

Thelonious Monk Timeline

1917. Thelonious Monk was born on October 10, 1917 in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. His badly written birth certificate misspelled his first name as "Thelious" or "Thelius". It also did not list his middle name, taken from his maternal grandfather, Sphere Batts.

1921. When he was just four, his parents, Barbara and Thelonious, Sr., moved to 243 West 63rd Street, in Manhattan, New York City, where he would spend the next five decades of his life.

1928. 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."

1930. 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.

1934. 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.

1941. At age twenty four, 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. Much of Monk's style was developed during his time at Minton's, when he participated in after-hours "cutting competitions" which featured many leading jazz soloists of the time. Monk is believed to be the pianist featured on several of the recordings Jerry Newman made around 1941 at the club. Monk's style at this time was later described as "hard-swinging," with the addition of runs in the style of [Art Tatum](#). Monk's stated influences included Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and other early stride pianists.

Midnight at Minton's is a 1941 album by jazz musician Don Byas. It is a live recording of a jam session at Minton's Playhouse, the famous New York nightclub at which the emerging style of bebop was being pioneered.

It features one of the earliest known recordings of Thelonious Monk, who was then playing piano in Minton's house band. The album is taken from private recordings made by Columbia University student Jerry Newman on a portable acetate disc recorder. Newman made the recordings for "Delayed on Disc" broadcasts on college radio station WKCR — the discs were rushed back to the radio studio shortly after being cut and presented in the style of a live broadcast from the venue.

Don Byas - Midnight At Minton's (1941)

Don Byas (ts), Joe Guy (tr), Thelonious Monk (p), Kenny Clarke (d), Helen Humes (v)

"Stardust"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUe1c6X2Nbo>

"So, the boppers worked out a music that was hard to steal. I'll say this for the 'leeches', though: they tried. I've seen them in Minton's busily writing on their shirt cuffs or scribbling on the tablecloth. And even our own guys, I'm afraid, did not give Monk the credit he had coming. Why, they even stole his idea of the beret and bop glasses." - Mary Lou Williams

1944. Monk made his first studio recordings with the Coleman Hawkins Quartet. Hawkins was one of the earliest established jazz musicians to promote Monk, and Monk later returned the favor by inviting Hawkins to join him on the 1957 session with John Coltrane.

Coleman Hawkins Quartet (New York City, October 19, 1944)

Coleman Hawkins (ts) Thelonious Monk (p) Edward "Bass" Robinson (b) Denzil Best (d)

"Recollections"

"Drifting on a Reed"

"Flyin Hawk"

"On the Bean"

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJUfF8OtEzRV-OyZwR83G6T4SO6Ka0vMb>

Thelonious Monk Timeline

1947. Monk married Nellie Smith, his longtime sweetheart. They later had two children, whom they named after Monk's parents, Thelonious and Barbara (Boo Boo).

1947. Monk didn't record under his own name, however, until 1947, when he played as the leader of a sextet session for Blue Note (later anthologised on *Genius of Modern Music, Vol. 1*) which showcased his talents as a composer of original melodies for improvisation.

Blue Note Records (1948–1952)

- *Genius of Modern Music: Volume 1* (1947 Blue Note recordings)
- *Genius of Modern Music: Volume 2* (July 23, 1951 and May 30, 1952 Blue Note recording sessions)

1947-1952. 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. is the name given to at least four different compilation albums by jazz pianist, Thelonious Monk. Each version comprises some of Monk's recordings as a band leader for Blue Note, recorded between 1947 and 1952 (or, in the case of the CDs, just 1951-2). The original LP with this title was compiled in 1952.

Two different CD compilations have been given this title. Both redistribute the material from the two volumes in a very different order. The individual volumes of both CD compilations omit a July 2, 1948 session featuring "Evidence," "Misterioso," "Epistrophy," "I Mean You," "All The Things You Are," and "I Should Care", which were released on a Milt Jackson compilation instead. A "monochrome cover" 2-CD set called "The Complete Genius" follows the track order of the original monochrome CDs, but adds all 10 released Blue Note performances of these missing 6 titles between the contents of "Volume 1" and "Volume 2."

In August 1951, New York City police searched a parked car occupied by Monk and friend Bud Powell. The police found narcotics in the car, presumed to have belonged to Powell. Monk refused to testify against his friend, so the police confiscated his New York City Cabaret Card. Without the all-important cabaret card he was unable to play in any New York venue where liquor was served, and this severely restricted his ability to perform for several crucial years. Monk spent most of the early and mid-1950s composing, recording, and performing at theaters and out-of-town gigs.

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.

Prestige Records and Vogue (1952–1954)

- *Thelonious Monk Trio* (Prestige 7027), 1952–4
- *Monk* (Prestige 7053) recorded 1953-4
- *Thelonious Monk and Sonny Rollins* (Prestige 7075), recorded 1953-4
- *Solo 1954/Piano Solo* (Disques Vogue, 1954) - first solo piano album, recorded in Paris

1955. 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.

