

The
PIANO
of
THELONIOUS MONK

Born: Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Oct. 10, 1917
 Died: NYC. Feb. 17, 1982

Introduction:

Mr. Evensmo and his friends in Oslo Jazz Circle were fascinated by Monk and became familiar with his records quite early. He always seemed to be an enigmatic personality, thinking different than all his fellow musicians, even his most modern contemporaries. I met him once, in 1958, at the Five Spot café in NYC., playing with Johnny Griffin, Ahmed Abdul-Malik and Roy Haynes. I ventured into his wardrobe in the intermission, but the conversation was rather below par. However, I managed to shake his hand, and I have not washed mine since (wonder if he did?). I wonder what he would have said, if he knew that 55 years later, that stupid young white kid would study his Minton recordings!

Early history:

When Monk was four his family moved to New York, which was his home until he retired. In the early 1940s he worked as a sideman in jazz groups, became house pianist at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem and was first recorded in 1941 in Minton's jam sessions. In these performances with visiting musicians, such as Don Byas, Roy Eldridge, and Helen Humes, Monk helped to formulate the emerging bop style. Here he encouraged the young jazz pianist Bud Powell (who achieved success far earlier than Monk himself). In 1944 Monk made his first known visit to a recording studio, as a member of the Coleman Hawkins Quartet; in the same year his well-known tune "Round About Midnight" was recorded by Cootie Williams, who collaborated with him in its composition. By this time Monk was playing at the Spotlite Club on 52nd Street with Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra. Three years later, in 1947, Monk made the first recordings under his own name in a sextet session for Blue Note, which included his compositions "Humph" and "Thelonious". These and five other recordings issued by Blue Note between 1947 and 1952, including such masterpieces as "Evidence", "Criss Cross", and a bizarre arrangement of Carolina Moon, are regarded as the first characteristic works of Monk's output, along with the recordings he made as a sideman for Charlie Parker in 1950, which included "Bloomdido" and "My Melancholy Baby". In 1952 Monk acquired a contract from Prestige Records, with which he remained associated for three years (ref. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz) (note: The above is quite superficial presentation of Monk's early life and career, for a real treatment, buy the book described below!!).

Message:

We can highly recommend the magnificent book: Robin D. G. Kelley: "Thelonious Monk – The Life and Times of an American Original", Free Press 2009 (ISBN 978-0-684-83190-9). We are almost ashamed trying to interfere and write anything on Thelonious Monk after this great work, but nevertheless hope that our solo information can give some added value. Quoting the backside cover: "THELONIOUS MONK is the critically acclaimed, gripping saga of an artist's struggle to "make it" without compromising his musician story that, like its subject, reflects the tidal ebbs and flows of American history in the twentieth century. To his fans, he was the ultimate hipster; to his detractors, he was temperamental, eccentric, taciturn or childlike. His angular melodies and dissonant harmonies shook the jazz world to its foundations, ushering in the birth of "bebop" and establishing Monk as one of America's greatest composers. Elegantly written and rich with humor and pathos. *Thelonious Monk* is the definitive work on modern jazz's most original composer".

Postscript of Jan. 2024: Check the Appendix!!

THELONIOUS MONK SOLOGRAPHY

Introduction:

It seems to be an impossible task of describing Thelonious Monk's early activities at Minton's Playhouse in a systematic way. There are several LPs with Monk material, as well as a large number of acetates on private hands. In both cases the information with regard to personnel is quite limited. We therefore has decided not to focus on any chronological presentation but group the information according to various sources. They all are within a timespan of three months anyway. Postscript of Sept. 30, 2016: Previously the following was written: "Note also that the presence of the excellent, modern oriented pianist Allen Tinney, present on numerous sessions at Minton's, can be quite confusing, and one should be careful in separating the two." However, Tinney has stated in an interview for Cadence that he never played at Minton's, only Monroe's.

Xanadu LP 107:

JAM SESSION(S) **NYC. April 30, 1941**
Hot Lips Page, Joe Guy, unknown unlikely Bennie Harris and more probably Freddie Webster (tp), Herbie Fields (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm). One title:

My Melancholy Baby Solo 32 bars. (M)

Same as "... Baby" except unknown (tp) out. One title:

Sweet Lorraine Intro 8 bars to acc. (tp)
32 bars. Solo 8 bars. (S)

