



## **Celebrated Pianist, Composer & Humanitarian Keiko Matsui Shares Her Dream For Unity, Serenity & Happiness on New Recording Euphoria**

*The All-Star Session Joins Keiko with Special Guests Lalah Hathaway, Randy Brecker, Mike Stern, Kirk Whalum, Joel Ross, Grégoire Maret, John Beasley & Others*

***“Through prayer and my music, I hope to be able to increase harmony on this planet.”- Keiko Matsui***

"Keiko Matsui is appreciated not just as an artist but as a humanitarian. She dedicates every song she writes to causes that move her..."-**NPR**

“A musician of depth, range, grace and talent.” -**All About Jazz**

“...Pretty melodies and spiritually uplifting anthems.” – **JazzTimes**

“Matsui is always so consistent...The spiritual and charitable-minded Japanese keyboardist, blends ethereal new age textures with a rich soul-jazz sensibility better than anyone.” -**All Music**

“This album is about the hope that we all carry inside of us,” shares internationally acclaimed pianist, composer and humanitarian, Keiko Matsui, who has worked with everyone from Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder, Bob James, and Hugh Masekela. “I have this dream where we can each cherish our own happiness and learn to accept and care for one another.” This declaration is a tall order but if anyone can pull it off it’s Keiko Matsui. There is a reason why the stunning, soft-spoken, and petite powerhouse with such a commanding presence at the piano has amassed a devout following through the years. “When I tour around the world and witness how my music cuts through our differences and connects everyone, it makes me feel euphoric!” exclaims Keiko, who has lent her voice to raise awareness for such causes as The Daniel Pearl and the Susan G. Komen Foundations. Keiko harnesses this joy on her anticipated new and 30th recording **Euphoria** (March 31, 2023 on Shanachie Entertainment). She enlists an all-star contingency of special guests including vocalist, and daughter of Donny Hathaway, Lalah Hathaway, trumpeter Randy Brecker, guitarist Mike Stern, saxophonist Kirk Whalum, vibist Joel Ross, harmonica player Grégoire Maret and pianist/arranger John Beasley. Keiko is also joined by her touring band, bassist Rico Belled, guitarist JP Mourao and drummer Jimmy Branly, who she credits for making the rigors of touring bearable. **Euphoria** is co-produced by Grammy nominated producer and manager Bud Harner, who also co-produced Keiko’s previous recording **Echo**, as well as albums by David Benoit, Jeff Golub, and Lalah Hathaway, among others. **Euphoria** promises to be a watershed moment for Keiko as she has poured her heart and soul into this project and the result is an utterly inspiring and epic statement. Keiko declares, “At the core of this album is beauty, strength, energy, love, and hope. These are all the things in life that we need to move forward on a new path. This music is dedicated to a new era.”

Keiko who masters the delicate balance between career and motherhood (she has two daughters) feels an urgency to leave the world a better place for future generations. “I want to make a positive impact for children in this generation and the future. Through prayer and my music, I hope to be able to increase more harmony on this planet.” Keiko succeeds in conjuring a harmonious affair on **Euphoria**.

The origins of the recording date back to two years ago, when Keiko started composing new music for the album. During the past year, as her tour schedule began to accelerate, she worked between tour dates and finally went into the studio to record in July 2022.

She recalls, “There is nothing like the enthusiasm of collaboration born on the spot. I cherish it!” Keiko is inspired by the world around her. “I unconsciously receive inspiration from the things around me, like people I meet while traveling, events happening in the world, the news or the movies,” explains the pianist. A master storyteller, Keiko Matsui crafts passionate, emotive, and timeless anthems colored with rich harmonies and global rhythms. *Euphoria* opens with the forward-driving and up-tempo groove of “Steps On The Globe,” the album’s catchy first single. Keiko shares, “This song is inspired by the strength of people who live life with joy and courage. They step on the ground one step at a time even when they are facing adversity. We must keep moving forward!” Guitarist Mike Stern, who records with Keiko for the first time, joins the pianist on her composition, “The Choice.” The track miraculously juggles a funk edge with a delicate impressionistic flair. “I met Mike years ago at one of his concerts in New York with Richard Bona, says Keiko. “My impression of Mike was that he is a gentle personality who plays beautifully. When I was thinking about a special guest for this song, I thought the uniqueness of his sound would add a wonderful spice.” The meditative and prayerful “Prairie Morning,” unites Keiko with the core band on the album; bassist Alex Al, drummer Gregg Bissonette, guitarist Tony Pulizzi, percussionist Luis Conte and Ron Pedley on Rhodes and strings. Randy Brecker also makes his inaugural recording date with Keiko on *Euphoria*. The trumpeter and flugelhornist adds the perfect touch to the percussive and scintillating “Neo.” “We had so much fun playing this song together,” recalls Keiko. “Randy was such a great collaborator, and we enjoyed our musical dialogue and exploding improvisations together. Originally, we were going to fade the song, but the entire band got so excited that we couldn’t stop and just kept playing!”

