



New World Records

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Come Josephine in my Flying Machine: Inventions and Topics in Popular Song 1910-1929 New World NW 233

The creation of popular music in America has been closely tied to the ways the music was performed, the growing and changing composition of the audience, and the emergence of highly commercial entertainment enterprises. The adaptation of certain mechanical, optical, and electrical devices to the needs of entertainment has also influenced popular music. The marked local or regional character of much of our music in the nineteenth century either faded or became part of the mainstream. In America, moreover, the development of popular song has been affected by diverse ethnic and social forces that have made this music not only rich in content and quality but also an influence throughout the world. In the end, the whole became more important than the parts.

Although love songs and sentimental ballads have accounted for most popular music, the topical song has always been important in America. Stephen Collins Foster wrote durable pieces about horse races, a dog, and imaginary southern homes. James Bland, another gifted writer, used golden slippers, tapioca, and silver trumpets as subjects. In the present century Irving Berlin used the telephone, a mythical ragtime band, violins, pianos, and girls on magazine covers as inspiration.

Early published music clearly reflects the American's preoccupation with things—with

inventions, devices, gadgets, and diversions of all kinds. There were "The Railroad" (1828), "The Lighthouse" (1841), the "Atlantic Telegraph Polka" (1868), "Velocipedia" (1868), "At the Roller Skating Rink" (1884), and "Snap Shot Girl" (1899). Telephone songs were particularly numerous: "The Telephone Polka" (1877), "The Telephone Wonder" (1884), "Kissing Papa Through the Telephone" (1889), and "My Own Little Telephone Belle" (1903), to cite a few.

Similarly social issues, political campaigns, and events have inspired numbers such as "The Bloomer Girl Quick Step" (1851), the temperance song "A Cup of Cold Water" (1873), "Blaine from Maine" (1884), "The Johnstown Flood" (1889), and "Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis" (1904).

The appeal and influence of the earlier topical songs is often difficult to assess, but the great number of them is certainly significant, and topical material has remained prominent in American music. Although the commercialism of the music business often seemed oppressive to creative freedom (because of the requirements in plugging a song, or because the companies wished to retain an artist's recording character), a surprising number of good topical songs were not only written but welcomed by the publishers, performers, and public. A song had to be easily sung, played, and remembered while retaining just the right amount of difference or incorporat-

ing some melodic or lyric hook to set it apart. The sixteen topical songs here represent but a small sampling of the output between 1900 and 1930.

Songs about new inventions became less numerous after 1930, probably because fewer gadgets of great importance were introduced, especially inventions that seemed useful in courtship. In this, however, song titles are no accurate barometer. Although there may be no song devoted solely to the refrigerator, the line "I'll stock my heart with icy frigid air" in "I'm Through with Love" (1931) was an obvious pun, and the more explicit phrase "picking on a wishbone from the Frigidaire" appeared cleverly in "Two Sleepy People" (1938). But the older inventions and things, along with a few new ones, did hold the attention of songwriters. There were, to name a few, "Flying Down to Rio" (1933), "Cocktails for

Two" (1934), "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (1941), and "The Old Piano Roll Blues" (1950). There were also big-band favorites such as Billy Strayhorn's wonderful "Take the A Train" (1941), with words that nobody seems to recall. There was even a witty put-down of the world of things with its ugliness and dangers in "Civilization" (1947), a fast-paced indictment of a materialistic society gone mad with taxicabs and A-bombs.

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Side One

Band 1

Oceana Roll

(Roger Lewis and Lucien Denni)

Eddie Morton, vocal; studio orchestra.
Recorded July 12, 1911, in New York.
Originally issued on Victor 16908.

President Theodore Roosevelt sent a large part of the United States Navy on a world cruise from December, 1907, to February, 1909, to emphasize to the powerful nations—especially Japan, which had objected to an order of the San Francisco School Board to segregate children of Oriental origin—that the United States naval forces ranked second only to those of Great Britain (Japan's ranked fifth). For Roosevelt's purposes, the cruise turned out to be very effective. Moreover, the glories of this "New Navy," capable of steaming anywhere and frightening almost anyone, captured the imagination of those at home.