These two items are in fact very close to being the first recorded examples of TM's music, beaten only by a few days by some events (see below). However, their contents makes them worthy of being good starting points for the TM solography. Assuming we had no idea that "... Baby" was jazz history, what would we think about it? Possibly something simple like this: "An interesting and competent swing piano player with good technique to play fast runs and pretty advanced harmonic sense". However, quoting Kelley looking back on it from a distant future: "They (referring to Herman Chittison) both stay rooted to the melody while busily filling in space with intricate runs and other embellishments that not only exploit the entire range of the keyboard, but are deliberately jagged or uneven. The difference, however, is that Monk exaggerates all of these elements: his playing is even more jagged, more uneven, less dense in terms of providing more breathing space between notes, and he takes even greater intervallic steps. We hear the first examples of Monk's signature "whole tone" runs – scales based entirely on whole steps". Anyway, the style here is quite far from the extremely economic one TM adopted later, and based upon the latter we doubt anybody in a quiz would identify him without solid knowledge of jazz history. On "... Lorraine", the introduction is heavily disturbed by noise, but quoting again: "Monk playfully embellishes the melody with dissonance and humor" and later "In the body of the tune, Monk creates a busy harmonic universe behind the soloists, sometimes creating little countermelodies using block chords, sometimes restating the melody. At the bridge, Monk takes off, much like his hero, Herman Chittison, with intricate phrases and slightly off-meter runs that dance across the keyboard". Yes, there are many interesting details here. The 8 bars solo is beautiful, sophisticated, showing that TM is highly confident in what he is doing. He is now 23 ½ years old.

Xanadu LP 112:

JAM SESSION(S) **NYC. 1941**
Joe Guy (tp, vo-"Nice ..."), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm). Two titles:

Rhythm Riff Solo 50 bars (NC) to acc. (b)
32 bars to acc. (tp) to solo
32 bars to acc. (b/tp). (M)

May 4 Nice Work If You Can Get It Solo 34 bars to acc. (vo) 34 bars
to solo 34 bars to acc. (tp). (M)

Quoting Kelley on "Nice Work ...": "It is a perfect vehicle for the kind of descending harmonic movement and sonorities that he loved so much". Yes, this is the experimenting TM, going much further than on the previous "... Baby". The item goes straight into a piano solo to continue with vocal and then back to piano, and for a full four minutes he is stepping on it, and the swing piano aspect slides into the background to be replaced by so much modern harmony. The same goes

in fact for the nine minutes of “... Riff”, where the beginning of the first piano solo is lost, but with an active TM almost all the way through. Two utterly exciting items!

Joe Guy (tp), unknown (cl), unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), (dm). Note: Benny Goodman (cl), Lester Young (ts) have been suggested for this item, but only within somebody’s imagination.

You’re A Lucky Guy Intro 4 bars. Solo 34 bars. (M)

The intro on “... Lucky Guy” is definitely not something an ordinary swing pianist would do, and the following solo chorus is a unique blend of the style of the swing era with new and searching ideas, as evident particularly in the bridge and in the ending. With the two Xanadu LPs one gets an excellent example of TM’s early style, his search for something completely different, yet still firmly based in the swing tradition.

Note: Two titles, “Down, Down, Down” and “I Found A Million Dollar Baby”, also on this LP belongs to a broadcast described later under Jan Evensmo’s acetates.

Xanadu LP 123:

JAM SESSION(S) **NYC. 1941**
Hot Lips Page (tp), unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Baby Lips Intro 4 bars. Soft acc. (F)

NYC. possibly May 4, 1941
Roy Eldridge (tp), Herbie Fields (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), (dm).

Body And Soul Intro 4 bars. Soft acc. (S)

NYC. possibly May 4, 1941
Roy Eldridge, Joe Guy (tp), unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Indiana Solo 64 bars. (FM)

The intro on “... Soul” is an interesting and unconventional one, and Roy seems not to wish for any active comping, nor does TM have any opportunity to solo, a real shame, there are so few soli in slow tempi. Two swinging uptempo choruses on “Indiana” is some consolation though. Clarke is dropping his bombs, but the audience seems too noisy to note that history is going on!

Onyx LP 207:

JAM SESSION(S) **NYC. 1941**
Hot Lips Page, Joe Guy, unknown (tp), unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), (dm). Two titles:

Sweet Georgia Brown Solo 64 bars. (FM)

Topsy Intro 8 bars. Soft acc. (FM)

The “Sweet ...” starts right out with two full choruses of piano (possibly this is only the end of a longer solo), and TM seems to be in excellent shape, swinging this item in his own, now so typical way. “Topsy” has only a not particularly interesting intro.

Onyx LP 208:

JAM SESSION(S) **NYC. poss. May 1941**
Joe Guy (tp), Don Byas, unknown (same as on “You’re A Lucky Guy” above?) (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), possibly Hal West replacing Kenny Clarke (dm), Helen Humes (vo).
Two titles:

Stardust Intro 4 bars. Solo 4 bars. (S)

Exactly Like You Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)

Quoting Kelley again: “Monk launched a stunning rendition of Hoagy Carmichael’s “Stardust” with a four-bar introduction in which the melody was barely recognizable, but then he stayed out of Humes’s way, uncharacteristically.

Ironically, Thelonious was never a fan of “Stadust”, which he once described as “a sad song ... if you know anything about music and harmony”. More important perhaps is “Exactly ...” with a recognizable intro as well as an original and noteworthy solo as only TM could make them, again a blend of swing piano tradition and modern ideas.

