

*Atmospheres* might as well bear a sticker saying "File under new age." The soothing muted colors and sunset photography on the cover; the song titles ("Morning Clouds," "Mirage," "Once Upon a Time"); even the album title itself all begin to soothe and lull you the minute you look at them. And sure enough, if what you want is gentle, non-challenging piano music that will set a pleasant mood, that's exactly what you'll get on *Atmospheres*. The good news is that, unlike most new age artists, Michael Dulin also gives you quite a bit more if you're willing to pay attention. Listen to the subtle flourishes that evoke the 19th century keyboard masters on "Once Upon a Time"; listen to the impressionistic flavor of the title track, which demonstrates Dulin's ability to soothe with pleasant melodicism without sacrificing harmonic complexity; note the gently jazzy "Night Rhythms," which closes the album with an unexpectedly swinging twist. In a musical genre that too often offers little more than strings of musical pleasantries, Michael Dulin is a rare commodity -- a composer who manages simultaneously to ease your mind with apparent melodic simplicity and hold your interest with a deeper harmonic complexity. Highly recommended.

- Rick Anderson

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