

**THE COMPLETE  
RECORDINGS**

# **MONTE EASTER**

**VOLUME 2  
1952-1960**



**blue  
moon**  
Blue Series

# MONTE EASTER

## THE COMPLETE • VOLUME 2 • 1952-1960

- |           |                                       |                |      |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|----------------|------|
| 1. D-6043 | CASABLANCA BOOGIE -1,3 (Monte Easter) | Discovery 1202 | 2:53 |
| 2. D-6044 | PASTEL° -1 (Callender-Otis)           | Discovery 1202 | 2:40 |
| 3. D-6045 | THAT'S HIS SECRET* -2 (Robinson)      | Discovery 1203 | 2:42 |
| 4. D-6046 | JESSE MAE'S BLUES* -2 (Robinson)      | Discovery 1203 | 2:28 |

**MONTE EASTER AND HIS ORCHESTRA** or **\*JESSIE MAE ROBINSON with MONTE EAST (sic) ORCHESTRA** or **\*PAT REED with MONTE EASTER ORCHESTRA**: Pat Reed, vcl -1; Jesse Mae Robinson, vcl -2 with Monte Easter, tp/vcl -3; Maxwell Davis, ts; Rosetta Andrews, p; poss. Jimmy Nolen, gtr; Ralph Hamilton, sbs; Charlie Blackwell, dms. *Los Angeles, 1952*

- |              |  |              |      |
|--------------|--|--------------|------|
| 5. RR-2228-6 | NEW ORLEANS HOP (Monte Easter)         | Aladdin 3256 | 2:29 |
| 6. RR-2229-6 | AFTER DARK -1,2 (E. Tate-Monte Easter) | Aladdin 3221 | 2:48 |
| 7. RR-2230-2 | JUST A-ROCKIN' (Monte Easter)          | Aladdin 3221 | 2:32 |
| 8. RR-2231-2 | BLUES IN THE EVENING -2 (Monte Easter) | Aladdin 3256 | 3:17 |

**MONTE EASTER AND HIS BAND**: Monte Easter, tp/vcl -1 with Jimmy Nolen, vcl -2/gtr; Maxwell Davis, ts; unk. bar. p. sbs, dms; ensemble vcl -2. *Los Angeles, 5 Oct. 1953*

- |                |                                       |                         |      |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| 9. A           | GOING BACK TO KANSAS CITY -1 (-)      | Elko 912                | 2:22 |
| 10. B          | MIDNIGHT RIDER (-)                    | Elko 912                | 2:40 |
| 11. A (IM-900) | SLOW FREIGHT BACK HOME* (James Nolen) | Elko 913, Imperial 5363 | 2:42 |
| 12. B (IM-901) | LET'S TRY IT AGAIN* -2 (James Nolen)  | Elko 913, Imperial 5363 | 2:24 |

**MONTE EASTER AND HIS BAND** or **JIMMY NOLEN\***: Monte Easter, vcl -1/tp with Jimmy Nolen, vcl -2/gtr; J.D. Ware (J.D. Weir a.k.a. Jimmy Delaney), ts; Alice Young or Clarence Lively, p; Frank Dandridge, sbs; Gabriel Williams, dms. *Los Angeles, 18. Aug. 1954*

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|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------|
| 13. HH-6044, E 7927      | WEEKEND BLUES (M. Easter)              | Swingin' 636                  | 2:41 |
| 14. D-186                | WEEKEND BLUES alt.take (M. Easter)     | Debonair 10-102               | 3:02 |
| 15.                      | WEEKEND BLUES 2nd alt.take (M. Easter) | unissued acetate              | 3:06 |
| 16. HH-6045,D-185,E 7928 | BIRDLAND HOP -1 (M. Easter)            | Swingin' 636, Debonair 10-102 | 2:18 |

17.

**BIRDLAND HOP** -1 alt. take (Do The Hoosie Doosie) (M. Easter) unissued acetate 2:12

**MONTE EASTER AND HIS BAND**: Tp/shouts -1 with unk. clt; Caughey Roberts, as/ts; Allan ?? or Eddie Davis, ts; Alice Young, p; Jimmy Nolen, gtr; unk. sbs; Jesse Price, dms. *Los Angeles, 1960*

**Note**: the fade-in on track#17 is on the original source.



Monte Easter, tp; Mary Wallace (DePina), vcl and Jimmy Delaney (a.k.a. J.D. Ware), ts/voc. Publicity shot, c. early 1950s.

## I'm Hunched

The Monte Easter Story

by Opal Louis Nations

Part 2

In 1952, Easter signed with Jack Bergman's freshly acquired Discovery label. Discovery, originally a Hollywood label, had just been sold by Albert Marx to its new Big Apple owners. The band at this time was composed of Pat Reed, vocals, Monte Easter, trumpet, Rosetta Andrews, piano, Ralph Hamilton, bass, and Charles Blackwell, drums. Maxwell Davis's tenor was added to broaden the combo's sound on the one date shared with Discovery vocalist Jesse Mae Robinson for the Los Angeles session. Robinson cut one of her finest waxings, "Jessie Mae's Blues," during this date.