The cover of the sheet music to "Oceana Roll" depicts (somewhat inaccurately) the U.S.S. *Alabama*—commissioned in 1900 and technically classified as a battleship—with its black smoke "floating up to heaven." A sailor sits banging out

the tune on a grand piano while a musical staff with superimposed drawings of dancing gobs, fish, and tables and chairs frames the whole. References to England and Spain in Roger Lewis' lyrics are significant. Spain had been beaten by America in the short war of 1898 and stripped of important parts of her colonial empire. The thought of even a peaceful visit by the American fleet to Spanish waters would be especially galling to the recent losers; but the jingoistic implications in the lyrics, which are otherwise breezy and concerned with ragtime being played on an unlikely seagoing piano, reveal, if fleetingly, the great expansionist confidence so often evident in America before World War I.

The composer, Lucien Denni, was born in Nancy, France, in 1886. It remains a surprise to many students of ragtime that a non-native could produce a competently written song of this type. But the raggy quality is there, and the song, with its appeal in both the tune and the words, which refer directly to ragtime and syncopation, was a hit right from the start.

Eddie Morton (1870-1938) was a native of Philadelphia who achieved considerable fame in

vaudeville during the first twenty years of this century. His recording career began with Victor in 1907, and he continued to be heard until 1917 on records produced by Columbia, Edison, Zonophone, Emerson, and other firms as well as Victor. This body of work includes a number of good ragtime pieces—"Wild Cherries Rag," "That Peculiar Rag"—plus some popular comic rousers like Harry Von Tilzer's "Don't Take Me Home," which Morton recorded for Columbia in 1909.

Morton's version of "Oceana Roll" was coupled with "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (sung by Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan) and remained available in shops until at least 1920. The unusually long-lived popularity of Irving Berlin's song undoubtedly helped Denni's number, but "Oceana Roll" had staying power of its own. It was given one last prominent and fond public notice by Charlie Chaplin, who in a subtitle in the charming cabin scene of the film *The Gold Rush* (1925) informs the girl of his dreams that he will dance the "Oceana Roll." Chaplin, with a fork in each hand, then spears two baked potatoes and proceeds to dance a manual ballet on a dinner plate, deftly and gracefully manipu-

lating the potato feet (a routine, as it turns out, lifted from a Fatty Arbuckle picture). It is probable that movie-house piano players provided an accurate accompaniment by rendering "Oceana Roll."

Band 2

Hello, Frisco

(Gene Buck and Louis A. Hirsch)

Elida Morris and Sam Ash, vocals; studio orchestra. Recorded June 30, 1915, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia A-1801.

A wonderful year, 1915—for Americans. While Europeans were entrenching themselves in a war that grew more grim and hopeless each month, Americans retained their confidence and a curious optimism that peace abroad could somehow be recaptured. Henry Ford sponsored the well-intentioned mission of American fellow optimists and pacifists to bring sense to European leaders and an end to the war. Their disappointment was bitter. A chorus back home said, "I told you so." Yet 1915 was the year when the opening of the Panama Canal (1914) was celebrated by a great fair in San Francisco, the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Of greater significance, the Edinburgh-born naturalized American citizen Alexander Graham Bell spoke from New York to his old colleague Thomas A. Watson in San Francisco to inaugurate America's first coast-to-coast telephone service.

While the Exposition was officially commemorated by a set of four exquisitely engraved postage stamps, the Broadway songwriting team of Gene Buck and Louis Hirsch created "Hello, Frisco" to commemorate, in their way, the new transcontinental telephone hookup. The telephone song was a bigger hit than the stamps.

Hirsch, who had been composing for Broadway shows since 1907, had already enjoyed a substantial success with "The Gaby Glide" in *Vera Violetta* (1911). But "Hello, Frisco" proved more durable than any of his

other songs with the possible exception of "The Love Nest," from *Mary* (1920), a superb number with words by Otto Harbach. "Hello, Frisco," the biggest hit from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1915*, eventually became a standard and was the inspiration for the 1943 motion-picture musical *Hello, Frisco, Hello*, a World War II hummer starring Alice Faye, John Payne, and Jack Oakie.

The song's success owed more than a little to Gene Buck's lyrics. The words create a near-perfect illusion of placing a transcontinental call through "Central" over the early static-filled long-distance lines. The dialogue captures the naive thrill of two sweethearts actually conversing while separated by more than three thousand miles. They ask the eavesdropping operator at Central to get off the line after the connection is made.

The record reproduced here presents two talented vocalists with experience of considerable depth. Sam Ash was featured in the long-running 1915 Broadway musical *Katinka* and in later productions such as *Doing Our Bit* (1917), *Monte Cristo, Jr.* (1919), *The Passing Show of 1922*, and the film musical *Girl Without a Room* (1933). Elida Morris, who had begun her recording career in 1910, also sang duets with partners as well known (to early record buyers) as Billy Murray and Walter Van Brunt. She is better remembered as a single who worked in the new syncopated style, and was sometimes labeled a "coon shouter." She toured England, France, and South Africa, sang for a while in opera, and as late as 1973 was reported to be still active in her church choir.