By the time of his signing to Riverside, Monk was highly regarded by his peers and by some critics, but his records remained poor sellers, and his music was still regarded as too "difficult" for more mainstream acceptance. Indeed, with Monk's consent, Riverside had managed to buy out his previous Prestige contract for a mere \$108.24. He willingly recorded two albums of jazz standards as a means of increasing his profile: *Thelonious Monk Plays the Music of Duke Ellington* (1955) and *The Unique Thelonious Monk* (1956).

On the LP *Brilliant Corners*, recorded in late 1956, Monk mainly performed his own music. The complex title track, which featured tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, was so difficult to play that the final version had to be edited together from multiple takes. The album, however, was largely regarded as the first success for Monk; according to Orrin Keepnews, "It was the first that made a real splash."

Riverside Records (1955–1961)

- *Thelonious Monk Plays the Music of Duke Ellington* (1955)
- *The Unique Thelonious Monk* (1956)
- *Brilliant Corners* (1956 recording with Sonny Rollins and Clark Terry)
- *Thelonious Himself* (1957)

Thelonious Monk Timeline

- *Monk's Music* (1957)
- *Mulligan Meets Monk* (1957, with Gerry Mulligan)
- *Thelonious in Action and Misterioso* (1958, live at the Five Spot with Johnny Griffin)
- *The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall* (1959, Charlie Rouse joined the band then)
- *5 by Monk by 5* (1959)
- *Thelonious Alone in San Francisco* (1959)
- *Thelonious Monk at the Blackhawk* (1960, with Charlie Rouse)
- *Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane* (1957 recordings, 1961 issue) – Inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2007.
- *Monk in France* (recorded in 1961)
- *Thelonious Monk in Italy* (recorded 1961, released 1963)
- *Thelonious Monk Quartet Live at the Five Spot: Discovery!* (with Coltrane recorded 1957, released in 1993 on Blue Note)
- *Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall* (1957, released 2005 on Blue Note.)
- *The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings* (2006 collection of the 1957 studio recordings with Coltrane)

1956. 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.

1957. After having his cabaret card restored, Monk relaunched his New York career with a landmark six-month residency at the Five Spot Cafe in New York beginning in June 1957, leading a quartet with John Coltrane on tenor saxophone, Wilbur Ware on bass, and Shadow Wilson on drums. However, little of this group's music was documented due to contractual problems. Coltrane was signed to Prestige at the time, but Monk refused to return to his former label. One studio session by the quartet was made for Riverside, three tunes which were not released until 1961 by the subsidiary label Jazzland along with outtakes from a larger group recording with Coltrane and saxophone pioneer Coleman Hawkins, those results appearing in 1957 as the album *Monk's Music*. An amateur tape from the Five Spot (not the original residency, but a later September 1958 reunion with Coltrane sitting in for Johnny Griffin) was issued on Blue Note in 1993; and a recording of the quartet performing at a Carnegie Hall concert on November 29, previously "rumoured to exist," was recorded in high fidelity by Voice of America engineers, rediscovered in the collection of the Library of Congress in 2005, and released by Blue Note

On **October 15, 1958** en route to a week-long engagement for the quartet at the Comedy Club in Baltimore, Maryland, Monk and de Koenigswarter were detained by police in Wilmington, Delaware. When Monk refused to answer the policemen's questions or cooperate with them, they beat him with a blackjack. Though the police were authorized to search the vehicle and found narcotics in suitcases held in the trunk of the Baroness's car, Judge Christie of the Delaware Superior Court ruled that the unlawful detention of the pair, and the beating of Monk, rendered the consent to the search void as given under duress.

Quartet 1, John Coltrane (ts), Wilbur Ware (b), Shadow Wilson (d) 1957
Quartet 2, Johnny Griffin (ts), Ahmed Abdul-Malik (b), Roy Haynes (d) 1958
Quartet 3, Charlie Rouse (ts), John Ore (b), Frankie Dunlop (d) 1962
Quartet 4, Charlie Rouse (ts), Larry Gales (b), Ben Riley (d) 1964

1962. Monk's relationship with Riverside had soured over disagreements concerning royalty payments and had concluded with a brace of European live albums; he had not recorded a studio album since *5 by Monk by 5* in June 1959. After extended negotiations, Monk signed in 1962 to Columbia Records, one of the big four American record labels of the day along with RCA Victor, Capitol, and Decca.

Columbia Records (1962–1968)

- *Monk's Dream* (1963)
- *Criss-Cross* (1963)
- *Monk in Tokyo* (1963)
- *Miles & Monk at Newport* (1963, with unrelated 1958 Miles Davis performance)
- *Big Band and Quartet in Concert* (1963)
- *It's Monk's Time* (1964)
- *Monk* (1964)
- *Solo Monk* (1964)

Thelonious Monk Timeline

- *Live at the It Club* (1964)
- *Live at the Jazz Workshop* (1964)
- *Straight, No Chaser* (1967)
- *Underground* (1968)
- *Monk's Blues* (1968)

1964. Monk became one of four jazz musicians ever to grace the cover of *Time Magazine*.

Far East Records (1970)

- *Monk in Tokyo* (1970, live, with Paul Jeffrey ts, Larry Ridley b, Lenny McBrowne d)

1971. 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.

