

"It was a special sensation: a unique piano recital that took place in June 1981, within cycling distance of my house, and at noon. The American pianist Salvatore 'Sal' Mosca (1927-2007) gave a lunchtime concert in the Masters of the Clavier series. You could closely follow the man's creative process from a few meters away. I often had to think about that, especially when I put this CD on.

As the title suggests, the pianist comes from the so-called Lennie Tristano school. He's a bopper by nature -right runs, left erratic punches- but in the end you can judge the man on his own merits. And the music gives every reason for that. It's all about following someone who plays whatever prompts them to do at the time.

Sometimes he finds a few motifs or a series of chords and develops them further, but he can also set them aside as unusable. With a busy rumble in the basses you wonder how he can get out of this. It could transition into a walking left hand, as we know from Dave McKenna, for example. He doesn't worry about the form: he doesn't really work towards a conclusion, to say the least. If he's tired of a song, he simply stops or starts another. That then becomes a medley and it is then up to the listener whether he has noticed the transition in time. Because don't think that he 'just' plays those well-known songs first! Only here and there a fragment of the melody seeps up. There is hardly any question of a fixed beat - isn't Art Tatum just around the corner? -but rhythmically everything is going on.

To this as-yet-unreleased 1970 session, his first as a solo pianist, the last two songs, taken from a radio broadcast, have been added. In A Mist (by Bix Beiderbecke) he already heard when he was fifteen. It is a character piece, with which there is little to start with and he just leaves it that way. With the short-lived Stella By Starlight (1'19"), he seems to have put his signature to the program.

Listening to Sal Mosca means: on an adventure!"

—Jan J. Mulder (June, 2022)

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