Band 3

The Girl on the Magazine Cover

(Irving Berlin)

Harry Macdonough, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded 1916, probably in New York or in Camden, N.J. Originally issued on Victor 17945.

The impact of the popular magazine on American taste before 1920 was equivalent to similar later influences imposed by the theater, motion pictures, radio, and television. Magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* circulated to more than a million subscribers well before America's entry into World War I. The magazine of the second half of the nineteenth century had been transformed into a powerful molder of opinion. It attracted authors as well known but dissimilar as Mark Sullivan, Rudyard Kipling, and President Theodore Roosevelt (who for a while contributed an anonymous column, "Men," to the *Journal*). The *Ladies' Home Journal*, in fact, ranked third in popularity with the American soldiers serving in France in 1918. The *Journal* grew fat and carried not only a million dollars' worth of advertising but music by Josef Hoffman, Johann Strauss, Sousa, and Paderewski.

The romantic content, however, was what captivated youthful Americans striving for higher positions within the middle class, a striving expressed in idealized but standardized notions of clothing, hair styles, and "a good marriage." The most effective popular illustrator in the years preceding the war was Charles Dana Gibson. He was born in 1867 to Yankee parents of modest means. The perfection of his art coincided with the perfection of the photoengraving process that permitted accurate reproduction of his pen-and-ink drawings. His portraits of idealized girls in *Life* were clipped and pasted in scrapbooks, converted to wallpaper designs for men's bedrooms, and widely imitated. Gibson's "American Girl" looked out from everywhere. The similarity between Gibson's and Ziegfeld's girls was not accidental.

Irving Berlin, the Russian-born immigrant who by 1915 was already well along toward making his American dream a reality, crafted his version of Gibson's beauty, "The Girl on the Magazine Cover," for *Stop! Look! Listen!*, which opened

at the Globe on Christmas Day and starred the French charmer Gaby Deslys. The song never enjoyed the wide popularity of many other Berlin tunes, even after being revived for the 1948 film *Easter Parade*. It remains, however, an outstanding melody with the unusual structure of ABCD, a pattern generally avoided by less competent writers and not too frequently used by Berlin himself. Yet the song has a natural flow, unity, and perfection that aptly mirror the same qualities found in Gibson's best illustrations.

The tenor Harry Macdonough was in the early years of disc recording the leading popular voice in Victor's impressive stable of male talent. His rendition here is sure and lyrical, and probably would have been heard to better advantage if Walter B. Rogers, the conductor of Victor's house orchestra, had slowed the tempo of the accompaniment just a bit.

Note: For more on Berlin see New World Records NW 238, *The Vintage Irving Berlin*.

Band 4

On the 5:15

(Stanley Murphy and Henry I. Marshall)

American Quartet, vocals; studio orchestra. *Recorded 1914, probably in New York or in Camden, N.J. Originally issued on Victor 1770A.*

Musically there is little to recommend this novelty number. The wit with which the lyrics develop the story of a commuter's marital woes that result from his epic struggle with the 5:15, however, should bring a smile to the lips of anyone who has had to ride the suburban trains in rush hour. The melody, such as it is, is in the spirit of other railroad tunes and seems to owe a debt to Harry Von Tilzer's "On the Old Fall River Line" of the previous year.

By 1914 most populous cities in America had vast suburban developments, "bedroom communities" that sprawled over countless acres in every direction, peppered with

look-alike houses and connected to the city by steam railroads or electric inter-urban lines. The rush to the local depot each morning and the crowded city station each evening became part of the exasperating but inescapable new American life-style. It rapidly became a legend that remains timeless.

The singers in the American Quartet obviously enjoyed making the record as much as their fellow commuters enjoyed hearing it. (The song, though terribly wordy, did become a hit.) The American had been formed in 1909 by Billy Murray, the lead voice. Other members were John Bieling (tenor), William F. Hooley (bass), and Steve Porter, an all-around recording pioneer who began professionally in 1897 and specialized as a soloist in comic novelty tunes and monologues in dialect. Murray, who sets the pace here, was equally versatile and even more in demand.

