

# 1952



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

*Peggy Lee*



In many ways, 1952 was a year of *déjà vu*. American troops were off fighting in another bitter Asian war. Dwight D. Eisenhower was again chosen as a leader, trading in his general's stars for the title of president-elect. The novelists Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck placed books on the bestseller lists (*The Old Man and the Sea* and *East of Eden*). Veteran jockey Eddie Arcaro rode to his fifth Kentucky Derby win. Comedian Charlie Chaplin, who had been making films since 1914, returned to the screen with *Limelight*. And the venerable Mills Brothers, who had been making hit records since 1931, returned to the top of the charts with **The Glow-Worm**.

*Glow-Worm* originated in the Berlin musical theater of 1902 as the creation of German composer Paul Lincke. In 1907 Lilla Robinson added English lyrics, and the song became a smash when it was featured in a Broadway show called *The Girl behind the Counter*. Soon it was a standard; "juvenile pianists and rhythmic dancing ladies murder it, but it is still a grand tune," wrote its American publisher, Edward Marks, in 1935. Musical anarchist Spike Jones cut a cowbell-and-gunshot-filled version of the song in 1946, earning himself a gold record in the process.

That was when Marks realized *Glow-Worm* still had some life left in it, and he commissioned Johnny Mercer to come up with new, hipper lyrics. Mercer retained the original chorus ("Shine little glow-worm, glimmer") but added three new stanzas, bringing the glow-worm into the 1950s with references to its "taillight neon." By coincidence, the Mills Brothers were switching from a simple guitar

accompaniment to an updated, swinging big-band sound as their backup. The refurbished *Glow-Worm* was the perfect vehicle for them, and they took it into the studio with a group led by former Glenn Miller reedman Hal McIntyre. The result was a new lease on life for both the Mills Brothers and the song.

Even the hottest new artists of the day were not above recycling old material. And few were hotter than Eddie Fisher, a Philadelphia native who first made a name for himself at New York's Copacabana nightclub before lining up Broadway legend Eddie Cantor as his producer. After modest success in 1950 and 1951, Fisher's career took off in 1952 with seven chart hits. One of the best was **Any Time**, which he later adopted as the theme song for his TV variety show. This 1921 Tin Pan Alley effort was popularized in the '20s by a blackface vocal contortionist named Emmett Miller. Country music star Eddy Arnold recorded a best-selling version in 1948, on which Fisher's arranger, Hugo Winterhalter, based his superb big-band chart. Another Fisher top-10 entry, **Lady of Spain**, started out as a 1931 collaboration by two British songwriters, Tolchard Evans and Erell Reaves, while **Maybe**, Fisher's duet with rival crooner Perry Como, was composed in 1935.

Some of the "new" stars making their chart debuts in 1952 were in fact seasoned performers using seasoned material. Georgia Gibbs was known primarily for her 1944 song *Shoo Shoo Baby* and her work on radio shows with Herb Shriner, Jimmy Durante and Gary Moore before she released **Kiss of Fire**. Coming out of the pre-World War

I tango craze, *Kiss of Fire* was originally the creation of Argentinian composer A. G. Villodo, who had named it *El Choclo*. Vera Lynn's **Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart** was the first record to top the hit parade in both England and America. Lynn had retired from a career as a big-band and radio singer when she returned to the London recording studios to cut this song. Known by thousands of allied troops as the "Sweetheart of the Forces," thanks to her World War II show *Sincerely Yours*, Lynn recaptured much of the era's poignancy in this 1949 German song newly fitted with English lyrics.

Amidst all these familiar tunes and faces, though, were some exciting newcomers. This was especially true of songwriters; by the end of 1952, *Billboard* noted that no fewer than 12 of the top 40 hits were by "unknown writers." Spurred by the rise of independent labels and the increasing decentralization of the music industry, "new" writers like Jessie Mae Robinson were responsible for some of the year's greatest successes. Robinson's **I Went to Your Wedding** provided Patti Page with her eighth gold record. Robinson had previously specialized in rhythm and blues numbers such as *Clean Head Blues* and *Blue Light Boogie*, and in the late '50s she would supply Elvis Presley with songs. *I Went to Your Wedding* was Robinson's first experimentation with pop ballads; its reception prompted Jo Stafford and Frankie Laine to record some of her other pop efforts in 1952.

Another newcomer to the hit parade, Chilton Price, was a mild-mannered broadcast-station record librarian from Louisville, Kentucky, who became friends with cowboy bandleader Pee Wee King (co-author of *The Tennessee Waltz*). Price started bringing song ideas to King, and in 1952 two of them bore fruit. **Slow Poke**, recorded by King himself with a vocal by Redd Stewart, made it to No. 1 on the country charts, then crossed over and climbed to No. 3 on the pop side. Earlier in the year Jo Stafford had recorded Chilton and King's **You Belong to Me**, which not only turned out to be the third most popular song of 1952 but also proved its durability when the doo-wop vocal group the Duprees took it to the top 10 with a synth ball version in 1989.

first gold record, **Tell Me Why**, was penned by Al Alberts, the lead singer and founder of the Philadelphia quartet, and Marty Gold, the group's arranger. Formed in 1949, the Aces were on the charts throughout the '50s. Bobby Vinton revived *Tell Me Why* in 1964.

