

Solo analysis: Frankie Dunlop, I Mean You

Hugh Denman

December 3, 2008

Recording and Band

This version of ‘I Mean You’ is a live recording from a concert played in New York in December, 1963. It was originally released on ‘Big Band / Quartet in Concert’ (Columbia 476898, 1963), and subsequently on ‘Who’s Afraid of the Big Band Monk’ (Columbia 32892, 1974).

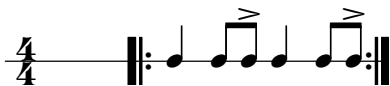
The core Monk quartet of the time consisted of Monk on piano, Charlie Rouse on tenor sax, Butch Warren on bass, and Frankie Dunlop on drums. Rouse had a long association with Monk, joining the quartet in 1959 and remaining a member until 1970. Frankie Dunlop’s tenure was shorter—lasting from 1960 until 1964—but no less celebrated; these two musicians are forever associated with Monk and complemented his distinctive rhythmic style adeptly. Butch Warren’s association with Monk was shorter-lived; he replaced John Ore in 1963 and was replaced by Larry Gales in 1964.

For this concert, the quartet was augmented by a six piece horn section: Thad Jones on coronet; Nick Travis on trumpet; Eddie Bert on trombone; Steve Lacy on soprano sax; Phil Woods on alto sax and clarinet; and Gene Allen on baritone sax, clarinet, and bass clarinet. The tunes were arranged by Hall Overton, a jazz pianist and classical composer. Although Monk had been recording as a leader since 1947, this record is only the second example of Monk with a big band (the first being ‘The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall’, recorded in 1959).

Frankie Dunlop

Frankie Dunlop was born in 1928, in Buffalo, and by the time of his retirement in 1984 he had recorded on over 100 albums. Born into a musical family, he took up the guitar at age 9 but switched to drums a year later and was working as a musician from the age of 16. In the 50’s he played with Sonny Stitt, Charles Mingus, and Sonny Rollins, and in the big bands of Maynard Ferguson and Duke Ellington. As noted above, he played with Monk from 1960 to 1964, and it is for this period that he is now best remembered. In later years he played in the groups of Lionel Hampton, Earl Hines, and Joe Zawinul, among others.

Monk’s son, Thelonious Jr—a professional drummer himself—has described how his own playing with his father (with whom he debuted at age 10), along with that of Ben Riley and the other post-Dunlop Monk drummers, was influenced by Dunlop’s playing with Monk, as they ‘all agreed that Frankie Dunlop was the perfect match with Monk.’¹ A key element of what Monk looked for in a drummer was an ‘upbeat swing’, in that the ride cymbal rhythm is accented on the pickup note



rather than on beats 2 and 4². Frankie Dunlop played with this feel and was one of its earliest and most prominent exponents. Dunlop most likely developed this feel influenced by Shadow Wilson, who played with Monk on a number of occasions in the forties and fifties (including at the recently issued concert with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall) and was described by Monk as his favourite drummer.

Other elements of Frankie Dunlop’s playing include distinctive placement of ‘bombs’ behind soloists and the use of short melodic phrases in comping, articulated principally between the snare and bass drum.

Dunlop’s later years are not well documented, and although colourful rumours are in circulation, little of substance can be found concerning the period following 1981, after his engagement with Lionel Hampton.

¹Interview with T. S. Monk, Jr on [allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com) (<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=19179>)

²Monk explicitly advised Paul Motian to phrase his cymbal time in this way, according to an interview conducted with Motian by Chuck Braman (<http://www.chuckbraman.com/Writing/WritingFilesDrumming/Motian2.html>)

The Solo

'I Mean You' is a composition credited to Monk with Coleman Hawkins. The form of the head is somewhat complicated: in the 'New Real Book', it is presented with an 'A' section of 2x8 bars, an 8 bar 'B', and an 8 bar 'C' section in which the last bar has only two beats; a four bar intro precedes letter 'A' and is also played after letter 'C'. The solos, however, follow a standard 32-bar AABA form. The drum solo is over 3 choruses, and is unaccompanied except for a few bars of walking bass at the beginning. A full transcription with rehearsal marks appears at the end of this essay.