NYC. prob. May 1941

Joe Guy (tp), Don Byas (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Two titles:

I Can't Give You Anything But Love	Intro 4 bars. Soft acc. (M)
Indiana	Intro 4 bars to acc. (tp). Soli 32 and 32 bars. (F)

A badly recorded intro on “... Love” and not much more audible piano here. However, “Indiana” is one of the most important TM items from this period with two separate and exciting choruses, “with a very boppish flavour to the last four bars of the first solo” to quote Dan’s liner notes. P.S. Great Don Byas on these items!!

Esoteric ES548 a. o.:

JAM SESSION(S)

NYC. May 12, 1941

Joe Guy (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Charlie Christian (g), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Note: TM’s presence has been disputed, and Ken Kersey has been suggested, but we still hold after close listening that this really is Monk.

Topsy / Swing To Bop	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
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NYC. May 1941

Same place. Personnel as May 12 plus unknown (ts) and one or two (tp).

Stompin’ At The Savoy	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
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Of all the jam sessions captured by the active and farsighted Jerry Newman, these are strong candidates for being the most important ones. The reason is of course the presence of the creator of modern jazz guitar, Charlie Christian, giving a strong demonstration of his genius. TM’s presence on the other hand, seems almost to have been forgotten, therefore we should note that the quantity of his playing surpasses that on other sessions, two choruses on each title, good sound, and again showing that he knows how to swing it in the old tradition, while his harmonic and melodic concepts already are into a not too distant future.

Jan Evensmo’s acetates:

JOE GUY / KENNY CLARKE & THEIR ORCHESTRA

NYC. 1941

Personnel announced: Joe Guy (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm). Guest: Al Sears (ts), Duke Groner (vo-“... River”).

Broadcast with announcer:

Theme (Epistrophy)	In ens. (M)
Down, Down, Down	In ens. Solo 8 bars. (M)
I Found A Million Dollar Baby	Intro 4 bars to acc. (tp) 32 bars. (M)
Walkin’ By The River	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
Theme	In ens. (M)

On the surface not so much TM here, but upon listening closely there are interesting details to be found, note particularly his comping of trumpet on “... Baby”.

JOE GUY & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. April 27, 1941

Personnel given on acetate: “Joe Guy & his orchestra (our comments: definitely including Thelonious Monk (p) and Kenny Clarke (dm)) with Kermit Scott & Al Sears (ts)”.

Two titles, written on acetate as stated below:

Dr. Christian	Solo 20 bars (NC). (FM)
Grabback and Drumboogy	Solo 32 bars. Acc.

(tp). Acc. (ts). (M)

The solo on “Dr. Christian” is amputated but interesting as far as it goes. The second title is really an unannounced “Epistrophy” to begin with, and TM has a simple and almost straight but effective solo here.

JOE GUY & HIS ORCHESTRA**NYC. May 3, 1941**

Personnel given on acetate: “Joe Guy’s orchestra with Sammy Davis & “Scotty” – Tenors at Minton’s”. “Scotty” is of course Kermit Scott. Probably including Thelonious Monk (p).

Two titles:

Stompin’ At The Savoy	Intro 8 bars. (FM)
Body And Soul	Solo 16 bars. (S)

Nice piano solo on “... Soul” but a bit untypical, less runs than usual.

Private collection of Jerry Newman acetates (Oslo, Norway):

JAM SESSION**NYC. 1941**

Personnel written on the Esoteric 10” acetate: Joe Guy (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b).

s. 1	Monkin’ The Blues	(NC) solo 20+32 bars to acc. (b) 32 bars to acc. (tp) 50 bars to fade out. (FM)
s. 2	Monkin’ The Blues	Solo 32 bars to acc. (b/tp). (FM)

Since this is a trio performance, there is ample space for everybody, thus we get a lot of excellent TM here, on a “... Blues” which absolutely is no blues but an unidentified standard.

Postscript of Jan. 2024: Further research has shown that this in fact is what is issued on Xanadu 112 som “Rhythm Riff”, also given as “I Got Rhythm (Rhythm Riff)”

JAM SESSION**NYC. 1941**

Personnel given on 10” acetate: “Monk – Piano – Guess Who – Trumpet” which definitely means: Hot Lips Page (tp), unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p).

Topsy	Solo 64 bars. (F)
Body And Soul	Solo 16 bars. (S)

“Topsy” starts out with a fine piano solo, possibly an introduction is missing, later to continue with three full trumpet choruses before the tenorsax is faded out. “Body ...” fades in with brief tenorsax, then half-a-chorus TM before some uncompleted muted trumpet.

Postscript of Jan. 2024: Further research has shown that “Topsy” in fact is “Sweet Georgia Brown”, issued on High Note HCD 7031 (Hot Lips Page – After Hours in Harlem (CD))

JAM SESSION /**MINTON’S HOUSE BAND plus guests****NYC. May 18, 1941**

Joe Guy, Hot Lips Page (tp), Sammy Davis (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Harold “Doc” West (dm).

