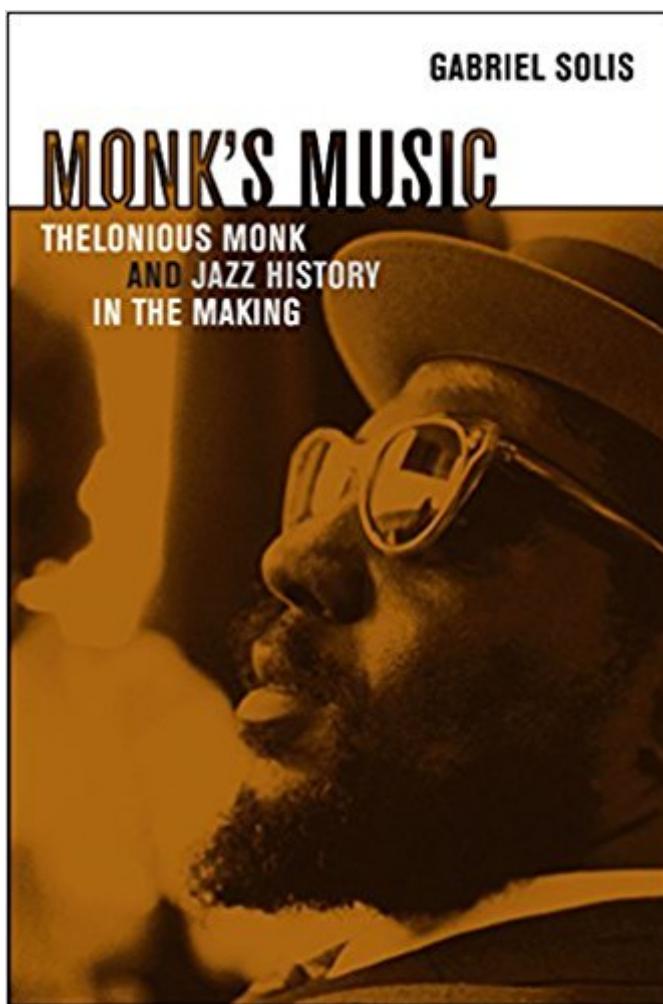


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# Monk's Music: Thelonious Monk And Jazz History In The Making



## Synopsis

Thelonious Monk (1917-1982) was one of jazz's greatest and most enigmatic figures. As a composer, pianist, and bandleader, Monk both extended the piano tradition known as Harlem stride and was at the center of modern jazz's creation during the 1940s, setting the stage for the experimentalism of the 1960s and '70s. This pathbreaking study combines cultural theory, biography, and musical analysis to shed new light on Monk's music and on the jazz canon itself. Gabriel Solis shows how the work of this stubbornly nonconformist composer emerged from the jazz world's fringes to find a central place in its canon. Solis reaches well beyond the usual life-and-times biography to address larger issues in jazz scholarship; ethnography and the role of memory in history's construction. He considers how Monk's stature has grown, from the narrowly focused wing of the avant-garde in the 1960s and '70s to the present, where he is claimed as an influence by musicians of all kinds. He looks at the ways musical lineages are created in the jazz world and, in the process, addresses the question of how musicians use performance itself to maintain, interpret, and debate the history of the musical tradition we call jazz.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Solis’ viewpoints are advanced by excellent writing and argued very competently. . . . Versatile and timely approach . . . innovative methodology.” (Arsc Journal 2009-05-01)

"Gabriel Solis's study of Thelonious Monk's legacy energizes an important development in jazz studies. Respectful of Monk and his musical heirs, Solis nevertheless offers insights on Monk myth-building by opposing jazz camps in which both moldy figs and avant-gardists claim him as their own. Moving beyond exploding these turf battles, Solis comes to deep realizations about jazz as a practice. This will become an often-cited work, even a transformative one." Steven F. Pond, author of *Head Hunters: The Making of Jazz's First Platinum Album* (winner of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music's Woody Guthrie Prize)

Monk's Music is a fine read that will repay your attention. It will appeal to you if you are interested in music, especially jazz, and the way it interacts with and is given context by the culture it exists in. Jazz fans, Monk fans, music fans, and anyone with an interest in music and culture will want to read this book. This is a book grounded in the academic tradition--yes, it uses big words and knotty concepts. It requires focus and attention to read. On the other hand, if you are willing to put in a bit of effort, the average music fan will find much of interest, and your effort will be repaid amply. Solis sets about examining some very interesting questions, like "how does someone become a Jazz icon?" "In an evolving musical genre, where slavish reproduction of a musical work is not valued and is indeed a source of disrespect, how does the ongoing evolution of a set of musical works take life and substance?" If you are expecting a biography of Monk, or a simple analysis of his music, you will be disappointed--although the book does provide an excellent synopsis of Mon's life to provide context, and also provides lucid analysis and commentary on the music. Solis gives life and context to his discussion by incorporating the results of extensive interviews with musicians who played with Monk, a primary resource that has depth. A unique and interesting book, I recommend it to anyone interested in jazz, music, and culture, and of course anyone interested in Monk and his music.

I bought this book thinking it would give me information on the music of Thelonious Monk, but was disappointed when I realized it was a book more interested in how other musicians look back at Monk as opposed to the music itself. Reads like a text book.

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