

## MUSIC

# The LSO plays second fiddle to sublime Eva

**TIM DE LISLE**

**Eva Cassidy**  
I Can Only Be Me  
Out Friday

★★★★★

**Philip Selway**  
Strange Dance  
Out now

★★★★★

**E**va Cassidy's life story is like a bitter fairytale. When she was born, in John F. Kennedy's Washington, a fairy godmother gave her the gift of a golden voice. But somewhere in the shadows was a wicked witch, wielding a curse that was doubly cruel.

Cassidy didn't merely die young – at 33, in 1996, from melanoma. She died before she could release a solo studio album. When her music finally found its way into the world, people fell in love with it. But, like Van Gogh, she never got to see her own success.

Whatever you feel about the fashion for adding an orchestra to a set of pop songs, this one is well timed. Cassidy would have turned 60 three weeks ago. It's seven years since her last release (the live album *Nightbird*), 15 years since her only big hit (*What A Wonderful World*, with Katie Melua), and 22 years since her first No1 album (*Songbird*).

There must be many music lovers who have never heard her sing.

Nearly all the songs here are arranged by Christopher Willis, a film-score composer with a distinc-

**GOLDEN VOICE:** Eva Cassidy, right, and below, the cover of Philip Selway's album



tive CV, half Disney, half Armando Iannucci. He handles Cassidy with care, not overdoing it: often he has the whole London Symphony Orchestra playing second fiddle.

Willis seems to have thought about what would enhance each song – a wash of strings, a swell of horns, a gleam of flute. And he twigged that the lead instrument had to be Cassidy's voice.

With her piercing softness, she barely needs any

accompaniment. She sings to us from somewhere in the stratosphere. She can take a song that is an old friend and shed new light on it.

In her hands, Cyndi Lauper's 1984 hit *Time After Time* is sublimely sedate and Christine McVie's *Songbird* is almost too moving, a fitting memorial to two great female voices.

The only thing wrong with the album is that it's too short. Once you've assembled the orchestra, why not record more than nine tracks? Maybe they did, and *Volume II* is in the can.

Back among the living, there's yet another album from the Radiohead stable that is not actually a Radiohead album. Hard on the heels of *The Smile* comes a third solo LP from Philip Selway, Radiohead's drummer.

He makes adult pop that is sophisticated and subtle without being hard work. His singing is only a whisper, but his songs speak volumes.



AND DAVID SHEPHERD  
CE SHOW YET  
**KAI**  
UDON A TIME