

A MOVING SOUND Songs Beyond Words

A Moving Sound

Not quite pop, nor folk, nor art music (but a little bit of each), this Taiwanese group's second album blends Eastern and Western instruments, traditional and modern sources and influences from China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, India and other stopping points along the Silk Road. Lyrics from a famed poet of 1000 years ago nestle next to modern musings about visiting the outermost planets; a day at the market gives way to ghosts in the night; a political marriage from the year 641 becomes a metaphor for multiculturalism and feminism today. You might not understand the words (apparently neither will Taiwanese listeners, since Mia Hsieh sings not only in a variety of dialects, but also in her own made-up language—the elegant booklet includes extensive notes in English). But delicately balanced between many worlds, *Songs Beyond Words* provides both an entryway into Eastern music and artful expression of the universal human condition.

—CHRIS HEIM



REZ ABBASI Bazaar

Zoho Music

Bazaar finds the excellent guitar player Rez Abbasi leading a tight little combo through a brisk collection of elegantly unfolding Indo-fusion jazz charts. The music is intricate but open-ended, and pleasantly sprawling enough to allow not only Abbasi to lay down exploratory solos, but for organist Gary Versace to do the same (he's excellent throughout,

opening up new spaces in the music every time he plays). The Indian flavors are refreshingly subtle throughout, with Abbasi able to switch effortlessly, sometimes within the same track, from electric guitar to “guitar-sitar,” while drummer Danny Weiss sounds as comfortable behind the tablas as a drum kit. But it's Abbasi's wife, Kiran Ahluwalia, who brings the Indian influence fully forward, with her smoky, traditional vocals soaring wordlessly over several of the tracks. It all may go down a little too smoothly for some, but there's plenty to chew on here, even after several listens.

—JOHN KUHLMAN



ARIESTA BIRAWA Ariesta Birawa

Shadoks Music 051

Ah the '70s. A time of horrendous fashion, but truly expansive visions of rock music's possibilities, no matter one's native culture. Hailing from Indonesia, Ariesta Birawa may never have made Pink Floyd and Ten Years After fans' radar back in the day, but it's never too late to revisit sounds from that golden decade. Heavy guitar solos, light keys, and drifts Indonesian vocals make *Ariesta Birawa* an exotic, appealing record, now re-mastered (original vinyl of this is one of the rarest collectibles for Asian music fans). “Si Ompong” kicks it off with a catchy upbeat hook (Santana influenced all the way), fading into King Crimson-esque melodic ballads. *In The Court Of The Crimson King* fans will definitely enjoy “Masa Depanmu,” “Will Never Die” and “Gadis Ayu.” It's a fascinating journey back to the '70s through a culture not necessarily known for psych-rock music but with a clear passion for it.

—JILL ETTINGER



ATERCIOPELADOS Oye

Nacional Records

Over the last couple of years, this Colombian alterna-pop duo's members went and got their solo albums off their chests. And now that Héctor Buitrago and Andrea Echeverri are back together, they are still just as sharp and lovely as they ever were. The shiny pop machine is in full gear here, from the big fat new wave drumbeats of opener and first single “Complemento” to the alt-Latin disco workout that is “Cruz de Sal.” Echeverri's lovely, clear voice cuts deep as she sings the cutting words of “Don Dinero” and “Oye Mujer,” and Buitrago comes up with a great protest song about the lack of protest songs (calling it, non-shockingly, “Canción Protesta”). It's nice to see the children playing together again, but the most intriguing new element is the new kid in class, guitarist Camilo Velásquez, who knows a whole lot about how to make the music go bang.

—MATT CIBULA



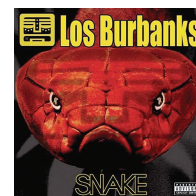
BRUSH Brush!?

Shadoks Music

A flip through this early '70s Japanese psych ultra-rarity's booklet shows no less than 15 people involved, yet there's no key member anchoring any of it, making it seem almost like a compilation. It's a dream come true for anyone seeking the roots of recent Japanese bands like Ghost, Maher Shalal Hash Baz or LSD March. There's everything from minimal organ pieces to sloppy garage-rock assaults to harpsichord-fueled gorgeousness. While this, like

much Japanese rock, mirrors the West, there's something exaggerated and naïve about it. To the folks in Brush, piano driven, tantrum-fueled avant-jazz makes perfect sense beside a sparse folk tune. A sitar-driven instrumental finds a home next to hippy nonsense about haircuts so sloppily played it would make Big Brother And The Holding Company blush. Strange and revelatory, this reissue fits perfectly alongside Amon Duul II's *Yeti*, anything by Les Rallizes Denudes and Xhol's 1972 masterpiece, *Motherfuckers GMBH*.

—BRUCE MILLER



LOS BURBANKS Snake

Infidel Records

At first listen, there seems to be way too much going on here. Los Burbanks never really decide if they want to be glam metal, punk-pop or Latin alternative rock 'n' roll. But this power trio from Washington State turns its multiple personality disorder into a strength by throwing major-league hooks into every tune. Singer German Briseño has one foot in the kind of emo self-deprecation of Julieta Venegas and Green Day, and the other in the machismo of Metallica and Argentinian ska. His tough Spanglish yowling has a hard edge to it, but he remains vulnerable and adorable even when swearing; one song is even titled “Mödérfoker.” Jay Smith shreds and stings and slams on guitar, and Briseño and drummer Jonathan Gottlieb Nelson form a rock-like and versatile rhythm section, even when asked to bang out a power ballad in 5/4 (“It's Dead”) or invent a country/doo-wop shuffle (“Addicción”).

—MATT CIBULA