

Benny Sharoni



BENNY SHARONI

Tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni is a bandleader, composer and arranger who is a mainstay on the U.S. and European jazz scenes. Fusing together classic straight-ahead influences of Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon and Steve Grossman, Sharoni flavors his music with Latin rhythms and an energetic drive that delights audiences worldwide. The repertoire includes unique arrangements of standards from the American Songbook, as well as dynamic original compositions.

Benny's most recent recordings, "Eternal Elixir" and "Slant Signature", captured the hearts and ears of jazz listeners and critics, earning tremendous acclaim in the jazz world:

"...Sharoni's crack quartet brings [an] exhilarating groove.....he'll let out an r&b-style honked bell note amidst nimble lines, and wax free in climax to an otherwise rail-running foray"

Michael Jackson, DownBeat Magazine

"filled with talent and verve and amazing music on top. It's one of a kind, a bebop tour de force of the highest calibre"

Reuben Klein, The Ear

"...a voice quite his own, demanding to be heard on common ground with other practicing giants"

Raul D'Gama Rose, All About Jazz

"...a tenor saxophonist with a big tone and a hard-driving style"

Scott Yanow's LA Jazz Scene

INTERNATIONAL VENUES & FESTIVALS:

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Miles' Jazz Café, New York, NY

Scullers Jazz Club, Boston, MA

Gregory's Jazz, Rome, Italy

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Petit Journal Montparnasse, Paris, France

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Club Milano, Barcelona, Spain

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Coastal Jazz Club, Vancouver, British Columbia

NightTown, Cleveland, OH

The Side Door Jazz Club, Old Lyme, CT

Old Capital Arts Center, Iowa City, IA

River Music Experience, Davenport, IA

Bar Harbor Jazz Festival, Bar Harbor, ME

Website with Audio Clips:

<http://bennysharoni.com/music/>

Video Performances:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSB2R7FVdluVH3e2h_VpbZJVecBgoKy0i

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BENNY SHARONI: SNAPSHOTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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LONDON



Sharoni's Crack Quartet Brings Exhilarating Groove to Berwyn

Posted 4/19/2016

Israeli tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni wasn't born in Alabama or the Bronx—he's from Yemeni/Chilean parentage—but he's truly steeped in American jazz (Brazilian music too). Influenced by the usual stateside suspects—the rugged contours of Joe Henderson blended with significant doses of John Coltrane's urgent passion, George Coleman's manly fluency and techy tinges of Steve Grossman—yet Sharoni still sounds like himself.

Not a household name, Boston-based Sharoni appeared at the lively, if suburban, Fitzgerald's nightclub in Berwyn, Illinois, on April 9, where he performed two sets with a top-notch quartet featuring stellar Toronto pianist Dave Restivo, charismatic drummer Steve Langone and thick-toned bassist John Sims (filling in for regular bassist Todd Baker).

These sidemen established a thumping, exhilarating pocket from the get-go, beginning with Eric Alexander's "The Second Milestone," and they never let up. Coleman's swaggering "Amsterdam After Dark" followed, and then, rather quixotically, a hard-bop version of "High Heel Sneakers."

Sharoni was raised in Israel, on a kibbutz near Gaza run by his father, a papaya farmer. He called his upbringing an experience intrinsic to his sense of self-determination, survival and community. He earned the nickname "Cakes" for his largesse in feeding bandmates spelt pancakes, and that's the title of a blazing, funky tune from his strong, self-produced debut, *Eternal Elixir* (Papaya Records 2009).

Less wholesome communal memories stem from Sharoni's three years of service in the Israeli army, for which his pursuit of music, by his own admission, functions as an antidote. At the SideBar, he repeatedly invited listeners to share his insights into the music, with commentary and pleasantries. Suggesting it should be the reciprocal demand of any audience member, Sharoni introduced a fleet "I Want to Be Happy" with the pronouncement, "This is dedicated to you guys!"

There's no questioning the tenorman's absorption of the edgier realm of straightahead; studying for a semester at Berklee in 1987, he thereafter sought Jerry Bergonzi and George Garzone for instruction, and has a CD project in the works with the latter. He's also a fine composer, as five catchy originals on his latest *Slant Signature* (Papaya Records, 2014) attest. The intriguing title refers to the name of a vintage Otto Link mouthpiece that Sharoni picked up at an estate sale—a choice moment of serendipity.



Benny Sharoni performs at Fitzgerald's in Berwyn, Illinois, on April 9. (Photo: Michael Jackson)

An example of Sharoni's illustrative approach (imbuing tunes with more life than is common) came across on "Bitter Drops" from *Slant Signature*. The title is Israeli slang for hard liquor, and when the leader solos (last, as if stumbling toward the night bus home), his back-of-the-beat, breathy low notes mimic a tipsy state.

Such playfulness marks Sharoni's ethos—he'll let out an r&b-style honked bell note amidst nimble lines, and wax free in climax to an otherwise rail-running foray. And he's also a lovely balladeer, sketching a breezy approximation of Lee Morgan's perfect melody on "Ceora" on *Slant Signature* while, live in Berwyn, saturating the elongated form of Bruno Martino's forlorn "Estaté" with poignancy and drama.

Earlier the quartet played Jobim's "Triste," but quite ferociously, Sharoni dueling with the drums. Given Sims' subbing role, Sharoni spared his originals but nevertheless picked lesser-known groovers such as Dexter Gordon's "Soy Califa" and an uptempo "There's A Small Hotel" for this Chicagoland debut.

Thinking there was a hard finish at 11 p.m., Sharoni respectfully called it for the night after two dynamic, generous sets, but soundman Gary was happy to hear more. So, since I'd bet Sharoni at intermission that *Coltrane's Sound* was his favorite record, he obliged with a rousing encore of "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes."