Black Lion Records (1971)

- *Something in Blue, Nice Work in London, Blue Sphere* and *The Man I Love* (all 1971 recordings, collected in *The London Collection* 1988, three individual CDs)

1982. After battling serious illness for several years, he passed away from a stroke in 1982.

Recordings as a sideman

With Art Blakey

- *Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk* (Atlantic, 1958)
- *The Giants of Jazz* (Atlantic, 1971)

With Miles Davis

- *Bags' Groove* (Prestige, 1954)
- *Miles Davis and the Modern Jazz Giants* (Prestige, 1954)

With Coleman Hawkins

- *Bean and the Boys* (Prestige, 1944)

With Milt Jackson

- *Wizard of the Vibes* (Blue Note, 1948)

With Sonny Rollins

- *Moving Out* (Prestige, 1954)
- *Sonny Rollins, Vol. 2* (Blue Note, 1957)

With Gigi Gryce

- *Nica's Tempo* (Savoy, 1955)

With Clark Terry

- *In Orbit* (Riverside, 1958)

Monk's Compositions

Below is a list of all known original compositions by Thelonious Monk. A few have never been recorded and therefore may not be familiar to Monk fans. Copyright dates give us an approximate date as to when Monk might have composed these works, but it is impossible to know for sure. Furthermore, Monk's compositions are legendary for having alternate titles. All of Monk's music is copyrighted by Thelonious Music Corp., administered by Second Floor

Thelonious Monk Timeline

Music. Musicians and anyone interested in learning more about Monk's music should consult the excellent Thelonious Monk Fake Book, edited by Don Sickler (Hal Leonard 2002).

Ask Me Now First recorded July 23, 1951 (Blue Note 1591), this is regarded as one of Monk's most beautiful ballads, along with Monk's Mood, Ruby, My Dear, Crepuscule with Nellie, and Pannonica. (We might also include 'Round Midnight, except that he often played it at a medium tempo.) Jon Hendricks added lyrics and titled it How I Wish. At least three artists recorded the song with Hendricks's lyrics.

Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues-Are (aka Bolivar Blues) First recorded October 9, 1956 (Riverside LP12-226) The title refers to the Hotel Bolivar in Manhattan, then the home of the Baroness Nica de Koenigswarter.

Bemsha Swing Co-written Denzil Best, it was sometimes referred to as "Bimsha Swing" and even recorded under that title by trombonist J. J. Johnso. Monk first recorded "Bemsha Swing" on December 18, 1952 (Prestige LP7027). Bluehawk - This solo piano blues was only recorded once, on October 22, 1959, in San Francisco (Riverside RLP12-312)

Blue Monk Monk recorded "Blue Monk" more than any other composition besides "Round Midnight." His first recording dates back to September 22, 1954 (Prestige PRLP 189 LP7027). Abbey Lincoln added lyrics and recorded it under the title Monkery's the Blues. Monk himself was summoned to the studio to hear Lincoln's version and to get his blessings. He approved.

Blues Five Spot (aka Five Spot Blues) First recorded July 9, 1958 (Milestone M-9124, Riverside RIV-4005/5), the title refers to the Five Spot Café, where Monk was playing when he recorded this song for the first time. It was originally located at Five Cooper Square in the East Village, until it moved to Third Avenue and East 7th St. 1962. Giacomo Gates added lyrics and recorded it as Five Cooper Square. The title refers to the address of the original Five Spot Café.

Blue Sphere A medium tempo, classic twelve-bar blues for solo piano, "Blue Sphere" was recorded only once, on November 15, 1971, during a session in London (Black Lion BLP30119). If anything, it is a tribute to Jelly Roll Morton and all the great stride pianists of the old barrelhouse and "rent party" tradition. The London sessions, which also included Al McKibbon (bass) and Art Blakey (drums), would prove to be Monk's last studio recordings as a leader.

Boo Boo's Birthday Recorded only once, on December 21, 1967 (Columbia CS9632), Monk wrote this song for his daughter Barbara, whose nickname was "Boo Boo."

Brake's Sake First recorded on October 15, 1955 (Signal S1201), with a quartet led by alto saxophonist Gigi Gryce. Bright Mississippi -first recorded on May 10, 1961 (Ingo 8) at a concert in Berne, Switzerland. It is a completely original melody based loosely on the chord changes of "Sweet Georgia Brown."

Brilliant Corners First recorded on October 15, 1956 (Riverside RLP12-226), this composition proved notoriously difficult for Monk's band, which included Sonny Rollins (tenor), Ernie Henry (alto), Oscar Pettiford (bass), and Max Roach (drums). After twenty-five attempts, the final recorded version consisted of parts of various takes spliced together. It was recorded only one other time, on November 20, 1968, with Oliver Nelson's Orchestra (Columbia CS9806).

Bye-ya First recorded on October 15, 1952 (Prestige 795 LP7027), it is unique for its Caribbean-inflected rhythms.