The song's story: Joe Commuter, with groceries under his arm, misses the 5:15 quite by accident; repairs "temporarily" to a corner saloon near the downtown station; gets tipsy with a few others who have missed the 5:15 and sings a little baritone; catches a late-night train home to his suburban love nest, only to find his wife crying behind locked doors; tosses the groceries over the transom and returns by train to the attractions of the city; struggles through the next day at the office with the world's worst hangover; finds to his dismay that he cannot return on the 5:15 because it is Saturday (he forgot) and trains are on different schedules; learns that his wife has gone home to mother, engaged a lawyer, and is suing for divorce. The ending could have been written by O. Henry, for when the bedraggled and apparently ruined hero of the song is hailed into court to defend against his wife, he and the rest of us are cheered to learn that the judge and jury are chums who all ride together each night on the 5:15.

Band 5

He'd Have to Get Under, Get Out and Get Under (to Fix Up His Automobile)

(Grant Clarke, Edgar Leslie, and Maurice Abrahams)

Will Halley, vocal; studio orchestra. *Recorded 1913 in New York. Originally issued on Columbia A-1457.*

By 1913 the automobile was no longer a curiosity, though it was by no means the mechanical marvel it was to become in the years following World War I. There was little hint, in fact, that the Tin Lizzie and her offspring would within a few short years profoundly change life in America and become a leading factor in the nation's rush toward total mechanization. There was hardly a hint of the concrete networks that would blight the countryside, barely a clue of the acres of junkyards to come, and surely no indication that exhaust fumes would pollute the very air of America.

The automobile was still regarded as considerably less reliable than a horse and buggy, even for taking a date for a novel drive in the country. It mattered little that cars were becoming not only more numerous but more affordable. Cars still got stuck in mudholes on nearly every country road, tires blew out regularly, and even new machinery broke down with frustrating frequency. "Get a horse" remained a wisecrack for years, shouted by boys and roadside idlers while the embarrassed Gibsonesquely dressed girl sat in the open car, watching her escort when he'd have to crawl under the motor for repairs.

Before 1920 the automobile was celebrated in a surprising number of songs, most of which were without innovative qualities or musical influence. Yet they mirrored the public's fascination with the horseless carriage and heralded the long love affair between Americans and their automobiles. Only a few automobile songs were average or above

in quality and longevity. (The same can be said for many of the cars.) “He’d Have to Get Under” became somewhat of a standard, as did “In My Merry Oldsmobile” (1905).

Not surprisingly, the Oldsmobile tune was used for years as a broadcast commercial. It gave no hint of road trouble. Neither did another name-brand automobile song, “The Little Ford Rambled Right Along” (1914). “He’d Have to Get Under” was more honest in describing the hazards of car travel, and its good-natured realism undoubtedly gave the number much of its popular appeal.

Will Halley’s work as a whole remains obscure. In addition to this selection, however, Halley had the privilege at Victor to record the great hit and subsequent standard by Joseph McCarthy and James V. Monaco, “You Made Me Love You,” also from 1913.

Band 6

Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine

(Alfred Bryan and Fred Fisher)

Blanche Ring, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded December 22, 1910, in New York. Originally issued on Victor 60032.

The songs written about airplanes seem to be better than those about cars. Within three years during the war, three very singable aviation tunes appeared: “Going Up (You Start to Sway)” (1917), “Poor Little Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now” (1919), and “Wait Till You Get Them Up in the Air, Boys” (1919). This attention to the airplane surely resulted from interest created by war reports of dogfights and the glamorized publicity about fighter planes and that new romantic hero, the ace. The peacetime uses of aircraft, however, were not lost on the ground-hugging public. Regularly scheduled air-mail service was introduced between Washington, Philadelphia, and New York in 1918.

One of the earlier airplane songs remained the best. “Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine,”

with a fine ragtime-like tune by Fred Fisher and delightful lyrics by Alfred Bryan, suggests the carefree, airy feeling associated with the early planes, which resembled kites more than anything else.

When the song was introduced in 1910, airplanes were a wonder and the seeming wave of the future. The idea of taking your Josephine (“up she goes”) for a hop in your own plane was not unlikely or even wildly undemocratic in 1910. Mechanically the airplane was no more complex than the automobile. To some, it seemed even easier to master. With Fisher’s catchy melody still in the air, so to speak, Cal Rogers started flying lessons with the Wright brothers and soloed after only ninety minutes of instruction. Holding pilot’s license number 49, he became the first to fly from coast to coast—in 1911. The price of a new plane then was about five thousand dollars, and it was conceivable that mass production would bring the price of a winged flivver, like that of the automobile, within range of the average pocketbook. But the industry and public demand never developed along those lines; only a relative few pursued the dream of flight, at least to the point of being able to romance their date in the clouds.

