



# Thelonious Monk Complete Recordings

*Michael Malott*

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Thelonious Monk (1917-1985) remains the second most recorded jazz composer to date behind Duke Ellington. Monk composed roughly seventy compositions within his career span including such notable standards as “Round Midnight”, “Straight No Chaser” and “Blue Monk”. Monk who was self-taught began playing piano at the age of six. From the beginning of his career Monk presented an unorthodox piano style. He also had a reputation for his idiosyncratic personal behavior habits and stylish choice of dress. In 1944 Monk made his first studio recordings with the Coleman Hawkins Quartet. Three years later in 1947, Monk made his very first recordings as a leader for Blue Note Records where he would stay for five years (1947-1952). Monk then signed with Prestige Records and recorded several important works including collaborations with Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey & Max Roach. In 1955, Riverside Records bought out Monk’s contract for \$108.24 and recorded his first two albums featuring standards to try and increase his public profile and appeal. In late 1956, Monk recorded Brilliant Corners, featuring all material written by Monk. This album is regarded as the first successful Monk recording. From 1962 to 1970, Monk recorded under the Columbia Records label. Joining producer Teo Macero, Monk assembled a session band that would stay with him for the next two years featuring saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop. “Monk’s Dream” the debut release on Columbia was released in 1963 and kicked off a long path of legendary jazz album masterpieces from Monk. Monk disappeared from the music scene in the mid 1970’s, and made very few appearances during the final decade of his life. His last studio recordings were made for the English label, Black Lion in 1971.

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