

= Misterioso ( Thelonious Monk album ) =

Misterioso is a 1958 live album by American jazz ensemble the Thelonious Monk Quartet . By the time of its recording , pianist and composer Thelonious Monk had overcome an extended period of career difficulties , including the loss of his cabaret card . After a six @-@ month residency at the New York City 's Five Spot Café in 1957 , he returned the following year for a second stint with his quartet , featuring drummer Roy Haynes , bassist Ahmed Abdul @-@ Malik , and tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin . Along with Thelonious in Action ( 1958 ) , Misterioso captured portions of the ensemble 's August 7 show at the venue .

The title of Misterioso referred to Monk 's reputation as an enigmatic , challenging musician . The album 's cover art , which appropriated Giorgio de Chirico 's 1915 painting The Seer , was part of Riverside 's attempt to capitalize on Monk 's popularity with listeners such as the intellectual and bohemian audiences at the Five Spot Café . The record features four of his earlier compositions , which Monk reworked live . It was one of the first successful live recordings of his music and was produced by Orrin Keepnews , who said that Monk played more distinctly than on his studio albums in response to the audience 's enthusiasm .

Misterioso was released in 1958 by Riverside Records to a mixed critical reaction ; reviewers complimented Monk 's performance but were critical of Griffin , whose playing they felt was out of place with the quartet . The album was remastered and reissued in 1989 and 2012 by Original Jazz Classics , and has since received retrospective acclaim from critics , some of whom viewed Griffin 's playing as the record 's highlight .

= = Background = =

After twenty years of career struggles and obscurity , Thelonious Monk had become a jazz star with a residency at the Five Spot Café in New York City 's East Village . In his first stable job in years , he helped transform the small bar into one of the city 's most popular venues , as it attracted bohemians , hipsters , and devout fans of Monk 's music . His employment there was a result of an appeal by his manager Harry Colomby to the State Liquor Authority ( SLA ) to restore Monk 's cabaret card . Monk was stripped of the card in 1951 when he was convicted of narcotics possession ; he had refused to betray his friend and pianist Bud Powell to the police after they discovered Powell 's glassine envelope of heroin laying beside Monk 's feet in the car of Powell 's female companion .

Although the loss limited Monk as a performer , he recorded several albums of original music and received much attention from the press , which led Colomby to argue to the SLA that he was " a drug @-@ free , law @-@ abiding citizen , whose productivity and growing popularity as a recording artist demonstrates his standing as a responsible working musician " . In May 1957 , the SLA said Monk needed to get a club owner to hire him first , so Colomby considered the Five Spot Café : " I wanted to find a place that was small . I once drove past this place in the Village and there was a bar and I heard music ... A place where poets hung out . " Joe Termini , who co @-@ owned the venue with his brother Iggy , testified at Monk 's police hearing , which resulted in his card being reinstated .

In July 1957 , Monk began to perform at the venue for six months with saxophonist John Coltrane , bassist Ahmed Abdul @-@ Malik , and drummer Shadow Wilson in his group . However , by the time Monk 's employment there ended in December , he had lost Wilson to poor health , while Coltrane left in pursuit of a solo career and a return to Miles Davis 's group . After returning to New York City 's club scene with a new quartet , Monk received an eight @-@ week offer from Joe and Iggy Termini to play the Five Spot Café beginning on June 12 , 1958 . He played most nights during the weekend to capacity crowds with Abdul @-@ Malik , drummer Roy Haynes , and tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin , who had performed with Monk before . Griffin was unfamiliar with all of his repertoire and , like Coltrane , found it difficult to solo over Monk 's comping during their first few weeks : " Any deviation , one note off , and you sound like you 're playing another tune , and you 're not paying attention to what 's going on . And it 's so evident ... there 's no space . " During their

performances , Monk often left the stage for a drink at the bar or danced around , which gave Griffin an opportunity to play with more space . However , the quartet eventually developed a sufficient rapport and grasp of the set list .

