

# Machine-made songs, ignited by her voice

By **Linda Laban**  
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“I haven’t introduced my band,” said Imogen Heap, as she stood alone on the stage at the Paradise on Friday night. **Music Review** “Here’s my bass box. Here’s my beat box,” she said, giving each a little prod into action. “Here’s my parrot.”

“Here’s my parrot,” came the echo from the vocal looper she triggered. “Here’s my mbira, here’s my laptop, and here’s my piano,” she added. Usually it takes a lineup of two or three bands to sell out a rock club on a Friday night. Newcomer Heap did it with only one other person on the bill: Zoe Keating, the Canadian-born cellist and member of the rock-cello troupe Rasputina. Keating opened with a solo set of experimental chamber pieces and also joined Heap for a couple of songs.

Positioned in front of a gauzy curtain flecked with sparkling lights, Heap was flanked on one side by an array of gadgets and on the other by another keyboard. The tall, barefoot, 26-year-old English woman with messy, leonine hair and a slightly batty way of twittering on between songs was utterly captivating.

She began with a piano version of “Just for Now,” from her breakthrough second solo CD, last year’s

“Speak for Yourself,” and later included songs, such as “It’s Good To Be in Love,” from her former duo project, Frou Frou. A haunting “Can’t Take it In,” from the “Chronicles of Narnia” soundtrack, united Keating’s rich bowing with airy, layered, looped vocals.

Heap’s breathy but firm voice rose and cracked through the performance, revealing more vulnerability and personality than on record. She ended the pulsing “Loose Ends” with a soprano scream, a grating sound that was awful yet freeing. As she began the hit “Hide and Seek,” her mike faltered, but she soon restarted and

pulled off another coup as her doubled vocals were manipulated with a touching, robotic echo.

It wasn’t technology that ignited these songs though, it was the sheer loveliness of the free-spirited Heap’s voice. Unlike the average rock or pop show, which builds to the (presumed) rousing finale, Heap’s set ended quietly with a dreamy piano and voice piece, “Sleep,” from her solo debut, 1998’s “I Megaphone.” It was a lullaby about waking up. How individual.

## Imogen Heap

With Zoe Keating

At: the Paradise, Friday night



VICKY DAWE

Imogen Heap’s singing adds a vulnerability to her music, which she creates with an array of electronic gadgets.