



**Elina Duni Quartet: *Matanë Malit*.
 ECM.**

When producer Manfred Eicher ventures into ethnic vocal music, in this case traditional and contemporary Albanian folk tunes sung by 31-year-old expatriate Duni, you can count on a recording with his label's iconic cool and pristine sonic aesthetic. Indeed, Colin Vallon's piano, Patrice Moret's double bass, and Norbert Pfammater's drums are given Eicher's trademark sharp-edged, crisply detailed, and exacting presence. (Vallon's Switzerland-based trio, with Moret and Samuel Rohrer, made its ECM debut in 2011.) The jazz instrumentation provides a floating, polyrhythmic setting for the tonal purity and emotional elasticity of Duni's sinuous and soaring vocals. Because she sings in her native tongue, the supplied English translations are essential to grasping the literal meaning of the songs Duni retrieved from her childhood and from her native land's turbulent past. The lyrics speak of lost love, painful expatriation, and brave resistance to oppression, whether by traditional chauvinist culture, fascist invaders, or the since-deposed Communist regime. But even if you don't follow along from the booklet, you'll feel the heartbreak, longing, resilience, and pride in Duni's enthralling vocals and the haunting piano-bass-drums accompaniment. Imagine solo voice from a Bulgarian women's choir meeting a Keith Jarrett trio: *Matanë Malit* is that stirring. DR

Further Listening: EDQ: *Lume Lume*; Colin Vallon Trio: *Rruga*

