

# SOUNDS

## POP QUIZ: IMOGEN HEAP Aidin Vaziri

Imogen Heap makes great Hollywood endings. The 27-year-old London native's single "Hide and Seek" brought down the curtain on the second season finale of "The O.C.," and "Let Go," a song she recorded with Madonna producer Guy Sigsworth under the name Frou Frou, played out the closing scene of the movie "Garden State." With her second solo album, "Speak for Yourself," the glitzy pop star has shoved aside major labels and refinanced her home to independently write, record and produce things her way. It could mark a really great beginning.

**Q:** The last time you played San Francisco you wore white knee-high fishnet stockings, a silver-sequined scarf, a white shawl and a blue fedora with a feather sticking out of it. Do you own any mirrors?

**A:** Any mirrors? Why, do you think I need one?

**Q:** I'm asking the questions here.

**A:** You think I should have a mirror because it's not coming together very well? I did have a mirror on tour, actually, but it was a little mirror, not a full size. And it was quite liberating not having a full-size mirror because you can't sit there and stare at yourself for ages. The other thing is, because I

rushed out on tour and I was trying to get my visa together I did the panic pack. So I ended up taking only 10 items of clothing with me, which is unheard of because it meant I had to restrict myself. So I got imaginative.

**Q:** I would buy that excuse if I didn't just see you on a magazine cover with red eye-shadow, white baby powder all over your chest and more feathers sticking out of your head.

**A:** I had a whole week to prepare

for that photo shoot.

**Q:** What do you have against birds anyway?

**A:** I love birds. That's why I wear them all over me.

**Q:** I think you take a similar approach with lyrics like "Trains and sewing machines/ All those years/ They were here first"

**A:** Some songs happen very, very quickly. "Hide and Seek" came together in one fell swoop because I wrote it as I performed it, all in the space of 4½ minutes. It was just one of those blessed moments when it just pours out of you. But that rarely happens. I wish I could push a button on my head and go, right, "Pour song out now." I really don't like writing lyrics.

**Q:** Are you more comfortable as a producer?

**A:** Much more. Music is interpretive. Lyrics are like talking. There's so much more you can get away with musically. If you've got a bad lyric, you've got a bad lyric. You can't hide it. If you've got a bad guitar sound, you can shove on some delays and make something good out of it.

**Q:** Is that why you use the Vocoder so much?

**A:** No. I just saw the Vocoder out of the corner of my eye and I decided to plug it in just to see what happens. The first thing that came out was "Hide and Seek."

**Q:** You paid for and made this album yourself. Do you find it funny that the only major criticism anyone has is that it sounds too polished?

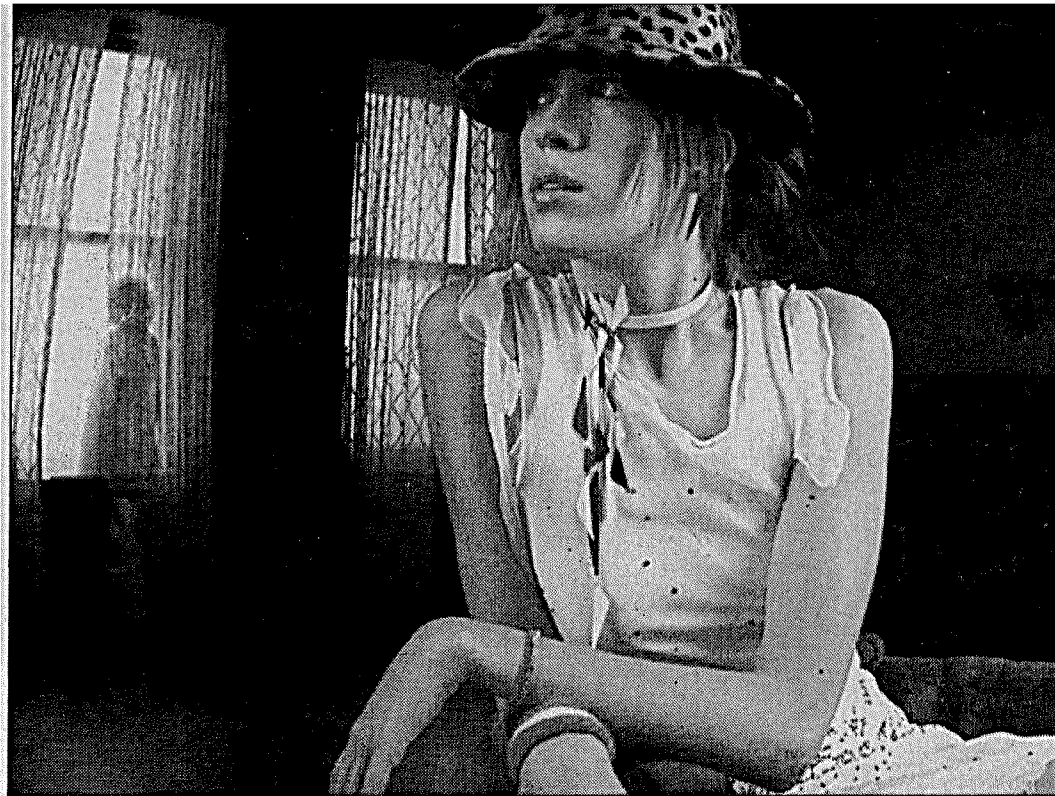
**A:** It does kind of make me laugh. I don't think it's polished. I think it has heart. Polished, to me, means it has no heart. I think maybe a lot of the reviewers who say that are

puritans and there's so much stuff going on they think it's polished. I'm happy that people think it's well produced. When I started, I didn't even think I could do a

whole record on my own. ■

---

*E-mail Aidin Vaziri at [avaziri@sfchronicle.com](mailto:avaziri@sfchronicle.com).*



**Imogen Heap is pleasantly puzzled over criticism that her latest release is too polished.**