Two titles, one has been available:

The Sheik (Of Araby)	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
Rose Room	

Typical solo on “The Sheik”, with good sound.

Additional, unavailable material:

JAM SESSION**NYC. possibly April 30, 1941**

Personnel unknown.

One more title, unissued:

Don’t Let The Doorknob Hitcha

JAM SESSION**NYC. possibly May 4, 1941**

Roy Eldridge, Joe Guy (tp), Sammy Davis, Al Sears (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm), unknown male (vo-“Rareback”).

This is probably the correct personnel for the “Indiana” on Xanadu LP 123. However, in Evensmo’s Roy Eldridge solography there is the following personnel for “Indiana”, as well as two more titles, the whereabouts of these now is unknown:

Honeysuckle Rose	(FM)
Rareback (Drum Boogie)	(M)

JAM SESSION

1941

Hot Lips Page (tp), possibly Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (dm).
One title, unissued.

I Surrender Dear

Private collection:

**MINTON’S HOUSE BAND /
JOE GUY & HIS ORCHESTRA**

NYC. prob. June/July 1941

Joe Guy (tp, vo-“Rear Back”), Al Sears (ts-Program 1&2), Thelonious Monk (p), Nick Fenton (b), Kenny Clarke (dm), Viola Jefferson (vo-“I Got ...”), Duke Groner (vo-“Everything ...”, “I ...”), unknown (mc).
Columbia University Radio Club (CURC) broadcasts:

Program 1	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
	Indiana	Intro 12 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
	I Found A New Baby	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
Program 2	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
	The Sheik Of Araby	No solo. (FM)
	Mean To Me	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (S)
	I Got Rhythm	A few bars before startup. (FM)
	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
Program 3	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
	Sweet Georgia Brown	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
	Everything Happens To Me	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
	Rear Back	Acc. (tp) and (vo). Solo 24 bars. (M)
Program 4	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)
	Meet Dr. Christian (Rhythm-A-Ning)	Solo 62 bars (NC). (FM)
	I Understand	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
	Topsy	Intro 12 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
	Epistrophy (Theme)	No solo. (M)

These programs were amateurish attempts to introduce the music of Minton’s to a wider public, however with no success. They also represent the end of TM at Minton’s, as well as the end of this first very creative pioneer period. There are several interesting soli here, nice supplements to the sessions above, note “... New Baby”, “... Brown” and “Topsy”. For some exceptional highlights, his cool and unusually slow solo on “Mean ...” is fascinating, as well as a swinging “Meet ...”, where the first bars of the solo are missing.

More than three years will pass before there is any recorded material documenting TM’s further development.

COLEMAN HAWKINS QUARTET

NYC. Oct. 19, 1944

Coleman Hawkins (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Edward “Bass” Robinson (b), Denzil Best (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Joe Davis:

On The Bean	Intro 4 bars. Solo 16 bars. (FM)
Recollections	Brief intro. (S)

Flyin' Hawk Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
 Drifting On A Reed Intro 4 bars. (S)

Rather strange to realize that if not an enthusiastic amateur had set up his recording equipment at Minton's more than three years earlier, this would have been our first encounter with TM! It is obvious that his style has changed, not much association with swing piano, and the process of minimizing his mode of expression has started. His two solo items are well constructed, and his intro on "... Reed" is remarkably simple, with a quick run to let Hawk start his solo. The interaction between the two is generally modest; TM is comping on all items but seems to be consciously constraining himself not to disturb the tenorsax master.

THELONIOUS MONK **NYC. Nov. 11, 1944**
 Thelonious Monk (p-solo).

Two titles were recorded by Timme Rosenkrantz in his apartment, recently issued on "Timme's Treasures", Storyville CD 1018439:

6:02 These Foolish Things Intro 4 bars to solo 3 choruses
 of 32 bars to long coda. (S)
 3:37 'Round Midnight Intro 4 bars to solo 64 bars to coda. (S)

These are really incredible jazz archeological discoveries!! Recorded at a time when there exist very few examples of TM's playing, here we get almost ten minutes of solo piano!! And not only that, but his own version of "... Midnight", studio recorded only once before (by Cootie Williams, almost three months earlier with Bud Powell at the piano). These items are not only historically important but in fact highly enjoyable, beautiful playing in slow tempo, equally fresh and far reaching today as then. Important as "... Midnight" is for many reasons, my (JE) personal favourite is "... Things", three delightful choruses!

JAM SESSION **NYC. autumn 1944**

Hot Lips Page (tp-except "Unidentified Tune"), Kirk Bradford (as), Don Byas, Lucky Thompson (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Al Hall (b), unknown (perc).

