

L.A.

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L.A.'S ONLY JAZZ PAPER

JAZZ SCENE

Benny Sharoni Sextet

Eternal Elixir

Papaya Records

I am pleased that I was able to come across this 2009 CD, *Eternal Elixir* from tenor saxophonist, Benny Sharoni. His parents began sharing music with him at a very early age, giving him the gift of life to an early calling to jazz music during his teens. He has assembled a crackerjack crew of Boston-area musicians where he lives since his days attending Berklee College of Music some years back. His titling of his CD comes from feeling a spiritual side of the music, thus the title *Eternal Elixir*.

The sextet members are: Benny Sharoni – tenor sax, Barry Ries – trumpet, Joe Barbato and Kyle Aho – piano (each sharing several tracks), Mike Mele – guitar, Todd Baker – acoustic bass and Steve Langone – drums.

Of the ten tunes performed, half a dozen are a hint of the ‘eternal’ that Sharoni picked and are bordering half century as well-known classics. The other four are his compositions and merit good listening to. Two favorites I liked were the beginning number, “Bernstein,” composed by Sharoni and a tribute to Leonard Bernstein, which go back to his earlier years of reading Bernstein’s biography which gave him much inspiration. Sharoni has family ties to Bernstein as well from visits the maestro made regularly to a brother-in-law raised in Israel. The tune was written to celebrate the free spirit of

Lenny Bernstein. The second favorite is the be-bop composition from trumpeter 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, “Estate” and “Sunny.” The latter is well-known from interpretations performed by many artists.

The tune, “Cakes” is Sharoni’s and got him the nickname he earned from the pancakes he whips up for his band mates 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. “Benitos’s Bossa Bonita” is a pretty bossa by Sharoni and offers a lot of rhythmic feel to its melody and harmonic construction. “To Life” (by Bock) 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” 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.

Glenn A. Mitchell