

## Clark Meets Monk

Colleen Clark

D.M.A. Recital #2: April 25, 2017

Using Monk's music as the control to compare and contrast five master drummers was (and still is) an incredible endeavor (and I highly recommend it). Monk's rhythmic approach to his composing and improvising created a unique dialogue between piano and the drums, unlike any composer of his time (including the present). Every master drummer researched in this project has a different sound and approach to the instrument but all of these players' support and interaction is expressed in their own voice. Whether it is the Higgins style of what I hear as the "long game", slowly adding more to the mix (most especially the relationship between the ride cymbal the snare drum comping) creating tension and releasing at the very last turnaround, or if it is a Haynes approach, interacting almost constantly, but never losing momentum (or energy) or running out of ideas, the music is empowering helping the music rise.

While doing a vast amount of listening, many curious concepts kept presenting themselves, but two that I particularly enjoyed included: how each drummer played the heads of the tunes and how they played behind Monk's solos. All of them have (difference in sound, time feel is included) a different interaction concept on the heads and when supporting Monk, but they all interact, always answering the prominent questions Monk asks in his compositions.

My personal favorite accompanist for Monk is Frankie Dunlop. To me, Dunlop sounds most free when interacting with Monk on Monk's solos. These two men were deeply connected musically and I categorize Dunlop and Monk as "one". Dunlop sounds the most "consistent", meaning stylistically and melodically, over the course of the entire tune, whereas Higgins, for example, tends to interact more on the heads of the tunes, incorporating toms and bass drum along with the ride cymbal and snare drum. Blakey tends to set up hits in his Blakey style on the heads of tunes and accompanies similarly, clearing signaling form and transitions between soloists.

On the topic of Art Blakey, he is in his own category. As my listening deepened, all of these drummers use the Blakey vocabulary, but each and every player use it in their own way. When Ben Riley uses a cross stick and plays a set of quartet note triplets, it reminds me of Blakey, but it is Riley doing it in his way, sounding like Ben Riley. (Most things come back Blakey as this is reminiscent in a lot of the recordings.) Blakey recorded with Monk most, especially in the early years. One of the reasons I chose to use *Bye-Ya* was because it does not sound like typical Blakey, as he alters the pattern on the rims and cymbal, but it is raw and it swings in its own way, typical of Blakey. Ben Riley and his deliberate and passionate swing propelled Monk on many records as well. He continues to celebrate Monk's legacy and his time with Monk in his own bands in tribute to the great composer and previous boss. How Riley plays a turn around with open triplets, split between the hands (what I call the Riley split in my practice), differs from Blakey's press roll, the resounding toms from Higgins, unison hands from Haynes or unison feet from Dunlop. Every player have/had their own voice, making them true masters of themselves and Monk's music.

The tunes you will hear tonight and the master drummer to take note of while we are playing them includes:

"Thelonious": Billy Higgins

"Evidence": Roy Haynes

"Jackie-ing": Frankie Dunlop

"Ba-lue Bolivar Blues-are": Ben Riley

"Crepescule with Nellie": Frankie Dunlop

"Eronel": Frankie Dunlop

"Bye-Ya": Art Blakey

One last note: The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall recording had a huge impact on me as I found it to be one of the only larger ensemble recordings that did Monk's music justice. This is most likely the case because Monk had a huge part in the creation of the orchestrations in collaboration with Hall Overton. The drummer on the record is Art Taylor (another great, but not included in this research). The reasoning for mentioning this is when Overton was orchestrating Monk's music, Monk made the decision to have the orchestra play his solo from the *Thelonious Monk Trio* (Prestige) record on "Little Rootie Tootie". With this in

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mind, I decided to my make own version. The orchestrations you will hear tonight are inspired by the Hall Overton orchestrations from Town Hall record. Borrowing the idea from Monk, I transcribed his Bye-Ya solo and orchestrated it from the same *Thelonious Monk Trio* (Prestige). I would suggest going to both of those records and hearing where the famous “Little Rootie Tootie” soli came from.

Tonight, this research will become evident as I try to emulate (not copy) the sound, ride cymbal patterns, comping styles, soloing, vocabulary and overall feel of each drummer. I hope you enjoy the music of Thelonious Monk in what would be his 100<sup>th</sup> year of life.

**Selected Readings:**

- Fitterling, Thomas. *Thelonious Monk: His Life and Music*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills, 2000.  
Kelley, Robin D. G. *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*. New York, NY: Free Press, 2009.  
Gourse, Leslie. *Art Blakey: Jazz Messenger*. New York, NY: Schirmer, 2003.  
Solis, Gabriel. *Monk's Music: Thelonious Monk and Jazz History in the Making*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008.  
Bliek, Rob Van der. *The Thelonious Monk Reader*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

**Selected Monk Discography (as applicable to these five drummers):**

**Art Blakey**

- Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk*: Atlantic SD 1278; CD: Atlantic 781332-2  
*Genius of Modern Music*: Volume 1 (tracks 1-9): Blue Note BLP 5010  
*Genius of Modern Music*: Volume 2 (tracks 1-8): Blue Note BLP 1511  
*Monk* (tracks 3-6): Prestige LP-7053; CD: OJC 016  
*Monk's Music*: Riverside RLP 12-242; CD: OJC 084  
*Thelonious Monk Trio* (tracks 1-4, 10): Prestige LP-7027; CD: OJC 010  
*Thelonious Monk / Sonny Rollins* (tracks 2-3): Prestige LP-7075; CD: OJC 059

**Frankie Dunlop**

- Criss Cross*: Columbia CS 8838; CD: Columbia 469184  
*Monk's Dream*: Columbia CS 8765; CD: Columbia 40786  
*Monk in France*: Riverside 9491; CD: OJC 670  
*Monk in Italy*: Riverside; CD: OJC 488  
*Monk in Tokyo*: Columbia 38510; CD: 466552

**Roy Haynes**

- Discovery! Live at the Five Spot*: Blue Note CDP 799786  
*Misterioso*: Riverside RLP 12-279; CD: OJC 206  
*Thelonious in Action*: Thelonious Monk Quartet with Johnny Griffin, Recorded at the Five Spot Café, New York City: Riverside RLP 12-262; CD: OJC 103

**Billy Higgins**

- Thelonious Monk Quartet Plus Two at the Blackhawk*: Riverside RLP 12-323; CD: OJC 305

**Ben Riley**

- It's Monk's Time*: Columbia CS 8984; CD: Columbia 468405  
*Monk*: Columbia C2 9091; CD: Columbia 468407  
*Monk Underground*: Columbia C2 9632; CD: Columbia 460066  
*Straight, No Chaser*: Columbia C2 9451; CD: Columbia 468409  
*Thelonious Monk Live at the It Club*: Columbia C2 38030; CD: Columbia 469186-2  
*Thelonious Monk Live at the Jazz Workshop*: Columbia C2 38269; CD: Columbia 469183-2