Four titles were recorded by Timme Rosenkrantz in his apartment (now on Mosaic) ("Unidentified Title" earlier falsely issued as "Let's Go"):

10:13 Lullaby In Rhythm Fill-in 12 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
 8:40 Crazy Rhythm Solo 64 bars. Acc. (b) 32 bars. (FM)
 5:47 Unidentified Title Intro 8 bars to 32 bars in ens.
 In ens 32 bars to coda. (FM)
 11:08 What Is This Thing Called Love? With ens/acc. (ts-LT). Acc. (tp).
 Acc. (ts-DB). Acc. (as). Solo 32
 bars, last 8 with ens to coda. (M)

Even without TM, these items would have been considered great treasures, as the two tenorsax giants Don and Lucky meet each other, the latter only twenty years old, having a great battle. TM seems to be in good shape, playing long soli confident and inspired. The impression that he tries to simplify his mode of expression, getting rid of unnecessary technical displays, is strengthened. Although TM does not solo on "... Title", except for the intro, he is very prominent in the ensembles, and this is definitely a very interesting item!

same
 Kirk Bradford (as), Lucky Thompson (ts-"I Got Rhythm"), Thelonious Monk (p), Al Hall (b).

Two titles were recorded by Timme Rosenkrantz in his apartment (now on Mosaic):

8:29 I Got Rhythm Soli 3 and 2 choruses of 32 bars.
 Acc. (b) 32 bars. (F)
 9:25 Sweet Georgia Brown Soli 3 and 2 choruses of 32 bars.
 Acc. (b) 64 bars. (F)

Postscript of Dec. 28, 2023: I am very happy that these two items were included in the Don Byas project, although he does not play on them, because they are some of the most exciting and important of the new discoveries. TM gets the chance to really go out on his own with extended soloing, historical!! Read Loren Schoenberg's liner notes!

JAM SESSION **unknown date (late 1944?)**

Don Byas, 2 unknown (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), unknown (b), (dm).

One title (James Accardi collection) (note: this has nothing to do with Mosaic!!):

Rosetta Intro 8 bars. Solo 64 bars. Acc.(b).
Soli 8 and 8 bars. (M)

Postscript of Jan. 2024: A real mystery session!! Around nine minutes of music with good sound, but what is it? We have the feeling that Timme Rosenkranz might have been involved in it, and Monk tempts us to put it right after his appearance with Don and Lucky, whatever that is worth. The piano playing is exciting and leaves no doubt about the artist! A real jazz archeological discovery!!

DIZZY GILLESPIE & HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. late June 18, 1946

Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Burns, Talib Dawud, John Lynch, Elmon Wright (tp), Leon Comegys, Gordon Thomas, Alton "Slim" Moore" (tb), Howard Johnson, John Brown (as), Ray Abrams, James Moody (ts), Sol Moore (bar), Milt Jackson (vib), Thelonious Monk (p), Ray Brown (b), Kenny Clarke (dm).

Recorded live at The Spotlite Club, 52nd Street:

Uptown UPCD 27.53:

Shaw 'Nuff / I Waited For You	No (p)
Our Delight	Soft acc. (FM)
Groovin' High	Soft acc. (FM)
The Man I Love	Solo with orch 8 bars. (S)
Ray's Idea	Soft acc. (FM)
Cool Breeze	Soft acc. (FM)
Oo Bop Sh'Bam	No (p)
'Round Midnight	Solo with orch. Solo 4 bars. (S)
Second Balcony Jump	Acc. (tp). Solo 8 bars. (M)
Day By Day	No (p)
Convulsions	(p) but not TM
Woody'n You	Duet with (b) 64 bars. (FM)
Lazy Mood	(p) but not TM
One Bass Hit	Soft acc. (M)
Things To Come	No (p)
I Waited For You	Soft acc. (S)

Uptown UPCD 27.54:

Shaw 'Nuff / I Waited For You	No (p)
Our Delight	Soft acc. (FM)
Second Balcony Jump	Soft acc. Solo 8 bars. (FM)
Things To Come	No (p)
The Man I Love	Solo with orch 8 bars. (S)
Grosvenor Square	Soft acc. Solo 8 bars. (F)
One Bass Hit	Soft acc. (M)
Things To Come	No (p)
I Waited For You	Intro. (S)

Note: Are there further titles from The Spotlite Club in addition to those on the Uptown CDs?

Why did Dizzy invite TM at all to play piano in his orchestra? From the only evidence, The Spotlite Club recordings, it seems that he does not interact with the orchestra, gets very few solo opportunities and hardly dares to involve with some careful comping now and then. Even on his own "... Midnight" he has some bars, although very nice. On "... You" he can be heard prominently behind the bass solo. Otherwise there are some interesting soli on the "... Balcony ..."s and "... Square", that's all.

