

1941



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

Duke Ellington



In early 1941 the Andrews Sisters, Maxene, Laverne and Patty, had two top-10 records, **Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy** and **I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time**. They'd sung both in the Bud Abbott-Lou Costello comedy *Buck Privates*. That December the Andrews played sellout shows at a Cincinnati theater, but on December 7 the crowds vanished. A curious Maxene Andrews walked backstage. "The stagehands were sitting around the radio," she told author Studs Terkel, "...talking about Pearl Harbor being bombed. I asked the doorman, 'Where is Pearl Harbor?...' the rest of the week, we had no business."

Nineteen forty-one was a year of transition. President Franklin Roosevelt began his unprecedented third term and spent much of the year planning for the inevitable conflict. As German forces conquered Europe while the Japanese swept Asia, Americans were transfixed by Edward R. Morrow's first-person CBS radio accounts of the Nazi bombings of London. Despite it all, antiwar "America First" isolationists, aviator Charles Lindbergh among them, urged the nation to remain neutral. Pearl Harbor and Germany's declaration of war against the United States ended all that.

In music, the big-band era continued unabated. While fans packed dance halls and bought millions of records—as if to stave off the grim events overseas—top bandleaders were losing key musicians to the draft. In his own response to the mood of the country, Glenn Miller began *Sunset Serenade*, a radio series directed at his young fans in the military. Miller awarded records and radio-phonographs to bases that correctly predicted the most popular song as selected by the show's listeners.

Miller's band topped the *Billboard* college polls in 1941 as they had in 1940. They also appeared in the film *Sun Valley Serenade* with John Payne and ice skater Sonja Henie. Among the songs the band performed was **Chattanooga Choo Choo**, specially written for the film by composers Harry Warren and Mack Gordon. Sung by tenor saxophonist Tex Beneke, Paula Kelly and the band's vocal quartet, the Modernaires, *Chattanooga Choo Choo* not only held the No. 1 position for nine weeks, it also earned the first gold record ever awarded, certifying one million copies sold.

Elmer's Tune, the Miller band's 10th top-10 record and fourth No. 1 that year, came from Chicago bandleader Dick Jurgens, who had heard Elmer Albrecht, a mortician on his lunch break, playing a melody on piano backstage at the Aragon Ballroom. Jurgens' band performed it as an instrumental. When Miller, who wanted to record it, asked Jurgens if the song had words, Jurgens enlisted lyricist Sammy Gallop to write some. Miller's recording featured vocalists Ray Eberle and the Modernaires and was arranged by Jerry Gray, who later did arrangements for Miller's legendary Army Air Force Band.

In 1939 trombonist Tommy Dorsey, whose orchestra rivaled Miller's in popularity, decided to strengthen his jazz repertoire by hiring trumpeter-arranger Sy Oliver, who had helped make the Jimmie Lunceford orchestra one of the greatest of all swing bands. Oliver's compositions gave Dorsey's band a stronger jazz and swing content, particularly in **Yes Indeed!** which Oliver sang as a duet with Dorsey vocalist Jo Stafford. **Oh! Look at Me Now**, a more conven-

tional pop tune, highlighted his star male vocalist, Frank Sinatra, backed by Connie Haines and the Pied Pipers. The song itself was the winning entry in a contest on Dorsey's *Fame and Fortune* radio show.

Dorsey's alto saxophonist brother Jimmy topped the charts with three Latin-flavored records in 1941. **Maria Elena** was sung alone by Bob Eberly, who spelled his name differently than his brother Ray. **Amapola** and **Green Eyes** made stars of Bob and his partner on the two recordings, Helen O'Connell. Eberly begins both songs as romantic ballads; then O'Connell swings out with the beat and Dorsey himself takes the clarinet solos. These unique arrangements by Tutti Camarata came about when the sponsor of Dorsey's radio series asked him to include all his name performers on the final song of each program.

Clarinetist Benny Goodman was still the "King of Swing" in 1941, though he wasn't having as many hits as when he had spearheaded the big-band era several years earlier. His recording of **There'll Be Some Changes Made**, a song made famous by Ethel Waters in 1922, was sung by Louise Tobin and arranged by pioneer swing bandleader Fletcher Henderson, who played piano on the date.

