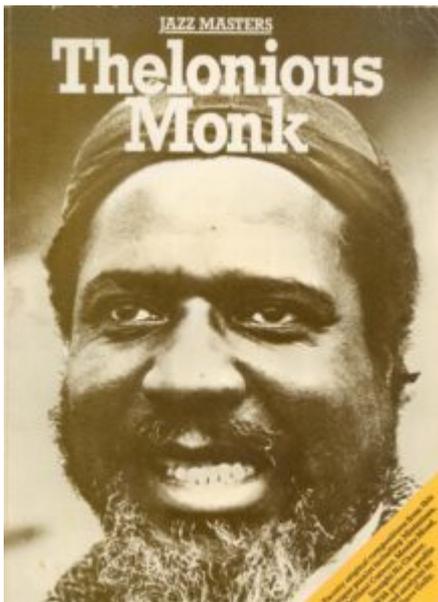


Thelonious Monk LIVE in 1966 Jazz Icons

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Tracklist

Norway 1966

1 Lulu's Back In Town

2 Blue Monk (deleted) Written-By – Thelonious Monk

3 'Round Midnight (deleted) Written-By – Cootie Williams,
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Denmark 1966

4 Lulu's Back In Town

5 Don't Blame Me (deleted)

6 Epistrophy Written-By – Kenny Clarke, Thelonious Monk

Jazz Icons:

Thelonious Monk features two intimate concerts filmed three days apart in Scandinavia in the Spring of 1966 with a legendary quartet that includes drummer Ben Riley, bassist Larry Gales and tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse. Thelonious Monk revolutionized jazz with his innovative musical approach and these remarkable performances allow viewers the rare opportunity to experience Monk's genius up close on his classic compositions

This video, which contains Thelonious Monk's two studio television performances taped in Oslo and Copenhagen in 1966, proves that seeing Monk is as important as hearing him. He's backed by his legendary quartet – tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Larry Gales, and drummer Ben Riley, who was forced to play with a spare borrowed drumkit. Save for the two renditions of the standard "Lulu's Back in Town" and another popular song, "Don't Blame Me," the rest of the six selections are pure Monk, including the spellbinding "Blue Monk," the algorithmic "Epistrophy," and of course, his eternal ballad "'Round Midnight," delivered here at a slightly faster tempo.

Thelonious's flat-fingered touch, trancelike dancing (which Riley playfully mimics), fancy footwork at the keyboard, and wild choice of hats steal the show. In the 20-page liner notes, trumpeter, arranger, and Monk scholar Don Sickler encourages you to, "[t]ake this fantastic opportunity to get a

better understanding of his distinct style, of the unique way he accompanies soloists, and the other idiosyncrasies that make Monk a musical treasure.” –Eugene Holley, Jr.

Thelonious Monk

Thelonious Monk’s music is instantly recognisable, sounding as if the modernist Schoenberg had inherited the jazz tradition of Fats Waller: angular music, jangling with discordant note clusters, set over jerking rhythms which nevertheless seem to “swing.” It is redolent of his beloved New York and expressive of a singular world view. But in the emerging literature that addresses his troubled life it is his state of mind which recurrently punctuates the rhythms of his musical career. In each of these works the authors eventually ask “What went wrong with Monk?”

Thelonious “Sphere” Monk was born in North Carolina in 1917. His family lived on the “coloured side” of town. They moved to New York when Thelonious was 6 years old, his mother becoming the sole breadwinner when his father returned to North Carolina. From then until the 1980s, Monk would live in the same small apartment; first with his mother and siblings, later joined by his wife and then by their own children. At 14, he was contributing to the family’s income by playing at “rent parties” (where neighbours subsidised their impoverished hosts). At 16, he became a professional musician, and one of his most recorded tunes, “Round Midnight,” was written when he was just 18.

He played in groups throughout his 20s, but his inclination towards idiosyncratic experimentation led to isolation. He was difficult “to play along with.” In terms of jazz history, his pivotal role was as a member of the “out of hours” group of musicians, who would play for themselves at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem in the 1940s. These experimental sessions, attended by other luminaries such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie

Parker, gave rise to a style called bebop, a frenetic form emphasising improvisation and individuality of sound. As others in the circle were hailed as innovators, he remained a background figure, admired by fellow musicians, his music an acquired taste.

Although he was unusual, those who knew him then thought him sane. He lived for music, forgetting to eat and going for days without sleep, wandering from one club to another asking to play the piano. He was generous to fellow musicians and would encourage younger colleagues, emphasising self discipline and the acquisition of an authentic voice.

Monk's nemesis was his relentless consumption of drugs. A variety of substances sustained the musical economy of those times. While no account exists of Monk using heroin (and certainly not intravenously), he was unfortunately fond of alcohol and taking "whatever was around." This created problems, not least on his perilous journeys outside New York, when he accepted hallucinogens from people he hardly knew.

At the age of 34, he lost his cabaret card (for holding heroin belonging to the pianist Bud Powell) and as a result was unable to perform in New York clubs for six years. This provoked further financial hardship. Of necessity, he toured and played abroad but was peculiarly unsafe when not accompanied by his devoted wife. Monk was always a loyal family man, but when venturing out from this structured environment he seemed to decompensate psychologically. On one trip to San Francisco he went missing for a week. Only subsequently did the family learn that he had spent that period, apparently mute, in a psychiatric institution.

Episodes of illness supervened as he approached his 40s. After bouts of depression, rationalised by friends as the understandable sequelae of life events, something went drastically awry. Monk was driving dangerously, apparently without insight, and one day suddenly turned to his wife and

asked her who she was. Afterwards, when his manager visited their home, Monk was laughing "without reason." Two days later, he was in a car crash and admitted to hospital. No formal diagnosis was arrived at on that or subsequent admissions, but a pattern was established whereby two or three days' excitement and restless walking would terminate in a similar period of withdrawal and mutism. On occasions, electroconvulsive therapy was considered but apparently never given.

At times, Monk received neuroleptics and lithium. His diagnosis would be confounded by persistent substance misuse (including cocaine in the 1970s), some of which he may not have known about (he attended a celebrity doctor, who, it later transpired, had been treating many socialites and artists with amphetamines under the guise of "vitamin" injections).

Despite belated recognition (including a cover portrait for *Time* magazine in 1964), Monk's performances dwindled both in quantity and quality. Sometimes his illness was publicly apparent, as when he repeatedly played the same tune in a performance or sat staring at the keyboard without playing at all. There is a late interview (quoted by Gourse) in which Monk is punning on both visual and verbal themes and lapsing into tangentiality.

The distinction between functional and organic psychiatric disturbance was further obscured by the onset of cerebrovascular accidents, one of which eventually killed him. He spent the last six years of his life in a withdrawn state in front of a television, mute for much of the time.

So what went wrong with Monk? In summary, none of these accounts provides sufficient information for a definitive diagnosis. This is unsurprising since Monk's diagnosis eluded those who treated him in life. He may have been unlucky in that a constitutional, functional affective disorder was

compounded by successive organic insults, chemical and vascular. He deteriorated from a warm, humorous, and supremely inventive human being to a withdrawn, tired recluse. In keeping with one of his earlier compositions, he became a very "Blue Monk" indeed.