

## JAZZWISE FEB 2011

### **Gwilym Simcock**

## Good Days at Schloss Elmau

ACT 9501-2 | ★★★★★

**Gwilym Simcock (p). Rec. September 2010**

Following the various opportunities and glowing hyperbole thrown upon him in the past few years, Gwilym Simcock is beginning to live up to all that promise. This new CD, on Munich's award-winning ACT label, is part of the label's focus on a new generation of international pianists, and while Simcock finds himself in the company of Vijay Iyer and Yaron Herman, both hipper, more street-wise jazz artists than Simcock, his more 'classic' post-Jarrett approach isn't stopping him from becoming a hot property on the continent too – Germany in particular is a nation being gradually seduced by his Anglo-Saxon charm. He goes from strength to strength on this solo piano album recorded in a secluded castle studio set in the Bavarian mountains, and you know the solitude and bucolic romanticism of the place would have been greatly appreciated by the Welsh-born pianist. Simcock's previous CD *Blues Vignette*, on UK label Basho, was half on solo piano, and he seems to have found something of a niche for himself there, the more sparsely textured format being one that seems to suit the classical architecture of his playing and his elegant poise and warmly expressive tone. Simcock also writes memorable vehicles for improv:

'Northern Smiles' references Jarrett's 'Southern Smiles' but is just as in touch with the French impressionism of Milhaud and Debussy; 'Gripper' on the other hand is in a more Jarrett country-ish blues mould, while the commanding 12 minute ballad 'Can We Still Be Friends?' has a motivic theme reminiscent of Strayhorn's 'Flower is a Lovesome Thing' while he demonstrates he can play against type on 'Wake Up Call', a cascading, free percussive piece revolving around a dark tonal centre that shows a more aggressive side to the pianist. The over-reliance on the sustain pedal for much of the set is a minor quibble. That aside *Good Days* is a very spirited, engaging set by a pianist who's justifying all those accolades, both home and abroad.

Selwyn Harris

