

GrandMixer DXT restores Thelonious Monk Quartet With John Coltrane recording using Glyph Hard Drives

GrandMixer DXT may be best known for his collaboration with Herbie Hancock in the song “Rockit”, inventing and introducing turntablism to popular music. Lately he has made a new name for himself with his business, The Transfer Master. In 2005 he was asked to restore the long lost *Thelonious Monk Quartet With John Coltrane* show, recorded November, 1957 at Carnegie Hall. The inadequately labeled tape resurfaced after being lost for years in the basement of the Library of Congress, and documented Monk and Coltrane at a crucial point in their careers. The show was recorded to ¼” tape, mono, but most of the other details of the recording are unknown. “I don’t think there is anyone alive from that time who knows what mics and how many were used, or what mixing board or tape machine was used,” says DXT. Regardless, the tape sounded great even in its raw form. “There was a ton of dynamic range in that original mono recording, it actually sounded like it was recorded in stereo,” DXT said.

DXT literally jumped at the chance to produce the recording of the legendary duo when Thelonious Monk’s grandson, TS Monk, actually held the tape above his head. “Monk held it up over his head, and I had to take a couple of steps back in order to jump up and grab the tape,” DXT said. He had to stop and shut down his regular workload in order to apply the needed attention to the project.

The tape was transferred at DXT’s Transfer Master studio, using Pro Tools HD hardware and software, onto a Glyph GT 103 with three GT Key hard drives. The tape was only allowed to be rewound twice, with one pass being recorded at 192k and the second at 88.2k. The data was recorded to one GT Key drive and then immediately copied to the other two drives for backup. The backup drives were separated for an off-site backup of the precious material.

Once the music was digitized, DXT began the tedious job of removing ambient anomalies from the source file. First he had to learn the songs, to understand what sounds were music and what were anomalies of the recording process and tape degradation. After days of studying, he invented his own technique that he calls “forensic editing”, which includes a variety of traditional and non-traditional methods of restoration. “The sound of the recording was based on the technology of the time. I had to deal with it like a crime scene. Many of the problems are still there, my job was to make them inaudible,” DXT explained.

Not everyone agreed that the recording should be brought to today’s standards of quality. “The purists said don’t touch it, and I kept thinking I didn’t want to be remembered as the guy who messed up the Monk tapes. But Monk and Coltrane played jazz, not tape hiss,” said DXT.

It seems as though DXT made all the right decisions, because *Thelonious Monk Quartet With John Coltrane - At Carnegie Hall* has been met with great applause and rave reviews from listeners and critics alike.