

COLIN VALLON TRIO

Rruga (ECM)



On Colin Vallon's MySpace page, you can find a picture of the young pianist and his two youthful bandmates, bassist Patrice Moret and drummer Samuel Rohrer, huddled together in laughter. The gesture appears to be unironic and a little bit innocent, the sort of thing three elementary school kids might do after discovering they all love the same superhero. Do these guys really like each other this much?

That's what it sounds like. On *Rruga*, the Swiss trio's ECM debut, Vallon highlights not only his own melancholic songwriting but also that of his bandmates. As a matter of fact, the trio kicks off the uniformly excellent album with "Telepathy," a lovely and dynamic ballad by Moret. Vallon is obviously in charge: His pulsing chords and impressionistic melody guide the track. But even at his most insistent, Vallon is always serving the song itself. Though the track swells and retreats in an improvisational manner, no one solos, per se. Vallon's own compositions, such as the elegant title cut and its similarly themed follow-up, "Home," straddle the line between cool jazz and chamber music in a way that seems effortless.

Ditto the ensemble interplay on "Iskar," the one track credited to all three members. Melody aside, the song sounds like the work of a John Cage-inspired Euro-improv outfit. As Vallon explores a percussive rhythm, Rohrer and Moret saw at cymbals and strings, respectively. The performance suggests that, as noteworthy as this album is, Vallon's trio could've shown up without a script and still had something to say.

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