

## **BENNY GREEN:** *Kaleidoscope*

(Blue Note)

Rating: \*\*\*\*

By *Chris Rubin*

The aptly-titled *Kaleidoscope*, Benny Green's eighth release as a leader (and sixth for the Blue Note label), reflects a key truth of jazz: the near infinite possibilities inherent in different combinations of musicians. They can create music of great and sometimes surprising diversity just as a kaleidoscope can create nearly infinite numbers of beautiful patterns from just a few shards of colored glass.

Pianist Green honed his chops supporting Art Blakey, Betty Carter and Freddie Hubbard. *Kaleidoscope* showcases his skills as a composer as well as a player on eight original compositions. Green bypassed his touring unit for this disc, assembling a strong band of veterans, including bassist Ron Carter, drummer Lewis Nash, Stanley Turrentine on tenor sax, Antonio Hart on alto and Russell Malone on guitar. The kaleidoscope principal shows up throughout, as Green reconfigures the band from tune to tune, shifting from a duet to the full quintet to a trio of guitar, bass and piano as it suits his needs.

Echoes of McCoy Tyner can be heard on the highly propulsive, rhythmic title track, a reharmonization of "Sweet Georgia Brown." Green liked the tune so much he included two versions ("Take 1" and "Take 2"), which bookend the CD, and the differences demonstrate the freedom with which these musicians play. The intensity of "Take 1" gives way to tenderness on the pensive "Patience," a conversation between piano and bass, and sensitivity on "You're My Melody," a beautiful ballad.

*Kaleidoscope* bristles with an energy and sense of swing that's been in short supply in Green's recent past. But he's managed to step up the intensity without losing intimacy, due to a dynamic rhythm section, inspired soloing and great ensemble play.