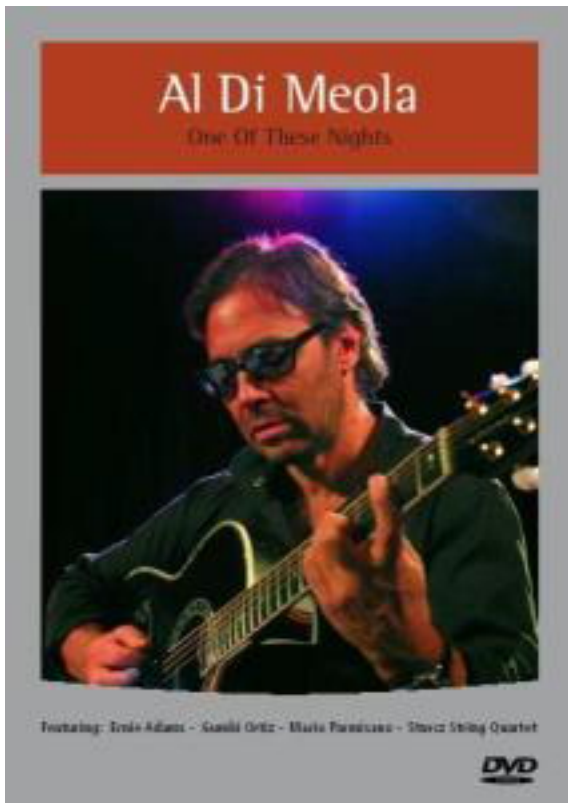




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## Al Di Meola: One Of These Nights

By



Al Di Meola  
*One of These Nights*  
Music Video Distributors  
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Guitarist Al Di Meola proved it's possible to evolve from raw groundbreaking fusion to mellow contemporary arrangements and still excel. His 2005 concert DVD *One Of These Nights* takes the concept to a visual level, offering a minimalist view of an exceptional performance instead of capturing viewers by showing off.

DI Meola works a range between chamber music and symphonic rock, all of it heavily laced with jazz and world music, during this

100-minute May 2004 concert in Ludwigsburg, Germany. He performs with a highly interactive quartet consisting of pianist and keyboardist Mario Parmisano, percussionist Gumbi Ortiz and drummer Ernie Adams, and gets exceptional texture contributions from the Sturca String Quartet Of Hungary.

Auditioning the opening four minutes of "Innamorata" (video store preview, anyone?) is helpful, as the group does a solid job of capturing the feel of the upcoming show. Di Meola and the ensemble shifting stylings and sound several times between cinematic prelude to pop symphonic to rock to ethnic interludes, but in a connected rather than abrupt manner. Di Meola feeds his acoustic guitar through a synth, switching between electric chord crunching, delicate lyricism and blazing fingerpicking to match appropriate stylings such as classical and mainstream jazz.

The rest is, as they say, very similar and yet very different. It's always modern chamber jazz, but constantly changing - sometimes feeling original, sometimes bringing to mind snippets of past works. Nearly all are based on easily accessible concepts and pleasing soundscapes - as a work of art think Andrew Lloyd Webber, not classic Greek theater - but it's more substance than guilty pleasure.

Much as I dislike making too many Pat Metheny comparisons, the influence is unquestionably there on “Misterio” in the lyricism of Di Meola’s solos and “First Circle”-like background. Di Meola’s takes a few simple Latin and Asian concepts and stretches them into a lengthy duet with Ortiz on “Orient Blue,” sounding like a Spanish guitar at the low end of the fret board and a steel drummer in the upper registers. The Latin influence remains strong throughout, perhaps not surprising since the only compositions not penned by Di Meola are Argentinean tango master Astor Piazzolla’s “Fugatta” and “Libertango.”

The players stand out for their boldness, always strikingly clear and well played even when they’re essentially contributing a series of bit parts. Ortiz almost by default has the second most noticeable role by providing much of the rhythmic pacing and texture. Parmisano gets chances to run high-speed excursions on songs like “Beyond The Mirage.” But the Sturca quartet’s work is one of the biggest and most surprising pleasures, offering everything from percussive backings to darkly intensive solos that consistently go beyond the expectations of a supplementary ensemble.

The mid-size auditorium has a simple, intimate feel and Di Meola, along with the other players, stay in their seats throughout the show. He talks only to introduce band members - perhaps due to the German setting - and there’s no light shows or other lavishness. Yet if one is hooked by the music watching also becomes addictive to see how various sounds are created and to observe their interaction. Unlike many shows, players focus on communicating among themselves instead of the audience - making the subtle but constant signs of enjoyment and development much more legitimate.

The only real extra is a brief “making of” feature. It shows an rapid-paced series of clips of musicians and crew setting up, with some interspaced comments about the concert’s concept and shots of the band’s time in Germany, in a reasonably legitimate behind-the-scenes experience. It’s also worth noting the DVD has no regional coding, so it will work in players worldwide.

This is a tough disc to fault, unless one is an MTV-type unable to watch a theater production, or at least AMC’s movie channel. It’s definitely superior to the *Live At Montreux 1986-1993* DVD which meshes together more diverse material from one solo and one trio show, but is an unremarkable performance made worse by poor audio and video production (not to mention a third billed concert that seems to be

missing). Di Meola fans not hung up on his Return To Forever days will find much to appreciate, while those who've never heard his work and enjoy this type of music are likely to develop an instant rapport, made all the easier by observing him bringing the audio equivalent of a tapas smorgasbord to life.

*Personnel:* Al Di Meola (guitars, synths); Mario Parmisano (piano, synths); Gumbi Ortiz (percussion); Ernie Adams (drums); Andras Sturcz (cello); Gyula Benko (viola); Gabor Csonka (violin); Victor Uhzik (violin)

*Track Listing:* Innamorata; Misterio; Azzurra; Orient Blue; Rhapsody Of Fire; This Way Before; One Night Last June; Fugatta; Libertango; Beyond The Mirage; Egyptian Danza

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