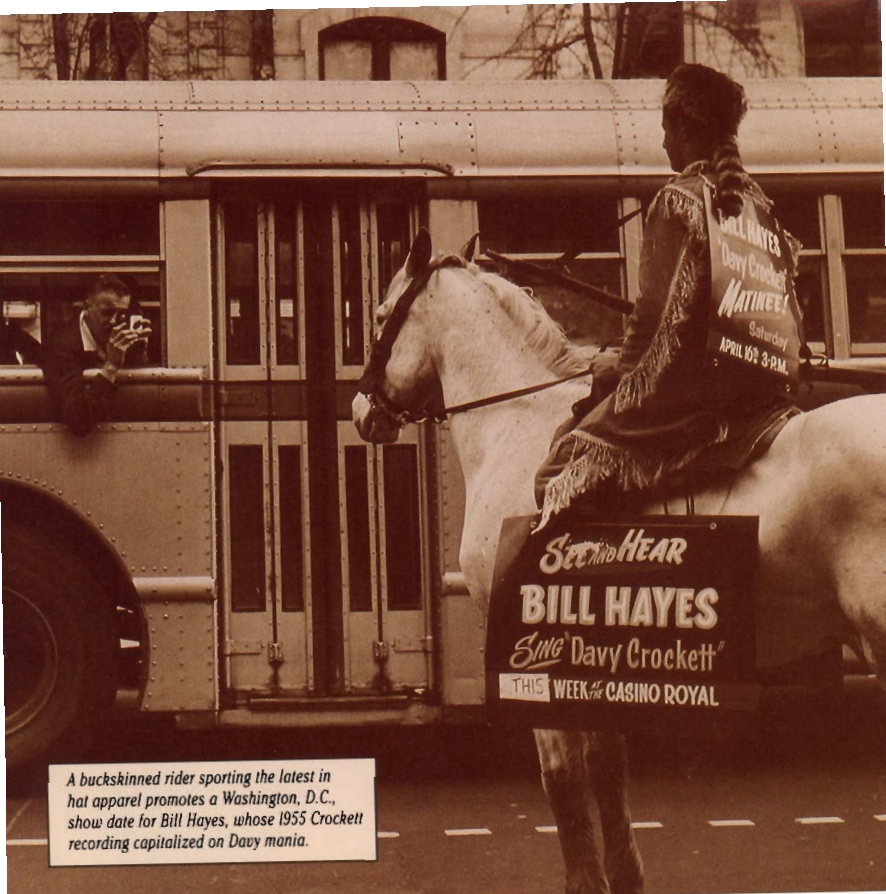


1955



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC



A buckskinned rider sporting the latest in hat apparel promotes a Washington, D.C., show date for Bill Hayes, whose 1955 Crockett recording capitalized on Davy mania.

In October 1954 Mitch Miller received a phone call from the producers of *Studio One*, the critically acclaimed CBS series of television dramas that ranged from Shakespeare to mysteries. They were working on a new play about a disc jockey involved in a murder and wanted an unknown song to give the plot added realism. Miller was the right man to ask; since becoming head of Columbia's pop-music division in 1950, he had masterminded dozens of hit records and discovered hundreds of songs.

As he had done so often in recent years, Miller turned to country music. Cowboy star Tex Ritter had recently scored a minor hit with a temperance song called *Let Me Go, Devil*, written by veteran radio singer Jenny Lou Carson, sister-in-law of singer Red Foley. Miller liked the melody and, with Carson's permission, enlisted another writer, Al Hill, to make the words more secular. **Let Me Go Lover** was what Miller finally offered *Studio One*.

He promptly cut it with an 18-year-old singer named Joan Weber, whose previous experience consisted of performing with her husband's dance band around their hometown of Paulsboro, New Jersey. Miller urged the *Studio One* staff to use this recording in the show, arguing that a new song by an unknown singer would heighten the drama's impact. The producers agreed and even named their episode "Let Me Go Lover." The song was heard six times during the broadcast, which aired on November 15.

Anticipating that the show might spur sales of the record, Miller had shipped copies to stores several days in advance. Sure enough, on the morning of November 16, thousands of fans rushed into the stores demanding "that

song that was on TV last night." Within two weeks, the disc had sold more than 500,000 copies; over the next few months, it became 1955's first million-selling record. The breathtaking speed with which this happened sent artists and producers alike an indisputable message: There was a powerful new force at work in pop music, and its name was television.

By 1955 TV was reaching almost 70 percent of American homes with top-rated programs like *I Love Lucy*, *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*. Pop singers had always been welcome on live television, but this year the medium proved a fertile source for songs themselves. Dinah Shore, who had her own 15-minute show on Tuesdays and Thursdays preceding the news, enjoyed one of her biggest hits with **Love and Marriage**, the first pop song to win an Emmy.

