

Sal Mosca

For Lennie Tristano

(Fresh Sound)

Pianist Sal Mosca, one of Lennie Tristano's top students, had an on and off recording career. He first recorded in 1949 on a Lee Konitz session and had other opportunities with Konitz in the 1950s (including one date that had Miles Davis as a sideman) but did not lead his first recording until 1959. While he recorded three albums of material during that era on obscure sessions that included duets with bassist Peter Ind and a quartet date with trombonist Eddie Bert, Mosca was completely off records during 1961-69, 1972-75 and 1982-90, making his final recordings in 2005.

The previously unreleased solo session from 1970 that constitutes the bulk of For Lennie Tristano broke a nine year period of silence on records. They come from a private tape that Mosca sent to Tristano that was discovered in more recent times by Don Messina. Mosca had evolved and grown since the 1950s and his playing is freer while still paying tribute to the melodies that he interprets. His improvising is mostly pretty thoughtful and sometimes out of tempo. Among the more memorable pieces on this CD are his versions of "It's The Talk Of The Town," "All The Things You Are," and "Sweet And Lovely," each of which he takes in unexpected and fresh directions. Rounding out the CD are two numbers (Bix Beiderbecke's "In A Mist" and a brief "Stella By Starlight") that were performed on a radio show in 1997. Throughout this program, despite his affection for Lennie Tristano, Mosca sounds very much like himself.

This intriguing and historic set, which contains Sal Mosca's first session of unaccompanied piano solos, grows in interest with each listen. It is available from www.freshsoundrecords.com.

Scott Yanow

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