

**ANDY MILNE**

*Dreams and False Alarms* (Songlines)



A curveball from Andy Milne, onetime keyboardist for Steve Coleman's M-Base Collective and leader of the similarly funk/fusion-charged Dapp Theory, sounds like most people's straight shots: acoustic piano music with a melodic foundation and a consistent approach throughout. He throws out *two* such curveballs with *Dreams and False Alarms*, a solo recording of not-quite-standards from the rock era (plus three originals), and *Scenarios*, a duo with Dapp Theory harmonica player Grégoire Maret. The real surprise, however, is that Milne is a lyrical player, one of bewitching tenderness and even subtlety.

Of the two, *Dreams* is superior. Its opener, Joni Mitchell's "Amelia," sets the tone for the disc: a funky intro, settling immediately into quiet beauty. Milne's variations on Mitchell's melody mostly tug at the heart, but occasionally explode with avant-garde fireworks that ignore the heart for the gut. Still, melody remains his focus, even as he rebuilds some songs from the ground up. Milne makes the Police's upbeat "Message in a Bottle" a slow introspection, so sensitive it's liable to draw tears, and alternates between soft lyricism and stomping on "I Shot the Sheriff," in which Milne never plays a reggae beat but masterfully implies one. He gets his out-music jollies with his originals, tellingly the album's shortest tracks; none are particularly memorable, although "Geewas" has freewheeling rhythm and harmonies reminiscent of Monk or Coleman.

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