

cd review

Two bands with diverse sounds deserve more credit

BY P.J. GRIMES
for The Beach News

Ruder Than You: *Big Step*; Foo Foo Records

These guys came highly recommended via my new music pal, Gwen Lacey, Editor of Big Shout Magazine (a popular music and entertainment publication from Philly), who was kind enough to forward out their promo package.

Merely the names of their record company and band were enough to perk my inquisitive nature alone. I'm not sure how they came up with the band name exactly (I was told they're actually nice guys and fairly well-mannered); however, I did find out the "Foo Foo (Records)" part was coined by their creative saxophone player from a toy owned by the group's official mascot, Rudy the Dog.

More, I discovered the band just as good as Gwen had said. Ruder Than You is an energetic, five-piece, danceable band hailing from Pennsylvania, who's been moshin' up the East Coast for about three years. Evidently they're causing quite a stir back there and across the country, receiving lots of favorable national radio airplay and media coverage. It's reported they're gathering large audiences wherever they play.

If you're a fan of the English Beat or The Specials and seeking some new generation, hard-hitting, infectious ska-funk, look no



RUDER THAN YOU - Actually nice guys, this band is causing a nationwide stir with their ska-influenced sounds.

further.

Band members include David Schneck (trombone/lead vocals/guitar), Doug "Squeek-chop" Dubrosky (saxophone), Greg Fain (lead guitar), Don "Mango" Pancoe (bass), and John "Woody" Woodman (drums).

Big Step, their impressive, 10-song debut release is solid, reflecting a well-rehearsed, tight crew who really has it together. The distinctive, soulful songs, ranging from fun, pop sounds to more serious, socially-aware messages, are full of catchy lyrics, good guitar riffs, and a super-strong horn section.

Recommended tracks on the CD are "Take This," "Your Mind is Mine," "Swallow Blood," and "Future Girl." New York-based premier ska label, Moon Records

(The Toasters and Scofflaws), is handling national distribution.

Contact the band at Foo Foo Records, Box 31202, Philadelphia, PA 19147. 215/592-8522.★★★1/2

Ancient Future: *Ancient Fusion*; *Narada*

The sixth and latest release by Ancient Future, one of the planet's most respected and earlier proponents of the World Fusion Music/New Age genre, is guaranteed to become one of your favorites, if you're into these styles. If you're not, you still might want to give it a try. You'll probably be pleasantly surprised at how quickly this Bay-area group grows on you, too.

Ancient Future is certainly

their most ambitious and promising recording to date. Ancient Future has put out five other strong albums, World Without Walls (Sona Gaia, 1990), Dreamcatcher (Sona Gaia, 1988), Quiet Fire (Narada, 1988), and Visions of a Peaceful Planet (1979). They just keep getting better.

Yet in spite of Ancient Future's obvious growth professionally, a hard-hitting master musician lineup, and high acclaim for their composition and performance by the media and fans alike, they still somehow stand in the shadows of more recognizable artists like Andreas Vollenweider or Strunz & Farah.

Critics from respected publications such as Billboard and others rave about them—hailing the group as "trendsetters," "Shadowfax with teeth," and "mesmerizing," yet it remains a mystery to me (and probably to the band, as well) as to why they are not yet a "household name," for lack of a better term.

Says Jon Diliberto of Jazziz: "They storm through an electric dervish of music." Noterity may continue to elude them still, but it is certainly not due to lack of talent or exciting and accomplished recording projects, most notably their current album, Asian Fusion.

The idea for Ancient Fusion, a musical travelogue spanning the vast geographic and cultural expanse of Asia, took root not long after the group's performance during the 1992 Sacramento River

Jazz Festival. Matthew Montfort, the group's founder and a gifted musician and book author, was approached by the English-speaking husband of Zhao Hui, one of China's preeminent musicians. Zhao Hui plays the gu zheng, a Chinese zither.

Zhao Hui was eager to perform with American jazz musicians and was impressed by Ancient Future's performance. She and Montfort quickly bonded, and she joined the group for several performances in California in 1992 and 1993.

Also performing on Asian Fusion is Vietnam native Bui Huu Nhut, who plays the Vietnamese dan bau, a long flexible, single-stringed instrument, on the track Ja Nam. The piece is a contemporary version of a popular Vietnamese folk song, and typical of the group's interest in multicultural alchemy that now includes a reggae background.

Ancient Future member's include Montfort (various guitars), Doug McKeehan (piano/keyboards), Jim Hurley (violin), and Ian Dogole (percussion), all very diverse and powerful musicians in their own right.

The more sensuous and upbeat "Mezgoof" captures that same moving spirit, where I've found myself many-a-time standing up and twirling and dancing around the room to it. Now that's some good music. Take a listen yourself. But watch out for the coffeetable. ★★★★★

CDs are rated from 1-5 stars.