At the time, the band was working at The Brass Rail on Vernon Street where they shared billing with Pee Wee Crayton and La Wanda Page. On weekends the combo worked The Casablanca Club where they came up with the song "Casablanca Boogie". This title, Easter's initial Discovery release, was recorded in Los Angeles with Pat Reed's vocal over-dubs for the flip, "Pastel," done in New York. On the second and last Discovery release, Easter recalled that the band backed aforementioned singer Jesse Mae Robinson, an artist who played the Playboy circuit in Kansas (not related in any way to the singer, pianist, and composer of the same name) which bears out Jim Dawson's like-wise assumption in his excellent article on the other Texas-born Robinson in Juke Blues, issue #22, Winter/Spring 1991.

Down Beat Magazine gave "Pastel" two stars; "Casablanca Boogie" was awarded a miserly one star. Down Beat's review reads: "The Red Callender-penned 'Pastel' is best known through the Erroll Garner recording. Reed shows promise as a junior league Billie Holiday, but her voice is poorly balanced with the band. The coupling is a nondescript r & b shuffle blues." An October 1952 Billboard review treated the later Robinson disc in the same fashion, awarding only two miserly stars to "Jesse Mae's Blues" and one for "That's His Secret". Contrary to Dave Penny's liner notes to "Scratchin'" (Charly CD 268, centering around guitarists Pete Lewis, Jimmy Nolen, and Cal Green), Jimmy Nolen did not first record with J.D. Nicholson in 1952 in Tulsa. Easter asserts that he brought the unrecorded Nolan out to California from his home in Tulsa in 1953. Nolan became a fixture in Easter's band alongside Easter, trumpet, Clarence Lively, sweet-singing J.D. Weir (a.k.a. Jimmy Delaney), tenor sax, Frank Dandridge, bass, Alice Young, piano, and Gabriel Williams, drums.

In July 1953, the Monte Easter Band played at Gillis Place on West Buckeye Road. Jimmy Wilson, who was garnering success at the time with "Tin Pan Alley" on Bob Geddings' Big Town label, took top billing. By October, the Monte Easter Band was back recording for Eddie and Leo Mesner's Aladdin Records in Beverly Hills. The outfit's first release, "After Dark" backed with "Just A-Rockin'", was issued in January 1954. February 1954's Billboard described "After Dark" (a song with Easter's vocals) with brevity by stating, "That is the time of night Easter says he has a ball, and from the sounds projected by Easter and the boys here, it is easy to believe."

The reverse also got a favorable mention: "Just A-Rockin'" is a good instrumental with a solid beat that builds up to a hectic climax. Danceable as this material is, it should make a good juke box item." A second and last release, "New Orleans Hop" coupled with "Blues In The Evening" with vocals by Jimmy Nolen, was released in September 1954. The disc is described in the trades as follows:

"New Orleans Hop", a new tune for dancers, is predicted another hit for band master, Monte Easter. On the flip side, vocalist Jimmy Nolen does a jam-up job with "Blues In The Evening". Easter and his all-star musical group have been standing on the big name threshold for the past two years and are expected to make the grade with this new waxing".

Easter's tenure with Aladdin was short, however. By the end of 1954, he had signed a deal with John R. Fullbright at Elko Records on East Adams Boulevard. It was on Elko that Nolen made his first two significant recordings. The initial release was as a member of Easter's band; the second was cut under his own name. "Midnight Rider" backed with "Going Back To Kansas City" was released in early 1955. "Slow Freight Back Home" sliced with "Let's Try Again" surfaced later that year. "Let's Try Again" is Nolen's upbeat vocal reworking of The Squires' Combo waxing of "Let's Give Love A Try", cut in 1953 but without the chanting harmony background. Nolen gives the chart plenty of swing with both booting sax and Nolen's strong T. Bone Walker-like licks brightening up the overall effects.

After the Elko sessions, Easter retired from music and got a job at the Post Office. In 1960, Easter cut one record for Hunter Hancock and Roger Davenport's

Swingin' label out of Hollywood. Easter remembers some of the musicians on the session: himself on trumpet, Count Basie's ex-alto player Caughey Roberts, Jesse Price sang and played drums. Jimmy Nolen plucked guitar, Alice Young took up the piano stool, and a cat only remembered as Allan played tenor. The bass and clarinet players' names have escaped his memory. The original Swingin' version of "Weekend Blues" wails like crazy, with Roberts and Nolen blasting righteously on sax and guitar while a rippling piano and solidly thrashed drums add color. The underside, "Birdland Hop", is a good dance vehicle that finds Monte coming in at times to call out the dance steps. Its unissued alternate take (called "Do The Hoosie Doosie" that comes from an acetate in Monte's private vault) is even raunchier and has a rather SKA music feel with Jimmy Nolen's offbeat chops on the guitar. Monte had used the "Birdland Hop" theme on an earlier opportunity, check out "New Orleans Hop" (Aladdin 3256).

