

fragmentary ambient phrases; and Downes, who has demonstrated his high calibre on various ECM and other solo projects, creates a mesmerizing, eerily low-key cavernous soundscape on organ that shifts subtly while complementing the vocal arrangements. The combination of sax and organ prove intriguingly electronica-like at times. An English translation of the ancient lyrics in the sleeve notes is useful in binding an enigmatic poetry to the entrancing otherworldly soundworld of this recording.

Selwyn Harris

## Elina Duni

### A Time To Remember

ECM 2781 (CD) ★★★

Elina Duni (v), Rob Luft (g), Matthieu Michel (flhn) and Fred Thomas (p, d). Rec. July 2022



The Swiss-Albanian vocalist Elina Duni, an artist with a rare sensitivity to the

connecting points between pure vocal and instrumental sound, textual narratives in different languages, and the cinematic qualities in good lyrics, has followed up the Mediterranean and Broadway balladeering, and Albanian and French folk music of 2020's *Lost Ships* with an equally spirited and subtle collection using the same lineup and a similar songlist.

Duni's confidence in her group's growing assurance on the road is borne out by the ease with which they wrap themselves around a repertoire of traditional Albanian and Kosovan folksongs, a couple of Duni's and guitarist Rob Luft's originals, the standards 'I'll Be Seeing You' and 'Send In The Clowns', and the softly ecstatic sea-themed poem 'Évasion' by Belgian-Israeli poet Esther Granek. The Albanian-language traditional 'Hape Derën' - literally 'Open The Door' - expresses the sense of hopes being patiently unfurled but brought to urgent demands through Duni's intensifying vocal and the subtle interventions of Luft and flugelhornist Matthieu Michel, while the confiding, vaporous 'I'll Be Seeing You' takes on an oddly impassioned matter-of-factness.

The much-covered 'Send In The Clowns' is instrumentally

stretched into a knowing, phlegmatic speculation around Duni's voice, and the title track is a rhapsody on the intensity of first experiences and their recollections in tranquillity. As always with Elina Duni, this is a thoughtful, beautifully articulated piece of jazzy poetry, even if the mood is predominantly introspective.

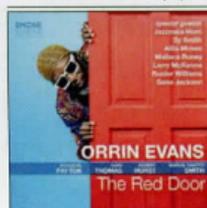
John Fordham

## Orrin Evans

### The Red Door

Smoke Sessions SSR2305C (CD) ★★★

Orrin Evans (p), Larry McKenna, Gary Thomas, Nicholas Payton, Wallace Roney (t) Jazzmeia Horn, Sy Smith (v), Buster Williams, Robert Hurst (b) Marvin Smitty Smith and Gene Jackson (d). Rec. date not stated



The notion of 'in' and 'out' sounds being able to live together is nothing new,

whether or not you care to call it 'freebop' or anything else.

The likes of pianist-composer Orrin Evans is a convincing addition to the debate, even though he has been largely tagged as 'straightahead' in his 25-year career. His strong gospel and blues inclinations may have come to the fore on several albums for Dutch label Criss-Cross but he has long thrown curve balls in his writing and playing, as can be heard on his work with The Bad Plus. *The Red Door* confirms Evans' ability to make music that has rhythmic and harmonic spikes and jolts amid its steady soulfulness.

Many of the well-written and arranged songs here have what could be called a quiet subversion, with some themes quite curt and static rather than lengthy and dynamic; while the chords make dissonance and consonance allies rather than enemies. The reprise of a few standards is done with measured flourish, and Evans, who plays with seasoned authority, has assembled a grade-A core band and multi-generational guests, including the likes of Buster Williams, Marvin 'Smitty' Smith and Jazzmeia Horn, among others.

When Evans appeared in Britain as a young man in Carmen Lundy's group 20 years ago, he was a talent in the making. This is the work of a talent properly made.

Kevin Le Gendre