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## Son of legendary musician bringing Institute of Jazz to Jackson County

■ Assembly programs planned Thursday at Pascagoula High, Gautier Middle School

By **DONNA HARRIS**  
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PASCAGOULA — The son of legendary jazz man Thelonious Sphere Monk hopes to give students in Pascagoula and Gautier a taste of a great American art form.

T.S. Monk Jr., with the financial backing of Northrop Grumman and the National Endowment for the Arts, is bringing the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, a non-profit educational organization, to Jackson County Thursday.

The tour, during Black History Month, is intended to introduce "Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum" to thousands of public school students in Mississippi.

At Pascagoula High School, Monk will be featured at an assembly program in the gymnasium and a one-hour jazz band clinic in the band hall, then it's a hop across town to Gautier Middle School for another assembly program. Later in the day, Monk's musicians will perform in concert at the University of Southern Mississippi during the All-South Honor Jazz Band Clinic.

Each assembly program will feature a five-piece jazz combo, led by internationally renowned saxophonist Bobby Watson, a presentation called "What is Jazz?" by J.B. Dyas, curriculum project director, and a question-and-answer session with students.

In addition, Monk, an award-winning jazz drummer and chairman of the institute's board of directors, will make remarks about jazz and its role as America's greatest musical contribution to the world.

"Jazz is the music that has changed 20th century music in the western world," Monk said Monday from a hotel

room in Jackson.

He said jazz has influenced all music from a technical to a harmonic side, mentioning Kenny G, Carlos Santana and Herbie Hancock as contemporary musicians who project their jazz influences in their recordings.

Through the institute, which Monk named for his father, jazz is promoted on an international level.

The 55-year-old musician from South Orange, N.J., said he is encouraged by the students who are part of music programs being reintroduced into schools. Through his tours, students get a taste of jazz through live concerts. "When you introduce children to things they don't actually know, more often than not they're surprised and pleased," he said.

"Through 'Jazz in America,' the program can move beyond music classes, and they can reach students who might not normally be able to experience it, he said.

"Jazz history is a part of American

history," he said. "We want it taught by social studies and history teachers, not just music teachers."

Monk is not worried that jazz may disappear after its 15 minutes in the spotlight. "The art form will be fine because all these kids will grow," he said. "Jazz will be here as long as America will be here."

The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz was established in 1986 with a mission to preserve America's legacy of jazz through performance and education. The Institute offers the world's most promising young musicians college-level training by America's jazz masters and presents public school-based jazz education programs for young people around the world.

Additionally, the institute provides scholarships, performance opportunities and worldwide recognition to gifted young musicians through its many other jazz education programs.

Pascagoula band director Jarrod Ledy is excited to be able to bring Monk and



Submitted Photo

### Thelonious Monk

his ensemble of musicians to the school district. "Jazz music is the only true American art form," he said. "The student body is just hopefully going to be thrilled by what they see and hear. It's going to be a really cool educational experience for the whole school."

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