



Save Ferris
Modified
(Epic)

Consider the best hybrid groups of California's third-wave ska movement: If Sublime had been fronted by a woman, if Gwen Stefani had a better vocal range, if Dance Hall Crashers still had horns, you'd have an accurate description of about half of Save Ferris's latest release, *Modified*. When you hear "I'm Not Crying for You," it's easy to remember that lead singer Monique Powell once sang on a Reel Big Fish

track years ago and that the two bands toured together. Which is not to say that Save Ferris doesn't have a sound of its own; it's the combination of the West Coast ska family sound and so many other influences that makes this band worthwhile. Bear in mind that its first Epic release revealed capabilities in swing as well as ska, and that its biggest hit to date is a remake of the quintessential '80s tune "Come on, Eileen."

Modified builds on the band's pop-ska foundation but also flirts with new diversity, touching on R&B, hip-hop and some serious reggae beats. In fact, track two, "The Only Way to Be," features scratching from DJ Swamp (of Beck fame) and kicks off so reggae-rock stylee that it sounds like something straight from Sublime's *40 oz. to Freedom*. Swamp also adds turntable flavor to the album opener, "Turn It Up," a hypercatchy '80s-inspired radio-request-line number. And in the middle of it all, a one-minute, mostly instrumental interlude called "One More Try" lays the bass and strings of a Portishead- or Björk-like electronica trip.

While a lot of ska bands tend to sound alike to the unfamiliar ear, some have transcended the trend. Save Ferris has what it takes not to fade away when the third wave dissipates.

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