

ECM INFORMATION

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Colin Vallon Trio

“Rruga” (ECM)

With its courtly, somber beauty and its soft, steady luminosity, *“Rruga”* projects a specific set of jazz protocols: that of the young Northern European piano trio, probably recording for the ECM label. As it happens, this is the handsome ECM debut of the Colin Vallon Trio, whose members are all in their 30s — but Swiss.

So that’s two out of three for blind presumption. In fairness, though, this trio’s namesake pianist titled one track *“Eyjafjallajökull,”* after the Icelandic volcano; another track, by the bassist Patrice Moret, is actually titled *“Fjord.”* Only with closer investigation does another region, the Balkans, lay a deeper claim here. *“Rruga,”* a piece by Mr. Vallon that appears in two versions, is the Albanian word for path. It draws distantly from Turkish folk forms, as does *“Meral,”* another of his tunes. *“Iskar,”* a collective

invention, has a shadow foothold in Bulgarian vocal music.

You might not hear those reference points without a tip-off because the group subsumes everything in its even-tempered sound. Mr. Vallon, Mr. Moret and the drummer Samuel Rohrer have been working as a trio for the last six years, and their cohesive powers, which are undeniable, seem to be moving them in the direction of rippling composure. You hear beautiful technique on this album, but not much in the way of virtuosity. That’s satisfying, even refreshing, though it flattens the album’s dynamic landscape a bit. (This shouldn’t be as much of an issue in person, as on the trio’s first tour of the United States, which brings them to the Rubin Museum of Art in Chelsea on Friday.)

Mr. Vallon’s approach to pianism suggests both classical training and a fondness for crescendo-driven art-rock, and the hovering way he drives this group can evoke the original, pre-millennial Brad Mehldau Trio. But the thrust of the material and the searching quality of much of the playing point in other directions. You can only hope for a trio of this promise that one of those directions is forward.

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