

**FREE**  
Every single  
Wednesday!

# ALIBI weekly

## SUSAN JAMES WITH JACK LOGAN AND BOB KIMBELL

Monday, Oct. 5; Launchpad (21 and over): Far be it from me to use the word "trend" in the same sentence as the name of the self-made, fiercely independent, joyful girl who started Righteous Babe Records from a loft in Buffalo, N.Y., eight or so years ago, only to take full ownership of the enigmatic genre variously known as folk-punk, new folk, blah, blah, blah. ... But there does seem to be an enormous amount of lip service and, sometimes, real attention paid to that old punk rock ethic called DIY. It can certainly be said that Ms. Not So Soft is partially responsible for curious renewed interest in remaining in full artistic control of one's destiny to the point that no amount of courting—be it money, cars, big-sounding deals with big-acting record execs—can sway character. Look where it's gotten her.

So while it may be tiring to read of another strong female musician out there fighting tooth and nail to make it on her own, one listen to Susan James is likely to wake your ass right up. One can only suppose that comparisons—from Sinead O'Connor to Joni Mitchell and beyond—could be drawn for days. Everyone has their influences. But James puts a unique spin on hers, drawing on world music at least as much as she does on Western folk and from a variety of individual musicians that transcends gender, genre and instrument. All of this married to a decidedly pop aesthetic. Sound weird? It is.

But her use of the weird and off-kilter—acrobatic vocal stylings and an incredible range, stunt guitar and pointed lyrics—is precisely what makes James something special amid a churning sea of bandwagoneers. The proof chimes out loudly on her latest release, the expansive, double CD *Fantastic Voyage* (Red Letter). So broad is James' scope on her latest that listening to it becomes like listening to several albums by several equally talented artists. And when the songs are as consistently good as James', more power to her! She's unpredictable, unexpected and exactly what you've been waiting for.

—Michael Henningsen



Susan James

# SHOWOFF!