

ALESSANDRO

Alessandro

(Rhombus)

Smooth jazz can give you the feeling that you're walking on a beach that features shade and gentle breezes. Alessandro sings "Triestezza" in Italian with a powerful samba beat to inspire celebration. Later, he sings another song in Italian: a slow, melancholy, blues ballad arrangement of "Roma nun'fa 'la Stupida Stasera." Whether singing lyrics, as on these two tracks, or caressing his guitar on "Afro Blue," the artist shows a deep respect for melody. Accompanied by keyboardist Yuko Tamura, bassist Tim Powell and drummer Danny Pucillo, Jr., Alessandro weaves his guitar through a lyrical, smooth jazz program inspired by the sum of his varied influences. From progressive rock roots with English lyrics, as on Alessandro's "You Slow Me Down" and "Telepathy," to his "Where the Freedom Lies," which combines wordless vocals with guitar melody, the program proves flexible by smooth jazz standards. But it's the leader's guitar that occupies center stage on his latest album, and it's his guitar that expresses each song's message the best. Alessandro's smooth guitar has a fluid sound and a soft, vocal-like presence that makes his album appealing for a broad audience.

—Jim Santella