

**Northern State***Can I Keep This Pen?*

Ipecac

***Long Island rap trio harangues  
Democrats, knuckleheads***

**N**orthern State is the best white female rap/alt-rock trio from the part of the island that's preceded by "Laaawn," not "Strong." They're also the only group, of any genre or gender, to rhyme "lemon spritzer" with "Eliot Spitzer." Much like their fraternity brothers in the Beastie Boys (Ad-Rock provides "Suka Mofo" with Jiffy Pop beats), the trio flows like they haven't really checked for rap since Treacherous Three (that's a compliment) and intermingles snarky asides with "good" politics, even if lines like "This is going out to the Democrats/Can we please come correct in 2008?" might work better on a pamphlet.

As refreshing as Northern State have always been, though, there's moments when their "Look at us! We're making a record!" naiveté and PC fixations feel like a meeting of the Park Slope Food Co-op. But since few musicians want to say anything, Hesta Prynne, Sprout, and Spero get a pass here for saying *something*. *Can I Keep This Pen?*, their third CD and first après leaving the majors (which, judging by recent press material, was akin to escaping a POW camp), does double-dutch leaps between verses about knuckleheads, verses about hanging in NYC, and verses about how "I'll parallel-park your car for you," the latter on the chugging "Things I'll Do," which addresses love from the POV of those of us who are smitten but might not want to be whipped and/or wifed. Northern State might be the only chicks in their niche, but they still beat the competition with a giddy, witty, rocksteady spirit that makes you say, *Yes, yes, y'all*. **AMY LINDEN**

***Northern State play the Luna Lounge August 29,  
lunalounge.com***