Each chorus builds in intensity on the last: the first is characterised by eighth note phrases, the second uses triplet and sixteenth note rolls over two beats, and the third uses several three and four beat long sixteenth note rolls. Cymbal time is introduced at the start of the second chorus, creating a continuity of sound which contrasts with the staccato sounds and phrasing of the first chorus.

Although not following the melody, some aspects of the solo clearly correspond with the phrasing of the melody. The tonal movement of the playing in bars 49–56 follows the movement of the long tones in the 'B' section of the melody (snare + cymbal for high / bright tone; descending line to bass drum for low tone; mix between high tom and snare for intermediate tone; snare alone for slightly higher tone).

The 'A' section of the melody has a sense of resolution in the first beat of bar 7, and this helps to make sense of sudden changes in tonality in the drum solo at bars 63 and 79. Without reference to the melody, these points can sound like the start of a new eight bar section.

The solo uses motivic development extensively, and many motifs recur at intervals. Letter 'F' shows a particularly clear example of motivic development in the solo. These eight bars contain five phrases, each beginning with the figure



The first phrase here (bars 41–42) creates a smooth tonal descent using continuous triplets played from snare to high tom to low tom. The triplets are grouped in fours, which adds interest through syncopation. The phrase is heard as a 'question' because of the rising tonality in the last beat (beat 4, bar 42: bass drum to unison accent on snare + cymbal).

The second phrase develops on the first, starting with the same rhythmic figure at the same point in the bar (the '&' of beat 3, bar 43), but increasing the intensity by using sixteenth notes—again creating syncopation by grouping across the beat boundaries—and by changing the flow of the tonality (running from high tom, to snare, to floor tom, i.e. medium register to high register to low register). The sense of a 'question' phrase is reinforced here as this phrase ends in the same way as the first.

Bars 45–46 contain an answering phrase, related to the previous two phrases in that it begins with the same motif and has the same overall downward trajectory in tonality, but with a more settled, 'answering' quality in that it is less dense rhythmically and finishes with the lowest tonality (unison accents on bass drum and cymbal). The rhythmic propulsion is not diminished, however, as the two final hits in bar 46 are both off the beat. Bars 47 and 48 contain a three beat phrase starting on the motif, repeated twice, and ending on the bass drum; this is the closing statement of the motif. The second repetition is augmented with an accented snare drum off-beat, which connects and propels the music into the next 8 bar section and the phrases there.

While in general the eighth note phrasing is on the beat, there are instances of the figure



in which the '2' has the distinct character of an off beat, due to slight anticipation. Bars 76 and 79 are examples of this (in bar 76, an explicit sixteenth note anticipation is shown).

Solo transcription

The solo is presented with the melody shown in a second staff for comparison of phrasing etc.

The image shows a musical score for a solo transcription, consisting of two staves and 21 measures. The top staff is in a drum set notation (H) and the bottom staff is in a piano notation (treble clef). The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into three sections: A (measures 1-4), B (measures 5-8), and C (measures 9-12). Measures 13-16 and 17-20 are also present. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplets. The piano staff provides a harmonic accompaniment for the drum set parts.

1 A

5

9 B

13

17 C

21

25 **D**

29

33 **E**

37

41 **F**

45

49 **G**

Musical notation for measures 49-52. The top staff is a drum set part with various rhythmic patterns and accents. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, featuring a melodic line with a triplet and a bass line with sustained notes.

53

Musical notation for measures 53-56. The drum set part continues with rhythmic patterns. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a descending eighth-note run and a bass line with sustained notes.

57 **H**

Musical notation for measures 57-60. The drum set part has a more active pattern. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a descending eighth-note run and a bass line with sustained notes.

61

Musical notation for measures 61-64. The drum set part continues with rhythmic patterns. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a descending eighth-note run and a bass line with sustained notes.

65 **J**

Musical notation for measures 65-68. The drum set part has a more active pattern. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a descending eighth-note run and a bass line with sustained notes.

69

Musical notation for measures 69-72. The drum set part has a more active pattern. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a descending eighth-note run and a bass line with sustained notes.

73 **K**

77

81 **L**

85

89 **M**

93