

Sal Mosca | *The Talk of the Town* | Sunnyside Records SSC1317

CD1: Ghost Of A Chance; Love Me Or Leave Me; Sweet Georgia Brown; Stella's Blues; Donna Lee; Gone With The Wind; Topsy; I Got Rhythm; Medley 1: Over the Rainbow / I Can't Get Started; Scrapple from the Apple; Cherokee.

CD2: Medley 2: Stardust, Dancing In the Dark, Too Marvellous for Words, I Cover the Waterfront, It's the Talk of the Town, Somebody Loves Me, I Never Knew & Lullaby In Rhythm; Medley 3: Sweet and Lovely, The Man I Love & Groovin High; I'll Remember April / Limehouse Blues; Medley 4: All The Things You Are & A Night In Tunisia; Medley 5: Yesterdays / Sunnyside of the Street; Tea For Two; Love For Sale (58:36 + 60:08).

Sal Mosca (p). Amsterdam, November 14 1992.Sunnyside SSC1317*****

Sal Mosca died in 2007, at the age of 80. This album is from a series of posthumous archive releases, and its rave reviews aren't hard to appreciate. Mosca, a still unsung modern jazz master, is here on top form, well recorded live at the Bimhuis – two hours of beautifully-relaxed interpretation of standards. He was always a maverick, and perversely rejected major label deals, releasing only a handful of small label recordings.

Like his mentor Lennie Tristano, he preferred to remain in his studio, where he worked and taught. But this double-album is a fine product of his late career renaissance, which featured mostly solo concerts. The Tatum influence is more obvious than Tristano at first, with Mosca at his most congenial and accessible. But he avoids Tatum's Bach-like "divine sewing-machine", breaking up feel and tempo, while still – like Tatum – keeping the melody centre stage. As Don Messina comments in his insightful sleeve note, his "fugue-like way of improvising multiple lines" is present, but there's also "a patient Sal, easing into...calm, Zen-like playing".

Sometimes, at the start of a track, he seems to ponder which song to play, before sidling into it. This is such a pleasurable recording that it's easy to enjoy on a rather superficial level. But listen hard, and you'll appreciate some amazing things that are going on. Mosca paces himself, starting with a beautiful, fairly straight ballad interpretation of Ghost Of A Chance. But by

the time he reaches Sweet Georgia Brown, he's all over the keyboard and the time. With Stella's Blues, the Bimhuis audience ought to be going wild, but they remain quietly respectful – what an incredible performance, fully in the spirit of Tristano, but with an exuberance his precursor never attained. A peerless pianist, communing with song material he's spent a lifetime absorbing and exploring.

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