With the driving bongo drums in **Lover** by Peggy Lee, the strong Brazilian-flavored **Delicado** by Percy Faith and the Argentine influences behind Georgia Gibbs's *Kiss of Fire*, 1952 audiences seemed to be fascinated with the Latin sound. In fact, the year's top-selling hit was a Latin pastiche called **Blue Tango**, by one of America's best-known orchestra composers, Leroy Anderson. A Harvard graduate, Anderson achieved fame as an arranger and orchestrator for Arthur Fiedler's Boston Pops Orchestra in the 1930s, then went on to write two of the most venerable tunes in the American band repertoire: *The Syncopated Clock* and *Sleigh Ride*. By 1952 he was leading his own orchestra for Decca and creating some of the most sophisticated music of the decade.

—Charles Wolfe

## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest chart position

- 1. The Glow-Worm** The Mills Brothers • *Music by Paul Lincke, English lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Lilla Cayley Robinson. Decca 28384. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 2. Wheel of Fortune** Kay Starr • *Music and lyrics by Bennie Benjamin and George Weiss. Capitol 1961. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 3. Maybe** Perry Como and Eddie Fisher • *Music and lyrics by Allan Flynn and Frank Madden. RCA Victor 4744. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 3\**
- 4. Half As Much** Rosemary Clooney • *Music and lyrics by Curley Williams. Columbia 39710. No. 1\**
- 5. Slow Poke** Pee Wee King and His Golden West Cowboys • *Music and lyrics by Pee Wee King, Redd Stewart and Chilton Price. Vocal by Redd Stewart. RCA Victor 0489. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 1\**

oo-wop vocal group the Duprees took it to the top 10 with a rock 'n' roll version in 1962.

Despite her sophisticated style and big-band background, Jo Stafford had shown a fondness for folk music since childhood when her parents taught her songs they remembered from their Tennessee mountain background. She was therefore receptive to adapting folk and country material to a pop style, and cashed in with her cover of **Jambalaya** in 1952. Country star Hank Williams, with whom the song is usually associated and who is credited with authorship, freely admitted that he bought it from Moon Mullican, a Texas pianist and composer. He, in turn, had derived the piece from an old dance tune called *Big Texas* and added some nonsense words in Cajun dialect, which Williams and Stafford retained.

The lively **Sugarbush**, by Doris Day and Frankie Laine, came from a South African folk song that had been collected and published by Josef Marais in 1942 in a book called *Songs from the Veld*. In the early 1950s, Marais began reworking his folk material to give it broader audience appeal, and *Sugarbush*, with its odd clapping rhythm, was one of his first successes. A similar history attends Doris Day's **A Guy Is a Guy**, taken from an old sailor song rearranged by folk artist Oscar Brand. "In 1942, I learned at Ft. Dix an ancient bawdy song which used as its twentieth century incarnation the refrain, 'A Gob is a Slob,'" he recalled. Ten years later, when Mitch Miller at Columbia Records asked Brand for some folk songs, he cleaned up the old lyrics, added a bridge and watched *A Guy Is a Guy* become one of the year's favorites.

Although many hits in 1952 involved adaptation of one sort or another, others were written by the singers themselves. Johnnie Ray, who surprised audiences when he appeared onstage wearing a hearing aid, was one of the hottest artists of the year. During his April stay at New York's Copa, he broke so many attendance records that the club gave him a new Cadillac convertible. **The Little White Cloud That Cried**, custom-designed by Ray to show off the unique catch in his voice, was originally the flip side of his 1951 smash *Cry*. The Four Aces'

*Music*. No. 1\*

**6. You Belong to Me** Jo Stafford • *Music and lyrics by Pee Wee King. Redd Stewart and Chilton Price. Columbia 39811. Courtesy of Corinthian Records. No. 1\**

**7. Lady of Spain** Eddie Fisher • *Music and lyrics by Robert Hargreaves, Tolchard Evans, Stanley J. Damerell and Henry B. Tilsley. RCA Victor 4953. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 6\**

**8. Delicado** Percy Faith and His Orchestra • *Music by Wally Azevedo. Stan Freeman, harpsichord. Columbia 39708. No. 1\**

**9. Kiss of Fire** Georgia Gibbs • *Music and English lyrics by Lester Allen and Robert Hill. Mercury 5823. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\**

**10. I'm Yours** Don Cornell • *Music and lyrics by Robert Milton. Coral 60690. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 3\**

