

SAM PHILLIPS
Don't Do Anything

NONESUCH
★★★★ **RECOMMENDS**

UNSUNG AMERICAN'S SEVENTH SUPERIOR OUTING. Maybe the Plant/Krauss cover of her song Sister Rosetta Goes Before Us on last year's Raising Sand will stir up a bit more interest in Sam Phillips; she's worth it. Her own sturdier version, complete with flying Gypsy violin, appears on this self-produced album that pitches her cool, modern-day cabaret abstractions against everything from lo-fi guitar rock to buzzy pop choruses and broken-down waltzes. Always an intriguing lyricist, her divorce from producer T-Bone Burnett seems to have added a bittersweet dimension to her words, too. ■ PETER KANE
DOWNLOAD: Sister Rosetta Goes Before Us

DANIEL POWTER
Under The Radar

WARNERS
★★★★ **RECOMMENDS**

THE CANADIAN JAMES BLUNT'S THIRD ALBUM. Hurtling towards his 40th year, and with his debut I'm Your Betty already written out of history, Daniel Powter seemed to come from nowhere with Bad Day and his self-titled album of 2005. With no discernible personality, he seemed likely to go straight back there. Yet its successor deserves to save him. As warmly irresistible as The Feeling, the impossibly catchy Best Of Me nods to Elton John's Your Song and it's the finest moment here, but Next Plane Home, the Bluntian My So-Called Life and Negative Fashion run it close. Excellent. And who'd have predicted that? ■ JOHN AIZLEWOOD
DOWNLOAD: Best Of Me

RA RA RIOT
The Rhumb Line

V2
★★★★

HIGH-IQ POP-ROCK GRADUATES WITH HONOURS. Led by former architecture student Milo Bonacci, these indie kids from Syracuse University in upstate New York inevitably draw comparison with Vampire Weekend thanks to a talent for creating smart, three-minute pop miniatures. And while their rapid ascent stalled following drummer John Pike's drowning in 2007, this effervescent debut seems determined to shake off the tragedy, driven by the urgent post-punk bass of Ghost Under Rocks, sprightly Dying Is Fine (co-written by Pike before his death) and a sublimely sinuous Kate Bush cover, Suspended In Gaffa. ■ RUPERT HOWE
DOWNLOAD: Ghost Under Rocks

MANDA RIN
My DNA

THIS IS FAKE DIY
★★★★

FORMER BIS SINGER'S BELATED SOLO DEBUT. In the mid-'90s Bis briefly convinced a few (mostly Japanese) people that amateurism was the way ahead, until the novelty wore off after three albums. The former Amanda MacKinnon has kept herself busy with Bis reunions, Junol and Meister, but this solo outing is a garage disco, where tinny but dancy synthesizers meet bedroom guitars and Rin's little-girl vocals. When it works, as on the twisting Black Book, it's fairly charming, but mostly it's CSS without the glam and attitude, Black Kids without the oomph and Late Of The Pier without the mystery. ■ JOHN AIZLEWOOD
DOWNLOAD: Black Book

ROLL DEEP
Return Of The Big Money Sound

ROLL DEEP
★★★★

GRIME CREW LEAVE THEIR ROLEXES AT HOME. Wiley, producer and leading figure in East London grime collective Roll Deep, recently scored a Number 2 hit with Wearing My Rolex. His crew's third album, however, is defiantly uncommercial. Stung by Virgin's decision to drop them after the disappointing performance of their 2005 debut, In At The Deep End, Roll Deep retreat into uncompromising club cuts. Thunder & Lightnin is built on a grinding bassline while U Know Dis pairs techno beats and tag-team rhyme schemes. The result is visceral, but it's a long way from the title's boast. ■ CHRIS COTTINGHAM
DOWNLOAD: U Know Dis

EILEEN ROSE
At Our Tables

EVANGELINE
★★★★

FEISTY SONGSTRESS'S FOURTH OFFERING. She was born in Massachusetts but, while living in Britain at the turn of the millennium, Eileen Rose's first two albums saw her adult tales of lust, family and betrayal through an exile's eyes. Strangely, since returning home, she's sounding less obviously American. At Our Tables comes with a second, mostly live, disc but it's a wordy trawl through midlife malaise, delivered with weary but sultry wisdom. Most harrowing is Blue Moon Words ("I don't believe I can do this any more, my dear"), where one partner shrugs her imminent peril away. Rose deserves much better than obscurity. ■ JOHN AIZLEWOOD
DOWNLOAD: Blue Moon Words

ROOTS MANUVA
Slime & Reason

BIG DADA
★★★★

RAP MAVERICK STILL THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX. Hailed as UK hip hop's most exciting new talent following the inspired fusion of 2001's Run Come Save Me, South London rapper Rodney Smith has since struggled to live up to the hyperbole – and comparisons to Tricky. Still, his fourth album is a step up from the patchy Awfully Deep. There's the odd lapse into plodding riddim (Kick Up Ya Foot), but fans of his anthemic Witness (I Hope) will relish Again & Again's crushing skank while the electro pulse of Let The Spirit shows him rediscovering the skewed, cross-genre invention that got him noticed in the first place. ■ RUPERT HOWE
DOWNLOAD: Let The Spirit

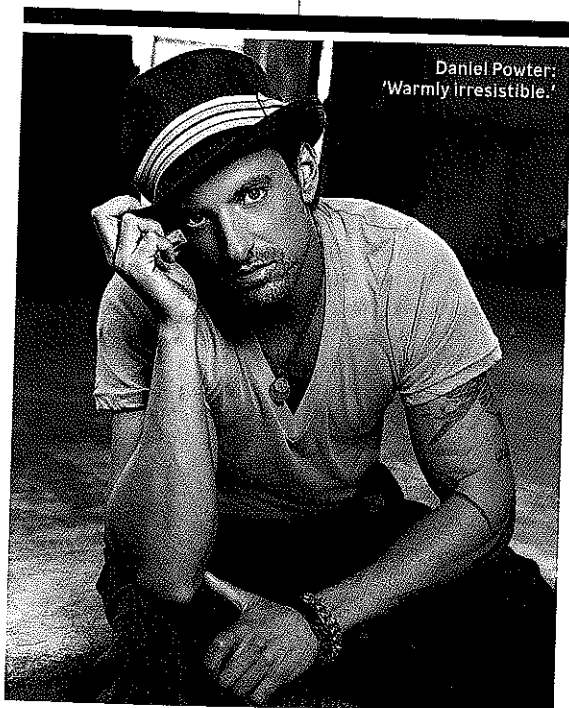
SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY WITH LABAMBA'S BIG BAND
Grapefruit Moon: The Songs Of Tom Waits

EVANGELINE
★★★★

ANOTHER TRIBUTE TO THE BARFLY TROUBADOUR. Going where Canadian Holly Cole, bluesman John Hammond and, most recently, actress Scarlett Johansson have already gone, Grapefruit Moon is another riff through Tom Waits's songbook. Teaming up with trombonist and original Asbury Juke Richie "LaBamba" Rosenberg, Southside Johnny has opted for a roaring big-band approach, Yesterday Is Here getting the woozy Jam treatment and Waits himself turning up to duet on Walk Away, giving extra kudos to an amiable project. ■ PETER KANE
DOWNLOAD: Walk Away



Roots Manuva:
'Crushing skank.'



Daniel Powter:
'Warmly irresistible.'