

Susan James *Driving Toward The Sun* (SJM)

Susan James is another of those artists whose output over the years would seem to rate more awareness than she's received so far. Her latest, *Driving Toward The Sun*, provides another fine example of what James does best, that is to purvey an engaging heartland approach that takes in the softer delights that are evidenced in gentle, entrancing numbers like "Anniversary" and "Tule Fog" as well as giddier, pedal steel-infused upcountry entreaties such as "Wandering" and "Agua Dulce Tears." James' wholesome, winsome vocals lend themselves nicely to this sublime approach, making each tune sound like an unequivocal invitation to join in and enjoy. To her credit, she also surrounds herself with some first rate assistance, counting among her players pedal steel player Eric Heywood, drummer Walfredo Reyes Jr., and guitarist Neal Casal. The combination of talents turns *Driving Toward The Sun* into the warm embrace the title seems to suggest. For those unaware, now is an ideal opportunity to hitch a ride and enjoy the view it brings. (www.susanjamesmusic.com)

- Lee Zimmerman, No Depression