

Monty Alexander

In a career spanning five decades, pianist Monty Alexander has built a reputation *exploring the worlds of American jazz, popular song, and the music of his native Jamaica*, finding in each a sincere spirit of musical expression. In association with V.O Music, Paris/F.American



Line-up

Monty Alexander - piano

On Stage: 3

Travel Party: 4

Website

www.montyalexander.com

Biography

Legendary pianist Monty Alexander explores the rich depths of musical and cultural diversity. In a career spanning five decades, pianist Monty Alexander has built a reputation exploring and bridging the worlds of American jazz, popular song, and the music of his native Jamaica, finding in each a sincere spirit of musical expression. In the process, he has performed and recorded with artists from every corner of the musical universe and entertainment world: Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Ray Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Clark Terry, Quincy Jones, Ernest Ranglin, Barbara Hendricks, Bill Cosby, Bobby McFerrin, Sly Dunbar, and Robbie Shakespeare, among others. Born on D-Day (June 6, 1944) and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, he took his first piano lessons at age six, although he is largely self-taught. As a teenager, he witnessed concerts by Louis Armstrong and Nat 'King' Cole at Kingston's Carib Theater. These artists had a profound effect on Alexander's aspirations. He formed Monty and the Cyclones in the late 1950s and also recorded on sessions with the musicians who would catapult Jamaican music to international recognition as The Skatalites (Bob Marley's first backing band). Alexander and his family came to the United States at the end of 1961. Less than two years later, while playing in Las Vegas with Art Mooney's orchestra, he caught the eye of New York City club owner Jilly Rizzo and his friend, Frank Sinatra. Rizzo hired the young pianist to work in his club, Jilly's, where he accompanied Sinatra and others. There he met Modern Jazz Quartet vibraphonist Milt Jackson, who hired him and eventually introduced him to former Charlie Parker collaborator and legendary bassist Ray Brown. Alexander recorded and performed with the two jazz giants on many occasions. Jazz's greatest luminaries welcomed Alexander to their 'musical fraternity' in the mid-1960s. Among these earliest enthusiasts

for his playing were none other than Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Miles Davis. To this day, Alexander maintains an active touring schedule, from intimate jazz clubs to concert halls and jazz festivals around the globe. His collaborations span multiple genres, styles, and generations. His projects have been as varied as assisting Natalie Cole in her tribute album to her father, Nat 'King' Cole in 1991 (the resulting album, Unforgettable, won seven Grammy awards), performing George Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' under the direction of Bobby McFerrin at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland, and recording the piano track for the film score of Clint Eastwood's Bird, a movie about the life of jazz titan Charlie Parker. In August 2000, the Jamaican government awarded Monty Alexander the title of Commander in the Order of Distinction for outstanding services to Jamaica as a worldwide music ambassador. In Hal Leonard's 2005 book The Fifty Greatest Jazz Piano Players of All Time, Alexander was listed among the top five Jazz pianists of all time. With the invitation and encouragement of Wynton Marsalis, Alexander conceived and directed the acclaimed program Lords of the West Indies at Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2008, broadcast nationally on BETJ. Alexander returns to Jazz at Lincoln Center in the Fall 2009 with a new program Harlem Kingston Express. As a leader, Monty Alexander has recorded over 60 albums to date. His 1976 Montreux (Switzerland) Jazz Festival performance with drummer Jeff Hamilton and bassist John Clayton has become one of the most celebrated live recordings in contemporary jazz. His most recent albums on the Telarc label include trio sessions, such as Impressions in Blue, and the live concert recording Goin' Yard. In the late summer of 2005, Alexander traveled to Bob Marley's Tuff Gong Studio in Kingston, Jamaica, and teamed up with top Jamaican session players to record Concrete Jungle, a set of twelve Bob Marley compositions reinterpreted through Alexander's jazz piano-centered arrangements. The resulting union of musical perspectives digs deep into the Marley legend and brings together the two worlds that Alexander most treasures, building the musical bridges that are the very essence of his craft. As a testament to his versatility, The Good Life, on Chesky Records is a collection of songs written and popularized by one of his all time favorite artists and good friends, Tony Bennett. In 2008, with the invitation of Wynton Marsalis, Alexander conceived and directed the acclaimed program Lords of the West Indies at Jazz at Lincoln Center, broadcast nationally on BETJ. Alexander returned to Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2009 with a new program, Harlem Kingston Express in which he merged classic Jazz with rhythms and vibrations of his native Jamaica. Two collections were released in 2011 that capture the excitement of Monty Alexander's live performances around the world: Uplift, a trio album on JLP Records, and Harlem-Kingston Express on Motema Music. Between Uplift and Harlem-Kingston Express Monty Alexander has officially dominated the US Radio Charts with three number 1 spots, all in the summer of 2011, as Harlem-Kingston Express rose to number 1 on Jazz and World Music charts concurrently.

Discography

1965 Alexander the Great - Pacific Jazz
1965 Monty Alexander - Polygram
1965 Spunky - Pacific Jazz
1967 Zing! - RCA
1969 This Is Monty Alexander - Verve
1970 Taste of Freedom - MGM
1971 Here Comes the Sun - BASF
1971 We've Only Just Begun [live] - MPS
1973 Perception! - MPS
1974 Now Is the Time - Pausa
1976 The Way It Is [live] - MPS
1976 Live! Montreux Alexander - MPS
1976 Love & Sunshine [live] - BASF/MPS

1976 Monty Strikes Again [live] - MPS
1977 Live in Holland - Polydor
1977 Cobilimbo - MPS
1978 Jamento: The Monty Alexander 7 - Pablo/OJC
1979 Monty Alexander in Tokyo - Pablo
1979 Facets - Concord Jazz
1980 Ivory & Steel - Concord Jazz
1980 Trio - Concord Jazz
1980 Just Friends - Pausa
1980 So What? - Black & Blue
1981 Fingering - Atlas
1982 Overseas Special [live] - Concord Jazz
1982 Triple Treat, Vol. 1 - Concord Jazz
1983 Duke Ellington Songbook - Verve
1983 Reunion in Europe [live] - Concord Jazz
1985 The River - Concord Jazz
1985 Threesome - Soul Note
1985 Full Steam Ahead - Concord Jazz
1986 Li'l Darlin' - Lob
1987 Triple Treat, Vol. 2 - Concord Jazz
1987 Triple Treat, Vol. 3 - Concord Jazz
1988 Jamboree: Monty Alexander's Ivory and Steel - Concord Jazz
1992 Caribbean Circle - Chesky
1993 Saturday Night - Limetree
1994 Steamin' - Concord Jazz
1994 Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Vol. 40 [live] - Concord
1995 Yard Movement Island - Jamaica Jazz
1996 To the Ends of the Earth - Concord Jazz
1996 Just in Time - E.J.
1996 Echoes of Jilly's - Concord
1999 Stir It Up: The Music of Bob Marley - Telarc
2000 Monty Meets Sly & Robbie - Telarc
2001 Goin' Yard [live] - Telarc
2001 Look Up - Atlas
2002 Pure Imagination - Recall
2002 My America - Telarc
2003 Impressions in Blue - Telarc
2003 Lil Darlin [Japan] - Absord Japan
2004 Rocksteady - Telarc
2005 Live at the Iridium - Telarc
2005 Solo - Kingston
2006 Concrete Jungle - Telarc
2008 The Good Life - Chesky
2009 Calypso Blues: The Songs of Nat King Cole - Chesky
2011 Uplift - Jazz Legacy Productions
2011 Harlem-Kingston Express - Motema Music

