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CD/LP/Track Review

Colin Vallon Trio: *Le Vent* (2014)

By [JOHN KELMAN](#), Published: March 16, 2014

When [Bill Evans](#) emerged in the 1950s, he represented a paradigm shift for the jazz piano trio. No longer a lead instrument supported by a rhythm section, Evans' more egalitarian approach to music-making allowed delineated soloists to engage in a more fully conversational context, with any instrument capable of pushing the music in a new direction at any moment. Half a century later, Evans' influence can still be felt, but there's been further development, stripping away individual virtuosity and leaving only the collective sound of the trio. It's a tougher approach with which to connect for those used to hearing a defined soloist demonstrating his/her chops, even when the rest of the trio is engaging as equals rather than accompanists, but it opens music up to a completely different set of evocative possibilities than Evans' then-radical innovation could have envisaged.

Colin Vallon, *Le Vent*, Patrice Moret, Julian Sartorius

Pianist Colin Vallon's *Le Vent* is an even stronger statement of such intent than his 2011 ECM debut, *Rruga*. Bassist [Patrice Moret](#) returns while the departing [Samuel Rohrer](#) is replaced by drummer Julian Sartorius, as Vallon assumes a greater compositional role; other than two improvised miniatures and Moret's opening "Juuichi"—which resumes the trio's exploration of repetition and slowly shifting motifs from *Rruga*, but this time with even greater focus and collaborative strength—all the compositions belong to the pianist. The two closing pieces may be collective, but fit within *Le Vent*'s overall purview: "Styx," largely revolves around Moret's impressive ability to play a pedal tone with a bow while simultaneously delivering a spare pizzicato melody that interacts with the similarly minimal Vallon and texture-centric Sartorius, while Vallon's upper register phrases entwine with Sartorius' bells on "Coriolis" to create, over Moret's simply bowed line, the feeling of a soft but gradually intensifying rainfall.

Individual virtuosity may be subjugated to the sound of the collective whole, but it's what makes *Le Vent* such a powerful statement. There's beauty to be found in Vallon's exploration of various motivic narratives on "Immobile," with Sartorius bringing greater energy and drive to the trio, while on the opening two minutes of the title track, the drummer's adherence to color provides Vallon the freedom to evoke a softer majesty, before Moret joins and the trio again once again begins to evolve its slow, unpredictable shape-shifting. Vallon's iterative patterns are bolstered by Moret and Sartorius, only to dissolve once again, the pianist's final chord taking a full 23 seconds to decay to silence beneath Sartorius' gentle sound of metal on metal.

Those looking for the comfort of defined melody leading to solo excursions, followed by a return to thematic reiteration, should look elsewhere; Vallon's writing and the trio's approach represents something else entirely. But those prepared to surrender to the sound of three players engaging in a different kind of collective interaction—and a more obfuscated approach to defining form and its in-the-moment journey to places unknown—will find plenty to love

about *Le Vent*, the inevitable consequence of Vallon and his trio's accelerating quest towards a likely unreachable conclusion, but with still greater confidence and commitment.

Track Listing: Juiichi; Immobile; Le Vent; Cendre; Fade; Goodbye; Le Quai; Pixels; Altalena; Rouge; Styx; Coriolis.

Personnel: Colin Vallon: piano; Patrice Moret: double bass; Julian Sartorus: drums.

Record Label: [ECM Records](#)

Style: [Modern Jazz](#)

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