A more phenomenal TV song was **The Ballad of Davy Crockett** by Bill Hayes, formerly ormerly a regular on *Your Show of Shows* alongside Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca. *Disneyland*, which had premiered in October 1954, presented a segment on December 15th called "Davy Crockett, Indian Fighter." After two more episodes aired in January and February, Walt Disney found himself at the center of the Davy Crockett coonskin-cap craze. The race to cover the Crockett theme song was won by Hayes, who beat out Fess Parker, Disney's own Davy. The sales of Hayes's record surpassed those of *Let Me Go Lover*. With more than 20 versions eventually on the market, *Davy Crockett* racked up seven million sales in less than six months, making it the fastest-selling song up to that time.



The Four Lads

blues music started leaving its mark on the mainstream pop charts. Though black artists such as the Moonglows, Fats Domino and the Chords appealed to teenagers, their influence carried over to "square" white pop singers as well. Perry Como stirred things up with **Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)**, originally done by the duo Gene and Eunice. **Dance with Me Henry** began as *Roll with Me Henry*, R & B belter Etta James's risqué answer to *Work with Me Annie*, a hit for the Midnighters in 1954. Her record sold well, but radio stations refused to play it. The title was changed to *The Wallflower*, then Georgia Gibbs recorded it as *Dance with Me Henry*, and it became her third million-seller.

The New Jersey trio the Fontane Sisters, known for their appearances on *The Perry Como Show*, shared chart space alongside the Charms with **Hearts of Stone**. To no one's surprise, the Fontanes did much better on the pop side. Ironically, their recording was a cover of a cover, since the Charms had first copied the Jewels, an obscure West Coast group. Other black vocal outfits found equal success on both the R & B and pop music charts. The Platters, a Los Angeles quintet led by vocalist Tony Williams, had originally recorded for the independent Federal label, which passed on **Only You**. After signing with Mercury, the Platters redid the song (co-authored by their manager, Buck Ram), and their career took off.

Two colorful retreads with deep roots rounded out the list of 1955's biggest songs. Tennessee Ernie Ford's **Sixteen Tons**, written by Kentucky singer and guitarist Merle Travis, had been issued in a 1946 Travis album called *Folk Songs of the Hills*. Based on Travis' memories of his father's life as a coal miner in Greenville, Kentucky

Another unlikely source for a hit was the NBC legal drama *Justice*. One episode focused on song sharks in the music business and, taking its cue from *Studio One*, involved a real song—**Hard to Get** performed by Gisele MacKenzie, a singer on *Your Hit Parade*. The record entered the charts in July, earning MacKenzie the distinction of being the first *Hit Parade* regular to have a hit single while on the show.

While Dinah Shore and Perry Como won Emmys in 1955 as TV's favorite singers, the prime-time schedule helped catapult a number of other artists onto the charts. The Four Lads, who had earlier backed Johnnie Ray on *Cry*, used their visibility as guest hosts of the summer show *Upbeat* to popularize **Moments to Remember**. The McGuire Sisters had already built a loyal following from their work with Arthur Godfrey when they released what would be the year's No. 8 song, **Sincerely**, a remake of the rhythm and blues smash by the Moonglows. Co-authored by rock 'n' roll DJ Alan Freed, *Sincerely* was revived by Paul Anka, the Four Seasons and the Forester Sisters. From the musical quiz show *Stop the Music* came Jaye P. Morgan, whose **That's All I Want from You** was one of the first hits in a career that included appearances on the 1970s *Gong Show*.

Three of the top 10 songs of 1955 had cinematic connections. The forgettable Jane Russell skin-diving movie *Under Water* contained a mambo by Perez Prado voted the No. 1 song of the year, **Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White**, featuring the trumpet work of Billy Regis. Close behind in the rankings was **Unchained Melody**, the theme of a prison drama, *Unchained*. Of the three versions that made the *Billboard* top 10 in 1955, the one by former Duke Ellington singer Al Hibbler remained the standard until the Righteous Brothers released a strong contender in 1965. **Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing**, taken from the William Holden movie of the same name, won the Four Aces an Academy Award for Best Song.

Nineteen fifty-five was also the year that rhythm and

the song's refrain referred to the practice of initiating a new miner by having him load 16 tons his first day instead of the customary eight to 10. When Ford, a country boogie specialist in the early 1950s, recorded the piece with a pop arrangement, four million listeners bought it. "We all live on credit and owe our soul to some sort of company store," mused *Time*.

The Yellow Rose of Texas had as its immediate source a pair of albums, *The Union* and *The Confederacy*, created by Mitch Miller to commemorate the Civil War. For the latter, composer and arranger Don George took an old Civil War campfire song, pruned it of some of its racial overtones and set it to a lively marching beat. It probably originated on the Northern minstrel show stages of the 1850s before Civil War soldiers took it up; one famous version added words about the Tennessee campaign of 1864, and a later one chronicled the exploits of the Texas Rangers. *The Yellow Rose of Texas*, like *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, celebrated American legends and enriched the hit parade in a year that saw more than its share of classics.

