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Any codas (+) that appear will be played only once on the recording at the end of the last recorded chorus.

#### PLAY-A-LONG CD INFORMATION:

STEREO SEPARATION: RIGHT CHANNEL = Piano, Drums; LEFT CHANNEL = Bass, Drums
Tuning Notes: Concert Bb & A (A=440)

#### PERSONNEL ON PLAY-A-LONG RECORDING:

MARK LEVINE - Piano; TODD COOLMAN - Bass; ED SOPH - Drums

Track 11 ONLY: JAMEY AEBERSOLD - Piano;

TYRONE WHEELER - Bass; JONATHAN HIGGINS - Drums

Graphics & Engraving by PETE GEARHART



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# Introduction

Jazz has certainly had its share of rugged individualists, but none more rugged than Thelonious Monk. His formal training was minimal and he made no artistic compromises in spite of scant recognition by the public (and by most musicians) in the fifteen or so years following his first collaborations with Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie and others in the movement to be known as bebop. Then a record contract with Riverside (then a fledgling company) and a six month gig in 1957 at the Five Spot in New York with a group that included tenor saxophonist John Coltrane established him with a gradually increasing audience. His salad days were the early and middle sixties, when he recorded extensively for Columbia, toured the world with his quartet, and in 1964 became only the fourth jazzman to make the cover of Time magazine (his predecessors were Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Dave Brubeck; as of this writing, only Wynton Marsalis has made Time's cover since Monk). If ever a jazzman became a superstar strictly on his own terms, it was Thelonious Monk.

He was not a prolific composer - about seventy compositions - and many are so unusual rhythmically and harmonically that most jazzmen have passed them up in favor of more traditional tunes. Included in this album are many of the tunes upon which Monk's fame rests. Many of these were probably composed during the early forties but not recorded until the dates shown in the discography. When the recordings were first released, they were either ignored or ridiculed, as the following quotes from 1948 reviews in Down Beat magazine reveal:

"Well, You Needn't doesn't require a Juilliard diploma to understand, but 'Round Midnight is for the super hip alone." On Epistrophy and In Walked Bud: "We have less and less patience with the far-fetched type of composition and inventiveness displayed by...Monk..." "Ruby, My Dear is a trio side - all piano and all abstract."

Monk was obviously ahead of his time. The discography now shows over a hundred in-print recordings of 'Round Midnight with hundreds more out of print, placing it in a category with Stardust, Body and Soul and a few other standards, and the others that were panned upon first hearing are well represented on record, albeit often in bowderdized versions.

Once when Monk was asked why he didn't compose more, he replied that there wasn't any point in doing so until musicians were able to properly play the tunes he'd already written. Many musicians emulated the Miles Davis recording of Well, You Needn't with a bridge that started with a G chord instead of Monk's D Flat, for example, and almost every musician has a different idea of 'Round Midnight's changes. Monk still confounds us, yet many dedicated jazz musicians go through a period of Monk study. Saxophonist Steve Lacy had a group that played an all-Monk repertoire for several years; even Monk himself played a few standards! Chick Corea, Tommy Flanagan, the Kronos String Quartet, Carmen McRae and Randy Weston are among those who have recorded whole albums of Monk's compositions.

Hopefully this album will help you to get inside Monk's music, but you should listen to Monk's own recordings as well. Many nuances of Monk's style, especially rhythmic ones, defy written notation. Hearing other artists' versions of these tunes can be useful too, but I strongly recommend that you go to the source. Consult the extensive discography of Monk recordings in this book.

Phil Bailey 3/24/93



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