

Heidi Mortensen

Wired Stuff

BY JOHN BERGSTROM

28 July 2006



Wired 'n' Weird

Artists you could call “uncompromising” are always curiosities at the very least. Is the term an indicator of real expectation-defying, genre-busting, true-to-self-ness, or a euphemism for “difficult, self-indulgent, and not very good”? The answer, as always, lies in the eye (and ear) of the beholder. But you can’t sit on the fence, and that’s where the curiosity comes in.

Wired Stuff is an uncompromising album from the uncompromising Danish-born, Berlin-based Heidi Mortenson. In terms of her approach and subject matter, you could say she’s in the tradition of Laurie Anderson or Grace Jones. If Grace Jones built her own synthesizers. But Mortenson isn’t sexy, either. She sings about sex—quite often, quite graphically—but, judging by the picture on the cover, she’s not interested in playing those lyrics or her erotic, bad-girl voice for their desirability. You take or leave her art on its own terms.



HEIDI MORTENSON

WIRED STUFF

(WIRED)

US: 4 APR 2006

UK: 24 APR 2006

AMAZON
ITUNES

As far as the listening goes, *Wired Stuff* is challenging. Difficult. Musically, it’s a cacophony of machines, electro-pulses, and static that Mortenson just *barely* has under control. The sounds are reminiscent of early synth pioneers like Fad Gadget and Cabaret Voltaire, but the arrangements are pure Mortenson. There aren’t many choruses. There aren’t many verses, either. The backing tracks are canvases onto which Mortenson can pour her words, have her say, dare you to switch her off. “Just Shut Up And” rides on something you could describe as an “electro pulse”; “In the Streets” may be a sort of “twisted, slinky blues”, and “Less and Less” fools you into thinking it’s a pop song before breaking into a pounding tantrum. But these descriptions don’t really do justice to the uniqueness, the *weirdness*, and the degree of listening difficulty.

As for her words, Mortenson makes some observations of urban life, though what she’s really about is portraying sex, sexuality, and relationships in a way

that's so dirty, so unabashed, so much a matter of synaptic responses as to take almost all the appeal out of them. She starts the album out stating "I don't know what the fuck is wrong with me", and by the end she doesn't really have an answer. She does tell you that she's "Workin' On It", in a near-rapping cadence that suggests Gwen Stefani on a bad acid trip. A song later, she's commanding you to "Shut up and kiss me . . . you come, / 'Cos Heidi says come", and a few songs after that to "lick my lips of desire". You sense she's being honest, too—it's neither a joke nor a novelty, which makes it all the more difficult.

You could say that in her uncompromising way, Mortenson is more honestly just a girl than any dance-pop diva out there. Then you listen to "On the Move", and realize that Mortensen's idea of girrl-pop would give Christina Aguilera nightmares. *Wired Stuff* is an album that does all-too-good a job of making you feel you've met your match.