



Elina Duni Quartet

'Dallëndyshe'

ECM

4/5

In almost its sixth decade, ECM never ceases to delight in exploring musical traditions and in the case of this particular new recording, it is the folk music of Albania that is in the spotlight this time round. Singer Elina Duni performs a kind of Balkan blues, but with a definite folk component to it and her songs recount tales of love and exile, and refer more specifically to the troubled existence that many face in her native country. She has in fact been heavily influenced by 1980s Albanian diva Nexhmije Pagarusha and this is Elina Duni's second album for ECM. The clarity of the voice sounds seemingly stuck in both time and space, and this is merely one aspect of her musical charm along with the relatively short length of the songs which is typical of the traditional song repertoire in Albania.

An international rhythm section is made up of pianist Colin Vallon, double bassist Patrice Moret and drummer Norbert Pfammatter complete the line-up and the album itself was recorded in the Mediterranean climbs of the Midi, southern France. Albanian is the softest of spoken languages in the gentle hands of Duni and her light, delicate and wordless vocals on 'Sytë' ('Eyes') are a sheer delight to hear while on the relaxed feel of the opener, 'The Partridge', there is a definite roots folk element in evidence. Elsewhere an a cappella intro on 'Kur të pashë' with minimalist accompaniment builds into an intense uptempo number with piano and drums in hot pursuit. Of special note here are the instrumentalists who certainly help to underline the spirit of a song without being merely illustrative and they are to be applauded for their sensitive accompaniment throughout. Thankfully, for those of us not fully conversant in the Albanian language, the translated lyrics in the inner sleeve notes help fill us in on the veracity and pertinence of the words composed. For a taste of something other worldly, this could hardly be bettered.

Tim Stenhouse