(**Note:** To read an Editors' pick review of George Coleman's 2016 album *A Master Speaks*, [click here.](#))

—Michael Jackson

feature

Wednesday, December 16, 2015



Slant Signature Benny Sharoni *Papaya Records*

This is bebop of the highest pedigree. With more energy and talent than some of the original musicians that it pays homage to. There is much here for those who are looking to discover what bebop is about and for the many who would like to be reminded why jazz as an art form is so unique. An uber album by uber musicians that will make any jazz lover uber happy.
RK

Benny Sharoni Brings Quest for Lyrical Expression to Old Lyme Jazz Haven

By OWEN MCNALLY (/PEOPLE/OWEN-MCNALLY) • MAY 27, 2015



"Our mission was to make the most beautiful music we could."

Benny Sharoni

It's been five years since the big-toned, Israeli-born tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni made his recording debut with an acclaimed album called *Eternal Elixir*.

All the promise resonating through that warmly expressive debut disc -- a spiritually inspired work that touted music as the eternal elixir for the world's woes -- has been more than fulfilled

in the Boston-based saxophonist/composer's new release, *Slant Signature* (Papaya Records).

An excellent showcase for his writing and playing, the CD rings with increased authority, additional creative breadth and depth and a re-affirmation of Sharoni's basic credo to make beautiful music.

His heartfelt aesthetic on beauty and truth is rooted in and originally inspired by the lyrical expressiveness of Sonny Rollins that he first encountered at home years ago as a musically gifted kid who was born and raised in a kibbutz near the Gaza Strip. His life-changing Rollins epiphany came to him wrapped up in a batch of vinyl LPs that his music-loving mother had brought home to him after a trip to New York City.

Music of all kinds reigned supreme in the Sharoni household presided over by his émigré parents. His mother, who grew up in Chile, and his father, who had lived in Yemen, both emigrated from their original homelands to Israel where they later met at a kibbutz not long after Israel became a nation in 1948.

The Sharoni home was alive with the sound world music, including Latin styles from Chile and African-based melodies and rhythms from Yemen. Plus, of course, the fortuitous cache of Rollins recordings, which Benny totally immersed himself in as a young man who suddenly had a calling to become a jazz musician. It was a calling that led him all the way to America, the Promised Land for many aspiring jazz musicians from foreign nations.

Hearing Rollins not only forever changed his life, but also lit the way to discovering a litany of tenor saxophone greats, including Zoot Sims, John Coltrane, Dexter Gordon, Benny Golson and many other American icons. His love for jazz led him to Boston's Berklee College of Music for just one semester, his collegiate career cut short by his need to work full-time to get by on his own in a land not quite so full of milk and honey for a young, idealistic jazz student.

Despite that bump on his road to success and jazz mastery, Sharoni managed to study with such Boston-based jazz Brahmins as the saxophonists Jerry Bergonzi and George Garzone. Eventually, he established himself on the Boston scene where he has led his own bands and appeared with such renowned players as Joshua Redman, Danilo Perez, Kenny Garrett and Larry Coryell. Today he tours and performs with his own bands throughout the East Coast, Canada, Europe and Asia.

On the studio recording of *Slant Signature*, Sharoni beefs-up his working quartet, which features Barbato, Baker and Langone, with two special guests -- the fiery trumpeter Jim Rotondi and guitarist Mike Mele. Although Rotondi had never played with Sharoni's quartet before, his interaction with the tenor saxophonist sets sparks flying right from the opener, a Sharoni original called "Minor City."



Throughout the session, the pieces are graced with refreshing vigor, verve and a continuous sense of celebration, whether the band is grooving on an original samba, or on such jazz pieces as Freddie Hubbard's "Down Under," Lee Morgan's Ceora (done as a romantic bossa nova with Sharoni in a reflective mood), or Ray Bryant's buoyant, funky "Tonk," the soulful, sterling grand finale sparkling with a Horace Silver lining.

Sharoni listened widely over the historic range of tenor styles as he honed his own voice.

Obviously, Sharoni, who is a diligent scholar of the tenor saxophone, listened widely over the historic range of tenor styles as he honed his own voice and found his independent sense of artistic direction leading to fresh approaches to the music.

Nonetheless, you still sometimes hear hints or catch glints of luminous Sonny elements beaming through, whether it shines in emotion-filled gruff tones or in smart thematic playing. It lights up in flashes of wit and a bright sense of play, for example, when Sharoni makes his grand entrance on the Freddie Hubbard tune.

What he's all about is life-affirming energy and the perpetual celebration of beauty. "This record is 99 percent heart," Sharoni has said of his artistic goal. "The band is so full of heart and joy and intensity."

As he confides in the CD's liner notes to jazz critic Ed Hazell: "Our mission was to make the most beautiful music we could." With total honesty and no hyperbolic exaggeration, Sharoni can stand proudly in front of any banner proclaiming: mission accomplished.

Benny Sharoni, 'Slant Signature'



By **Jon Garelick** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 28, 2015

BENNY SHARONI

SLANT SIGNATURE

The format on tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni's "Slant Signature" couldn't be more straightforward: the bluesy, tuneful, groove-based imperatives of hard bop. There isn't a stale lick on this concise, utterly satisfying disc, which includes five well-turned originals as well as covers by stalwarts Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, and Ray Bryant. The Israeli-born Sharoni (living in the Boston area since coming to Berklee in 1986) and his band crackle with spontaneity on every tune. They come flying out of the gate at a superfast tempo on Sharoni's "Minor City," a hard-bop flag-waver if ever there was one, Sharoni and guitarist Mike Mele nailing the tricky unison theme with precise abandon. Sharoni has an appealingly gruff, throaty sound, which he combines with a lyrical attack that gives a vocal quality to his lines, especially on more relaxed grooves, like the blues of Hubbard's "Down Under" and his own "Bitter Drops." Filling out the band are trumpeter Jim Rotondi, pianist Joe Barbato, bassist Todd Baker, and drummer Steve Langone, all of them focused and assured. The tunes are as varied as the solo sequences: blues, a samba, a bossa, an irresistible boogaloo. Play it again! (Out now)

23 Mar 2015

Benny Sharoni

Slant Signature

CD

Papaya Records



Let's get one thing straight from the start, this album is fabulous. It is filled with talent and verve and amazing music on top. It's one of a kind, a bebop tour de force of the highest calibre. It doesn't just be and bop, it shuffles it goes Caribbean and does some of the most inspired and tightest jazz things I have heard in many years. A happy, and for the most part rhythmic affair, that provides an incredibly talented sextet the space to impress and beguile in equal measure. The musicians are: Benny Sharoni (tenor sax); Jim Rotondi (trumpet); Joe Barbato (piano); Mike Mele (guitar); Todd Baker (bass); Steve Langone (drums). Sharoni is a Boston based Israeli who has made one other album as a leader and collaborated on three others, if *Slant Signature* is anything to go by there need to be a lot more of both.