On the album is the tender love song “Love and Nothing Less,” featuring vocalist Lalah Hathaway and harmonica player Grégoire Maret, who also appears on Keiko’s album *Journey To The Heart*. “The moment the first melody came to me, I immediately could hear Lalah singing and before I even made contact with her, I had written the complete verse melody while imagining her voice,” explains Keiko. “I really admire her as an artist, so I was so happy we had the opportunity to finally collaborate. Her performance is amazing! When I shared my feelings and thoughts about the song, she delicately captured the vibe and spirit of it and transformed it into beautiful words.” *Euphoria* is a meeting of old and new friends. Saxophonist Kirk Whalum, the latter, is featured on the reggae-tinged and soul-stirring “Luminescence.” “I feel a similar spirituality with Kirk,” declares Keiko. “When we create together, I feel we share a musical and spiritual connection.” Keiko summons beauty and drama on the striking Tango “Rosso Cantabile,” and she transports us to Paraguay for “Legend of Yaguarón.” “Last summer, I did a charity concert with an orchestra in Paraguay. This is where I first heard about the mysterious Legend of Yaguarón,” recalls the pianist, who composed the song prior to her visit. However, upon visiting she was inspired to title the song after the legend. She explains, “When I visited the city of Yaguarón, there was a mural that expressed the mystic story with monsters and guardian angels, and it seemed like the perfect fit to name my song after this legend.” The serene and majestic “Mossy Mountain,” is penned after Keiko’s manager Bud Harner’s favorite place, the West Central Plains of Illinois and “Blue Waters,” is a gorgeous contemplative number that shines a light on Keiko’s ability to transport us with her stunning melodies.

“I hope in some small way that these songs stay with people. In some small way, I want to leave a positive impact. Rather than wanting people to receive the message that I want to convey, I would be happier if they can feel the music freely and decide what the music means to them,” says Keiko. The album’s arresting and monumental title track dances with fury and delight. It features the young vibist, Joel Ross. Keiko refers to this track as her “Jazz Symphony.” “When I finished composing “Euphoria,” I knew it had to be the title track. I love the sound of vibraphone and I think Joel’s tone brought a tension and cool vibe to the song. I also enlisted pianist/arranger John Beasley who I met in Istanbul when I was invited to perform at International Jazz Day, where he was the music director. I have admired and respected his work since then. I thought about his arrangement and knew that

he would be wonderful for this song.” It is only fitting that *Euphoria* concludes with the dazzling melody and cascading piano of “New Passage.” Keiko’s message is simple. “If we are open there is a new passage for each one of us. If we lead with our hearts, all of mankind and humanity can take this new direction.”

In 1997, Keiko Matsui launched a tour dedicated to raising awareness of breast cancer, and released a four-song CD entitled *A Gift of Hope* that benefited the Y-Me Breast Cancer Organization. Her music was prominently featured in *Say It, Fight It, Cure It*, a Lifetime special profiling several courageous women battling breast cancer. “My fans come from all backgrounds, and I have been approached by various foundations to join in their efforts. When I hear of a cause that resonates with me that I can dedicate my music to then I am always willing. It is my way to show gratitude and give back,” states Keiko. In 1999, the pianist performed at “A Golden Moment,” a skating concert featuring Olympic figure skaters Kristi Yamaguchi, Tara Lipinski, Ekaterina Gordeeva, and Katarina Witt, which benefited the Susan G. Komen Foundation. 1998 saw the release of her album *Full Moon And The Shrine*, which was accompanied by the acclaimed PBS-TV special *Keiko Matsui: Light Above The Trees*.

Keiko Matsui’s CD *Deep Blue* (2001) topped Billboard’s Contemporary Jazz charts for three consecutive weeks. She is the first Japanese artist to achieve this honor. In 2003 she enjoyed success with her recording *The Piano*, which featured reinventions of some of her most loved original works. In 2004 the title track of Keiko’s *Wildflower* was used to support the United Nations World Food Programme’s efforts in Africa. “I decided I wanted to support the WFP after learning about the tremendous problems in Africa and how humanitarian assistance can change people’s lives for the better,” shares the activist. Keiko has also collaborated with Asians for Miracle Marrow Matches (A3M) in numerous charity concerts. In addition, proceeds from her 2001 mini-CD, *A Gift of Life*, went to The National Donor Program and Marrow Foundation in support of A3M. In December 2009, the highly sought-after pianist was asked to put together a Christmas show at the Blue Note club in Tokyo, which was a major success and in November 2010 she made her highly anticipated debut at the Blue Note in NY, which was sold out. In 2011 Keiko recorded with fellow pianist Bob James on a four-hand piano project called *Altair & Vega*. Keiko’s depth as a composer has also allowed her to contribute music to soundtracks in Japan, the U.S. and Russia. She also released her critically heralded *Billboard Top 5* recording *The Road...* which featured Cameroonian bassist Richard Bona and saxophonists Kirk Whalum and Jackiem Joyner among others. In 2013, Keiko Matsui celebrated the release of her critically lauded album *Soul Quest*, which is the musical inspiration behind *Live in Toyko*. The same year she was also an invited guest in Istanbul for International Jazz Day alongside such luminaries as Herbie Hancock, Branford Marsalis, and Terence Blanchard. *Journey To The Heart* (2016) and *Echo* (2019), further solidified Keiko’s place as one of the most significant and thrilling pianists in contemporary jazz.

Keiko concludes, “During the past few years, I have witnessed the loss of life and seen people's sadness and it has been really painful, but it has helped to remind me of the precious gift of time and the importance of gratitude for what I have now,” confides Keiko.” “*Euphoria* is my gift to my fans around the world.”

**Street Date: March 31, 2023**

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