

Memphis Slim - Memphis Slim U.S.A. (1998)

Written by bluesever

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1 - Memphis Slim U.S.A. 2 - Sassy Mae 3 - Little Piece of Mind 4 - Gotta Find My Baby 5 - Banana Oil 6 - Blue and Lonesome 7 - Two of a Kind 8 - She's Allright 9 - Blues All Around My Head 10 - Wish Me Well 11 - Four Years of Torment 12 - Gotta Find My Baby - (previously unreleased) 13 - Slim Was Just Kiddin' 14 - Jive Time Bounce 15 - Backbone Boogie 16 - (alternate take) Memphis Slim U.S.A. - (previously unreleased) 17 - (alternate take) She's Allright - (previously unreleased) 18 - (alternate take) Blues All Around My Head - (previously unreleased) 19 - (alternate take) Blue and Lonesome - (previously unreleased) Musicians: Memphis Slim (vocals, piano) Arbee Stidham (vocals, guitar) Jazz Gillum (vocals, harmonica) Matt "Guitar" Murphy (guitar) Neil Green (tenor saxophone). Universal Recording Studios (03/16/1954)

Memphis Slim's classic United label sessions from 1954 comprise this exceptional document of the master pianist's work: 19 of the some 30 tracks he waxed during four sessions, and very well-produced, considering the time frame. A 24-year-old Matt "Guitar" Murphy contributes mightily, tenor saxophonists Neil Green and Jimmy Conley smoothly fill in the cracks, and bassist Henry Taylor and drummer Otto Allen keep things nicely swinging along. As a blues pianist, Slim is in a class by himself. His tinklings, jazzy affectations, and distinct chordal punctuations are the mark of a true master. His singing is equally robust, occasionally wailin', but mostly in a storytellers' mode. Many of the tunes are old warhorses: "Blues All Around My Head" has two takes, one with unedited studio banter; "Blue and Lonesome" has more squawking before the slow melody line, while "Wish Me Well" is a patient boogie, if there is such a thing. Slim excels on loping, half-shuffles with horn complement, as on "Sassy Mae," "Two of a Kind," and the killer "Four Years of Torment." He plays celeste on another three, the hard swinging "Got to Find My Baby," and twelve-bar on "She's Alright" in the second take. At their roughest on "Slim Was Just Kiddin'," they can't decide what to do, settling on "Shake, Rattle & Roll." The T-Bone Walker influence definitely comes out for Murphy's instrumental features on the easygoing "Jive Time Bounce," and the out-and-out "Backbone Boogie." The calypso-informed "Banana Oil" is somewhat of an anomaly, but a delightful aside. This recording shows the complete prowess of Slim and his ability to lead a band. Murphy's spice makes it all that much tastier. A highly recommended CD, and an important historical bookmark

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in the career of an enduring legend of blues piano. ---Michael G. Nastos, Album Notes

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