The album is made up of both originals and tributes to the music composed by Lee Morgan, Freddy Hubbard and pianist Ray Bryant. The band plays the finest bebop one is likely to hear today, they play with confidence, accuracy, sensitivity, speed and a rhythmic groove that you rarely hear, they have the be and the bop sorted. Jazz is not always fun but this album will be cherished by jazzers of all persuasions. This is helped by a recording that does the musicians justice, it is clear, fast and clean but also sweet and natural, instruments are placed realistically and solidly across and within the soundstage. To my ears Freddy Hubbard's *Down Under* and Sharoni's *Bitter Drops* are the strongest. But each and every track is a sheer and rare joy to listen to. Very highly recommended. Even though it is only March, I have put this album at or near the very top of my best of 2015 shortlist. Buy it.

Reuben Klein

Benny Sharoni 'Slant Signature' (Papaya) 3/5

by ukvibe



BENNY SHARONI
SLANT SIGNATURE
FEATURING
JIM ROTONDI

Firmly routed in the tradition of many a classic Blue Note album, "Slant Signature" is Boston saxophonist Benny Sharoni's second release as a leader. Indeed, on first listen one can imagine a young Sonny Rollins blowing his horn, accompanied by the time honoured trumpeter and rhythm section. In this instance however, we are listening to a 2015 release that brings back such memories with its old-skool approach to music making. There's nothing outdated here though, far from it. Sharoni is joined by pianist Joe Barbato, bassist Todd Baker and drummer Steve Langone. Also featured are special guests Jim Rotundi on trumpet and Mike Mele on guitar. Together the band perform eight tunes with a joyful effervescence, providing us with a modern day take on a classic sound with suitable reverence to their jazz forebearers intact.

The first, and most important thing that strikes me when listening to this album is Benny Sharoni's tone. His playing is in the bebop mould of Charles McPherson or Joe Lovano, but it is his tonality that is pure gold. He truly has a wonderful sound that resonates and rings out with a quality rarely heard. Effectively blending Sharoni originals with some timeless classics, "Slant Signature" kicks off with one of the stand out tracks "Minor City", a swinging, fast flowing tune that quickly

sets the scene for what is to follow. Other gems include Lee Morgan's sumptuous "Ceora", the melodic "Subterranean Samba", and the impressive title track itself. "Bitter Drops" adds a touch of variation, featuring a quality, bluesy guitar break from Mike Mele. Throughout the recording Sharoni and trumpeter Rotundi exchange solos, with plenty of room for expression also given to pianist Barbato. In fact, I found myself wishing Sharoni had been a little more selfish in this respect, listening with anticipation for the next wonderful sax solo to enrich and delight.

The title of this release; "Slant Signature", relates to a sought after Otto Link sax mouthpiece from the 1940's. Apparently if you are lucky enough to find one of these the price tag is huge. The story goes that Sharoni came across one for ten bucks from a street vendor on Cape Cod. His good fortune is now also ours. Yet as enjoyable as this album is, I would love to hear Sharoni playing in a more adventurous, challenging setting. It will be very interesting to see how his writing develops over a period of time and hopefully we'll hear a lot more from him in the near future. As a saxophonist he certainly has the skill and flair to potentially follow in the footsteps of some of the greatest – the aforementioned Sonny Rollins and Joe Lovano being just two that spring to mind. Time will tell, as it always does.

"Slant Signature": Benny Sharoni Featuring Jim Rotondi



Written by Glenn A. Mitchell, LA Jazz Scene

Thursday, 05 March 2015



With his second CD, *Slant Signature* (2015, Papaya Records), saxophonist Benny Sharoni has moved the bar up a notch from his previously released *Eternal Elixir* (2010, Papaya), which garnered rave reviews. Sharoni's longtime quartet appears on the new release, with pianist Joe Barbato, bassist Todd Baker, and drummer Steve Langone, plus special guests, trumpeter Jim Rotondi and guitarist Mike Mele. Mele also played on Sharoni's *Eternal Elixir*. Although this was Rotondi's first time performing with the Sharoni ensemble, he sounded as if he'd been with the band for a long time. Sharoni mentions that the bottom line is that the music moves and inspires people. He says, "This record is 99% heart. The band is full of heart and joy and intensity and everybody's mission was to make the most beautiful music they could."

Sharoni's home for many years has been Boston, MA, where he has spent time not only performing but also composing. Five of his original tunes are on his new CD, along with three famous classy jazz tunes -- Freddie Hubbard's "Down Under," Lee Morgan's "Ceora," and Ray Bryant's "Tonk." They are all done with lots of favorable flavor. The musicians support each other to the max and everyone plays an important part in every tune. The front line, Sharoni, Rotondi, and Mele, are perfect and backed 1000% by the rhythm team of Barbato, Baker, and Langone.

One of several jazz influences for Sharoni has always been Sonny Rollins. His powerful tone is reminiscent of Rollins on his original "Minor City Blues." You can hear just how tight this band is by listening to Sharoni's compositions "Subterranean Samba" and "The Bodega." Another Sharoni original, "Bitter Drops," has relaxed blues lines and gives way to outstanding solos from Sharoni, Mele, and Barbato. On the title track, Sharoni's "Slant Signature," the group performs immaculately. It is an up-tempo and hard-driving piece.

