Listen, we're gonna do it big 'cause we ain't got nothing else to do.

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The Voodoo-EROS Family Portrait

BY SOPHIE MÖRNER



MILITIA SHIMKOVITZ, LACY LANCASTER, QUINN WALKER, BIANCA CASADY, SIERRA CASADY,
BUNNY RABBIT, PETE



BIANCA CASADY



MILITIA SHIMKOVITZ



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