Children's Song (aka That Old Man) Recorded once on October 7, 1964, it is Monkishly altered version of the traditional ditty, "This Old Man," also known as "The Children's Marching Song."

Chordially Recorded only once in London on November 15, 1971 (Black Lion CD760142), it is not a composition, per se, but a very musical and coherent improvised warm-up exercise on solo piano. It was not released on the original LP because it was not considered to be a song. But just about everything Monk plays possesses the quality of a complete composition.

Coming on the Hudson First recorded on February 25, 1958, at a session led by Johnny Griffin (Milestones M-9124, Riverside RIV-4005/4), Monk secured a copyright on December 22nd of that year (Jazz Standard Music Publishers). Monk lived a couple of blocks from the Hudson River for most of his life and enjoyed the sound of the various boats "coming on the Hudson."

Crepuscule with Nellie First recorded on June 25, 1957 (although the first released take was recorded the following day [Riverside RLP12-242]), this beautiful ballad is unusual in that it is his only composition played straight through

Thelonious Monk Timeline

without improvisation. "Crepuscule" was written in 1957 while Nellie was in the hospital to undergo surgery. Monk had come up with the title "Twilight with Nellie" but the Baroness, who was at the hospital at the time, promptly suggested the French word for twilight: "crépuscule." Soesja Citroen added lyrics and recorded it as In Twilight.

Criss Cross First recorded on July 23, 1951 (Blue Note 1590, 1509), critic and composer Gunther Schuller called it "the Monk masterpiece of this period." So enthused with "Criss Cross," Schuller used it as the basis for his tribute to Monk titled "Variants on a Theme of Thelonious Monk" (1960).

Epistrophy (Fly Right or Iambic Pentameter) One of Monk's earliest compositions, it was co-written with drummer Kenny Clarke and went by various names; Clarke called it Fly Right or Fly Rite, it was called Iambic Pentameter, and known, too, as simply "The Theme" since it was used by Minton's House band to open and close a set. It was first recorded by the Minton's House band on June 7, 1941, but the first version by Monk issued appeared on his first Blue Note recordings (July 2, 1948, Blue Note 548, 1510). Giacomo Gates added lyrics and recorded it under Kenny Clarke's title, Fly Rite.

Eronel an unusually "boppish" tune for Monk, was co-written with pianist Sadik Hakim (Argonne Thornton) and trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, and first recorded on July 23, 1951 (Blue Note 1590, 1509). "Eronel" was named after Lenore Eisner, whom Sadik Hakim was dating at the time. Initially, neither Hakim nor Sulieman were given co-composers credit, but since then their names have been restored as original co-authors.

Evidence First recorded on July 2, 1948 (Blue Note 549, 1509), it went by various names, notably "Justice" and "We Named it Justice." It puns off of the song on which it was loosely based, "Just You, Just Me" (by Jesse Greer and Raymond Klages), which transforms the title to "Just Us," which in turn became "Justice" and ultimately "Evidence."

Feeling That Way Now (see Monk's Mood)

52nd Street Theme Ironically, Monk never recorded "52nd Street Theme." Also known as "Nameless," and simply "The Theme," it was widely used as a vehicle for Dizzy Gillespie's various bands, among others.

Five Will Get You Ten (see Two Timer)

Four in One First recorded on July 23, 1951 (Blue Note 1589), "Four in One" was known to have a particularly treacherous melody built on sixteenth note phrases (hence the name—a quarter note [one 'beat'] divided into sixteenth notes [four 'beats']).

Friday the Thirteenth First recorded on Friday the 13th, 1953, it refers not only to the day but the turn of events—tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins was delayed because of a car accident and trumpeter Ray Copeland fell ill and French horn virtuoso Julius Watkins had to fill in at the last minute. The result was a remarkable session, including a swinging interpretation of this deceptively simple repeating bar theme.

Functional There are actually two different versions of the blues given the title "Functional," which was probably just a name made up on the spot. Both takes were recorded the same day, April 16, 1957, and never recorded again. According to one report, after hearing a playback of one of his takes of "Functional," he said: "Well, that sounds like James P. Johnson." Johnson, one of the great Harlem stride pianists, was one of Monk's musical heroes.

Gallop's Gallop First recorded on October 15, 1955, with Gigi Gryce as leader. This incredibly complicated melody was only recorded one other time, in November of 1964 when Monk's quartet played at the It Club in Los Angeles.

Green Chimneys Another one of Monk's later compositions, it was first recorded on November 14, 1966, although this particular take was not released until 1996. The take that was released initially was recorded a year later, on December 14, 1967 (Columbia CS9632). "Green Chimneys" is named after the school Barbara Monk attended at the time—a progressive private boarding school located in Putnam County, New York.

Hackensack First recorded on May 11, 1954 (Prestige PRLP 180), it was also the first day Monk recorded in Rudy Van Gelder's famous studio in Hackensack, New Jersey (hence the title). "Hackensack" bears some resemblance to a Coleman Hawkins composition he must have played when he was with Hawk's band, and an arrangement of "Lady Be Good" by Mary Lou Williams.

