

1958



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

*The Kingston Trio: Bob Shane,
Dave Guard and Nick Reynolds*



In May of 1868, newspapers in the mountains of North Carolina were full of stories about a hanging. Young Thomas C. Dula, a Civil War veteran who fought at Gettysburg, had returned home to Wilkes County and almost at once gotten involved in a turbulent affair with a young woman named Laura Foster. Things soon went sour, though; Tom accused Laura of duplicity, of giving him a disease, and with a new girlfriend named Ann Melton he plotted against Laura, swearing he would "put her through." One lonely night he lured her out to a remote mountainside, thrust his bandanna in her mouth and stabbed her. Six weeks later Laura's body was found in a shallow grave, and Tom Dula was chased down and arrested.

The trial was a local sensation and dragged on almost two years, partly because of Dula's refusal to involve Ann Melton. The sentence was finally pronounced, though, and in the long nights Dula spent waiting for the hangman, he composed a song about his plight. On execution day, a large crowd gathered in Statesville and, it was said, Dula sang his composition and played it on his fiddle as he was led to the gallows.

Whatever people in the region thought of Dula as a person, his song caught their imagination. Generations after people forgot about the hanging, they remembered the music. In 1929 two mountain singers recorded Dula's ballad for the Victor Talking Machine Company; in 1938 a folk collector included it in an early book of Southern highlands songs; about the same time, an old banjo player named Frank Profit began singing it at university folklore lectures. Finally, in the spring of 1958, 90 years after Tom Dula went

to the gallows, his ballad became the biggest sensation of the pop music world.

A young, clean-shaven singing group called the Kingston Trio was responsible for this success. Composed of Nick Reynolds, from California, and Bob Shane and Dave Guard, both from Hawaii, the act had come together at San Francisco's trendy nightclub the Purple Onion. Signed to a contract with Capitol, they envisioned a recording career geared to the LP; **Tom Dooley**, as they called their version of Dula's song, was only a cut on their debut LP when it was discovered by disc jockeys. Repeated air play led to its release as a single, and to one of the year's biggest hits. The recording propelled the Kingston Trio to stardom and helped set off a national fad for folk music.

Tom Dooley was also one of the first records to be awarded a Grammy. Nineteen fifty-eight was the year in which the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, a trade organization composed of artists, producers and arrangers, made their first awards.

While the Kingston Trio won for best "country and western performance," the best male vocal performance went to Perry Como for the lilting **Catch a Falling Star**. Buoyed by his successful Saturday night television show, Como seemed impervious to the rhythm and blues revolution, and was able to make this gentle, evocative piece by veteran songwriters Paul Vance and Lee Pockriss into one of the year's top four bestsellers. This was shown dramatically when *Catch a Falling Star* became the first record to be certified as "gold" (million-selling) by the Record Industry Association of America. (Cuban bandleader Perez Prado's

Patricia became the second gold-record winner for its spectacular showing on both the pop and rhythm and blues charts.)

The first Grammy for best performance by a vocal group went to Louis Prima and Keely Smith for **That Old Black Magic**. Prima was a veteran New Orleans trumpet player who had won fame at the Famous Door nightclub in New York in the late 1930s; jazz vocalist Keely Smith joined Prima in 1953. By the mid-1950s, the duo had become favorites at clubs in Vegas and Tahoe, where, aided by tenor sax man Sam Butera and a band called the Witnesses, they featured old standards set to an R & B beat.

The rich rhythm and blues tradition was influencing the year's pop charts in other ways. On the original label of Peggy Lee's **Fever**, for example, composer credits were given to a John Davenport along with Eddie Cooley. Few Lee fans knew that "John Davenport" was a pseudonym for black singer-pianist Otis Blackwell, the composer of rock 'n' roll anthems *Don't Be Cruel* and *Great Balls of Fire*. He had written *Fever* in 1956 and seen Arkansas bluesman Little Willie John make it into a huge hit for the independent King label. Peggy Lee, a former Benny Goodman singer and specialist in torch songs, used *Fever* to help redirect her career toward jazz.

