

# JAZZ NEW RELEASES

those note clusters in the middle of a break he resembles Cecil Taylor. Yet Pullen's "Jana's Delight" was one of the most fragile, innocent melodies to come out last year. Pullen is not as jerky and didactic as Taylor; he has much more lineage and swing to his style. On *Random Thoughts*, first try Pullen's sensitive side with "Ode To Life," "Dancer" and "Indio Gitano." Yeah, I know. It all works up to a frenzy by the end anyway. But the players who reach for the clouds do so after they've fully experienced life on the ground. Pullen is drifting away from avant garde categorizations. His technique might get spacey, but his chops are earthy. Brilliant stuff.

## SOLDIERS ON THE MOON - DAVID LASLEY (AGENDA)

David Lasley is a vocal craftsman who has put out a couple of solo projects in the past, and has been backup vocalist during quite a few sessions. Luther Vandross arranges some of the vocals here, and David Benoit appears on every track. Lasley's extraordinarily wide range led to him writing "You Bring Me Joy," which was covered and popularized by Anita Baker. Check out Lasley's version of "Joy" plus the Carole King standard "It's Too Late" and the torchy, smoldering Billie Holiday ballad "God Bless The Child." Nice jazzy chord changes for nighttime Adult Alternative programming. *Soldiers On The Moon* is the debut release from Agenda, a progressive label distributed by BMG.

## ESSENTIAL TRI ATMA - TRI ATMA (HIGHER OCTAVE)

Much of Tri Atma's music has only penetrated the United States on import, hence Higher Octave's decision to put out this compilation of past recordings. Their engaging blend of sweetly percussive electronic music is penetrated with elegant but vigorous undercurrents of Indian percussion. Don't

prejudge Tri Atma as overly blissful, pastoral egghead music, and never underestimate the potency of German recorded synthesizers. Indian percussionist Asim Saha and German guitarist Jens Fischer put *World Beat* into a celestial blender and the results will dazzle any Adult Alternative listener. When you audition this disc, crank the volume on such lunar faves as "Taschi Delek," "Namaskar" and "Blue Caravan." Haven't heard anything as gripping since the last Exchange release. If you're tired of hukey-dukey electronic records that spiral into pointlessness and want one with bite and force, grab Tri Atma. Can't wait for a brand new one. Highly recommended.

## RHYTHM PEOPLE - STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS (NOVUS/RCA)

Steve Coleman, along with Greg Osby, is currently the most noted sax player in Brooklyn's M Base movement. Like Osby and Cassandra Wilson's most recent efforts, *Rhythm People* is a quirky hi-tech set of somewhat worrisome chord progressions and melodic compositions that borrow James Brown upbeats and what Coleman calls "21st Century of multi-layered thought." Tracks like "Step'n" and "Ice Moves" swing closest to airplay potential. Coleman is a searching and verbose soloist, splashing his frenzy of rounded and cool notes generously like a Jazz Jackson Pollack. "Armageddon" is highlighted by Cassandra Wilson's scatting.

## KOSEN RUFU - BILLY SKINNER DOUBLE JAZZ QUARTET (ACCURATE)

Trumpet player Billy Skinner plays some pretty uncompromising, single-take styled bop. A product of the Boston area, Skinner learned his pow-notes with James Brown and Otis Redding before gigging in smaller groups with Jimmy McGriff and Roy Haynes and recording with Jackie McLean. Skinner plays

some painful, serious solos. His style is unlike many of the latest flashy youngsters. He slurs and slides his way into the notes and his attack is ragged. Sometimes the notes die before completion. *Kosen Rufu* is for serious acoustic Jazz fans only. Recording a first solo effort after playing in bands for twenty-five years is bound to bring out a lot of suppressed angst and pain. Skinner's solos can be downright scary and a bit downcast.

## ERKIOLOGY - STEVE ERQUIAGA (WINDHAM HILL JAZZ)

The big difference between guitarist Steve Erquiaga (ER-KEY-AH-GA) and his counterparts on the charts is that Steve concentrates on a more rhythmic presentation. The solos that emanate from power tracks like "Pick It Up" and "San Sebastian" are built exclusively from dampened guitar string grooves. Steve's notoriously funky jangling guitar riffs on the bridge of "Pick It Up" usher in some snappy steel drum soloing by co-producer Andy Narell. Another cooking percussive number titled "Euzkadi" is compositionally structured more toward hard Jazz. Even though he switches over to his nylon string axe, Steve E performs some searing duets with flautist Bob Shepard, complemented by the bustling fusion drumming of Peter Erskine. Chalk up *Erkiology* as another double format delight.

## TECHNICOLOUR - POLYHEDRA (DARK HORSE PRODUCTIONS)

Polyhedra wears polymasks. This electric Southern California unit takes a stylistic chance at every turn. *Technicolour* is a mixture of electric ballads ("Full Circle") funk (the opening "Boneyard") Salsa ("Baile Caliente") and more excursions that fuse big band with electric energy. The core of Polyhedra is a frontline horn section playing off guitars, keys and an aggressive rhythm section. Try to imagine the power of this band live.

California Roll

**Chuei Yoshikawa**