

# THE '40s



TIME  
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*Bandleader Les Brown*

# THE '40s

During the 1940s, American popular music underwent major changes whose echoes continue to this day. The big-band era peaked in the early '40s, declined during the war and faded away as the decade ended, replaced by the new era of the solo singer. The beginnings of the next musical trends—rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll—developed during the '40s as outgrowths of jazz and pop. And, just as would happen later in the rock era, white bands often had hits with songs written and recorded by black performers and orchestras.

Bandleader Lucky Millinder, who had led bands for others in the 1930s, formed his own orchestra in 1940. By mid-decade the group boasted several future stars of rhythm and blues, among them gospel singer-guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe and blues shouter Wynonie Harris. Harris, vocalist on Millinder's 1945 novelty **Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well**, went on to a stellar rhythm and blues career performing songs much like this one. Louis Jordan's upbeat, humorous music was similarly influential in R & B and enjoyed enormous success with pop audiences as well. One typical Jordan number was **Buzz Me**, which featured backing from his combo, the Tympany Five.

Though **Tuxedo Junction** remains one of Glenn Miller's best-known numbers, he first heard the tune when his orchestra and Erskine Hawkins' orchestra played the same date at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom on Christmas Eve, 1939. Hawkins, who had recorded his version earlier that year, wrote the song to honor a streetcar terminal near a Birmingham, Alabama, dance hall, and he shared writing credit with his alto saxophonist Bill Johnson and tenor saxophonist Julian Dash. When Miller noted the Savoy crowd's

positive reaction, he had arranger Jerry Gray work with band members to create a new arrangement. The Miller version sold 115,000 copies the first week, and it remains one of the outstanding tunes of the entire swing era.

Margaret Whiting, daughter of songwriter Richard Whiting, began her career singing on other artists' records. By 1946 she was recording in her own right, and her first top-10 hit was **Oh, But I Do**, from the film *The Time, the Place and the Girl*. Her orchestra leader on this number was none other than Jerry Gray, Glenn Miller's former arranger.

In the '40s Decca Records commonly teamed their top artists for duets that often became big hits. The Ink Spots, for example, joined forces with Ella Fitzgerald for **Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall** in 1944.

Latin and Western music influenced pop music throughout the decade. Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters joined forces in 1945 for **Along the Navajo Trail**, backed by Patty, Laverne and Maxene's usual accompanists, Vic Schoen and His Orchestra. Bandleader John Scott Trotter provided the Latin-style backing on Crosby's 1944 solo version of **I Love You**, a tune taken from the Mike Todd production of Cole Porter's *Mexican Hayride*. In 1947 vocalist Eddy Howard's version of Louise Massey and the Westerners' 1941 hit **My Adobe Hacienda** became so popular that four other recordings (including a new version by Massey) became bestsellers.

The legendary Western vocal group the Sons of the Pioneers first recorded **Cool Water**, written by charter member Bob Nolan, in 1941. In 1945, newly signed to RCA Victor, the boys re-recorded it with Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra, with Monroe singing the lead, though it was not

released until 1948.

Les Brown and His Orchestra and vocalist Doris Day came into their own with *Sentimental Journey* and *My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time* in 1945. They continued accumulating hits into 1946. Their first of that year was **You Won't Be Satisfied (Until You Break My Heart)**. Also in 1946, **It's All Over Now** became Peggy Lee's fourth top-10 record in barely a year. As on her other early releases, her husband, guitarist Dave Barbour, led the accompanists. Dinah Shore's 1942 **Miss You** was appropriate for a year when thousands of men left wives, children and girlfriends for military service.

Movie musicals provided many hit records during the decade. Perry Como's **I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now** was used in the 1947 film biography (of the same name) of songwriter Joe Howard. Betty Hutton's frantic novelty **His Rocking Horse Ran Away**, written by Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen, came from the 1944 musical *And the Angels Sing*, with Hutton, Dorothy Lamour and Fred MacMurray. Paul Weston and His Orchestra provided the lively accompaniment. Ella Mae Morse's 1944 novelty **Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet** likewise had a Hollywood connection; it was performed in MGM's 1943 *Broadway Rhythm*.

The Dorsey brothers, leading separate orchestras, also dominated the hit parade throughout the '40s. Jimmy had a No. 1 record in 1941 with **Blue Champagne**, featuring his popular vocalist Bob Eberly. Tommy's **Our Love Affair** spotlighted singer Frank Sinatra, whose rise to fame was just beginning.

