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Ted Howe is a pianist, arranger, bandleader and educator who has taught at Berklee in Boston and played in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's summer pops series. He is also something that, based on the relative scarcity of Elton John covers, would seem to be uncommon among jazz musicians: an Elton John fan.

Howe's commitment to quality on this project is apparent in his choice of sidemen (John Patitucci and Joe LaBarbera) and engineer (Matt Still), and also in his thorough, meticulous, varied piano-trio arrangements for 10 Elton John songs. His two stated goals are to respect John's music and to make it into genuine jazz. He succeeds at both.

It is intriguing to hear Patitucci sing "Border Song" in his dark bass language. Howe's elegant piano makes "Blue Eyes" sound like it has been a staple of the jazz book since Teddy Wilson. The best track is "Your Song." It begins as a moody reflection, then kicks hard into time, then ends in another free meditation on the famous melody.

It is all so much fun? A second volume is in order.
Thomas Conrad