Slant Signature will be released on March 17, 2015. This CD will be wonderful to play and play many more times. See Benny Sharoni's website: <http://www.bennysharoni.com>

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THE BOSTON PHOENIX

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The Year in Review

A look back at banned things, AP Style, Dutch hip-hop, politics, movies & more

TEN LONG-PLAYERS

JAZZ THAT LINGERS FROM 2010

BY JON GARELICK

Here, in no particular order, are some of my favorite things from among the people, CDs, and concerts I wrote about this year.

1 DARCY JAMES ARGUE'S SECRET SOCIETY

Argue and his Society's *Infernal Machines* (New Amsterdam) made year-end lists in 2009, but this extraordinary big band — based in New York — didn't get to Boston for a live show until a Regattabar gig in February. For the first wave of press, Argue sold the band as steampunk, drawing on the idea that big bands themselves are an anachronism in 2010 and that he's using acoustic instruments to impersonate electronic studio effects like digital delay, filter sweeps, and phase shifting. If you weren't cued in to those references, you might just respond to the swirling texture of layered meters and to the sweeping harmonies and sunburst chords that are the legacy of Argue's New England Conservatory teacher Bob Brookmeyer. The band also played Newport in August.

2 PHIL WILSON DOES MILES AND GIL

Speaking of jazz orchestras: Berklee big-band sage Phil Wilson conjured one of Argue's

progenitors when he gathered a group of faculty and students to perform Gil Evans's landmark 1958 arrangement for Miles Davis of the Cershwins' *Porgy and Bess*. A complex suite for 19-piece band (including tuba and three French horns), it doesn't get played live often. But here it was, from the first blasts of "Bazzard Song": the many layers of Evans's conception, where low brass could conjure a chorus of double basses or fill out beguiling harmonies behind the soloists. Trumpeter and singer Christine Fawson (of the group Syncopation) brought the idea to Wilson after performing the piece at a concert in Mexico. Here she was joined by Miles Evans (son of Gil) for the trumpet solos and also sang the opening "I Loves You Porgy." But the piece was the star.

3 TAYLOR EIGSTI

At Scullers in July, he showed why he's a young star in the making: he has the chops and the imagination to cover a broad range of material — from Ellington and Mussorgsky to Coldplay and Mutemath — and an inventive flair as a composer. As a pianist, he doesn't seem to have a weak finger. His guest that night was singer-songwriter Becca Stevens. Together, and with a line-up that included the great drummer Kendrick Scott, they previewed his September release, *Daylight at Midnight* (Concord), which claims the likes of Chris Martin, Feist, Nick Drake, and Elliott Smith for the book of contemporary jazz standards. And "Midnight Afternoon" is a promising start to an Eigsti-Stevens songwriting partnership. Here's hoping they come back in 2011.

FLYING Esperanza Spalding tried a new direction — and her audience went with her.

4 RON GILL/JOHN STEIN

Singer Gill and guitarist Stein have been long-time teammates, and on *Turn Up the Quiet* (Whaling City Sounds), they show each other at their best. The only other musician on the CD is pianist Gilad Barkan (playing beautifully), and the scaled-back setting gives Gill's warm, conversational directness a chance to shine. An April show at Scullers was meant to showcase both *Turn Up the Quiet* and Stein's equally fine *Raising the Roof* (also on Whaling City) but Gill — a one-time fixture on the Boston scene as a musician and WCBH jazz announcer, now living in North Carolina — was felled by illness, and Stein's band went on alone. With any luck, Gill and Stein will perform together again in Boston in 2011.

5 ESPERANZA SPALDING

After her pop-leaning major-label debut, this year's *Chamber Music Society* (Heads Up) was supposed to be bassist/vocalist/composer Spalding's "difficult" album. Yet despite

its contrapuntal voice and string no more in a 2008's *Esperanza*. And like that has traction: "Paisagem" (and the vocal and Cretcheard take on "Kin & Ned Wash Is the Wind," he of William Blake's exploratory originals "edge of Good and Evil" triple listens. A sold-out concert in October proved the audience is willing to move a

6 IDEAL BREAD

It shouldn't be a secret after that one way to get my attention Steve Lacy. The composer and saxophonist was a master of passionate compositions that inspired the music of life-long inspiration Thelonious Monk and the many poets he loved. The quartet Ideal Bread play the music of Lacy exclusively. In place of Lacy's soprano, we have bandleader and former Lacy student Josh Sinton's baritone, and he's joined by trumpeter Kurt Knuffke, bassist Reuben Radding, and drummer Tomas Fujiwara. On their second CD, *Transmit* (Cuneiform), they showed that Lacy — like all the great jazz composers — can be a source of individual expression.

7 MIKE REED

Reed's *Stories & Negotiations* (482 Music), with his project People, Places & Things, concluded a trilogy dedicated to their home town of Chicago in which the band juxtaposed their own tunes with repertoire of progressive hard bop that flourished in that city between roughly 1954 and 1960. For this album, they brought in some of the players from that era: 75-year-old trombonist Julian Priester, 79-year-old trumpeter/saxophonist Ira Sullivan, and 81-year-old trumpeter Art Hoyle. So they play "Urnack" — the Priester tune that he and Hoyle recorded with Sun Ra in Chicago in 1960 — as well as a handful of others that stretch everybody on the date and make the whole thing sound like the coolest of young avant-garde bands. In October, Reed brought the core quartet — saxophonists Greg Ward and Tom Haldeman and bassist Jason Roebeke — to the Lily Pad.