Two strikes by the American Federation of Musicians against the record companies took place in 1942 and 1948. During these "recording bans," instrumentalists could not record commercially and vocalists could use only choral accompaniment. This accounted for hits like **Put Your Arms around Me, Honey**, by Dick Haymes, backed by the vocal group the Song Spinners. The song came from the 1943 film *Coney Island*, with Betty Grable, George Montgomery and Phil Silvers.

In 1943 Gene Krupa's Orchestra lost its popular vocalist Anita O'Day, who left because of exhaustion. Just months later an arrest for marijuana possession (which many contended was a police setup) shattered Krupa's career. With help from friends like his former employer Benny Goodman, Krupa reorganized his band, and O'Day, following a brief stint with Stan Kenton, rejoined Krupa in 1945. **Boogie Blues**, a combination of blues lyrics, had been created for O'Day to sing with Kenton, but the bandleader rejected it. Krupa had it rearranged for his own band, and it helped herald his comeback.

Like many female vocalists of the '40s, Anita O'Day was influenced by the legendary jazz singer Billie Holiday. Though Holiday had previously worked with small jazz groups, in October 1944 she recorded the dark, melancholy ballad **Lover Man**, today considered among her greatest efforts. She was backed for the first time by a lush string section, arranged and led by Toots Camarata.

Kansas City pianist-bandleader Jay McShann first gained fame for his 1941 hit *Confessin' the Blues* and for employing legendary alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, architect of the modern jazz style known as bebop (Parker plays in the ensemble here). McShann's 1943 **Get Me on Your Mind** was co-written by John Tums, actually John Tumino, McShann's manager. The vocalist was Al Hibbler, who left McShann to join Duke Ellington's orchestra later in the year.

*A "trio" of '40s singers (from left): Billie Holiday, Mel Tormé and Ella Mae Morse*





Guitarist Les Paul, a disciple of jazz guitarists Eddie Lang and Django Reinhardt, first achieved fame leading a trio on Fred Waring's radio show. An electronics innovator and inventor, he designed his own solid-body electric guitars and experimented with "multiple recordings," in which he combined many separate parts to create a guitar orchestra. Capitol signed Paul in 1947, and his version of Cole Porter's **What Is This Thing Called Love** was the first record on which he played his own bass parts. In the '50s, Paul turned out a series of enormously popular records with his wife, singer Mary Ford, and also found the time to invent a line of Gibson solid-body electric guitars that remain mainstays of rock music today.

Mel Tormé's 1949 version of the Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart ballad **Blue Moon** had a complex history. Originally written in 1934 as *The Prayer*, it was rewritten with new lyrics and reincarnated as *Blue Moon for Words and Music*, the MGM biography of the famous Broadway songwriting team. When Tormé, who sang the song in the movie, recorded it for the sound track, Rodgers, who was present at the sessions, objected to some of Tormé's vocal phrasing. Tormé declined to change it, and the composer angrily stormed out of the studio—he never forgave the singer. Tormé re-recorded a release version with an orchestra led by veteran Stan Kenton arranger Pete Rugolo.

The end of the '40s brought the rise of solo vocalists and the waning of the orchestras. Sammy Kaye's final top-10 record of the decade was **The Four Winds and the Seven Seas** in 1949, featuring baritone vocalist Tony Alamo and the Kaye Choir. Alamo, who sang lead on Kaye's 1950 hit *Harbor Lights*, eventually left music for a controversial career as an evangelist that continues to this day.

—Rich Kienzle

## DISCOGRAPHY

**1. Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well** Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Lucky Millinder, Eddie De Lange and Johnny Brooks. Decca 18674 (1945). Vocal by Wynonie "Mr. Blues" Harris and Congregation.*

**2. Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet** Ella Mae Morse • *Music and lyrics by Don Raye and Gene de Paul. Capitol 151 (1944). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.*

**3. Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall** The Ink Spots and Ella Fitzgerald • *Music and lyrics by Allan Roberts and Doris Fisher. Decca 23356 (1944).*

**4. Our Love Affair** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Arthur Freed and Roger Edens. Victor 26736 (1940). Vocal by Frank Sinatra. Courtesy of BMG Music.*

**5. What Is This Thing Called Love** Les Paul • *Music by Cole Porter. Capitol 15070 (1948). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.*

**6. Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)** Billie Holiday • *Music and lyrics by Jimmy Davis, Roger "Ram" Ramirez and Jimmy Sherman. Decca 23391 (1945).*

**7. Buzz Me** Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five • *Music and lyrics by Danny Baxter and Fleece Moore. Decca 18734 (1946). Vocal by Louis Jordan.*

**8. It's All Over Now** Peggy Lee • *Music and lyrics by Sunny Skylar and Don Marcotte. Capitol 292 (1946). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.*

**9. Blue Moon** Mel Tormé • *Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart. Capitol 15428 (1949). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.*

