



TERENCE BLANCHARD

Flow

(Blue Note)

Blanchard and his latest band are literally "in the zone" on the trumpeter's second Blue Note album, *Flow*, the title a nod to author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theories

about man's precious moments of earthly transcendence and optimal experience. Produced by **Herbie Hancock** (a rare and choice undertaking for the man who usually focuses on his own musical journeys), *Flow* abounds in the compositions and improvisations of all involved, particularly Blanchard, saxophonist **Brice Winston** and West African guitarist/vocalist **Lionel Loueke** (also a member of the trio Gilfema). Two of the eleven pieces are completely off the Richter in passion and execution. First is the two-part "Wadagbe" followed later by the galvanizing and spiritual "Over There" that will have you feeling like the glory of all God's majesty surrounds you. The dynamic heights this piece reaches stretch somewhere beyond amazing, placing the listener in the eye of emotional hurricanes they won't soon forget. Look for *Flow* on year-end best of lists.

Al Di Meola



AL DIMEOLA

One of These Nights: Concert DVD

(inakustic)

Virtuoso fretsman Al DiMeola, whose career was launched in the '70s as a member of fusion gods Return to Forever, is captured magnificently in this May

17, 2004 concert video shot in the German city of Ludwigsburg with his group of a pianist, drummer, percussionist and string quartet. Anyone who knows Al knows that you are in for a magic carpet ride when it comes to his music, especially as performed live. Blending classical, South American and Mediterranean influences with jazz, he takes you to unforgettable places in your imagination. Beautifully filmed, this concert features highlights such as Al's thrilling rhythmic interplay with conguero **Gumbi Ortiz** on "Rhapsody of Fire/The Way Before," the rapturous solo piano intro to "Misterio" by **Mario Parmisano**, and Al's winding solo on "One Night Last June" in which - with one guitar - plays an acoustic solo that leads into one triggering a synth sound to a blazing electric rock guitar finale. Ten songs total, *One of These Nights* is riveting viewing and listening.

Keiko Matsui



KEIKO MATSUI

A Drop of Water

(Shout! Factory)

Walls of Akendora

(Narada Jazz)



Keyboard enchantress Keiko Matsui reflects on 18 years of milestones from her smooth jazz/new age history on *Walls of Akendora*, the title representing a fictional personal space she goes to for peace and contemplation. The mystical nature of the music evokes modern day noir...be it from an omniscient view of the rat race below on the opener "Overture for The City" and the smooth lounge shuffle "Walking Through It" to more haunting pieces such as "Crystal Shadow," "Blue Butterfly" and the spellbinding "Akendora's Clock." This month I also found myself revisiting a recent reissue of Keiko's 1987 debut, *A Drop of Water* (financed with her and her husband Kazu Matsui's honeymoon money), which brought back many fond memories of when I was a proud member of L.A. Quiet Storm radio icon KUTE's music department. Lovely pieces such as "From My Window" (f/ **Grant Geissman** on guitar), her up tempo show stopper "Mediterranean Sands" and, of course, the heart-stopping "A Drop of Water," written from the poignant point-of-view of an astronaut from the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle explosion...looking down on loved ones with intense longing. It remains THE most powerful performance of the late **Carl Anderson's** recording career. These two Keiko Matsui CDs bookend the most wondrous fairy tale smooth jazz has to offer.

HIROSHIMA

ōbōn

HIROSHIMA

Obon

(Heads Up Int.)

Another staple of my KUTE days was Los Angeles' own Hiroshima who continue to make deeply inspired music. The title of their new

11-song album, *Obon*, is all about respecting and honoring ancestors. And in so doing, the sextet has crafted its first entirely instrumental album ever. It opens with the Eddie Harris style groover "Swiss Ming" which segues south into the aptly titled "China Latina" (w/ koto player **June Kuramoto** playing a charming signature melody over a suave Latin beat). Other standouts are the romantic "Paris (ici avec moi)," the bittersweet "Kototsuhan (San Kyoku)," the turntable scratch-enhanced "Atomic Café," the atmospheric Taiko-drum accented "Obon Two-Five" and two special jazz reflections by leader/saxophonist **Dan Kuramoto**: "Pharoah" (for jazz sax legend Pharoah Sanders) and "The Lighthouse" (a waltz-time homage to the legendary jazz club by the sea in Hermosa Beach, CA).