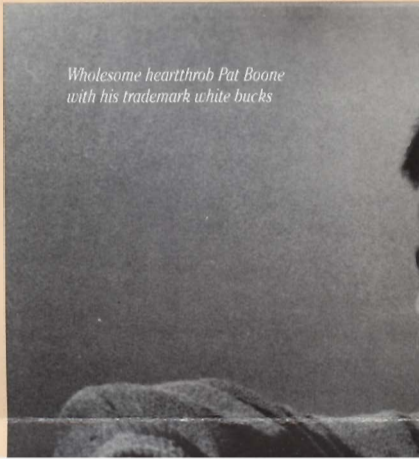
Then there was the bouncy Chordettes smash **Lollipop**. The Chordettes were a foursome of former "barbershop" singers who had come to fame on the Arthur Godfrey television show. Their manager (and one member's husband) was former Godfrey bandleader Archie Bleyer, who had started Cadence Records. In late 1957 a duo named Ronald and Ruby submitted a demo of *Lollipop* to him; "Ruby," the song's co-author, was a white teenager from Brooklyn; "Ronald" was also a teenager but black. Possibly nervous about recording an interracial pair, Bleyer took their song to the Chordettes. The result was one of 1958's catchiest hits, and one that was revived in the 1987 film *Stand by Me*.

Some rhythm and blues groups were themselves able to cross over to the pop charts. One such group, the Platters, began their career in Los Angeles in 1953 recording for the Federal label. After meeting promoter Buck Ram, they got a contract with a mainstream label, Mercury, in 1955 and

were becoming some of the decade's favorites; the original song was co-authored by Joplin, Missouri, composer Percy Wenrich, best known for *Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet* and *When You Wore a Tulip*. **March from the River Kwai**, heard in the Academy Award-winning film *Bridge on the River Kwai*, was based on a World War I-era British march.

In other senses, 1958 reflected the musical diversity that was evident on the nation's jukeboxes. Young groups like the **Four Lads**, the McGuire Sisters and the Everly Brothers crafted memorable songs that at least acknowledged the presence of rock 'n' roll. Veteran masters like Dean Martin, Perry Como and Nat King Cole reminded listeners of the continuing vitality of the classic crooner sound of an earlier age. It was a year when pop music displayed both its traditions and its willingness to embrace the future.

~ Charles K. Wolfe



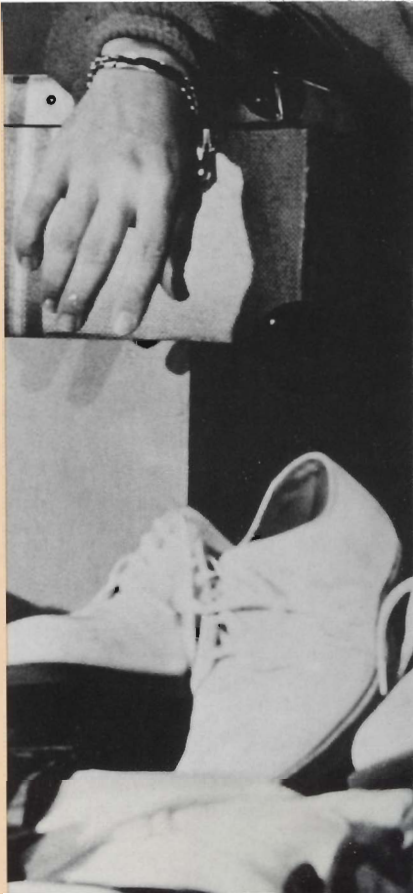
Wholesome heartthrob Pat Boone
with his trademark white bucks

...a contract with a mainstream label, Mercury, in 1955 and crafted a string of top hits. **Twilight Time**, one of their 1958 chart toppers, was written by Ram back in 1944 and became a million seller for the Three Suns; it was one of several standards the Platters revived for their newfound mass audience.

A first cousin to R&B, gospel music provided the basis for two other major hits this year. Pat Boone, middle America's squeaky-clean answer to Elvis, turned in one of his most convincing performances in **A Wonderful Time Up There**. The song had been written in 1947 by Atlanta gospel singer Lee Roy Abernathy, who called it *Gospel Boogie*. Though it became intensely popular in the late 1940s, it caused a furor with gospel fans who objected to a sacred song being called a "boogie." Gospel promoter Wally Fowler saw a way around this by changing the title; he then pitched it to Dot Records and watched Boone take it into the top 10.

He's Got the Whole World (In His Hands) was a black folk song that had been collected from a cook on Nag's Head Island, off the Carolina coast, in 1933 by Frank Warner — the same folklorist who collected and preserved *Tom Dooley*. In the 1940s singer Marian Anderson began including *He's Got the Whole World* in her concerts, and eventually it found its way to England, where bandleader Geoff Love arranged it for 13-year-old Laurie London.