Harlem is Awful Messy Co-written with Oran "Hot Lips" Page and Joe Guy, this hilarious jump tune (with lyrics!) was never recorded. It was copyrighted by the trio on September 16, 1941.

Thelonious Monk Timeline

Hornin' In Recorded only one time (four takes), on May 30, 1952, during his last session for Blue Note as a leader. His sextet consisted of an all-star line up: Kenny Dorham (trumpet), Lou Donaldson (alto); Lucky Thompson (tenor), Nelson Boyd (bass), Max Roach (drums). It first appeared on Blue Note 1603.

Humph Another early classic, Humph was only recorded once (three takes) during Monk's first recording session as a leader (October 15, 1947). It first appeared on Blue Note 560.

I Mean You (aka Stickball) First recorded in December of 1946 by Coleman Hawkins, not Monk. The band included Fats Navarro on trumpet and J. J. Johnson on trombone, and in the piano stool was a very young Hank Jones fresh from Detroit. It would be another year and a half before Monk recorded "I Mean You" (July 2, 1948 [Blue Note 1564, 1510]. Jon Hendricks added lyrics and retitled it You Know Who. Several artists recorded the vocal version.

Introspection (aka Playhouse) Originally titled "Playhouse" as a tribute to Minton's, this song was first recorded for Blue Note on October 24, 1947, but was not released until 1956! Monk wrote it during his association with Dizzy Gillespie's big band and Walter Gil Fuller wrote an arrangement of "Playhouse," but there is no record of the band recording it, let alone playing it. It's unusual thirty-six bar structure and wandering chord progressions set it apart from the music identified as "bebop."

In Walked Bud First recorded on November 21, 1947 (Blue Note 548), it was written for Monk's very good friend, pianist Bud Powell. It is based on the chord changes for Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies." Jon Hendricks added lyrics and retitled it Suddenly. Several artists recorded the vocal version.

Jackie-ing First recorded on June 4, 1959 (Riverside RLP12-305), Monk named this song after his niece, Jackie Smith. This sixteen bar theme is written as a dynamic, processional march, but after the melody is stated it swings extremely hard. After 1960, "Jackie-ing" became a regular part of the Monk quartet's live repertoire.

Let's Call This First recorded on November 13, 1953, on that famous "Friday the Thirteenth" date (see above), and released on Prestige PRLP 166. Another one of Monk's remarkable compositions, he only recorded it one other time: live at the Blackhawk in San Francisco on April 29, 1960 (Riverside RLP12-323). His quartet expanded to a sextet with the addition of Joe Gordon and Harold Land, and Billy Higgins sat in on the drums. It is doubtful that anyone had much time to rehearse "Let's Call This," which had not been part of the band's repertoire. Nevertheless, they turn in excellent results.

Let's Cool One First recorded in on May 30, 1952 (Blue Note 1602, 1511), it was probably given that name because it is a relaxed, medium tempo tune without a lot of intervallic leaps. The songs recorded just prior to "Let's Cool One" were complex, up tempo tunes like "Skippy" (three takes) "Hornin' In" (two takes), and "Sixteen" (two takes), which apparently required a lot more work-even from a band made up of bebop's top musicians. "Let's Cool One" was done in one take. Soesja Citroen added lyrics and recorded it as Come With Me.

Light Blue The first recorded evidence of this tune comes from a radio broadcast from Pep's Music Lounge in Philadelphia, where Monk led a trio on February 9, 1957, consisting of Jimmy Bond and bass and Albert "Tootie" Heath on drums. Interestingly, the first official recording of "Light Blue" was also live, this time at the Five Spot Café on August 7, 1958. It is not a blues but rather a sixteen-bar theme played at a slow, plodding tempo built on descending chord progressions.

Little Rootie Tootie First recorded on October 15, 1952 (Prestige 850), was named for Monk's son, Thelonious, Jr., who was two years old at the time. He earned the nickname "Toot" after "Little Toot the Tugboat" from a favorite Walt Disney cartoon; young Thelonious learned to whistle-like "Little Toot"-before he learned to talk. The song has also been associated with the sound of the railroad, a common motif in blues and jazz since the early part of the century.

Locomotive First recorded on May 11, 1954 (Prestige PRLP 180), it is definitely in the tradition of "train" recordings going back to Count Basie, Ellington, and the train-whistle guitar blues of the early part of the century. Built on an odd 20-bar chorus and played as a medium-slow tempo, rhythmically and melodically it captures the motion of the old steam engines steadily chugging down the railroad line. Monk only made one other recording of "Locomotive" . . . twelve years later (Columbia CL2651)

A Merrier Christmas The only evidence of Monk playing this song is from a private recording made at the home of Baroness Nica de Koenigswarter around December of 1972. It is also the only recording of Monk singing.

