

Blaer *Yellow*

RONIN RHYTHM 023



As heard on its impressive third album, *Yellow*, Blaer lives somewhere between jazz and the structural realm of new music. Centering this unique Swiss quintet is pianist/composer Maja Nydegger, whose natural idiom-crossing feats find ways of energizing her largely minor-mode palette.

Opening with the gentle title track, Nydegger creates minimal but carefully conceived compositional structures and explores fresh musical notions of how to reinvent the “jazz” band. While her anchoring piano often moves in deceptively simple patterns—conjuring moody atmospheric effects—she deploys improvisation, via a standard jazz-related definition, in a sparing role here. Undulant reed textures rise from a nearly silent mist on “Epilog,” recalling Norwegian Christian Wallumrød’s mystical inventions, while “All We Need” sounds like a sensuous math puzzle, with Philippe Ducommun’s drumming energies beneath the pianist’s mesmeric design. The album-closing and almost hymn-like epic “Arktis” grows gradually out of Nydegger’s simple one-note motif, mulling and musing, while building waves of intensity in ways listeners won’t immediately recognize or be able to easily categorize. More generally, a seductively slippery identity graces *Yellow*—and the ongoing Blaer adventure.

—Josef Woodard

Yellow: Yellow; The Unknown; Years; Kosmo; Epilog; All We Need; Arktis. (55:58)

Personnel: Maja Nydegger, piano; Nils Fischer, saxophone, bass clarinet; Claudio Von Arx, saxophone; Simon Iten, bass; Philippe Ducommun, drums.

Ordering info: roninrhythmrecords.com

