

Benny Sharoni – Eternal Elixir

Israeli-born tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni has recently released his inaugural CD, *Eternal Elixir* on Papaya Records. He is joined by a core of talented musicians including Kyle Aho and Joe Barbato on piano, guitarist Mike Mele, bassist Todd Baker and Steve Langone on drums. Barry Ries rounds out the ensemble on trumpet.

Benny Sharoni has studied with some great teachers in Boston in an around Berklee College of Music. Despite his tutelage under George Garzone and Gerry Bergonzi, he doesn't sound like anyone else. He's got his own sound - his own thing going on.



The opening cut *Bernstein* takes off immediately with Joe Barbato on piano playing open voicings ala McCoy Tyner. As the rest of the group launches into the melody and following solos, it is clear we are in for a treat on *Eternal Elixir*.

The second track is somewhat reminiscent of Blakey's popular *Blues March*. Here Sharoni is joined by trumpeter Barry Ries on *French Spice*. Barbato and Ries solo first and second before Sharoni's gutsy tenor stretches out a bit.

The gorgeous Latin ballad *Estate* treated well by Sharoni. It is one of my favorite cuts on the first half of the recording and a beautiful showcase for Sharoni's sound and laid back feel. The understated, simple, unharmonized piano solo by Kyle Aho really draws in the listener. Aho then gradually adds harmony and a left hand counterpoint to this compelling solo.

On *Sunny* Sharoni is joined again by Barry Ries on trumpet. As before, Sharoni lets the trumpet and piano solo first. Having the leader and tenor player solo down in the order is not always the norm yet a nice twist here.

The aptly titled *Pentecostal Feelin'* is a spirited 1960's type romp which showcases guitarist Mike Mele. *Benito's Bossa Bonita* seems somewhat forgettable but an enjoyable cut non-the-less. *Cakes* seems initially unassuming, however it does have a drive within the 4ths in the guitar and piano. Sharoni also takes the time to stretch out at the end.

The Thing To Do reminds this listener a bit of Bob Mintzer with the Yellowjackets. Then again, Sharoni has developed his own unique sound on tenor saxophone. We may hear a hint of this player or that, but again his sound is his own.

Senor Papaya pushes ahead with energy as *Bernstein* did at the onset. The two compositions form nice "book ends" to this thoroughly enjoyable journey in jazz. On *Senor Papaya* Aho solos first on Piano then Mele on guitar and finally Sharoni. The unison tenor and guitar is always a welcome sound and executed beautifully.

Eternal Elixir is a fine outing for this Israeli-born tenor player who has listened to all the greats and developed his own voice. Well worth checking out!

You can find more about Benny Sharoni at bennysharoni.com