

SAL MOSCA: TOO MARVELOUS FOR WORDS: JUNE 1981
FIVE CONCERTS FROM THE NETHERLANDS,
CADENCE Jazz CJR 1248-1252: Mosca, piano

Of all the jazz pianists around, Sal Mosca has got to be one of the most overlooked of the pioneers. He was born in 1927, so he's got the heart of a bopper, and it's palpable on this sumptuous feast of solo concert recordings on 5 CDs from the Netherlands. He's best known for his teamwork with Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz, and Warne Marsh, which was the band that was one of Charlie Parker's favorite during his lifetime. These concerts from 1981 summarize his musical world view, bringing together standards, boppers and originals that reflect the style of an artist never to be copied again.

How can that claim be supported? Well, while there are many pianists that still take a swing at pieces such as "Donna Lee" or "Hot House," there are none living anymore that have it developed in their DNA. All present artists have been leavened by the influence of rock, fusion and other subsequent WWII styles. Not Mosca, there is no cream in the coffee as he lets his fingers take breaths at just the time that a true bopper should, with an in-bred bounce that can only come from growing up with the music. The canon of music presented here is quite impressive; of the 56 songs done during the five concerts and four (!) dates, only a small handful are repeats, with variations of pieces such as "You Go To My Head" and "Hot House" keeping these pieces fresh. Being weaned on the swing era, he delivers a crystalline and romantic chime on "Moonlight in Vermont" while bouncing like the Harlem Globetrotters on "Sweet Georgia Brown." His own material is sprinkled throughout most of the concerts, with "KLM" reflecting references to "Limehouse Blues."

Then you get to the June 20, 1981 concert, in which everything except the closing piece is one of Mosca's own compositions. Some of the pieces sound spontaneously composed, such as "So Nice" with its incessant drive and thunderous double step accents. "A Family Song" veers into a reference to the standard "Cherokee" while "MFM" mixes digital dexterity with re, and "SAM" makes you think, "Where have I heard that melody before?" His touch has hints of Claude Debussy, dashes of Bud Powell and

a treasure trove of stride that wins over every song.

This is music from hands that were never tarnished by subsequent styles that confused “freedom” with chaos, “cacophony” for adventure and too many notes for “exploration.”

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