



Ken Elkinson's third album, *Opal*, is a relaxing collection of ten original titles which feature the songwriter's simple, wandering piano musings. No lyrics, no vocals, one has to get clues from the arrangements as well as the titles of the songs in order to understand the artist's intent. An opal is a gemstone of rich iridescence, and on the title track the pianist explores the initial translucent melody with a style that suggests a musical question and answer. Unlike Canadian Frank Mills' 1979 success with *Music Box Dancer*, a piano classic which featured uptempo riffs and instrumental accompaniment, Elkinson keeps the entire proceedings low-key, new age keyboard movements meant to soothe rather than provoke. When he covered Jimi Hendrix' "Little Wing" on his second release - 2000's *Revelry* – he absorbed the melody into the style that permeates this presentation. But *Opal* is darker in tone to the bright, glassy music found on his first CD, *Midnight Conversation*, as well as the aforementioned *Revelry*, Elkinson takes passages that Carly Simon has utilized with great success, her melody to "Coming Around Again" tucked somewhere inside "Augustine." "Orchid", "Indigo" and "Afterglow" form a trio of four minute plus essays which seem to work on the subconscious while they close out a creative album chock full of notions and effect.

- Joe Viglione for ALLMUSIC.COM