= = Recording and production = =

Producer Orrin Keepnews attempted to record the quartet live at the Five Spot Café on two different occasions in 1958 . His first recording of the ensemble was of two sets during their July 9 show . Monk was disappointed with the recording and did not allow his label Riverside Records to release it , although it was released later after his death . Keepnews returned to the venue on August 7 when Monk performed an evening show in the club 's overcrowded room set up with recording equipment . This yielded both *Misterioso* and *Thelonious in Action* , which was released first in 1958 . The show was believed to be the first successful live recording of Monk 's music , until the recording of his 1957 concert with Coltrane at Carnegie Hall was discovered and released in 2005 . The two live albums from the Five Spot Café are the only recordings that document Monk 's time with Griffin .

According to Keepnews , who produced *Misterioso* , the album and its title track were named as a slight play on the words " mist " and " mystery " , meant to evoke the perception of Monk 's music as enigmatic and challenging at the time . Jazz critic Neil Tesser said that the word , which is Latin for " in a mysterious manner " , was " used most often as a musical direction in classical music scores . But by the time Monk 's quartet recorded this music [ in 1958 ] ' *Misterioso* ' had largely come to identify Monk himself . "

To capitalize on Monk 's popularity with intellectual and bohemian fans from venues such as the Five Spot Café , Riverside released *Misterioso* and reissues of his older records with designs referencing 20th century works of art . The album 's cover art is a reproduction of Giorgio de Chirico 's 1915 painting *The Seer* , which was originally painted as a tribute to French poet Arthur Rimbaud . Monk biographer Robin Kelley argued that , because Rimbaud had " called on the artist to be a seer in order to plumb the depths of the unconscious in the quest for clairvoyance " , the painting was the best choice for the cover : " The one @-@ eyed figure represented the visionary ; the architectural forms and the placement of the chalkboard evoked the unity of art and science ? a perfect symbol for an artist whose music has been called ' mathematical . ' " According to musicologist Robert G. O 'Meally , the cover reflected " the mysterious violations of convention of perspective , the silences , and oddly attractive angles ( the overall futuristic quality ) in Monk 's music " .

= = Composition and performance = =

According to jazz critic Gary Giddins , *Misterioso* is a hard bop record . The songs performed for the album were arranged by Monk , who reworked four of his earlier compositions . In the album 's liner notes , Keepnews wrote of Monk 's approach to arrangements : " It should be axiomatic that Monk is a constantly self @-@ renewing composer @-@ arranger @-@ musician , that each new recording of an ' old ' number , particularly with different personnel , represents a fresh view of it ? almost a new composition . " According to Keepnews , he played piano more vividly and less introspectively than on his studio recordings in response to the enthusiastic crowds he drew nightly to the Five Spot Café .

On " *Nutty* " , Griffin incorporated lines from " *The Surrey with the Fringe on Top* " and exhibited a frenetic swing that was complemented by counterplay from Haynes and Monk . " *Blues Five Spot* " , a new composition by Monk for the album , is a twelve @-@ bar blues homage to the Five Spot Café and featured solos from each player . Griffin and Monk transfigured chord structures and melodies throughout the performance . Griffin 's solo vamp maintained the rhythm while quoting lines from other pieces , including the theme song for the animated Popeye theatrical shorts ; he played " *The Sailor 's Hornpipe* " at the end of " *Blues Five Spot* " .

The quartet began " *In Walked Bud* " with an eight @-@ bar piano intro and thirty @-@ two @-@ bar form . Griffin began his solo a minute into the song with saxophone wails . In the third minute , Monk did not play , while Griffin played fast phrases at the top of his register with intermittently

slower R & B and free jazz elements . Monk shouted approvingly throughout Griffin 's solo before he resumed piano and played a two @-@ minute theme . " Just a Gigolo " , a standard , was the only song on the album not composed by Monk , who performed it in a brief , unaccompanied version . It was played as a single chorus repeated at length .