8 TED ROSENTHAL

Pianist Rosenthal's *Impromptu* (Playscape) was one of the most ridiculously entertaining CDs of the year. A piano-trio record (with bassist Noriko Ueda and drummer Quincy Davis), it could easily pass for a collection of superbly well-played jazz standards — until you realize that that beautiful ballad whose words you can almost remember is Chopin's F-minor Nocturne. But *Impromptu* is more than a parlor-game

9 BENNY SHARONI

Tenor-saxophonist Sharoni's *Eternal Elixir* (Papaya) snuck up on me like the great lost hard-bop album of 1962 — and with good reason. Here were Donald Byrd's "French Spice" and "Pentecostal Feelin'" and Blue Mitchell's "The Thing You Do." Even the *Fiddler on the Roof* chestnut "To Life" (a natural for this kibbutz-raised Israeli-American Boston resident) was inspired by the classic 1964 Cannonball Adderley recording of the score. None of which would matter a whit if we didn't have Sharoni's expressive playing, his crushed-felt tone, his feeling for boogaloes and bossa, and his own sturdy originals to round out the program.

10 MATT WILSON

The drummer, composer, and bandleader gave us an early holiday present, *Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O* (Palmetto), that could stand among some of the better horn-and-rhythm albums (with saxophonist Jeff Lederer and bassist Paul Sikivie). That and his Sunday-morning set at the Newport Jazz Festival — with a cover of Beyoncé's "If I Were a Boy," Wilson's Carl Sandburg-inspired "Bubbles," Mary LaRose singing her lyrics to Ornette Coleman's "Broken Shadows," and an auxiliary string quartet — sealed Wilson, and his generosity of spirit, in my mind as one of the great lingering memories from 2010. ☺



This year's Puerto Rico Heineken Jazz Fest was steeped in the nostalgia of triumphs past as it paid tribute to many of the notables who've graced its stages over the past two decades. While several, most prominently conga player Mongo Santamaria and bandleader Tito Puente, have passed away, many who've been honorees of previous festivals were on hand once again for this year's 20th-anniversary edition. Among them were drummer Alex Acuña, pianist Michel Camilo, woodwind artist Paquito D'Rivera and saxophonist Leandro "Gato" Barbieri, who, although in his mid-70s and in failing health, electrified fans with a virile reading of his 1970s hit "Europa."

The four-day series of outdoor concerts, attended this year by some 6,000 spectators, has always served as a showcase for the talents of the extended family of Puerto Rican notables. This year featured such native sons as bassist Eddie Gomez, *conquero* Giovanni Hidalgo, trombonist William Cepeda, saxophonist Miguel Zenón and trumpeter Humberto Ramírez alongside such U.S.-born Puerto Rican talent as flautist Dave Valentín and pianist Eddie Palmieri. The festival is also noted for its strong relationship with the Berklee College of Music. This year scholarships totaling over \$700,000 were awarded to the Puerto Rican jazz stars of tomorrow.

The sonic signature of the festival, however, turned out to be provided by the omnipresent two-tone chirp of the island's indigenous frog, the *coquí*. During quiet passages, the presence of the so-called "coquí chorus" became an inescapable part of the aural mix. At one point, D'Rivera aimed his clarinet into the surrounding darkness, picked the perfect interval, and engaged in a tuneful call-and-response with the tiny creatures. Pure magic. —**Story and photos by Mark Holston**

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Bandoneón player Jofre Romarion, bassist Pedro Giraudo and percussionist Enrique Cárdenas; clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera; bassist Eddie Gómez; trombonist William Cepeda; and flutist Dave Valentín.



From Battlefield to Bandstand

Tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni says that music saved him. When the 49-year-old Israeli native was doing his mandatory three-year stint in the Israeli Army in the early '80s, the horrors of battle were overwhelming.

"While I was in the Army, when I had a moment of quiet at night, I'd put on headphones and listen to Steely Dan and Sonny Rollins," he says. "It saved me. The war experiences were just so ugly and so painful and so overwhelming that I think music really healed me. Music kept me safe from those insane experiences. It still does to this day. When I'm playing music, I'm in the moment, I don't have to think about the experiences that I hated in the past. Music just elevates me; it puts me in a place that you can't match any other way."

The 10 cuts on Sharoni's debut CD as a leader, *Eternal Elixir* (Papaya Records), reflect his depth of experience and overflow with the joy of living. Working with different small groupings of six Boston-area musicians who also happen to be close friends, Sharoni and company tackle a vibrant selection of material on *Eternal Elixir* — from a couple of Donald Byrd covers from the trumpeter's 1961 album *Free Form* (which featured saxist Wayne Shorter) and a recitation of Blue Mitchell's "The Thing to Do" to four original compositions, a version of *Fiddler on the Roof*'s celebratory "To Life," and sumptuous bossa fare (a cover of the classic "Estate" and Sharoni's own "Benito's Bossa Bonita").

"I just picked tunes because my heart was attracted to them," Sharoni says. "It's the same way when I improvise; I go after the notes that are beautiful. Every musician has a gift, and I think mine is to make music simple enough, but emotional enough, so everyone can feel good about it. I didn't think about having something for everyone on the disc, although I think everyone can find something they like on it."

In 1986, after his traumatic battle experiences in Lebanon, Sharoni moved to Boston, where he enrolled at the Berklee College of Music. He left after a single semester, opting instead for private lessons with saxophonists Jerry Bergonzi and George Garzone. In the meantime he began leading his own bands and has since appeared with Joshua Redman, Danilo Perez, Kenny Garrett and Larry Coryell. Today, having survived the trials and tribulations of war, Sharoni and his music stand as living testaments to the power of jazz to restore mind, body and spirit.

"Music healed me in so many ways," the saxophonist says. "If I didn't have music, I don't know what I'd do. Music is the only reason I'm still alive." ▲

Los Angeles Jazz Scene - CD Reviews

Various Artists

Private Treasures From Allegheny Jazz Concerts (Jump)

Joe Boughton, who recently passed away, loved hot jazz. In 1984 he founded the Allegheny Jazz Society, organizing many concerts during the next 25 years. He also acquired the Jump label, reissued recordings that were originally made for Jump in the 1940s and '50s, and recorded newer sets of trad jazz.