Though many of 1958's top songs were spanking-new, others had histories deeper than most listeners ever suspected. Tommy Edwards' **It's All in the Game**, one of the year's No. 1 songs, sported a tune that had been written in 1912 by General Charles Dawes, vice president of the United States under Calvin Coolidge. **Who's Sorry Now**, Connie Francis' first solo smash, dated from 1923 and used an arrangement suggested by her father, an amateur concertina player. **Sail Along Silvery Moon** featured the mellow saxophone sound of Billy Vaughn, whose Dot albums



DISCOGRAPHY

- 1. Lollipop** The Chordettes • *Music and lyrics by Beverly Ross and Julius Dixon. Cadence 1345. Courtesy of Barnaby Records.*
- 2. Oh-Oh, I'm Falling in Love Again** Jimmie Rodgers • *Music and lyrics by Al Hoffman, Dick Manning, Hugo Peretti and Luigi Creatore. Roulette 4045. Courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc.*
- 3. Looking Back** Nat King Cole • *Music and lyrics by Clyde Otis, Brook Benton and Belford Hendricks. Capitol 3339. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 4. Are You Sincere** Andy Williams • *Music and lyrics by Wayne Walker. Cadence 1340. Courtesy of Barnaby Records.*
- 5. Patricia** Perez Prado and His Orchestra • *Music by Perez Prado. RCA Victor 7245. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 6. Fever** Peggy Lee • *Music and lyrics by John Davenport and Eddie Cooley. Capitol 3998. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 7. A Wonderful Time Up There** Pat Boone • *Music and lyrics by Lee Roy Abernathy. Dot 15690.*
- 8. Everybody Loves a Lover** Doris Day • *Music by Robert Allen, lyrics by Richard Adler. Columbia 41195. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 9. Twilit Time** The Platters • *Music by Morty Nevins, Al Nevins and Artie Dunn, lyrics by Buck Ram. Mercury 71289. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 10. Catch a Falling Star** Perry Como • *Music and lyrics by Paul Vance and Lee Pockriss. RCA Victor 7128. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 11. 26 Miles (Santa Catalina)** The Four Preps • *Music and lyrics by Glenn Larson and Bruce Belland, Capitol 3845. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 12. March from the River Kwai and Colonel Bogey** Mitch Miller and His Orchestra • *Music by Malcolm Arnold and Kenneth J. Alford. Columbia 41066. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 13. That Old Black Magic** Louis Prima and Keely Smith • *Music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by Johnny Mercer. Capitol 4063. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 14. Sugartime** The McGuire Sisters • *Music and lyrics by Charlie Phillips and Odis Echols. Coral 61924.*
- 15. Secretly** Jimmie Rodgers • *Music and lyrics by Al Hoffman, Dick Manning, Hugo Peretti and Luigi Creatore. Roulette 4070. Courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc.*
- 16. All I Have to Do Is Dream** The Everly Brothers • *Music and lyrics by Boudleaux Bryant. Cadence 1348. Courtesy of Barnaby Records.*
- 17. Return to Me** Dean Martin • *Music and lyrics by Carmen Lombardo and Danny Di Minno. Capitol 3894. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 18. Who's Sorry Now** Connie Francis • *Music by Ted Snyder, lyrics by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. MGM 12588. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*
- 19. Put a Light in the Window** The Four Lads • *Music by Kenny Jacobson, lyrics by Rhoda Roberts. Columbia 41058. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 20. Magic Moments** Perry Como • *Music by Burt F. Bacharach, lyrics by Hal David. RCA Victor 7128. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 21. He's Got the Whole World (In His Hands)** Laurie London • *Traditional, arranged by Geoff Love. Capitol 3891. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*
- 22. Sail Along Silvery Moon** Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra • *Music by Percy Wenrich. Dot 15661.*
- 23. It's All in the Game** Tommy Edwards • *Music by Charles Gates Dawes, lyrics by Carl Sigman. MGM 12638. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.*



PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.

24. Tom Dooley The Kingston Trio • *Traditional, arranged by Dave Guard. Capitol 4049. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc.*



The McGuire Sisters

1958

- 1 **Lollipop** The Chordettes
- 2 **Oh-Oh, I'm Falling in Love Again** Jimmie Rodgers
- 3 **Looking Back** Nat King Cole
- 4 **Are You Sincere** Andy Williams
- 5 **Patricia** Perez Prado and His Orchestra
- 6 **Fever** Peggy Lee
- 7 **A Wonderful Time Up There** Pat Boone
- 8 **Everybody Loves a Lover** Doris Day
- 9 **Twilight Time** The Platters
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- 22 **Sail Along Silvery Moon** Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra
- 23 **It's All in the Game** Tommy Edwards
- 24 **Tom Dooley** The Kingston Trio



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1958 was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with MCA Records, Inc. Digitally remastered at A&M mastering studios; Ken Perry, engineer.

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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.

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MSD 35181

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