

# YEAH YEAH YEAH

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Susan James  
*Fantastic Voyage:*  
a double album  
(Red Letter)



One of the awesome advantages of writing for a cool fanzine like *Yeah3* is that it gives you ample opportunity to write about people who float your boat. (Well, thank you Morley, the sports car is in the mail-ed.) Every once in a while something special spins across my micro-mini turntable and helps me redefine what it is that I truly love about the music I truly love. So let's spill some hot sauce on this sonic saucer full of swirling secrets.

If you don't know her already, please introduce yourself to Susan James. Now, she's not a "pop" chick, or a neo-ska babe, or even a Lilith Diva for that matter. But if your musical taste buds can imagine Leo Kottke and Jeff Buckley jamming with Stereolab then you've only just begun to live and riotously rock your way through the wobulus world of Susan James. Take *Fantastic Voyage's* first disc entitled "Lovesick." Some kind of strange tape loop "loops" its way through the strong fibers of foundation in order

to set the setting for "Manna." And it's almost as if Jeff Buckley was spinning the front cover of *Led Zepelin III*.

"Static" tells the truth about hearing love songs on the radio when you're not in the mood for love. It's followed immediately by "The Blood Of Experience," which seemingly blends folk-rock with an open-tuned healing tourniquet. As intriguing tape loops kick start the track, the words then provide poetic interpretations of love lost and found and then lost again.

For me, the most powerful emotional moment on the record occurs during the mesmerizing seventh track, "Love & Luck & Sin." I don't know if it was the vibe of the Venice, CA recording studio on that particular night or what? But to say she nailed it would be an understatement. And lord knows I could use a few more of those.

"All She Ever Wanted" has this ultra-cool organ track running through its compact two minutes and 37 seconds before it wildly careens and then crashes directly into "Spinning Down," which happens to completely rock my world. Sounding a lot like T. Rex side-swiping The Pretenders as they drive down Abbey Road.

Hey, as if that wasn't enough, there's a second CD. James effortlessly broils pop, folk, blues, rock, psychedelia, classical, swamp, and choral into one deliciously intoxicating brew. The production certainly sounds like a perfect marriage between analog and digital. And I wish more records today had that balance and feel—something so easily

meshed between these very musical grooves. Buried deep within the magical confines of these two very different, yet compatible records, lies a seductively diverse voyage that can only be described as fantastic. Bravo.

address: 2029 Verdugo Blvd.,  
Montrose CA 91020  
[www.pacificnet.net/~susan/](http://www.pacificnet.net/~susan/)  
—Morley Bartnoff