

**Andy Milne**  
Dreams And False  
Alarms

Songlines SGL SA 1565-2 | ★★★★★

Milne (p). Rec. Aug 2006

Hot on the heels of *Scenarios*, his excellent duet offering with harmonica wonder Gregoire Maret comes this assured solo set from Milne in which he performs a repertoire comprising mostly popular song. The likes of Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Sting and Dylan are all tackled and there are also a few Milne originals to break things up. Although the great harmonic and structural richness that the pianist displayed on the other disc are by no means abandoned, this set stands above all on sobriety and a judicious simplicity rather than outré reinvention. Melody is paramount. Every piece is treated not so much as a vehicle for "watch the chops!" improvisation but a song in the literal sense of the word, one in which lyricism and the astute brokering of emotional tension are the order of the day. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the rendition of the Police's 'Message In A Bottle' where all of Milne's additional new 'writing' – a beautifully woozy, waltz-like bass figure, the mildly Beethovenesque turn of the melody, the series of pithy resolutions – do not blur the central focus: the yearning, the plea that is the *raison d'être* of the original. To greater or lesser degrees the same holds for the rest of the set, where Milne uses his well-weighted, communicative touch at the keyboard to ensure that the story of the song is not lost in a blizzard of sound, as can often be the case when solo performers see silence as adversary rather than ally. The result is a strong, focused statement from an excellent improviser who understands something of the art of writing, its jazz, classical and pop manifestations and what might make a real composition more than a pattern of notes. Kevin Le Gendre