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**\*\*\* Kristin Hersh**

**SKY MOTEL**

(4AD)

Such was Kristin Hersh's situation after two years of muselessness: the musician who once admitted "My mouth is full of demons/I swear to God" found her mouth empty. A funny thing happens when you're possessed and then, suddenly, whoever's in control just up and vacates; you're forced to figure out how to speak in your own words. And so, Hersh explains, she made herself write. And write she did! And play she did -- all instruments except the drum parts on four tracks. Voilà! -- *Sky Motel*, the happiest medium imaginable between the alterna-rock of the Throwing Muses and the acoustic quality of her solo work. Skip straight to the "Dizzy"-like "San Francisco": muffled vocals and slightly off guitar chords stick in a molasses groove as she sincerely sings "God bless the hard way." Later, on the super-slow "Husk": "When you're smoke, how do you speak? . . . c'mon out, c'mon out, write with me." What these carefully penned lyrics lack is the bittersweet obscurity that marked Muses' stories, but what they gain is intent. Hersh now knows exactly what she's saying. She's aware, and she seems happy that way. "This is no time to fuck up," she sings on "Clay Feet." And she hasn't.



– Robin A. Rothman

*(Kristin Hersh headlines downstairs at the Middle East on Wednesday August 25. Call 864-EAST.)*



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