Two Goodman alumni-turned-bandleaders, trumpeter Harry James and drummer Gene Krupa, truly came into their own in 1941. James had led his own swing band since 1938. In 1941 he added strings to broaden his band's appeal and recorded the 1913 Al Jolson hit **You Made Me Love You**. Moved by Judy Garland's sentimental interpretation of the song, James copied her phrasing on his trumpet. When his band arrived at a Brooklyn theater to perform on tour, James was surprised to find crowds stretched down the block. He asked a few people why they were there and "they said they were there to hear Harry James play *You Made Me Love You*. I couldn't believe it."

Krupa had also led his band since 1938, and by 1941 had hired two major jazz innovators, vocalist Anita O'Day and fiery trumpet virtuoso Roy Eldridge. At year's end, Krupa was on top with the swinging **Let Me Off Uptown**, a piece selected for O'Day by her friend, music publisher *Redd Evans*. The song so enthralled her

phrase by phrase, as I sang to him," she later recalled in her autobiography. The song, the classic **God Bless the Child**, was recorded with a small band that included Roy Eldridge and pianist Eddie Heywood.

Bing Crosby's **Dolores**, from the film *Las Vegas Nights*, was an all-star effort. Decca, Crosby's label, commonly teamed their artists in various combinations for special numbers. Bing was backed this time by the vocal quartet the Merry Macs (known for their novelty *The Hut Sut Song*) and the Bob Cats, the Dixieland combo within Crosby's younger brother Bob's band. Two of the combo's most brilliant members, tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller and cornetist Muggsy Spanier, were featured.

Fiddler Bob Wills and his band, the Texas Playboys, dominated Southwestern dance halls from 1935 on with their unique blend of Texas fiddle music, pop songs, jazz and blues, a combination later known as Western swing. Based in Tulsa, the Playboys boasted not only fiddles and electric steel guitar (played by Leon McAuliffe) but full brass and reed sections as well.

New San Antonio Rose, which started out as a fiddle instrumental, was later given lyrics that conjured up romantic images of the Southwest. The 1941 recording was solidly in the big-band style, the swinging arrangement revealing the formidable group of musicians Wills boasted at the time. Bing Crosby made his own version of the song that year and later performed it with Wills and the Playboys at a Tulsa war-bond rally.

—Rich Kienzie

Bandleader Xavier Cugat and Jane Powell in the 1940s MGM musical Holiday in Mexico

piece selected for O'Day by her friend, music publisher Redd Evans. The song so enthralled her that she visited Harlem clubs to catch the atmosphere and consulted a vocal coach to find the most effective phrasings. Arranged as a jumping duet matching O'Day with Eldridge's electrifying trumpet, *Let Me Off Uptown* made both artists even better known.

Legendary jazz pianist-composer Duke Ellington's orchestra also had a 1941 hit extolling Harlem: **Take the "A" Train**, written by his arranger Billy Strayhorn and named for the New York City subway to Harlem. It featured solos by trumpeters Rex Stewart and Ray Nance; the band also included tenor sax great Ben Webster and bassist Jimmy Blanton, whose expressive, melodic playing revolutionized the bass in jazz.

I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good was written by Ellington and lyricist Paul Francis Webster for a stage show, *Jump for Joy*, that Ellington hoped to take to Broadway. It did well in Los Angeles but never went further. The recording spotlighted vocalist Ivie Anderson, alto sax virtuoso Johnny Hodges and Ellington playing celesta.

Bandleader-clarinetist Artie Shaw revived **Star Dust**, the ballad Hoagy Carmichael wrote after a 1927 visit to his alma mater, Indiana University. A standard by 1941, *Star Dust* had been a top-10 recording four times before: for Isham Jones's orchestra and Bing Crosby in 1931, and for the Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey bands in 1936. Arranged by Lennie Hayton, this version had solo spots for Shaw's exquisite clarinet as well as for trumpeter Billy Butterfield and trombonist Jack Jenney.

