



One of the most keenly-anticipated performances of this year's Cheltenham Jazz Festival was this concert from **Rymden**, a Swedish supergroup comprised of pianist Bugge Wesseltoft together with former Esborn Svenson Trio members, bassist Dan Berglund and drummer Magnus Ostrom. Drawing on material from its highly-regarded debut LP, 'Reflections & Odysseys,' released earlier this year, the trio created glacial soundscapes that were cinematic in the way they combined suspense and atmosphere. Although there were long passages of nuanced quiet - so quiet that at one point a passing ambulance siren was clearly audible outside and integrated itself into the textured quality of the on-stage sounds - the music wasn't monotonous but was characterised by clearly defined peaks and troughs in terms of dynamics and mood. These qualities were readily apparent in their opening song, 'Reflections,' a delicate piece that eventually segued into a sinewy tune called 'The Odyssey,' which then crescendoed to a roaring climax.

Indeed, the group played with a palpable fire in its belly, producing moments of transcendent brilliance in the way the three musicians interacted with each other. Though a sense of spellbinding melancholy - a characteristic long associated with Scandinavian jazz - pervaded the group's music, Rymden also served up some uplifting moments dominated by uptempo, and sometimes funkified, grooves; as exemplified by the jaunty tune, 'Pitter-Patter,' where Wesseltoft showed his prowess on the electric piano. He was ably supported by Berglund, who provided bass lines that possessed both an anchoring solidity and fluid elasticity, and Ostrom - the most loquacious member of the group on stage - whose polyrhythmic drums ranged from fiercely dynamic to wispy and delicate. On the basis of this enthralling concert, there's no doubt that Rymden is one of Europe's pre-eminent jazz groups right now. There's a deeply immersive quality about their music that's hard to resist.

(Charles Waring)