

Sal Mosca | *Too Marvelous For Words* | New York City Jazz Record

Pianist, Lennie Tristano, an influential teacher, created his own world of music during the second half of the '40s at the same time that bebop was becoming jazz's new mainstream. Tristano's early students included saxophonists Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh and pianist Sal Mosca, who would have turned 89 this month. Mosca grew from that foundation, worked with Konitz on and off from 1949 into the '60s as a sort-of Tristano surrogate and had an association with Marsh in the '70s. Other than records for Wave in 1959 released years later, it was not until 1977 that Mosca had the chance to make his own solo album.

Too Marvelous For Words is a five-CD set recorded live in the Netherlands during Jun. 19th-24th, 1981. Part of one of the concerts was broadcast but otherwise the performances are unreleased. The tapes, recorded by Mosca, were discovered after his death when his archive was being organized by the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers. The sound quality is generally very good, particularly the June 19th Hague concert.

Mosca, 54 at the time, shows he had studied much more music than that of Lennie Tristano. At various times one can hear Art Tatum's runs, relaxed stride of Teddy Wilson and bebop mastery of Bud Powell. Blended together with aspects of Tristano and Mosca's own musical personality, the result is a still fresh solo style that is very much his own. Mosca explores many standards, some disguised by new song titles and reharmonized chords, and digs into pieces by Tristano, Konitz, Marsh, Billy Bauer, Charlie Parker and Tadd Dameron.

The fourth CD is almost exclusively his originals; among the best are "S.A.M." (an abstract "The Best Thing For You Is Me"), melodic "A Family Song" and driving "IotoGo", based on "All The Things You Are". Other highlights include "Donna Lee", Bauer's "Marionette" (on which Mosca sounds very close to Powell) and a version of "Love Me Or Leave Me" powered by a strong bass line. While a few numbers are repeated, his interpretations are different each time.

With over five and a half hours of music, this is a major addition to Mosca's musical legacy.

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