

what we like

▲ **Jason Ajemian** *The Art of Dying* (Delmark, 2008) — A busy sideman on Chicago's vibrant improvised-music scene, bassist Ajemian leads Smokeless Heat — his trio with tenor saxophonist Tim Haldeman and drummer Noritaka Tanaka — through a set of stylistically diverse tunes. Joined occasionally throughout by three Chicago-based acquaintances (trumpeter Jaimie Branch, guitarist Matt Schneider, and marimba player Jason Adasiewicz), Ajemian and his cohorts play everything just right, from sumptuous balladry to restless, angular workouts that stretch madly toward the outer limits.



▲ **Ersi Arvizu** *Friend For Life* (Anti-, 2008) — This is the first album that former El Chicano singer Arvizu has recorded in 32 years. Essentially an impeccably tasteful Latin-rock record (Arvizu sings in both Spanish and English), *Friend For Life* was produced by Ry Cooder, who's said of Arvizu: "I was hoping to find a female singer who could still evoke the sound and feel of Chavez Ravine, of East Los Angeles, back in the day. For me, Ersi is exactly that person." Yes, in its resounding soulfulness this disc does bring the best of "back in the day" to mind. — **David Pulizzi**

