

The years that followed included several overseas tours, but by the early 1970s, Monk was ready to retire from the limelight; save for his 1971 recordings at Black Lion Records and the occasional appearance at the Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall, Monk spent his final years living quietly in seclusion. After battling serious illness for several years, he passed away from a stroke in 1982. He has since been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, added to the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry, and featured on a United States postage stamp.

As a pioneering performer who managed to slip almost invisibly through the jazz community during the first half of his career, Monk is exactly the type of figure who invites rumor and exaggeration. The image the public has been left with is that of a demanding, eccentric recluse with an inborn gift for piano. The real person was more complex. "People don't think of Thelonious as Mr. Mom," his son points out, recalling his father changing diapers, "but I clearly saw him do the Mr. Mom thing, big-time."

Whatever Thelonious was to the media, it's clear what his legacy will be to jazz music: that of a true originator. Monk probably said it best when he insisted that a "genius is one who is most like himself."



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

THELONIOUS MONK

It's Monk's Time

Thelonious Monk was born on October 10, 1917 in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. When he was just four, his parents, Barbara and Thelonious, Sr., moved to New York City, where he would spend the next five decades of his life.

Monk began studying classical piano when he was eleven but had already shown some aptitude for the instrument. "I learned how to read before I took lessons," he later recalled. "You know, watching my sister practice her lessons over her shoulder." By the time Monk was thirteen, he had won the weekly amateur competition at the Apollo Theater so many times that the management banned him from re-entering the contest.

At age seventeen, Monk dropped out of the esteemed Stuyvesant High School to pursue his music career. He toured with the so-called "Texas Warhorse," an evangelist and faith healer, before assembling a quartet of his own. Although it was typical to play for a big band at this time, Monk preferred a more intimate work dynamic that would allow him to experiment with his sound.

In 1941, Monk began working at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, where he joined the house band and helped develop the school of jazz known as bebop. Alongside Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, he explored the fast, jarring, and often improvised styles that would later become synonymous with modern jazz.

Thelonious Monk's first known recording was made in 1944, when he worked as a member of Coleman Hawkins's quartet. Monk didn't record under his own name, however, until 1947, when he played as the leader of a sextet session for Blue Note.

Monk made a total of five Blue Note recordings between 1947 and 1952, including "Criss Cross" and "Evidence." These are generally regarded as the first works characteristic of Monk's unique jazz style,

which embraced percussive playing, unusual repetitions and dissonant sounds. As Monk saw it, "The piano ain't got no wrong notes!" Though widespread recognition was still years away, Monk had already earned the regard of his peers as well as several important critics.

In 1947, Monk married Nellie Smith, his longtime sweetheart. They later had two children, whom they named after Monk's parents, Thelonious and Barbara. In 1952, Monk signed a contract with Prestige Records, which yielded pieces like "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" and "Bags' Groove." The latter, which he recorded with Miles Davis in 1954, is sometimes said to be his finest piano solo ever.

Because Monk's work continued to be largely overlooked by jazz fans at large, Prestige sold his contract to Riverside Records in 1955. There, he attempted to make his first two recordings more widely accessible, but this effort was poorly received by critics.

Not content to pander ineffectively to a nonexistent audience, Monk turned a page with his 1956 album, *Brilliant Corners*, which is usually considered to be his first true masterpiece. The album's title track made a splash with its innovative, technically demanding, and extremely complex sound, which had to be edited together from many separate takes. With the release of two more Riverside masterworks, *Thelonious Himself* and *Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane*, Monk finally received the acclaim he deserved.

In 1957, the Thelonious Monk Quartet, which included John Coltrane, began performing regularly at the Five Spot in New York. Enjoying huge success, they went on to tour the United States and even make some appearances in Europe. By 1962, Monk was so popular that he was given a contract with Columbia Records, a decidedly more mainstream label than Riverside. In 1964, Monk became one of four jazz musicians ever to grace the cover of *Time Magazine*.

Continued

THELONIOUS MONK

It's Monk's Time

1. Lulu's Back In Town 9:55
2. Memories Of You 6:06
3. Stuffy Turkey 8:16
4. Brake's Sake 12:29
5. Nice Work If You Can Get It 4:15
6. Shuffle Boil 7:09

Transferred from a Columbia 4-track tape • Producer – Teo Macero • Recorded 1964 by Columbia Records

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks. Because your CD or DVD-A was individually "burned" in order to realize superior sound quality to stamped, mass-produced versions, microscopic cosmetic blemishes may be visible. Please regard these tiny marks as evidence of the "human touch" in the care and individual attention that each and every HD TT disc receives during its very demanding manufacturing process.



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