The Swingin' single was re-issued shortly thereafter on the Debonair label with an alternate version of "Weekend Blues." This second version drags on the beat a little more and finds Price playing at stop time in a few places. The overall effect is jazzier and slightly less down in the alley, although it is difficult to tell at times. Both versions are sensational and should be sought out by collectors.

Easter again set down his horn. When asked why he quit playing music, Easter says that being constantly plied with drinks from patrons at The Brass Rail was the deciding factor. Easter set out for Kansas City but returned to Los Angeles in 1975. In the late 1980s he took up singing seriously and formed "Kansas

City Jazz", a band made up of some of his old buddies: Eddie Davis, tenor sax, Caughey Roberts, alto sax, Wallace Broadis, tenor sax, Duke Burrell, piano, Bill Hadnott, bass, Jim Daniels, guitar, Oscar Lee Bradley on drums and himself on trumpet.

After founding his own label, Intrigue, Easter recorded a single, an album and then finally a CD of twelve of his own compositions.

The Easter Band played a lengthy engagement at The Caliente Lodge in Palm Springs in 1995. Kansas City Jazz then enjoyed concerts at The Chester Washington Clubhouse on Western Avenue, The Holiday Inn at Crowne Plaza, Levy's Restaurant in Beverly Hills, The Shriners Temple #5, The Musicians Clef Club (where Easter served as president) plus a multitude of others.

Monte Easter married six times, the last to Ruthie Elliot. He died of congestive heart failure on Christ-

mas Day, 2000. Monte clung to life with a passion. Towards the end, he fell down and could not get up. It was evening, and Monte insisted he was fine. He fell asleep on the floor, and Ruthie, not being able to move him, left him to go to bed. In the morning she found him sleeping in bed by her side, a testament to Monte's rugged determination and will to survive.

Monte Easter is survived by Ruthie, his wife of twenty-one years, as well as eleven grandchildren, fourteen great grandchildren, and many relatives.

**Opal Louis Nations, April 2001**

With thanks to Ruthie Elliot and Norman Bowden.  
Thanks to Peter Vacher for his help with additional information.  
These liner notes are based on the article that originally appeared in Real Blues magazine (Canada) No. 17 (Feb./March 1999) and B&R magazine (England) No. 169 (May 2002), and are used by permission.

## **JIMMY NOLEN (1934-83)**

Guitarist

Jimmy Nolen was born on April 3, 1934 in Oklahoma City to a family of nine children and was raised on a farm in Weleka, Oklahoma. Like many young men of his day, he gravitated to guitar after hearing T-Bone Walker on the radio at the age of 14 in 1948. After four years of honing his skills on an old Harmony, he was proficient enough on his instrument to get his first electric guitar and join J.D. Nicholson & His Jivin' Five, receiving his first exposure to a recording studio in 1952. In 1955, Jimmy Wilson heard Jimmy playing at a club in Tulsa and hired him to go on the road with him and his band. Tired of the grind in Oklahoma for little pay, he jumped at the chance and packed his bags. When Wilson's band broke up in Los Angeles, Nolen decided to stay and after scuffling for awhile working with nondescript groups in seedy little clubs, he became a sideman for Chuck Higgins, a very popular sax "honker" who had a style that was very popular on the west coast. It is interesting to note that the piano player in this band was none other than the legendary Johnny "Guitar" Watson.

Jimmy replaced the ailing Pete "Guitar" Lewis in the Johnny Otis Band around 1957 and became very busy as a recording session guitarist, resulting in Otis's big hit, "Willie And The Hand Jive". It was during this time that he contracted with Federal Records, a subsidiary of the King label and recorded his first sides under his own name. Striking out on his own in 1960, he formed his own band and was sought after by many of the major blues stars that came into Los Angeles for

backing when they were without their own bands. B.B. King, T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson and Buddy Ace would always use Jimmy and his band when they were in town without their sidemen. After his stint with Johnny Otis and in the period before joining James Brown in 1965, Jimmy would regularly work the Southern California "chittlin' circuit", playing small clubs and ballrooms with his own band. Jimmy played throughout California and Arizona working steadily until he decided to accept James Brown's offer to join his band in 1965.

One of Jimmy's former sidemen, tenor saxophonist L.D. Williams, who was working with Brown at the time had recommended him.

Jimmy Nolen was a prolific session guitarist under other band leaders and without his backing it is argued if any of their releases would have made it to the top of the charts. That's Jimmy on guitar on many west coast jump classics, for instance, tenor sax man Chuck Higgins whose biggest hit was "Pachuco Hop". There's Jimmy again on the Bo Diddleyesque "Willie And The Hand Jive" by Johnny Otis. Jimmy again on the "ting a-ling-aling-aling" riff after James Brown shouts, "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" and he was on many more hits of "Soul Brother Number One" from 1965 to 1983, except for the two years he left the band to go with Brown sidemen, Maceo Parker and Fred Wesley as "All The King's Men". He literally put James Brown on the worldwide stage with his patented funk riffs and fills.

Jimmy Nolen passed away on a road tour in Atlanta, in December of 1983, after a massive heart attack.