

## INDIE SCENE

## SHANNON AND THE CLAMS

*Sleep Talk*

shannonandtheclams.com

Large and in charge, singer and bassist Shannon Shaw presides over her Clams like a misfit Marvete or punk-rock version of a John Waters film character. She lives for the teen melodrama of doo-wop and early-'60s girl-group pop, and on this Oakland trio's sophomore album, she pouts and growls but never plays the pushover. Shaw sounds genuinely heartbroken on ballads like "Tired of Being Bad," but the irreverent "Half Rat" is a better example of what she does best. Singing to a philandering ex-con boyfriend, she threatens to tie a bell around the bad boy's neck, lest he wander off again.

On "The Cult Song"—sort of a cross between the Ramones' "We're a Happy Family" and



Heidi Gutman

Sheb Wooley's 1958 novelty tune "The Purple People Eater"—Shaw stands firm against a Jim Jones-type, insisting, "I don't wanna be in your cult no more!" Down the stretch, guitarist Cody Blanchard takes the lead, putting a chill in the creepy "Old Man Winter" and wailing with a voice distinguishable from Shaw's only by the presence of demonic rockabilly yelps. How this band lucked into two vocalists with this much bizarro-retro gusto is anyone's guess, but their absurdist glee makes for time-warp rock that's truly warped.

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