Private Treasures From Allegheny Jazz Concerts is a two-CD set of previously unreleased performances, and it is overflowing with gems. Most of the music is taken from concerts dating from 1985, 1992 and 2000. Swing guitarist Marty Grosz is well featured, not only at the head of some all-star combos but as an often-hilarious commentator. Among the other greats who make memorable appearances are clarinetists Bobby Gordon, Bob Reitsemer and Ken Peplowski (also heard on tenor), the late Tom Baker (heard on trumpet and tenor), trumpeters Peter Ecklund, Jon-Erik Kellso and Joe Wilder, trombonists Dan Barrett and Bob Havens, tenors Bud Freeman (who plays "I Cover The Waterfront") and Scott Hamilton, pianists John Sheridan and Keith Ingham, guitarist Howard Alden, Vince Giordano on bass sax, and drummer Hal Smith. Highlights of these good-humored and generally inspired performances include "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," "Rose Of The Rio Grande," "After Awhile" and "Lady Be Good."

But that is not all. A 1966 rehearsal by the trio of cornetist Ruby Braff, clarinetist Bob Wilber and guitarist Wayne Wright resulted in a wonderful version of "Mandy Make Up Your Mind," based loosely on the 1925 Louis Armstrong-Sidney Bechet version. And there are versions of "Indiana" and "Old Folks" from a mid-1950s rehearsal that feature Lee Wiley.

This highly recommended two-CD set, available from alljz@zoominternet.net, serves not only as a tribute to the music that Joe Boughton loved but to the organizer himself.

Benny Sharoni Eternal Elixir (Papaya)

Born and raised in Israel and now based in Boston, Benny Sharoni is a tenor-saxophonist with a big tone and a hard-driving style. Although Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson have influenced his playing a bit, his solos also sometimes recall Sonny Rollins.

Sharoni loves hard bop of the 1960s and that is very much reflected not only in his intriguing repertoire on *Eternal Elixir* (which includes songs by Donald Byrd and Blue Mitchell plus "Sunny" and "Estate") but in his four excellent originals, most of which would have fit in well on a Blue Note album from 1965. But rather than being merely derivative, the music is fresh and lively as Sharoni and his sidemen are creative within the older genre rather than dealing with recreations.

Benny Sharoni's sidemen, other than trumpeter Barry Ries, are not that well known but all are talented: Joe Barbato or Kyle Aho on piano, guitarist Mike Mele, bassist Todd Baker and drummer Steve Langone. Together they create a modern hard bop classic in *Eternal Elixir*, which is available from www.bennysharoni.com

Fay Claasen Sing! (Challenge)

Ran Blake/Sara Serpa Camera Obscura (Inner Circle Music)

There is no point mincing words. Fay Claasen is a great jazz singer, one of the very best around today. Although from the Netherlands, her warm voice does not display an accent when singing in English. Not only does she do a superb job of interpreting lyrics, but she swings at all tempos, is not shy at all to take chances, has a wide range, and her singing is consistently full of surprises.

Eternal Elixir

Benny Sharoni | Self Produced

By [Jordan Richardson](#)

Tenor saxophonist Benny Sharoni's debut as a leader, *Eternal Elixir*, mixes the vitality of a spiritual journey with the intelligence of an academic lesson, to come up with an intoxicating cocktail of brains and brawn.



Sharoni is a precise and exciting player. His record is couched in the idea of music as salvation, and is largely culled from his experiences during a mandatory three-year term with the Israeli Army in the 1980s. Says Sharoni, "While I was in the Army, when I had a moment of quiet at night, I'd put on headphones and listen to [Steely Dan](#) and [Sonny Rollins](#)." With *Eternal Elixir*, Sharoni offers similar peace of mind with these 10 jubilant tracks.

Born and raised in Israel on a kibbutz near the Gaza Strip, Sharoni's formative years came filled to the brim with the music of his parents' homelands, with the sounds and vibrations from Chile and Yemen filling the home constantly. It was when the saxophonist heard Rollins, however, that he fell in love with jazz. After traumatic experiences in the Israeli Army in Lebanon, Sharoni enrolled in the Berklee College of Music and transformed the violence and bloodshed of his past into the beautiful noise of the present.

Sharoni's pursuit of elegance, beauty and joy is invigorating, drawing on a lovely mix of original compositions and music from [Donald Byrd](#) and Bobby Hebb. Through it all, Sharoni's group chase resplendent notes and compelling tones. The joy springs forth from the instruments, propelling the album with equal portions grace and excitement.

Eternal Elixir bounces right out of the gate with "Bernstein," a Sharoni original that teems with proud playing and gobs of enticing swing. It is, of course, inspired by composer Leonard Bernstein and serves as the ultimate invitation to Sharoni's celebration of joy and life.

Perhaps some of his mother's influence is tucked into "Benito's Bossa Bonita," a soulful bossa nova that takes full charge of its medium tempo, thanks to drummer [Steve Langone](#)'s sturdy work. Sharoni sails high and drives low, all the while maintaining his instrument's sensual core.

Rhythm is the name of the game on "Pentecostal Feelin'," with its groovy boogaloo beat. The Byrd original, featured on the trumpeter's *Free Form* (Blue Note, 1961), gains an emotional edge as Sharoni takes on saxophonist [Wayne Shorter](#)'s part with boldness and creativity.

For Sharoni, music is a spiritual experience. Through his *Eternal Elixir*, he shares his thirst for life and his continuing quest for pure happiness. His story has been one of horror and adversity, but the saxophonist has managed to change that story into one of hope and love through the unyielding and unstoppable power of jazz.

Track Listing: Bernstein; French Spice; Estate; Sunny; Pentecostal Feeling; Benito's Bossa Bonita; To Life; Cakes; The Thing To Do; Senor Papaya

Personnel: Benny Sharoni: tenor saxophone; Barry Ries: trumpet; Joe Barbato: piano; Kyle Aho: piano; Mike Mele: guitar; Todd Baker: bass; Steve Lagone: drums

Giant Steps



MAINSTREAMING

BENNY SHARONI'S HARD BOP, PHIL WILSON'S MILES AND GIL, BEN POWELL'S FIDDLE MAGIC

BY JON GARELICK

When I first put on Benny Sharoni's new *Eternal Elivár* (Papaya), there was, as a composer friend of mine likes to say, "nothing wrong with it." That is, it seemed no better or worse than a zillion other straight-ahead tenor-saxophone discs.