THELONIOUS MONK SEXTET

NYC. Oct. 15, 1947

Idrees Sulieman (tp), Danny Quebec West (as), Billy Smith (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Gene Ramey (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note:

308-2	Humph	Solo 32 bars. (F)
309-1	Evonce	Solo 16 bars. (FM)
309-4	Evonce	As above. (FM)
310-1	Suburban Eyes	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars to acc. (b) 16 bars. (FM)
310-2	Suburban Eyes	As above. (FM)
311-0	Thelonious	Intro 4 bars. With ens 38 bars to solo 88 bars to ens. (FM).

This is TM's first recording session as a leader, 'of course' with the foresighted Blue Note recording company. Presenting a sextet and giving everybody ample solo space, his own piano might have been more strongly featured. Nevertheless, we can now hear the 'real' Thelonious, the way most people learned to know him in the years to come. He is now thirty years old, and all his searching through the years has manifested itself in a highly personal style, economical in notes, highly advanced in harmonies. All titles are his own but not the most well known, the first two never to appear later. It seems highly unnecessary to make detailed comments, since Michael Cuscuna has done such an excellent analysis in the liner notes of the Mosaic album. Let us just state that our favourite soli are on "Humph" and "... Eyes", that the alternate takes are quite different, and that it is very interesting to hear the stride piano on "Thelonious".

THELONIOUS MONK TRIO

NYC. Oct. 24, 1947

Thelonious Monk (p), Gene Ramey (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note:

312-0	Nice Work If You Can Get It	Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 34 bars to long coda. (FM)
312-1	Nice Work If You Can Get It	As above. (FM)
313-0	Ruby My Dear	Intro 2 bars to solo 48 bars to long coda. (S)
313-1	Ruby My Dear	As above. (S)
314-0	Well You Needn't	Intro 4 bars to solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (FM)
314-1	Well You Needn't	As above. (FM)
315-0	April In Paris	Intro to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (M)
315-1	April In Paris	As above. (M)
316-3	Introspection	Intro to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (M)
317-1	Off Minor	Straight 1 to solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to long coda. (M)

This is a very important session, inasmuch as it is the first one where TM plays with a trio, and thus can expand his improvisations to several choruses. "Nice Work ..." is a tune he played at Minton's six years earlier, and it is interesting to compare the development, also to realize how different two takes can be. The same can be said for "... Needn't", a much played and exciting tune later, not only by TM, note the alternate here! His way of treating the standard "April ..." is magnificent, the typical Monkish "Off Minor" is also very exciting, and the "Ruby ..."s are just so much beauty. Finally we have to quote MC's liner notes on "Introspection": "has a dream-like, floating melody. In fact, the composition is so complete that the improvised second chorus is little more than a sensitive embellishment on the theme. The delicacy of *Introspection* made it the only difficult piece on the session" (!). Whatever, this session belongs to piano jazz history!!

THELONIOUS MONK QUINTET

NYC. Nov. 11, 1947

George Taitt (tp), Sahib Shihab (as), Thelonious Monk (p), Bob Paige (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Blue Note:

318-3	In Walked Bud	Intro. Solo 32 bars. (M)
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319-0	Monk's Mood	Intro. With ens 32 bars to solo 8 bars to ens 8 bars. (S)
320-0	Who Knows?	Intro 4 bars. Solo 32 bars. (F)
320-7	Who Knows?	As above. (F)
321-1	'Round Midnight	Intro with ens 8 bars. Solo with ens 40 bars to long coda. (S)

Quoting Mosaic on this one: "Blue Note's belief and commitment to the relatively unknown Thelonious Monk is underlined by the fact that with ten unissued masters a mere month old in the can, the company brought him in for a third session. This was a unique date in its extremes. On one hand are two of his most celebrated ballads and, on the other, are two of his most neglected and most incandescent cookers". One can just marvel at these early versions of "... Mood" and "... Midnight", tunes that conquered the world and now are familiar to any serious study of jazz music. An excellent solo on "... Bud", and very colourful uptempo on "Who ...", oh how we wish the six unissued takes inbetween the two issued still exist!

THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET **NYC. Feb. 16, 1948**
Idrees Sulieman (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Curly Russell (b), Art Blakey (dm).
WNYC broadcast from "The Festival of American Music", three titles:

5:11	Just You, Just Me	Intro 8 bars to solo 32 bars. Solo with (b) 64 bars. (M)
6:17	All The Things You Are	Intro 4 bars. Solo 2 ½ choruses of 32 bars. (FM)
3:31	Suburban Eyes (NC)	Intro 4 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)

This is an exciting program and the sound is also very good. TM's contributions are excellent on all three items, long and inspired soli! Our favourite must be "All The Things ...". In addition there is inspired bebop trumpet playing with TM comping prominently.

THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET **NYC. July 2, 1948**
Milt Jackson (vib), Thelonious Monk (p), John Simmons (b), Shadow Wilson (dm), Kenny Hagood (vo-326,327).
Six titles were recorded for Blue Note:

326-3	All The Things You Are	Acc. (vo). Acc. (vib). Solo 8 bars. Acc. (vo). (SM)
327-1	I Should Care	Brief intro to acc. (vo). Solo 8 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
327-2	I Should Care	As above. (S)
328-0	Evidence	Intro. Acc. (vib). Solo 32 bars. Duet with (vib) 32 bars to coda. (M)
329-0	Misterioso	Straight intro and ens to acc. (vib). Solo 24 bars to duet with with (vib) 12 bars. (S)
329-1	Misterioso	As above, except solo 12 bars. (S)
330-0	Epistrophe	Straight intro and ens to acc. (vib). Solo 16 bars to duet with (vib) 32 bars. (M)
331-1	I Mean You	Intro 4 bars to ens 32 bars. Acc. (vib). Solo 16 bars to duet with (vib) xx bars. (M)

This session sounds quite different from all the other Blue Notes, because the presence of Milt Jackson's vibraphone lays the foundation for a different kind of music. The cooperation between the two, as different they may be in their styles, is perfect in every respect. Every title is a just a great pleasure, take "Evidence" as an excellent example, or perhaps the session highlight should be the hypnotic blues "Misterioso". And TM's soloing is perfect, note the brief and slow soli on "All The Things ..." and "... Care", magnificent! Very nice to hear also the famous "Epistrophe" with this group, as well as "... Mean ...". This session also belongs to the most exciting of TM's early ones, jazz history!

CHARLIE PARKER QUINTET **NYC. July 11, 1948**
Miles Davis (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Thelonious Monk (p), Tommy Potter (b), Max Roach (dm). Note: Most of this date has Duke Jordan (p).
Live recordings from the Onyx Club, only one title has TM:

2:19	Well You Needn't (NC)	Acc. (as) to solo 6 bars (NC).
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Acc. (as). (M)

Rather disappointing this item, bad sound quality, and it seems that, as many times elsewhere, the recording only involves Bird, the rest is omitted.

**FRANKIE PASSIONS VOCAL ACC. BY
THELONIOUS MONK QUINTET**

NYC. prob. late 1948

Idrees Sulieman (tp), Charlie Rouse (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Curley Russell (b), Art Blakey (dm), Frankie "Passions" Paccione (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Washington:

Epecially To You	Intro 2 bars. Acc. (vo). (S)
Nobody Knows, Nobody Cares	Intro 8 bars. Acc. (vo). Acc. (ts). Solo 8 bars. (M)

A rather strange recording session on a 'mystery' label. However, it is not without merits, particularly "... Cares" has in general good bebop with a fine piano solo.

CHARLIE PARKER & HIS ORCHESTRA

NYC. June 6, 1950

Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Thelonious Monk (p), Curly Russell (b), Buddy Rich (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Mercury/Clef. This session has a lot of alternate takes and breakdowns, and for practical purposes we list only where you can hear TM:

410-1	Bloomdido (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (FM)
410-2	Bloomdido (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (FM)
410-3	Bloomdido (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (FM)
410-4	Bloomdido	Intro 4 bars. Solo 24 bars. (FM)
410-5	Bloomdido (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (FM)
411-1	An Oscar For Treadwell	Intro 8 bars. (FM)
411-2	An Oscar For Treadwell	Intro 8 bars. (FM)
411-3	An Oscar For Treadwell	Intro 8 bars. (FM)
411-4	An Oscar For Treadwell	Intro 8 bars. (FM)
412-1	Mohawk (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (M)
412-2	Mohawk (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (M)
412-3	Mohawk	Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. Acc. (b). (M)
412-4	Mohawk (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (M)
412-5	Mohawk (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (M)
412-6	Mohawk (BD)	Intro 4 bars. (M)
412-7	Mohawk	Intro 4 bars. Solo 12 bars. Acc. (b). (M)
413-1	My Melancholy Baby	Intro 8 bars. Solo 16 bars. (M)
413-2	My Melancholy Baby	As above. (M)
414-**	Leap Frog	No solo. (F)
415-4	Relaxin' With Lee	Solo 32 bars. (M)
415-6	Relaxin' With Lee	As above. (M)

Note: ** The three complete takes and seven breakdowns of "Leap Frog" all have TM comping behind Bird who starts the proceedings. Also comping on other titles with alternates and breakdowns, details seem unnecessary.

This session has a long story of different evaluations, but in our opinion, it is very successful, except for the choice of drummer. And ... the fact that TM never was a bopper like Diz and Bird. There is a feeling of distance between them; when TM solos, they are far away, musically as well as mentally. He is allowed to comp them, but he seems to restrain himself to not get in the way, and they don't seem to note in their playing that he is there. Remember also that while the two horns are by now famous and spiritual leaders of the modern jazz community, TM is still 'only' an experimental and generally unrecognized artist, except by a minority (like Blue Note), waiting for his breakthrough to come later in the decade. When all this is said, the three of them play their parts par excellence, and the session in general has fine music all through. TM's highlights are perhaps the "... Baby"s, but he is

very good wherever he has the chance, lots of breakdown before the time for piano solo, and therefore, if you have time to spare, compare his different versions of the introductions (intri ...)!

