

THEROCKCLUBUK,:

Highways, Ghosts, Hearts & Home – Susan James

“This is not exactly a dipping the toe back in the water after a long time away, more like a head first dive back into the world of country and Americana balladry. Susan hails from the West Coast but sounds like the next queen of Nashville on the strength of this outing.

Two albums precede this release, Shocking Pink Banana Seat from 1995 and Fantastic Voyage from 1998. 13 years later and we get this gem from Susan with an impressive band of musicians accompanying her. Paul Lacques, Paul Marshall and Shawn Nourse from LA County outfit I See Hawks. Gabe Witcher of the Punch Brothers is on Fiddle and Danny McGough of the magnificent Shivaree plays the Hammond Organ.

The album kicks off with an almost Ryan Adams & the Cardinals-esque, “Airstream Girl.” Delightful mandolin leads the way through “A Weed is not a Weed” after which Gabe’s fiddle is the driving force in a foot stomping “Thank You Tomorrow.” “On your Side” has a heart bleeding guitar and vocal and, yet another change of pace on the album.

“Cold Moon on the Highway” does indeed invoke a night time drive down a long west coast highway, while “Old Jug Song” is sung sitting round the campfire, taking a break from that long drive and is an extremely catchy tune.

The album actually seems to mature as it progresses with “Out in the Woods,” “Calling Mr Zimmerman” and a psychedelic, Americana tumbleweed classic of a song called, “Falling Waltz 2.” Sweet songs close out the album the acoustic “How to fix a Broken Girl” and the album closing song, “Goin’ To California” with a heady sixties vibe.

This is a fabulous album that is a real grower so give it three or four spins and you will fall in love it, much like we all did with Caitlin Rose in 2010. 2011 gives us Susan James!”

- Peter Eley

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