— Charles K. Wolfe

DISCOGRAPHY

- 1. Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)** Perry Como • *Music and lyrics by Forest Wilson, Jake Porter and Eunice Levy. RCA Victor 5994. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 2. Whatever Lola Wants** Sarah Vaughan • *Music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. Mercury 70595. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 3. Wake the Town and Tell the People** Les Baxter • *Music by Jerry Livingson, music and lyrics by Sammy Gallop. Capitol 3120. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 4. The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane** The Ames Brothers • *Music and lyrics by Sid Tepper and Roy C. Bennett. RCA Victor 47-5897. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 5. Let Me Go Lover** Joan Weber • *Music and lyrics by Jenny Lou Carson, lyrics by Al Hill. Columbia 40366. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 6. The Shifting, Whispering Sands** Rusty Draper • *Music by Mary Hadler, lyrics by V. C. Gilbert. Mercury 70696. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 7. Dance with Me Henry (The Wallflower)** Georgia Gibbs • *Music and lyrics by Johnny Otis, Hank Ballard and Etta James. Mercury 70572. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 8. Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White** Perez "Prez" Prado and His Orchestra • *Music by Louigay. RCA Victor 5965. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 9. That's All I Want from You** Jaye P. Morgan • *Music and lyrics by M. Rotha (pseudonym for Fritz Rotter). RCA Victor 47-5896. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 10. Unchained Melody** Al Hibbler • *Music by Alex North, lyrics by Hy Zaret. Decca 29441.*
- 11. Hard to Get** Gisele MacKenzie • *Music and lyrics by Jack Segal. X 0137. Courtesy of BMG Music.*

- 12. Moments to Remember** The Four Lads • *Music by Robert Allen, lyrics by Al Stillman. Columbia 40539. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 13. Hearts of Stone** The Fontane Sisters • *Music by Rudy Jackson, lyrics by Eddy Ray. Dot 15265. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 14. Only You (And You Alone)** The Platters • *Music and lyrics by Buck Ram and Ande Rand. Mercury 70633. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 15. Love and Marriage** Dinah Shore • *Music by James Van Heusen, lyrics by Sammy Cahn. RCA Victor 6266. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 16. Autumn Leaves** Roger Williams • *Music by Joseph Kosma. Kapp 116.*
- 17. A Blossom Fell** Nat King Cole • *Music and lyrics by Howard Barnes, Harold Cornelius and Dominic John. Capitol 3095. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 18. I'll Never Stop Loving You** Doris Day • *Music by Nicholas Brodsky, lyrics by Sammy Cahn. Columbia 40505. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 19. Sixteen Tons** Tennessee Ernie Ford • *Music and lyrics by Merle Travis. Capitol 3262. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 20. The Yellow Rose of Texas** Mitch Miller with His Orchestra and Chorus • *Music and lyrics by Don George. Columbia 40540. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 21. Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing** The Four Aces • *Music by Sammy Fain, lyrics by Paul Francis Webster. Decca 29625.*
- 22. Sincerely** The McGuire Sisters • *Music and lyrics by Harvey Fuqua and Alan Freed. Coral 61323.*
- 23. Melody of Love** Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra • *Music by H. Engelmann. Dot 15247.*
- 24. The Ballad of Davy Crockett** Bill Hayes • *Music by George Bruns, lyrics by Tom Blackburn. Cadence 1256. Courtesy of Barnaby Records.*





The McGuire Sisters

1955

- 1 **Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)** Perry Como
- 2 **Whatever Lola Wants** Sarah Vaughan
- 3 **Wake the Town and Tell the People** Les Baxter
- 4 **The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane**
The Ames Brothers
- 5 **Let Me Go Lover** Joan Weber
- 6 **The Shifting, Whispering Sands** Rusty Draper
- 7 **Dance with Me Henry (The Wallflower)**
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- 8 **Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White**
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- 9 **That's All I Want from You** Jaye P. Morgan
- 10 **Unchained Melody** Al Hibbler
- 11 **Hard to Get** Gisele MacKenzie
- 12 **Moments to Remember** The Four Lads
- 13 **Hearts of Stone** The Fontane Sisters
- 14 **Only You (And You Alone)** The Platters
- 15 **Love and Marriage** Dinah Shore
- 16 **Autumn Leaves** Roger Williams
- 17 **A Blossom Fell** Nat King Cole
- 18 **I'll Never Stop Loving You** Doris Day
- 19 **Sixteen Tons** Tennessee Ernie Ford
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His Orchestra and Chorus
- 21 **Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing** The Four Aces
- 22 **Sincerely** The McGuire Sisters
- 23 **Melody of Love** Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra
- 24 **The Ballad of Davy Crockett** Bill Hayes



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