**10. Oh, But I Do** Margaret Whiting • *Music by Arthur Schwartz, lyrics by Leo Robin. Capitol 324 (1947). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.*

**11. Blue Champagne** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Grady Watts, Frank Ryerson and Jimmy Eaton. Decca 3775 (1941). Vocal by Bob Eberly.*

**12. I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now** Perry Como • *Music by Joseph E. Howard and Harold Orlob, lyrics by Will M. Hough and Frank R. Adams. RCA Victor 2315 (1947). Courtesy of BMG Music.*

**13. Better Blues** Gene Krupa and His Orchestra • *Music and lyrics by Gene Krupa and Ray Biondi. Columbia 36986 (1946). Vocal by Anita O'Day. Under license from Sony Music Special*



*Vocal by Anita O'Day. Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.*

**14. Get Me on Your Mind** Jay McShann and His Orchestra • Music and lyrics by Gus Johnson, John Tums and Ernest Redd. Decca 4418 (1943). Vocal by Al Hibbler.

**15. Miss You** Dinah Shore • Music by Henry H. Tobias, lyrics by Charles Tobias and Harry Tobias. Bluebird 11322 (1942). Courtesy of BMG Music.

**16. I Love You** Bing Crosby • Music and lyrics by Cole Porter. Decca 18595 (1944).

**17. My Adobe Hacienda** Eddy Howard and His Orchestra • Music and lyrics by Louise Massey and Lee Penry. Majestic 1117 (1947). Vocals by Eddy Howard with trio. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc.

**18. The Four Winds and the Seven Seas** Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye • Music by Don Rodney, lyrics by Hal David. RCA Victor 3459 (1949). Vocal by Tony Alamo with the Kaye Choir. Courtesy of BMG Music.

**19. Tuxedo Junction** Glenn Miller and His Orchestra • Music by Erskine Hawkins, William Johnson and Julian Dash. Bluebird 10612 (1940). Courtesy of BMG Music.

**20. Put Your Arms around Me, Honey (I Never Knew Any Girl like You)** Dick Haymes and the Song Spinners • Music by Albert Von Tilzer, lyrics by Janie McCree. Decca 18565 (1943).

**21. You Won't Be Satisfied (Until You Break My Heart)** Les Brown and His Orchestra • Music and lyrics by Freddy James and Larry Stock. Columbia 36884 (1946). Vocal by Doris Day. Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

**22. Cool Water** Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra • Music and lyrics by Bob Nolan. RCA Victor 2923 (1948). Backup vocals by the Sons of the Pioneers. Courtesy of BMG Music.

**23. Along the Navajo Trail** Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters • Music and lyrics by Larry Markes, Dick Charles and Eddie De Lange. Decca 23437 (1945).

**24. His Rocking Horse Ran Away** Betty Hutton • Music by Jimmy Van Heusen, lyrics by Johnny Burke. Capitol 155 (1944). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.

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- 1 **Who Threw the Whiskey in the Well**  
Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra
- 2 **Milkman, Keep Those Bottles Quiet** Ella Mae Morse
- 3 **Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall**  
The Ink Spots and Ella Fitzgerald
- 4 **Our Love Affair** Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 5 **What Is This Thing Called Love** Les Paul
- 6 **Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)** Billie Holiday
- 7 **Buzz Me** Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five
- 8 **It's All Over Now** Peggy Lee
- 9 **Blue Moon** Mel Tormé
- 10 **Oh, But I Do** Margaret Whiting
- 11 **Blue Champagne** Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra
- 12 **I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now** Perry Como
- 13 **Boogie Blues** Gene Krupa and His Orchestra
- 14 **Get Me on Your Mind** Jay McShann and His Orchestra
- 15 **Miss You** Dinah Shore
- 16 **I Love You** Bing Crosby
- 17 **My Adobe Hacienda** Eddy Howard and His Orchestra
- 18 **The Four Winds and the Seven Seas**  
Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye
- 19 **Tuxedo Junction** Glenn Miller and His Orchestra
- 20 **Put Your Arms around Me, Honey (I Never Knew Any Girl Like You)**  
Dick Haymes and the Song Spinners
- 21 **You Won't Be Satisfied (Until You Break My Heart)**  
Les Brown and His Orchestra
- 22 **Cool Water** Vaughn Monroe and His Orchestra
- 23 **Along the Navajo Trail**  
Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters
- 24 **His Rocking Horse Ran Away** Betty Hutton



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*Since none of the tracks in this collection were originally recorded on magnetic tape, we have used the best available lacquers or metal part sources. Digital mastering often enhances anomalies present in such vintage recordings. Every effort has been made to present this material in its truest form.*