Misterioso (sometimes spelled Misterioso) One of Monk's most famous blues compositions, it was first recorded on July 2, 1948 (Blue Note 1510). The melody is distinctive in that it's built on even eighth notes of ascending and

Thelonious Monk Timeline

descending parallel sixths. The most famous recording of “Misterioso” was made by Sonny Rollins and includes both Monk and pianist Horace Silver taking turns at the keyboard! Rollins’s solo has been hailed by critics as a masterpiece. Although “Misterioso” is not thought to be a very singable melody, it is so musical, so perfectly balanced that it has inspired several vocal versions and at least three different sets of lyrics: Claude Nougaro (retitled *Autour de Minuit*), Judy Niemack (retitled *Crazy Song to Sing*), Teri Roiger (retitled *Listen to your Soul*), Andre Minvielle (retitled *Ounba’s*), as well as a children’s book based whose poetic story is told to the melody and rhythm of *Misterioso*. The latter is by Chris Raschka and is titled *Mysterious Thelonious*.

Monk’s Dream First recorded on October 15, 1952 (Prestige 850), like *Bye-ya*, this is another strongly Caribbean “flavored” composition. Jon Hendricks added lyrics and called it “*Man, that was a Dream*,” as did Soesja Citroen, who gave it the title “*Sure it Can Be Done*.”

Monk’s Mood One of Monk’s early ballads, he gave it several different titles before settling on “*Monk’s Mood*,” (i.e., *That’s the Way I Feel Now*, *Feeling that Way Now*, *Why Do You Evade the Facts*, and *Be Merrier Sarah*). He had conceived of the song with lyrics. Monk first recorded “*Monk’s Mood*” on November 21, 1947 (Blue Note 1565) Lyrics were added by Soesja Citroen and recorded under the title, *Underneath This Cover*.

Monk’s Point Recorded only twice, once as a solo piano piece (November 2, 1964 [Columbia CL2349]) and again with Oliver Nelson’s Orchestra (November 19, 1968 [Columbia CS9806]), it is a fairly straight forward twelve-bar blues in Bb full of Monk’s signature “minor seconds” in the melody.

North of the Sunset Recorded only once on October 31, 1964, it is a twelve-bar blues whose melody is very close to *Monk’s Point*. It was also written in Bb.

Nutty First recorded on September 22, 1954, in a trio setting with Percy Heath (bass) and Art Blakey (drums), “*Nutty*” was among Monk’s more popular tunes. Perhaps the most famous recording of it is with John Coltrane, July 1957 (Jazzland JLP[9]46). A few writers have strangely tried to link the title to Monk’s alleged state of mind (!), but any such claims betrays an ignorance of the “hip” lingo of the day. In the 1940s and 50s (and even later), “*nutty*” commonly meant “*excellent*” or “*cool*”-like “*insane*,” “*mad*,” and “*crazy*.”

Off Minor (aka What Now) Was actually first recorded in January of 1947, but not by Monk. Bud Powell was the first to put “*Off Minor*” on wax when he was with Cootie Williams’s Orchestra. Monk first recorded it on October 24, 1947 (Blue Note). Also, Dizzy Gillespie’s big band had intended on using it in their book. It stands among Monk’s more frequently recorded tunes. It is so named probably because it is written in G minor but never resolves on the tonic.

Oska T First recorded on December 30, 1963, during Monk’s famous Town Hall concert (Columbia), there are many different stories in circulation explaining this title. The most common is that it is Monk’s impersonation of a bourgeois Englishman saying “*ask for tea*.”

Pannonica First released recording was made on October 9, 1956 (Riverside RLP12-226). The song was written for the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, whom Monk had met in Paris in June of 1954. This first recorded version of “*Pannonica*” is significant in that Monk plays both piano and celeste. Jon Hendricks added lyrics and retitled it “*Little Butterfly*.”

Played Twice First recorded on June 1, 1959 (Riverside RLP12-305), the title refers to the structure of the song itself. It is a rhythmically complex, sixteen-bar AABC theme based on a series of repeated phrases or “*echoes*” that fall in different places in the meter. And like many Monk tunes, it begins in one key (C) and ends on another (D).

Raise Four Only recorded once, on Valentine’s Day, 1968 (Columbia CS9632), Monk probably wrote this in the studio. Reminiscent of *North of the Sunset* and *Monk’s Point*, *Raise Four* is a basic twelve-bar blues but built on Monk’s signature harmonies-the augmented fourth, also known as the “*flatted fifth*” or the tritone. It is the interval that divides the diatonic scale in half and tends to be the most dissonant and unstable. If anything, this song is a paean to the augmented fourth-hence the title.

Reflections (Portrait of an Eremite) First recorded on December 18, 1952 (Prestige LP 7027), it was not issued until 1956. Although it is often thought of as a ballad, Monk originally played it at medium tempo. Even his solo version of “*Reflections*,” recorded on Paris in 1954 (*Vogue*), was delivered just slightly slower than his Prestige trio version. But when he recorded it with Sonny Rollins in 1957 (Blue Note 1558)-perhaps the best known version-he turned it into a lovely ballad. The dynamic interplay between Monk and Rollins on this recording has been commented upon and studied by critics for decades. According to discographer Chris Sheridan, the alternative title of *Portrait of an Eremite* was given by French producer André Francis because he wasn’t given the proper title. *Eremite*

Thelonious Monk Timeline

or ermite, in French, means hermit. Jon Hendricks added lyrics and retitled it Looking Back. It has since been recorded by several vocalists.