THELONIOUS MONK QUINTET

NYC. July 23, 1951

Sahib Shihab (as-except 396,397), Milt Jackson (vib-except 396), Thelonious Monk (p), Al McKibbon (b), Art Blakey (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note:

392-1	Four In One	Intro 8 bars. In ens. Solo 32 bars. Acc. (as). In ens. (M)
392-2	Four In One	As above. (M)
393-0	Criss Cross	Intro 4 bars. In ens. Acc. (vib). Solo 16 bars. In ens. (M)
393-1	Criss Cross	As above. (M)
394-0	Eronel	Intro 8 bars. In ens. Solo 32 bars. Acc. (as). Acc. (vib). In ens. (M)
395-1	Straight No Chaser	Straight 12 bars. Solo 24 bars. Acc. (as). Acc. (vib). (M)
396-0	Ask Me Now	Solo feature 3:17. (S)
396-1	Ask Me Now	Solo feature 4:26. (S)
397-2	Willow, Weep For Me	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vib). (S)

Three years have passed since the previous Blue Note session, but nothing has changed TM's music, only new and exciting compositions; both "Four ...", "... Chaser", and "Criss ..." are so typical of TM's highly personal world. Of the latter, we again quote Gunther Schuller/Mosaic: "Criss Cross stands out as perhaps *the* Monk masterpiece of this period. It contains all the by now familiar melodic-harmonic characteristics, his innovations in shifting rhythms and accents, but it is above all important because it is a *purely instrumental conception* ... it is not a tune – it is a composition for instruments". Should we add anything to this, it must be that "Willow ..." is Milt Jackson's vehicle, and that the two takes of his own ballad "Ask ..." have some of the best TM in slow tempo from this period!

THELONIOUS MONK SEXTET

NYC. May 30, 1952

Kenny Dorham (tp), Lou Donaldson (as), Lucky Thompson (ts), Thelonious Monk (p), Nelson Boyd (b), Max Roach (dm).

Six titles were recorded for Blue Note:

434-1	Skippy	Intro 24 bars. Acc. (ts/tp). Solo 32 bars. (FM)
434-2	Skippy	As above. (FM)
435-1	Homin' In	Intro 4 bars. Acc. (tp/ts/as). Solo 16 bars. In ens. (M)
435-2	Homin' In	As above. (M)
436-0	Sixteen	Intro with (b/dm). Acc. (as/tp/ts). Solo 16 bars. (M)
436-1	Sixteen	As above. (M)
437-0	Carolina Moon	Intro. Acc. (as/tp/ts). Solo 12 bars. (FM)
438-0	Let's Cool One	Acc. (tp/as/ts). Solo 16 bars. (M)
439-0	I'll Follow You	Solo feature. 3:50. (SM)

TM's sixth and final date as a leader for Blue Note. It strikes me (Jan) that the presence of horns in the quintet and sextet sessions confuses the stories TM is trying to tell us, doing their own things. I had problems with this session the first time I heard it, and I still have, would much have preferred trio sessions... The four tunes of his are however daring and original, and he transforms the waltzing "Carolina ..." to something quite different from what the original composers could have imagined in their wildest dreams. The solo feature "... You" is commented like this: "This is another example of Monk's penchant for digging out and reshaping forgotten pop tunes of the twenties and early thirties (1932)". Right, to get a more enlightened and professional evaluation of this (and other) session(s), read the exciting liner notes on Mosaic. Anyway, we can all agree that there is excellent piano playing all over, and that Thelonious Monk upon leaving Blue Note has achieved the legendary status that remains with him to this very day.

This Thelonious Monk solography stops for the moment here!

...ooo...

APPENDIX

HOT LIPS PAGE

NYC. Dec. 29, 1940

Personnel including Hot Lips Page (tp, vo), unknown (cl), Hilton Jefferson (as), Charlie Barnet, Lester Young (ts), unknown (rhythm).

Broadcast WNEW "Bundles For Britain", two titles, "Lady Be Good" and "Wham", who is the piano player??:

Lady Be Good

Solo 64 bars. (FM)

Wham

Obbligato parts (vo-HLP). (FM)

The above is taken from the Hot Lips Page solography. Matthew Sasaki of Vancouver has studied this session, and his suggestion is that we may have here the first example of Thelonious Monk's piano playing! He recommends first pitch correcting the recordings, then comparing the "Lady Be Good" piano soli with Monk's soli on "Who Knows (master take)" from 1947 as well as "Hackensack" (based on "Lady Be Good" chord changes) from July 17, 1955 at Newport (with Miles Davis). Personally I (JE) dare not have any firm opinion in this matter, and there are people who have heard the session with little enthusiasm for the idea, but if Sasaki is correct, we have a sensational treasure here. So listen and volunteer your opinions!

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