But within two tracks, I'd changed my mind. This was like some great lost hard-bop album from 1962. Indeed, that second tune was the easy-swinging blues "French Spice," from Donald Byrd's 1961 *Free Form*. Another Byrd tune, "Pentecostal Feelin'" (also from *Free Form*), and Blue Mitchell's 1964 "The Thing To Do" were classic boogaloes. Each of the other tunes likewise had a specific groove and pop-song verse-chorus hookiness — boogaloes, bossa novas, Latin-jazz/swing mixes.

Sharoni also has a taste for what Don Byron once called "one of the great acts of jazz — the weird cover." That's another hallmark of '60s hard bop, when movie themes from the likes of *Exodus* and *Spartacus* were popping up everywhere. Sharoni takes his lead from Cannonball Adderley's 1964 *Fiddler on the Roof*, following that album's arrangement of "To Life" as he begins with a muted trumpet solo (Barry Ries) over a Latin rhythm before heading into straight swing. A bossa arrangement by pianist Joe Barbato of Bobby Hebb's 1966 "Sunny" is another highlight.

None of which would matter a whit if not for Sharoni's playing. Think of his crushed-felt tone and ruminative bop phrasing as coming out of, oh, Dexter Gordon by way of Jerry Bergonzi. He also has the Coltrane-requisite speed and muscle, but his solos — no matter how fast — always take their time. On "French Spice," he slows down the flow with quarter-note melodic arcs and plenty of rests before accelerating into 16th-note double time. These pieces are never merely abstract chord exercises — Sharoni is always creating tunes that parallel the theme. On the bossa-nova classic "Estate," his beautiful, relaxed little reveries of melody have the dreamy grace of Stan Getz.

"If music doesn't work, it doesn't work," he tells me over tea at Trident Booksellers & Café on Newbury Street. "Negative space," he says, and looks over his shoulder at the *faux* Van Gogh image on the wall, "that's what makes a painting great."

Born and raised on a kibbutz in Israel by a mother from Chile and a father from Yemen, Sharoni has led a peripatetic life. He served his mandatory stint in the Israeli army from 1979 to 1982, participating in the disastrous '82 invasion of Lebanon. His unit was within earshot of the notorious Sabra and Shatila massacre. "There was nothing we could do," he tells me. "Sharoni was an animal."

Sharoni, who plays Chianti in Beverly next Friday, credits music with saving his sanity — the tapes of Sonny Rollins and Steely Dan he listened to on his headphones. In 1986, he came to Berkeley for a semester that was cut short by a teachers' strike. He studied with Jerry Bergonzi, George Garzone, Charlie Banacos. He practiced, played, and worked all manner of

odd jobs. For six or so years, he ran an R&B wedding band, but he tossed it when the business tanked with the economy — "I was tired of fighting for it." He tells me that it was now or never as far as making an album. "The more you know in jazz, the more depressed you can get. I mean, try listening to Coltrane — how humbling is that?" He pauses. "You know what? I can live with it."

GRACE
Sharoni's solos
always take
their time —
even when he's
playing fast.





Eternal Elixir

Benny Sharoni | Self Produced

By [Raul d'Gama Rose](#)

The Benny Sharoni at work on *Eternal Elixir* shares two sides of his emerging voice and therefore a true personality that is developing deep within the soul of the tenor saxophonist. One side of the artist is a brash young man, who favors the language of modal music. And he makes good this aspect of the artist by kicking off the proceedings on "Bernstein," his reverential sketch of the legendary American musician and conductor of various equally legendary orchestras of the middle and late 20th Century. The rapid fire changes of [Donald Byrd's](#) "French Spice" give further notice of Sharoni's intentions. In fact, here the saxophonist conjures up the restless spirit of [John Coltrane](#), and even bewitches pianist Joe Barbato into recalling the presence of [McCoy Tyner](#).



Then, on "Sunny," he resurrects the other persona, that one which makes distinct reference to the cool pronouncements of men like Big [Ben Webster](#) and especially [Lester Young](#). In fact, so strong a change to this side of his persona takes place that the music appears to come from another album. This is not meant to suggest that something is amiss here. The observation suggests that Sharoni is an emerging voice, whose shifts and changes speak to that aspect of artistry that aches to define itself. And it is an amazing thing to be witness to this metamorphosis on a single album.

As a tenorist, Sharoni strives to let his muscular attack meld with a softer intonation. His vocabulary is vast and he can make a myriad of metaphors sit cheek by jowl in a long and flowing line. Sometimes Sharoni is apt to prolong these lines so that they meander gracefully like rivulets rushing in apparently different directions, but all eventually meeting at a preordained spot. His ideas are exciting and always eagerly awaited. And when he makes statements, they are always exquisitely enunciated and lucid. His solos on "Benito's Bossa Bonita" and on "Cakes" show just how creative Sharoni can be.

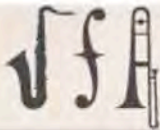
It is only a matter of time before Sharoni emerges with a voice that his quite his own, demanding to be heard on common ground with other practicing giants of an instrument that he has chosen to make his own.

Track Listing: Bernstein; French Spice; Estate; Sunny; Pentecostal Feelin'; Benito's Bossa Bonita; To Life; Cakes; The Think To Do; Señor Papaya.

Personnel: Benny Sharoni: tenor saxophone; Barry Ries: trumpet; Joe Barbato: piano; Kyle Aho: piano; Mike Mele: guitar; Todd Baker: bass; Steve Longone: drums.



JAZZ FOUNDATION
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Saving jazz & blues...one musician at a time.