Rhythm-a-ning One of Monk's most recorded and performed songs, he doesn't actually put it on wax under this title until May 15, 1957, at a recording session led by drummer Art Blakey (Atlantic 1278). Monk certainly made the melody his own, but the truth is that the "A" section of Rhythm-a-ning can be heard as early as 1936, on Mary Lou Williams's arrangement of "Walking and Swinging" twenty-six bars into the second chorus. The same melodic line was claimed by guitarist Charlie Christian (with whom Monk played at Minton's Playhouse) as Pagin' Doctor Christian or Meet Dr. Christian, by Al Haig as "Opus Caprice," and by Sonny Stitt as "Symphony Hall Swing." Indeed, on one recording from Minton's in 1941, Monk is identified as the pianist on a version of the song listed as Meet Dr. Christian. But in the end, Monk would eventually seize ownership of the tune and make it distinctively his own. The title, of course, references the fact that it is based on the chord changes to Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," popularly known in the bebop world as "rhythm changes." Jon Hendricks added lyrics and retitled it Listen to Monk. And again, several vocalists recorded it.

Round Lights Recorded once on October 21, 1959, in San Francisco (Riverside RLP12-312), "Round Lights" is a slow, twelve-bar blues for solo piano.

'Round Midnight (aka 'Round About Midnight and Grand Finale) Certainly the most recorded Thelonious Monk song of all time, Monk was not the first to record it. Cootie Williams's Orchestra recorded it in 1944 and used it as their theme song. He also took co-composer credit for "Round Midnight" despite not having contributed anything to the score. Bernie Hanighen added lyrics and suddenly Monk was forced to share composer credit (and royalties) with two other people. In 1946, Dizzy Gillespie added his famous introduction and cadenza for his big band arrangement, which proved so popular that Monk added it (albeit an altered version) to his own performance of "Round Midnight." It is now a standard part of the song. Monk first recorded it as a leader on November 21, 1947 (Blue Note 543). Although Hanighen's lyrics have been sung by many vocalists over the years, Robert Craft added a new set of lyrics and recorded it as The Night That Monk Returned To Heaven.

Ruby, My Dear (aka Manhattan Moods) A beautiful ballad and one of Monk's best known compositions, it was written originally for his then girlfriend, Ruby Richardson. Monk was probably still a teenager when he composed "Ruby, My Dear." Both Sally Swisher and Mike Ferro have added lyrics and retitled the song Dear Ruby and It's Over Now, respectively.

San Francisco Holiday (aka Worry Later) First recorded on April 28, 1960, at the Blackhawk in San Francisco (Riverside RLP12-323), Monk had given it the title "Worry Later" initially as a response to Orrin Keepnews's question as to what to call it. Eventually, he settled on "San Francisco Holiday" to the fact that his West Coast gig proved to be a kind of family vacation.

Shuffle Boil First recorded with the Gigi Gryce quartet on October 15, 1955 (Signal S1201), the song was then resurrected in 1964 and, for about a year, became part of the band's repertoire. With its wide intervallic leaps, "Shuffle Boil" was particularly treacherous for tenor saxophonists since the highest notes are outside of the horn's range. Some sources suggest that Monk taught Charlie Rouse how to achieve these notes through false fingering.

Sixteen Recorded only once (two takes), at the Blue Note session of May 30, 1952, but it was not released until many years later, when Blue Note decided to issue Monk's complete recordings. The title seemed temporary; it referred to the sixteen bar AABA structure of the song, but that is what Monk wrote on the sheet music. A complex, angular melody based on chord changes similar to those of Sonny Rollins's "Doxy," it proved a formidable challenge for great musicians such as Kenny Dorham, Lou Donaldson, and Lucky Thompson.

Skippy Named after Nellie's sister, this song was recorded only once (three takes), on May 30, 1952 (Blue Note 1602, 1511). It is a rare example of an uptempo Monk composition. The A section is particularly difficult, which may explain why the horns only play the entire melody on the out chorus and not at the beginning. Whatever the case, it is interesting to note that Monk never returned to these more boppish tunes such as Skippy, Sixteen and Humph.

Something in Blue Recorded in London on November 15, 1971 (Black Lion BLP 30119), another classic, slow, solo blues played in Monk's unorthodox stride piano style.

Straight, No Chaser Recorded July 23, 1951 (Blue Note 1589, 1511), it is only the second blues Monk recorded-Misterioso being the first. Like Misterioso, Straight, No Chaser is not like other blues in that the melody breaks with the typical four-bar phrasing and extends beyond the bar line. It is also the only blues he recorded in F (all others, including a few versions of "Straight No Chaser," are in Bb). It has become a true standard in jazz repertoire. Sally Swisher added lyrics and recorded it under the title Get it Straight.

