

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

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## Spin Control

*January 8, 2006*

### SUSAN MAY, "BLACK COFFEE" (SOUTHPORT) \*\*\*

There's a world-weariness in the vocals of Susan May that you might expect from a jazz singer, just not one who was born during Bill Clinton's administration.

The pride of St. John, Ind., 14-year-old Susan May Wiltrakis tackles the Great American Songbook on her second album for Chicago-based Southport Records (the first, "The Rose," was recorded at the ripe old age of 12). Pianist Bobby Schiff again lends a mighty hand as arranger, giving May a great foundation to perform Rodgers and Hart's "With a Song in My Heart" and "A Ship Without a Sail," Ann Ronell's "Willow Weep for Me" and, most memorably, Sonny Burke and Paul Francis Webster's title track.

Yes, May's voice is that of an older, more mature woman. But she is learning to find the raw emotions at the heart of her material, rather than getting hung up on technique and phrasing. Hers is a talent that should continue to ripen with life experience.

*Jeff Johnson*

The Sun-Times Company