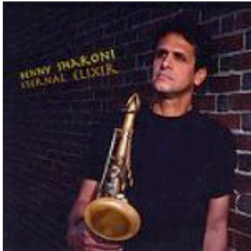


Benny Sharoni Sextet, "Eternal Elixir" (2009, Papaya Records)

Written by Glenn A. Mitchell, LA Jazz Scene
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I am pleased that I was able to come across this late 2009 CD, *Eternal Elixir*, from Israeli native tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni. His parents began sharing music with him at a very early age, giving him an early calling to jazz music during his teens. A resident of Boston since his days attending Berklee, he has assembled a crackerjack crew of Boston-area musicians, including Barry Ries (trumpet), Joe Barbato and Kyle Aho (piano, each on several tracks), Mike Mele (guitar), Todd Baker

(acoustic bass) and Steve Langone (drums). His titling of his CD comes from feeling a spiritual side of the music, thus the title *Eternal Elixir*.

Of the ten tunes performed, half a dozen hint at the "eternal," bordering half century as well-known classics. The other four are Sharoni's compositions and merit close attention. One of my favorites was the beginning number, "Bernstein," composed by Sharoni in tribute to the free spirit of Leonard Bernstein. Sharoni has family ties to Bernstein as well from visits the maestro made regularly to a brother-in-law raised in Israel. A second favorite would be the bebop composition from trumpet great, Donald Byrd, "French Spice." "The Pentecostal Feelin,' " also by Byrd, has a fine swing and jazz feel from this group. The hard bop groove takes a break with two softer numbers, "Estaté" and "Sunny." "Cakes" by Sharoni reflects the nickname he earned from the pancakes he whips up for his bandmates when they come over to rehearse. "Senor Papaya" is a tribute to his father, who raises fruit back home in Israel on the kibbutz. It is a tasty composition and full of life. "Benito's Bossa Bonita" is a pretty bossa by Sharoni and gives us a lot of rhythmic feel to its melody and harmonic construction. "To Life" (Jerry Bock, *Fiddler on the Roof*) features Ries on his muted trumpet and also brings out Sharoni's extra smooth tenor work. I hadn't heard this one or "The Thing to Do" (Blue Mitchell) before. Everyone plays very well throughout all of this CD. The rhythm players keep the group tight. This is a great CD to listen to many times, getting better each listen. See Benny Sharoni's website: www.bennysharoni.com.

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