

THIRD RAIL

South Delta Space Age (Antilles)

Rating: ***1/2

By Chris Morris

Yes, that really is James Blood Ulmer chanting "I wanna get dusted, I gotta get dusted bay-bay" on a cover of Philly bad-rappah Schooly D's "Dusted," which is the lead track of *South Delta Space Age*. Ol' Blood, formerly of Ornette Coleman's harmolodic posse, is down for some serious funking here--in fact, he tells us he wants to "funk all night"--and he's got some major hands on board to help him.

Third Rail is, by all appearances, another of studiomaster Bill Laswell's ad hoc projects. Ulmer takes the main chair on guitar and vocals, while Laswell takes his usual slot on bass. The lineup is filled out by Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, late of New Orleans' Meters, on drums, and a pair of keyboardists--P-Funk/T.Heads vet Bernie Worrell and jazzbette Amina Claudine Myers.

This alliance of jazz and funk players generally makes for meandering and slightly lazy fun, defused in the end by a lack of ambition and thoroughly lightweight writing. Chanking splayed chords and sleepily muttering half-baked lyrics, Blood is working in the same bag he grooved out of more fruitfully on such '80s opuses as *Are You Glad To Be In America*. On the mighty Hammond B-3, Worrell has enough honk in his conk to keep things moving on the MG's time-honored compass points, while Myers displays a weaker instrumental profile. The real ace here is Ziggy, who keeps things kicking; only the stolid rock of "First Blood" defeats the funk that courses naturally through his veins.

Neither terrible nor overwhelmingly exciting, *South Delta Space Age* boasts just enough juice to cut it at your next git-down. But if Third Rail really want to kick it next time out, they'd better hit the studio armed with some tunes and a few fresh ideas.