**11. The Little White Cloud That Cried** Johnnie Ray • *Music and lyrics by Johnnie Ray. Okeh 6340. No. 2\**

**12. Lover** Peggy Lee • *Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart. Decca 28215. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 3\**

**13. Sugarbush** Doris Day and Frankie Laine • *Music and English lyrics by Josef Marais. Columbia 39693. No. 7\**

**14. Wish You Were Here** Eddie Fisher • *Music and lyrics by Harold Rome. RCA Victor 4830. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 1\**

**15. Jambalaya** Jo Stafford • *Music and lyrics by Hank Williams. Columbia 39838. Courtesy of Corinthian Records. No. 3\**

**16. Blue Tango** Leroy Anderson and His "Pops" Concert Orchestra • *Music by Leroy Anderson. Decca 27875. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1\**

**17. I Went to Your Wedding** Patti Page • *Music and lyrics by Jessie Mae Robinson. Mercury 5899. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\**

**18. High Noon (Do Not Forsake Me)** Tex Ritter • *Music by Dimitri Tiomkin, lyrics by Ned Washington. Capitol 2120. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 12\**

**19. Tiger Rag** Les Paul and Mary Ford • *Music by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, lyrics by Harry DeCosta. Capitol 1920. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 2\**

**20. Tell Me Why** The Four Aces • *Music by Marty Gold, lyrics by Al Alberts. Decca 27860. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 2\**

**21. A Guy Is a Guy** Doris Day • *Music and lyrics by Oscar Brand. Columbia 39673. No. 1\**

**22. Here in My Heart** Al Martino • *Music and lyrics by Pat Genaro, Lou Levinson and Bill Borrelli. BBS 101. No. 1\**

**23. Any Time** Eddie Fisher • *Music and lyrics by Herbert Happy Lawson. RCA Victor 4359. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 2\**

**24. Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart** Vera Lynn • *Music by Eberhard Storch, English lyrics by John Sexton and John Turner. London 1227. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\**



*Kay Starr*

*Frankie Laine*



# 1952

- 1 **The Glow-Worm** The Mills Brothers
- 2 **Wheel of Fortune** Kay Starr
- 3 **Maybe** Perry Como and Eddie Fisher
- 4 **Half As Much** Rosemary Clooney
- 5 **Slow Poke**  
Pee Wee King and His Golden West Cowboys
- 6 **You Belong to Me** Jo Stafford
- 7 **Lady of Spain** Eddie Fisher
- 8 **Delicado** Percy Faith and His Orchestra
- 9 **Kiss of Fire** Georgianna Gibbs
- 10 **I'm Yours** Don Cornell
- 11 **The Little White Cloud That Cried**  
Johnnie Ray
- 12 **Lover** Peggy Lee
- 13 **Sugarbush** Doris Day and Frankie Laine
- 14 **Wish You Were Here** Eddie Fisher
- 15 **Jambalaya** Jo Stafford
- 16 **Blue Tango**  
Leroy Anderson and His "Pops" Concert Orchestra
- 17 **I Went to Your Wedding** Patti Page
- 18 **High Noon (Do Not Forsake Me)** Tex Ritter
- 19 **Tiger Rag** Les Paul and Mary Ford
- 20 **Tell Me Why** The Four Aces
- 21 **A Guy Is a Guy** Doris Day
- 22 **Here in My Heart** Al Martino
- 23 **Any Time** Eddie Fisher
- 24 **Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart** Vera Lynn



**President:** Paul R. Stewart  
**Vice Presidents:** Terence J. Furlong, Carol Kaplan  
**Executive Producer:** Charles McCardell  
**Recording Producer:** Bill Ingot  
**Series Consultant:** Charles K. Wolfe  
**Creative Director:** Don Sheldon  
**Art Director:** Robin Bray  
**Associate Producer:** Brian Miller  
**Art Studio:** Nina Bridges  
**Production Director:** Fernando Pargas  
**Production Manager:** Karen Hill

1952 was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with CBS Special Products. Digitally remastered at K-Disc, Hollywood, Calif.; Ken Perry, engineer.

**The Author:** Three-time Grammy nominee Charles K. Wolfe teaches English at Middle Tennessee State University. He has written numerous books and articles on country music and has also produced country and folk music recordings.

Time-Life Music wishes to thank William L. Schurk of the Music Library and Sound Recordings Archives, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, for providing valuable reference material.

TIME-LIFE MUSIC is a division of Time-Life Books Inc.  
© 1989 Time-Life Books Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. TIME-LIFE is a trademark of Time Incorporated U.S.A.

**Picture Credits:** Cover art by John Maggard © 1988, 1989 Time-Life Books Inc. Opening spread: Photo courtesy Culver Pictures. Center spread: Michael Ochs Archives, Venice, Calif. (2)

© 1989 CBS Records Inc. Manufactured for CBS Special Products, CBS Records Inc., 51 W. 52 St., New York.

A 20758 HPD-05