When Billie Holiday's mother Sadie refused her request for a loan, the resulting argument sparked an idea for a song. Holiday went to Greenwich Village and met her friend Arthur Herzog. "He sat down at a piano and picked it out,



DISCOGRAPHY

- 1. Take the "A" Train** Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra • *Music by Billy Strayhorn. Victor 27380. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 2. Let Me Off Uptown** Gene Krupa and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Redd Evans and Earl Bostic. Vocals by Anita O'Day and Roy Eldridge. OKeh 6210. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 3. Oh! Look at Me Now** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music by Joe Bushkin, lyrics by John DeVries. Vocals by Frank Sinatra, Connie Haines and the Pied Pipers. Victor 27274. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 4. Green Eyes** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music by Nilo Menendez, English lyrics by Edil Rivera and Eddie Woods. Vocals by Bob Eberly and Helen O'Connell. Decca 3698. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 5. I Hear a Rhapsody** Charlie Barnet and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by George Fragos, Jack Baker and Dick Gasparre. Vocal by Bob Carroll. Bluebird 10934. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 6. You Made Me Love You (I Didn't Want to Do It)** Harry James and His Orchestra • *Music by James V. Monaco. Columbia 36296. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 7. Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy** The Andrews Sisters • *Music and lyrics by Don Raye and Hughie Prince. Decca 3598. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 8. Daddy** Sammy Kaye and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Bob Troup. Vocals by the Kaye Choir. Victor 27391. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 9. God Bless the Child** Billie Holiday • *Music and lyrics by Arthur Herzog Jr. and Billie Holiday. OKeh 6270. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 10. Yes Indeed!** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Sy Oliver. Vocals by Sy Oliver and Jo Stafford. Victor 27421. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 11. I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire** The Ink Spots • *Music and lyrics by Eddie Seiler, Sol Marcus, Bennie Benjamin and Eddie Durham. Decca 3987. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 12. Maria Elena** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music by Lorenzo Barcelata. English lyrics by S. K. Russell. Vocal by Bob Eberly. Decca 3698. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 13. Chattanooga Choo Choo** Glenn Miller and His Orchestra • *Music by Harry Warren, lyrics by Mack Gordon. Vocals by Tex Beneke and the Four Modernaires with Paula Kelly. Bluebird 11230. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 14. There'll Be Some Changes Made** Benny Goodman and His Orchestra • *Music by W. Benton Overstreet. Lyrics by Billy Higgins. Vocal by Louise Tobin. Columbia 35210. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 15. Star Dust** Artie Shaw and His Orchestra • *Music by Hoagy Carmichael. RCA Victor 27230. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 16. Racing with the Moon** Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra • *Music by Johnny Watson, lyrics by Vaughn Monroe and Pauline Pope. Bluebird 11070. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 17. I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time** The Andrews Sisters • *Music by Albert Von Tilzer, lyrics by Neville Fleeson. Decca 3622. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 18. I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good** Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra • *Music by Duke Ellington, lyrics by Paul Francis Webster. Vocal by Icie Anderson. Victor 27531. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 19. New San Antonio Rose** Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys • *Music and lyrics by Bob Wills. Vocal by Tommy Duncan. OKeh 5694. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*
- 20. Dolores** Bing Crosby • *Music by Louis Alter, lyrics by Frank Loesser. Backup vocals by the Merry Macs. Decca 25399. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 21. Amapola (Pretty Little Poppy)** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music by Joseph M. Lacalle, English lyrics by Albert Gansse. Vocals by Bob Eberly and Helen O'Connell. Decca 3629. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.*
- 22. Perfidia** Xavier Cugat and His Waldorf-Astoria Orchestra • *Music by Alberto Dominguez. Victor 26334. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 23. Elmer's Tune** Glenn Miller and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Elmer Albrecht, Sammy Gallop and Dick Jurgens. Vocals by Ray Eberle and the Modernaires. Bluebird 11274. Courtesy of BMG Music.*
- 24. 'Til Reveille** Kay Kyser and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Stanley Cowan and Bobby Worth. Vocals by Harry Babbitt, Ginny Simms, Jack Martin and Max Williams. Columbia 36137. Courtesy of CBS Special Products.*

Gene Krupa



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- 2 **Let Me Off Uptown** Gene Krupa and His Orchestra
- 3 **Oh! Look at Me Now** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 4 **Green Eyes** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 5 **I Hear a Rhapsody** Charlie Barnet and His Orchestra
- 6 **You Made Me Love You (I Didn't Want to Do It)**
Harry James and His Orchestra
- 7 **Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy** The Andrews Sisters
- 8 **Daddy** Sammy Kaye and His Orchestra
- 9 **God Bless the Child** Billie Holiday
- 10 **Yes Indeed!** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 11 **I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire** The Ink Spots
- 12 **Maria Elena** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 13 **Chattanooga Choo Choo** Glenn Miller and His Orchestra
- 14 **There'll Be Some Changes Made**
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- 18 **I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good**
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