The title track ? first recorded for Blue Note Records in 1948 with vibraphonist Milt Jackson ? is one of Monk 's most influential recordings and is based on a series of minor second clusters . His performance of the song at the Five Spot Café showcased his idiosyncratic playing of one blue note next to another . Monk superimposed musical ideas that deviated from the song 's original tonal center , adding a C blue note to the D @-@ flat blue note . Haynes ' subdued drumming backed Griffin 's aggressive bop playing and extended solo on " Misterioso " .

= = Release and reception = =

Misterioso was released in 1958 by Riverside and was Monk 's eighth album for the label . Writing for Hi Fi Review , critic Nat Hentoff said the record was " not one of his best " and observed " too little space for Monk 's soloing and somewhat too much " for Griffin , whose saxophone cry and timing were more impressive than his solos . Hentoff also believed Haynes and Abdul @-@ Malik did not support Monk as creatively as Wilbur Ware and Art Blakey had on his previous Riverside albums , where he said Monk was in more compelling form . In 1959 , Monk was voted the pianist of the year in an annual poll of international jazz critics from Down Beat magazine , who said he was heard " at his challenging , consistently creative best " on Misterioso . When Misterioso was released in 1964 in the United Kingdom , Charles Fox gave it a positive review in Gramophone . He found its music on @-@ par with Monk 's usual standards and highlighted by exceptional playing by him and the rhythm section , particularly Haynes , who showed " once again what a great drummer he was then ? and , indeed , still is today " . However , Fox felt Griffin did not fit in with the quartet and overshadowed Monk 's compositions , finding his solos diffuse and characterized by trivial quotations rather than musical development .

In the All Music Guide to Jazz ( 2002 ) , Lindsay Planer wrote that Monk 's quartet " continually reinvented " their strong , cohesive sound with " overwhelming and instinctual capacities " throughout Misterioso . He especially praised Griffin , saying he " consistently liberated the performances " . Monk biographer Robin Kelley felt because he had mastered Monk 's songs at that point , his solos on Misterioso and Thelonious in Action were excursive and spirited . Jazz critic Scott Yanow found Misterioso to be the superior record because of what he said was Griffin 's unforgettable solo on a passionate rendition of " In Walked Bud " , while music historian Ted Gioia listed Monk and Griffin 's " freewheeling " performance on the title track as one of his recommended recordings of the composition . According to Robert Christgau , both this record and Brilliant Corners ( 1957 ) represented Monk 's artistic peak . He cited Misterioso as his favorite album and , in a 2009 article for The Barnes & Noble Review , wrote that Griffin 's tenor solo during " In Walked Bud " remained his " favorite five minutes of recorded music " . Liam McManus from PopMatters was less enthusiastic about Griffin 's playing , which he believed was occasionally heavy @-@ handed and detracted from the music , but still recommended Misterioso as an exceptional Monk record featuring him in a casual performance with his quartet .

In 1989 , Misterioso was digitally remastered by mastering engineer Joe Tarantino for the album 's CD reissue . Tarantino used 20 @-@ bit K2 Super Coding System technology at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley , California . On May 15 , 2012 , Concord Music Group also reissued the album as part of their Original Jazz Classics Remasters series , along with Jazz at Massey Hall ( 1953 ) and Bill Evans ' 1962 record Moon Beams . The reissue featured 24 @-@ bit remastering by Tarantino and three bonus tracks , including a medley of " Bye @-@ Ya " and " Epistrophy " performed with drummer Art Blakey . Concord vice president Nick Phillips , who produced the reissue series , said Misterioso was " an all @-@ time classic live Thelonious Monk record " and " an indelible snapshot of Monk live in the late ' 50s . " In a 2012 review , McManus wrote that as with most reissues of jazz albums , the bonus tracks on Misterioso were valuable and showcased uninhibited performances of Monk 's past compositions .

= = Track listing = =

All songs were composed by Thelonious Monk , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

= = Release history = =