



NOTE: From December 15-January 31, excerpts from some of the records reviewed in this issue can be heard on the new telephone service *Music Access*. By calling 1-900-454-3277, callers can select from as many as 1,000 recorded selections, receive mail order information, and more. To select any of the recordings included from *EAR*, punch in the code printed in parentheses next to the artist's name. Callers are charged \$.95 per minute; proceeds go toward a variety of artist support services. See the *New Music News* Column, page 9, or the *Music Access* advertisement, page 50, for information.

JANE BUNNETT

In Dew Time

Dark Light Records (LP)

FOR HER FIRST ALBUM AS A LEADER, JANE Bunnett, a flutist and soprano saxophonist of exceptional talent, has paired a group of able Torontonians jazz musicians with three well-known American talents: pianist Don Pullen, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, and French hornist Vincent Chancey. The record should garner attention for Bunnett on the strength of her soprano playing alone. Though the notes state her primary influence to be Steve Lacy, Bunnett powers the instrument with a fleet rhythmic suppleness all her own. Though there are no dull moments here—the American guests shine in sympathetic environments—my vote for best track goes to “The Wanderer,” which features Bunnett and Pullen’s finest solos and a romantic theme reminiscent of early Carla Bley. An added attraction is Pullen’s “Big Alice,” a flute and piano duet in which Bunnett plays forcefully while Pullen provides a semi-joking down-home commentary.

—Ben Ratliff

STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS

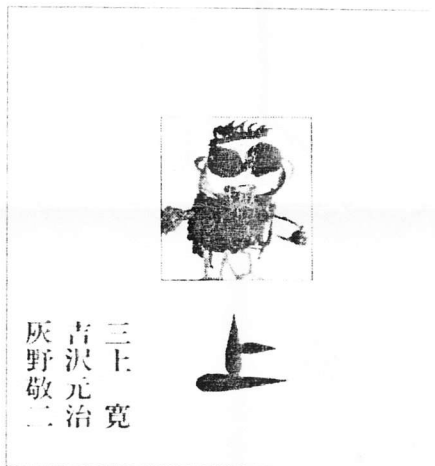
Rhythm People (The Resurrection of Creative Black Civilization)

RCA Novus (CD)

THIS IS STEVE COLEMAN’S FIFTH ALBUM AS a leader and his best release to date—a proud, knotty outing that refuses to settle into any category. Coleman’s sound emanates from a grab-bag of modern styles ranging from hip-hop to jazz—all bumping up against each other in a thicket of patterns and rhythms. It isn’t a smooth sound, nor does it particularly strive for synthesis as much as chunky contrast. *Rhythm People’s* ten mostly original compositions include two rap hybrids with

political statements, a modern distillation of the blues (“Blues Shifting”) reminiscent of Ornette Coleman’s early handling of the genre, and several gnarly funk/jazz sallies held together by drummer Marvin “Smitty” Smith. Coleman’s slightly stiff approach to funk tends to downplay the physical, but Smith keeps things percolating throughout with his rhythmic inventiveness. Coleman’s band of M-Basers sounds tighter than before. Those partial to *On the Corner*-era Miles, Ornette’s hard-driving Prime Time sound, or “Blood” Ulmer’s harmolodic chunks will probably also enjoy *Rhythm People*.

—Nan Helm



Kata-Ashi Kutsu-Ya

DELTA ENSEMBLE

La Musique du Delta
Musea Parallele (CD)

THE DELTA ENSEMBLE IS A PECULIAR BUT wonderful new music/jazz trio from France. Their music is a hybrid of Harry Partch, gamelan, and jazz, with a hint of minimalist modular forms, especially in the use of mallet percussion, which smacks of Reich without being derivative. The music generally consists of improvisational saxophone melodies, modal arabesques which unfold over a foundation of percussion, characterized typically by ostinati and other repetitive structures. The percussion battery consists of tuned drums and mallet percussion, including tubular bells, “icebells” (small gongs with a cupped bell in the center), and other metallophones. The Delta Ensemble has a unique, idiosyncratic sound, which, coupled with solid compositions, makes for some fas-

cinating listening.

(*Musea Parallele*, 68 La Tinchotte 57117, Retonfey, France; also available from Wayside Music, P.O. Box 6517, Wheaton, MD 20906-0517)

—Dean Suzuki

ELMAR DAUCHER

KlangSteine SteinKlange
ProViva (CD)

DAUCHER IS NOT A COMPOSER OR MUSICIAN, but rather a sculptor who has created from granite massive, beautiful minimalist objects he describes as “resonating stones.” These sound sculptures—recently featured on Stephan Mieus’s album, (ECM)—produce the most remarkable sonorities when stroked, rubbed, or struck. On this recording, two German composers, Klaus-Hinrich Stahmer and Michael Vetter, provide compositions that highlight the extraordinary qualities of the sculptures. Stahmer’s four-movement work, *Hommage Ö Daidalos*, for six female voices and resonating stone, is a wonderfully other-worldly work. The wordless vocalizations of Frankfurt’s Bel Canto Ensemble blend perfectly with the strange, buzzing, quasi-electronic drones and other unexpected sounds produced by Daucher’s sculptures. Vetter’s *Musik aus Stein* features improvisations that couple the smooth, droning sounds of the stones with Vetter’s own deep, resonant overtone singing.

(*ProViva*, Intersound GmbH, Schleibinger Strasse 10, D-8000 Munich 80, West Germany)

—Dean Suzuki

BILL FRISELL

Is that You?

Elektra Musician (CD)

THERE’S AN EMPTINESS AT THE CORE OF BILL Frisell’s high-gloss electric guitar solos. His plaintive, crying style calls so much attention to its own importance that it eliminates the process of listening structurally. While his new album isn’t short on bombast, the bold-face notes are also balanced by much subtler effects—a simple banjo figure (“Someone In My Backyard”); elegant chords from an acoustic guitar (“Is That You?”); the barest rustle from Joey Baron’s drums, or the delicate synthesizer shadings of Wayne Horvitz. When Frisell erupts into one of his slick, screaming-eagle solos, the tone of the piece adds some meaning to it. All the tracks on the album make use of stillness, and lingering notes—one keeps imagining movie scenes