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Elina Duni Quartet Dallëndyshe (Swallow)

Elina Duni (voice); Colin Vallon (piano); Patrice Moret (bass); Norbert Pfammatter (drums)

ECM

This CD is a wonderful example of a successful marrying of jazz and folk music. It is my CD of the Month for April, even though all the singing is in Eastern European languages such as Albanian. We reviewers here at BSH get to keep CD's that we review, but I sometimes have to return mine to Lance for lack of space. However, there's no way he's getting his paws on this one!

Each of the 12 tracks has the unmistakable yearning sound of Eastern Europe with some hints of Arabic tones and yet the jazz influence is well-present, tastefully heard from piano, bass and ever so subtle drumming. The songs are about loss and exile but, as stated in the notes supplied, the pain is sung or danced away, rather like the feel of blues music, sadness with attitude is how I'd describe it. The voice is expressive and the songs have titles such as *Fellenza (The Partridge)*; *Kur Te Pashe (When I Saw You)*; *Taksirat (The Mishap)*. A booklet with translations into English is supplied, but there is great pleasure in just listening to the singing, as I found the language to be very attractive.

Take track 2 as an example, *Syte (The Eyes)*. This begins with an Eastern European tune, light drums, subtle bass and a build-up of tension towards the end. But then the very end is a fast dance which you could imagine being danced at a village wedding. 'My eyes wet with tears for you, don't you ache for me the least? The arrangements of the songs cleverly prevent any sentimentality.

It goes without saying that the singing and musicianship is well up to the job on this CD, which is Ms Duni's second with ECM. It was released on April 13 - catalogue number 470 9282.

Ann Alex