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

Written by Glenn A. Mitchell, LA Jazz Scene



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.

Three new discs from Israeli jazz players ... Vincent Herring disc revisits 1980s funk

Reviews by George Fendel - continued from page 9

Introducing Takao Iwaki, tenor saxophone.

Another native of Japan, Takao Iwaki is also a product of Boston's Berklee College of Music. He's now doing club work, teaching, and playing occasional cruise gigs as well. In listening to Iwaki, I was trying to discover his influences. As is the case with many startlingly good musicians, I could only come up with the ones he *doesn't* sound like. Iwaki chooses a big full tenor sound, but he's not in the Hawkins-Webster bag. He has moments of lyrical swing, but no one would suggest he's out of Zoot and Al. He sounds as though hard bop may have been a this very impressive recording, Claassen sings an array of songs from eras ranging from Louie Jordan to Strayhorn, Jobim and even Joni Mitchell. There are surprises here, too. How many of us remember Cy Coleman's "You Turn Me On," a song I only know from an ancient recording from The Js With Jamie! Or how about "Tea For Two"? No kidding. And you've never heard it swing quite like this! So, let it be said that Claassen is all over the map, and equally impressive in every camp. She needs to get over to this country and get in front of lots of people at big festivals. Claassen is the real deal.

Challenge Records, 2010, 64:47

Conversations, Dave Anderson, piano, Mike Wingo, percussion.

This Washington D. C. duo works skillfully together. Anderson's concept is to play acoustic piano with a percussionist rather than a drummer. And Wingo brings some percussive instruments not normally seen in a standard drum set. It adds up to a rather unusual but always pleasant sound. If Anderson reminds me of anyone, I want to say there is a bit of Vince Guaraldi at the faster tempos. His ballads sound as though he may have once upon a time heard the nearly forgotten purveyor of pretty chords, Don Shirley. The song selection is split between standards and singing originals. In the latter category, the twosome includes "It Might As Well Be Spring," "Gentle Rain," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," "Autumn Leaves" and "Spring Is Here." I hesitate to call this dinner jazz, because that can carry negative connotations, and this is well performed. If it doesn't spin you around in your chair, well, that's not what you should be doing at dinner anyway.

Self-produced, 2010, 61:48.

Thinking Out Loud, Nadav Snir-Zelniker, drums.

It is apparent over the last decade or so that Israeli-born jazz musicians are becoming increasingly a factor in the jazz panorama. Consider the arrivals of guitarist Roni Ben-Hur, scat singer Ori Dagan, piano maven Tamir Hendelman, and, in the review

that follows this one, tenor saxist Benny Sharoni. This time it's drummer Nadav Snir-Zelniker who has followed his passion for the jazz art from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Now a busy resident of The Apple, Snir-Zelniker would be required to display considerable jazz chops to connect with established New York vets like Ted Rosenthal, piano, and Todd Coolman, bass. He does just that on a recording that's loaded with invigorating piano trio material, both his stimulating originals and standards such as "Secret Love," "Isfahan" and a special rarity from Bill Evans simply entitled "Interplay." It also becomes clear that this is a showcase for former Gerry Mulligan pianist Rosenthal, as he cooks up a straightahead brew that steams with pleasure. For decades, the jazz art has welcomed esteemed players from such far away places as Sweden, New Zealand, Spain, Brazil and Russia, among others. Now it has extended to the state of Israel, to which we American jazz fans can only enthusiastically say *shalom!*

OA2 Records, 2010, 60:22.

Eternal Elixir, Benny Sharoni, tenor saxophone.

Score another soaring tenor sax monster from Israel. While serving a mandatory three years in the Israeli army, Sharoni was saved, during a quiet moment here and there, by the music of Sonny Rollins, among others. I was impressed with the fact that Sharoni plays tenor exclusively; not seeing a need to double on soprano, as is often the case today. His tone brings Rollins, his hero, to mind, and Joe Henderson's earthy sound is lingering somewhere nearby. Sharon's sextet includes only one familiar name to me, Barry Ries on trumpet. In fact, Ries is heard to great advantage on the pop tune of yesteryear, "Sunny," which enjoys a sunnier rendition than ever before. Other carefully chosen vehicles include a delicate "Estate," a couple of Donald Byrd rarities in "French Spice" and "Pentacostal Feelin'," Blue Mitchell's ironclad "The Thing to Do," and the surprise, a jazzy "To Life." You'll notice a sense of veteran musicianship and a strong link to tradition from a player who undoubtedly did not grow up hearing much jazz on a kibbutz near the Gaza strip. So it is these days with a music that has spread beyond its native borders. The horrors of war taught Sharoni how critical jazz was as an emotional uplift. He put it in these terms: "music is the only reason I'm still alive."

Papaya Records, 2009, 67:34.

Destinations, Tamir Hendelman, piano.

Some things are just meant to be. Just a couple days after

Continued on page 10

Reviews by Kyle O'Brien - continued from page 8

that creates moods both mysterious and fluid. It uses acoustic instruments — alto sax and flute by Patrick Cress, drums by Tim Bulkey, bass by Eric Perney — and combines them with electric guitar and electronica from Ryan Francesconi. The musicians work together in harmony to create soundscapes that are a mix of jazz and trance music. It can be at times mesmerizing, at times contemplative, and almost always interesting. This is one for the headphones.

2010, Porto Franco Records, 38:45.

proach. Brunish knows who he is as a singer. Straightforward, melodic, with roots deep in the music. Brunish isn't breaking any new ground, though his swinging version of Elvis's "Love Me Tender" is a fun departure from the original. It would be nice to hear Brunish do more updated takes on these classics, or tackle some lesser-known tunes from bygone eras to give them new life.

2010, Brundog Records, "In Concert": 33:50; "Both Sides": 37:45.

Morning Star, Vincent Herring & Earth Jazz.

Veteran alto saxophonist Herring has played plenty of

[Home](#) » [Reviews](#) » Benny Sharoni – Eternal Elixir

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!