

Michael Stevens, working with several other composers, throw out tracks like the title tune, where swing meets the sexy, Brazilian-like vocalese of French artist Camille. There's "Bold Changes," where trumpeter Till Brönner mutes his trumpet during the first third and plays *con brio* for the last third. Saxophonist Graeme Blevins takes hold of the middle with his sax. Fusion and Eastwood's lead bass get the call on "Hot Box," while the edge is smoothed off somewhat on the appealing trio of "Song for You," "Rue Perdue" and "Le Balai."

## JESSY J

*True Love* (Peak)



Although Jessy J's sophomore album argues that should be considered an excellent saxophonist, period, those who want to label her might put her in the "Latin jazz" category, as compared to Mindi Abair's pop-jazz and Candy Dulfer's funk-jazz categories.

J—who plays in Michael Bolton and Gloria Trevi's bands—burst onto the contemporary scene with her debut CD and the No. 1 hit single "Tequila Moon." With *True Love* she continues her tropical nights theme by bringing back überproducer Paul Brown for 10 mostly steamy tracks, including a cover of "Manha de Carnaval" from the motion picture *Black Orpheus*. There, J's sweet, girlish Portuguese vocals (she's also

fluent in Spanish), sly computer-enhanced wordspeak and an in-the-pocket beat bring a bright twist to the classic.

J's tenor has been compared favorably to John Klemmer's, and she shows her breezy style in tunes like "Jessy's Blues," "True Love" and "Tropical Rain." She displays her soprano talents in "Somewhere in a Dream" and especially with "Brazilian Dance," a minimalist, swinging composition with Sergio Aranda's gorgeous piano and vocals.

## GREGG KARUKAS

GK (Trippin N Rhythm)



Gregg Karukas is nothing if not steady. The easygoing pianist, backed by an all-star cast of like-minded Southern California pros, delivers the mellow groove of Sunday morning breakfast on the porch, the coffee just about ready. "Daylight," "Manhattan" and "Floating in Bahia" describe Karukas' muse, as the soft music sways and piano lines float in and out of consciousness.

Karukas kicks it up a gear with the Wurlitzer and organ on "Coyote Party" and "Wildwood," and jaunts along with a peppy Brazilian number, "Samba Jamba." But with saxophonists Jessy J, Michael Paulo, trumpeters Rick Braun and Lee Thornberg and guitarists Michael O'Neill and Russ Freeman laying down their smoothest grooves, Karukas is soon back to the soothing sounds of



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