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Ken Elkinson Revelry (2000)

Ken Elkinson's opening track on his Revelry disc, "Sunshower," combines elements of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells, perhaps a perspective if that music had been transplanted to, say, Driving Miss Daisy instead of The Exorcist. "Zymic" is a good title for track two, the word a reflection of the music more than its definition of fermentation. The title track continues the theme and here's the dilemma with 55 minutes of instrumental piano stretched out over a dozen tunes — the material cries out for something more, be it a guitar, percussive sounds or even spoken word over these melodies. As creative and intriguing as Elkinson's wanderings are, too much of a good thing takes the beauty away from what one track might do mixed in between other music on the radio. Jimi Hendrix classic "Little Wing," the only cover here, is stretched beyond the point of recognition, and it's a lovely arrangement, again, crying for a guitar in the background. It's an interesting lament of sorts for Hendrix, and on that level it works fine, taking the initial ideas Hendrix had and making them lighter, brighter — more of an up-tempo "happy sad." As anything goes in music production there is never really any right or wrong, but that being said, the dueling pianos of Ferrante & Teicher and the splash of a Liberace tend to hold one's attention more and beg for repeated spins. Elkinson takes these explorations further on his later disc, Opal. The piece entitled "Windward" cries out for a stand-up bass, perhaps Barre Phillips to add another dimension to this landscape. As Emitt Rhodes and Paul McCartney both released important '70s albums where they played all the instruments there was still a need for a few more flavors. Working only a piano, the listener hears the artist's singular impressions which can have some titles melting into each other. The tender "Solutions" relies more on chords than notes, simple in its approach it segues nicely into "Summit." "Lakeside Melody" is among the strongest tracks and stands well on its own, emerging out of the background and showing some real identity. The cover art by Romero Britto is intriguing and worthy of mention.

By Joe Viglione