Kari Ikonen Trio
Wind, Frost & Radiation

A commitment to Extremes

Kari Ikonen is not afraid of the light. His 'ultra-positive' afro-pop-jazz project Trio Toffa is living proof of that. Lately, however, his Finnish background seems to have drawn him to the wintertime and darker moods of the soul. *Wind Frost & Radiation* is a search for his roots, a quest for the Nordic qualities in music. Spaces of biting cold and horror, of inhumanity and transience – these are the fundamentals of the Ikonen Trio's third studio album.

The contrast with the sensual late-night-jazz of predecessor *Beauteous Tales and Offbeat Stories* could hardly be more obvious. And yet, experiments have always come natural to this band and its members. Olli Rantala is equally capable of creating danceable grooves in one moment and making his bass sing like a cello in the next. Markku Ounaskari is as adept at laying down a ferocious swing as he is at breaking his percussive patterns apart into insular dots. And Ikonen himself has just hit his creative peak with his eccentric project *Ikonostasis*. Clearly, these musicians would find it hard to record a single unoriginal note!

Still, the depth of their commitment to extremes is remarkable. On "Pripyat", they visit the forlorn ghost town near the burnt-out Chernobyl reactor. And in the closing track, they completely disassemble Aram Chatschaturjan's famous waltz, leading it into a wondrous shadow world. The pulse of the music slows down to a glacial melt, the music penetrates the moment like a scalpel, in search of the nerve that hurts the most.

What has remained is the familiar separation of the album into a distinct a- and b-side. It is a sign that the Ikonen Trio hasn't entirely left tradition behind. In fact, breaking with the past and re-building it from scratch has always been an essential part of jazz right from the start.