

SPIN

REVIEWS

NEW CDs

Northern State

Can I Keep This Pen? ★★★

IPECAC

Post-major label, New York rap gals sing for their supper

By immediately bragging about their superlative mic skills and overall fly-ness on this third album, the ladies of Northern State prepare us for a hip-hop record similar to their first: goofy, Beastie Boys–style bravado with an erudite twist. Instead, MCs Hesta Prynne, Spero, and Sprout morph into an electro-rock trio on the jump-along “Better Already”—and they can’t, won’t, and don’t stop. Some halfhearted rhymes linger, but contagiously energetic political jams such as “Cold War” make it easy to forget that it’s been three years since anyone heard from Le Tigre. *PHOEBE REILLY*