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Heidi Mortenson

Diamonds & Underwear

BY TIMOTHY GABRIELE 2 March 2008

Had she come along three years earlier, the sleazy gender-bending digital pleather synth-pop on Heidi Mortenson's two full-lengths would have been lumped in with the electroclash movement. Luckily, Mortenson has fallen into our laps a hair late of the bandwagon. Her latest EP Diamonds and Underwear shares perhaps its closest kin with the stoned experimentalism and sound collage chicanery of Chicks on Speed (one of electroclash's more original exports) and their The Re-Releases on the Un-Releases LP. But rather than reach for the Bong, Heidi Mortenson pounds back the vodka, dreams of escaping to an ocean town, heads on over to the disco club, and comes back horny and a little bit nutty. It's a busy little three song 12-minute EP. To call it a cluttered curiosity would be an understatement. The lyrics are barely discernible and about half of the production makes me feel a bit dizzy, but there's a schizophrenic charm in the way Mortenson layers reverbed moans, giddy squeals, goofball cat-calls, wiry pitch-bent steel guitar, '80s hip-hop mouth-bass, cartoon sound FX, and the whole of the kitchen sink. This intentionally unfocused method becomes more successful as the album wanders along its deviant path. Closer "Stronger Than This" veers alongside a fantastic but exhausting whirlwind of wild tangents, Nintendo improv, and false endings. Even if *Diamonds & Underwear* is far too strange to be anywhere close to perfect, Mortenson should at least be given credit for exploiting the much neglected architecture of the short player and creating a full listening experience.



