

Thing-Ah-Majig (Zinnia)
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SAL MOSCA

First, the bad news: Sal Mosca is a fierce individualist. His Web site states that “to remain independent, he has recorded and produced all his own work.” *Thing-Ah-Majig* is a sonically wretched amateur digital recording.

Now the good news: Sal Mosca is a fierce individualist. He is not just a name in the history books. He is, at 77, one of the most original and important pianists now playing jazz.

Once a student of Lennie Tristano, he is a somewhat shadowy figure who has devoted much of his life to private teaching at his studio in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. It was into this studio that Mosca brought bassist Don Messina and drummer Bill Chatten to record, spur-of-the-moment, his first trio album since 1959.

Deconstructing standards is not a new idea, but wait until you hear what Mosca does with “I’ll Remember April” and “I Can’t Get Started.” Tempo and melody and changes are relative matters to Mosca, and he breaks these songs so far down, in abstracted block chords, tangential fragments and confrontational tremolos, that it is startling when they resolve back into themselves. Mosca’s improvisatory impulses are reminiscent of Art Pepper’s.

He will sometimes musically ponder and mark time until a gust of inspiration blows up revelatory free ideas that all tie. There are three more standards in this 43-minute album that are almost as intelligently impulsive and beautifully jagged.

Bad sound aside, *Thing-Ah-Majig* is an essential recording.