



Hidden Depths

I hate it when iTunes appears to randomly assign an inappropriate genre to a record. I know I can make it stop showing me that column, but it's oddly fascinating (when it's not annoying). This week, iTunes thinks the dulcet-voiced, improbably infectious **Ingrid Michaelson** is easy listening. Sure, she's easy on the ears, but that's not exactly the same thing.

Michaelson is a New York singer-songwriter with a vulnerable tone that alternately matches and mismatches beautifully with her lyrics, which are full of romantic musings, hopes and fears, and observations that take a few listens to sink in (such as the song in which she promises her love "I'll buy you Rogaine if you start losing all your hair"). Her piano-laden, electronics-decorated songs range from the spare "Corner of Your Heart" to "Die Alone," the first track on 2006's *Girls and Boys*, which is like a polished-up Aimee Mann song from the *Magnolia* soundtrack, all quiet vocals, rhythmic guitars and restraint – to a

point. If I have any complaint about *Girls and Boys* it's that it's so glossy, so sound-track-ready and polished, it nearly bounced off my ears at first, beautiful background noise with a thread of darkness. It's not until I'd let the record play through – and through, and through – that the depths to Michaelson's songs began to show through.

Both "Corner of Your Heart" and "Keep Breathing," an as-yet unreleased song available on Michaelson's MySpace page, have been featured on *Grey's Anatomy*, which should tell fans of *Grey's* a lot about what Michaelson

sounds like even if they didn't know it was she they were hearing (the show's music choices are just that precisely selected). Michaelson is touring with fellow singer-songwriter William Fitzsimmons; catch them at 9 pm Friday, June 1 at John

Henry's. 21+ show. \$8 adv., \$10 door. – *Molly Templeton*

A Message to You, Teddy

It seems we've all been fooled. But hey, **Sketchy Ted**'s album cover for *Now*



You Know does recall any Mighty Mighty Bosstones album made in the '90s. Not too mention their annoyingly cute press info, which is gleaming with sugar-coated statements like, "Portland, Oregon pop-rock outfit Sketchy Ted puts the smiles, laughter, and dance back into pop music." Did I mention that Sketchy Ted "aims to make you dance – or at least wiggle a little"?

The good folks at the *Music Liberation Project*, a Portland music journal, were also wary of the band: "Do not be fooled. Like I was. Like everyone else here at MLP was." Remarkably, the *EW* had the same response. In the end, we all came out unscathed and pleasantly surprised with what we heard.

It's possible you're thinking, "People still play ska-punk music?" Yes, it's true. Sketchy Ted's sound recalls bands like Mustard Plug, Skankin Pickle and The Hippos – talk about a flashback – with a hint of Cars pop sensibilities. Now, my children, go forth and get your skank on. Plaid pants optional. Sketchy Ted plays with the Ingredients at 9 pm Monday, June 4, at the Indigo District. \$3.

– *Amanda Burhop*

Put on a Happy Face

When Jim Fairchild, ex-Grandaddy guitarist, started skateboarding with Menomena drummer Danny Seim during Fairchild's six-month stay in Portland last summer, he wasn't sure how to ask if Seim would drum for All Smiles, Fairchild's new project. Of course, Seim agreed. No surprise, then, that **All Smiles** is now touring with

Menomena, who released their second full-length album, *Friend and Foe*, in January. Intricate sound layers, heavy, artful drumming and tremulous, Wayne Cohen-like vocals add a surreal quality to Menomena's genre-bending. For lack of better terms, music reviewers often shove Menomena under the oversized indie pop umbrella, perhaps with a "post" disclaimer in front of the "pop" so no one on *Pitchfork* gets offended.

Over the duration of *Friend and Foe*, Menomena breaks in listeners by working up to the riskier, more cacophonous stuff. A good tactic, especially for those suspicious of experimental pop, but the complex sound layers that make *Friend and Foe* so exceptional might also make it a tough act to follow – or open for. But like Menomena's debut album *I Am The Fun Blame Monster*, the mood of each track on *Friend and Foe* varies enough to keep listeners engaged. Enthusiastic drumming and heavy saxophone add a deep urgency to "Weird," but the album's tide recedes with "Rotten," a sad tune steered by staccato piano and subdued, simpler rhythm.

Menomena often favors forceful,



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