Thelonious Monk Timeline

Stuffy Turkey First recorded on January 30, 1964 (Columbia CL2184), this Monk original is frequently confused with Coleman Hawkins's and Sir Charles Thompson's Stuffy. Although both songs are based on "rhythm changes," the melodies are quite different. Bud Powell also acknowledges Monk's authorship of Stuffy Turkey in a home recording of it in Paris in February of 1964, just two weeks after Monk took it into the studio for Columbia records. These home recordings, a tribute to Monk's music, were made around the time of Monk's European tour.

Teo First recorded on March 9, 1964 (Columbia CL2291), Teo was written for Monk's producer at the time, Teo Macero. Based on Eddie Durham's "Topsy"-a favorite back in the days of Minton's Playhouse recast as Swing to Bop-it should not be confused with Miles Davis's Spanish-tinged Teo, which he wrote for Macero in 1961. Macero also produced Miles at Columbia records.

Thelonious First recorded on October 15, 1947 (Blue Note 542), it is a brilliant example of Monk's use of ostinato (a short phrase repeated throughout a composition). Based on the reiteration of a single note (Bb) played over descending chord progressions, the song has an unusual 36-bar AABA structure: the second and last "A" sections are 10 measures long rather than the more traditional eight measures. Thelonious is widely regarded as one of Monk's classic compositions.

Think of One First recorded on November 13, 1953 (the infamous "Friday the Thirteenth" session) and released on Prestige (PRLP 166), Think of One shares many features with Thelonious-notably, Monk's use of ostinato. It is based on one note repeated over a stoptime rhythm in the A section, which releases to a swinging bridge. Think of One has not been recorded many times, nor have many artists explored this part of Monk's repertoire. Fleurine Verlopp added lyrics and retitled it When I Think of One.

Trinkle Tinkle First recorded in a trio setting on December 18, 1952 (Prestige 838), the best known version of Trinkle Tinkle was made with John Coltrane in July of 1957 (Jazzland JLP[9]46). Like Work and Four in One, it has an extremely difficult melody for a horn player (or for any instrumentalist, for that matter), replete with sixteenth note runs and very angular phrasing. The Monk/Coltrane version is considered by many critics to be among the essential jazz recordings of all times. There are mixed stories behind the title; producer Ira Gitler believes he might have misunderstood Monk who may have said "Twinkle, Twinkle" instead of what he heard. On the other hand, all the great stride pianists with whom Monk identified called themselves "ticklers," so it might have been a playful corruption of that word. Either way, Monk continued to use Trinkle Tinkle long after the 1952 recording.

Two Timer (aka Five Will Get You Ten) Monk himself never recorded this composition, which he apparently wrote in the late 1950s. Pianist Sonny Clark, who turned to Monk a few times when his heroin addiction left him broke and virtually homeless, somehow got a hold of the music. Either Monk gave him the song (along with money) to help him get by, or Clark "found" it in Monk's house. Whatever happened, Clark ended up taking composer's credit and recorded it in a session led by alto saxophonist Jackie McLean in October 1961 as Five will Get You Ten. The first to record Two Timer under its original title was T. S. Monk, who had discovered the original manuscript among his father's papers. His version appears on Monk on Monk (N2KE - 10017)

Ugly Beauty The first known recording of Ugly Beauty took place on November 14, 1967, for a taped television broadcast. Exactly one month later, Monk's quartet made their only studio recording of this song (Columbia CS9632). Ugly Beauty is significant in that it is Monk's only composed waltz; he arranged a wonderful version of Benny Davis and Joe Burke's Carolina Moon in 6/4 time for Blue Note in 1952, but that was the only recorded evidence we have of Monk exploring waltz time. Mike Ferro added lyrics and recorded it as Still We Dream.

Well You Needn't First recorded for Blue Note (549) on October 24, 1947, it is one of Monk's most recorded and most popular tunes, and a very good example of Monk's penchant for chromatic harmonic motion.

We See (aka Manganese) First recorded on May 11, 1954 (Prestige PRLP 180), the bouncy, medium tempo We See has a "happy" melody-the A section is singable. It was mistitled Manganese when Monk recorded it in France in 1954. His produced, Andre Francis, came up with the title as a French-speaking pun on "Monk at Ease." And, of course, it refers to the mineral.

Who Knows Yet another Blue Note-era tune recorded once and disbanded, Who Knows required eight takes when it was recorded on October 21, 1947 session (Blue Note 1565, BNJ61011). Trumpeter George "Flip" Taitt and alto saxophonist Sahib Shihab had a difficult time negotiating the melody, especially at a fast tempo.

Work Only recorded once, in a trio setting on September 22, 1954 (Prestige PRLP 189), Work is a dissonant, difficult, wild melodic ride that artists have been willing to take. The title speaks for itself. Besides Monk's version of Work, for

Thelonious Monk Timeline

which he alone is responsible for stating the melody, one of the few musicians to take up the challenge was soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, who recorded it on his debut album (Prestige 7125) in November of 1957.

List compiled and annotated by Robin D. G. Kelley

Resources

<http://www.monkzone.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thelonious_Monk

<http://www.jazzdisco.org/thelonious-monk/discography/>