As for Blanche Ring (1877-1961), hardly anyone would seem more appropriate to sing the fetching “Flying Machine” number. She had put over such memorable popular songs as “In the Good Old Summer Time” (1902), “Bedelia” (1903), “Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay” (1909), and “I’ve Got Rings on My Fingers” (1909). Miss Ring had a good instinct for recognizing a potential hit. The daughter of an actor, she started in theater at sixteen in her native Boston, made a New York debut in *Tommy Rot* (1902), worked successfully in London variety (1903-4), returned to the States to work on Broadway and on the road, appeared in musicals, vaudeville, Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* and other legitimate productions, two silent films (1915), radio, and (briefly) in Bing Crosby’s *If I Had My Way*, a 1940 movie. It was easy to believe the note on

Miss Ring in Victor’s record catalogue for 1920:

It is hardly necessary to say anything about this . . . gifted comedy star. . . . Whether she sings or dances, in her occasional serious moments, as well as in comedy, she is charming, and no woman on the stage today can sing a humorous song better than this artist.

Band 7

Take Your Girlie to the Movies

(Edgar Leslie, Bert Kalmar, and Pete Wendling)

Billy Murray, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded 1919, probably in New York or in Camden, N.J. Originally issued on Victor 18592.

By 1910 nearly every town of any consequence had at least one old store or a hall or converted theater where motion pictures were shown. Although few artists then were known by name, “movies” were the newest rage. Within the next ten years theaters specifically intended to function as motion-picture houses were being constructed, some of the larger with all the architectural trappings of European palaces. The stars found their professional road paved with gold. More than a hundred and fifty motion-picture players were well known enough to be listed by name in the *World Almanac* for 1918.

By that year the former admission price of a nickel or dime had risen to twenty-five or even thirty-five cents at the larger houses. The pioneer nickelodeon programs consisting of a hodgepodge of one-reelers had been supplanted by feature productions of many reels: dramas, comedies, romantic pieces that showcased the new stars. Fan magazines had sprung up to fuel the interest of a growing audience that was beginning to cut into the proceeds of vaudeville and burlesque.

Curiously, the end of the war in 1918 brought an immediate slump to the motion-picture business for a few months. Filmmakers had been

steadily grinding out pictures based almost exclusively on the theme of war, and the sudden peace caused a sudden loss of public interest in the war film. In the publicity agents' scramble to restore health to the sagging film business, while new scripts were prepared and new footage was shot, an advertising campaign was launched that included a number of gimmicks to refresh the public's interest. Ballyhoo and hokum had long been part of Hollywood's approach to business, even in healthy times; but now the filmmakers seemed to be fighting for their survival. "Take Your Girlie to the Movies" can be viewed not only as a song of topical content but as part of this intensified publicity campaign.

Billy Murray enjoyed enormous popularity as an artist for the Victor, Columbia, Edison, and other phonograph companies. He was a pioneer performer in the industry and can be heard on records dating from 1902. He made an incredible number of recordings as a soloist, in duets with a variety of colleagues, and with the Heidelberg Quintet and the American Quartet. Murray was at home in different vocal styles—straight, slangy, dialect—with a bounciness that was current among those who appreciated syncopation. He seemed to prefer comic or topical songs. Murray worked throughout the period reviewed here, his last commercial recording for Victor apparently being "Katie, Keep Your Feet on the Ground," a duet with Aileen Stanley, on June 13, 1929. The only other male singer in the early period of recorded popular music who rivaled Murray in number of recordings issued or sold was Henry Burr. But their styles and material were different, and, while their careers spanned the same period, they should not be considered rivals in the normal sense.

The paragraph with which Victor plugged Murray's records was repeated without change in the catalogues for 1920 and 1925. The opening sentence was undoubtedly true:

Billy Murray is one of the most successful of all American singers of

humorous songs, and probably entertains, through his Victor records, a larger audience than any other singer who has ever lived.

Band 8

Everybody Wants a Key to My Cellar

(Ed Rose, Billy Baskette, and Lew Pollack)

Bert Williams, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded April 16, 1919, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia A-2750.

A great deal has been written about Prohibition and the Volstead Act of 1919, probably because people were prohibited from doing one of the things they had always enjoyed and because the new legislation fermented one of the biggest crime binges experienced by any people anywhere. While trying to cope with Prohibition, and even after Repeal, few seemed able to understand why the whole thing should have happened the way it did.

There were numerous explanations: wartime prejudice against German brewers; the longstanding hatred of the saloon on the part of some; the exaggerated self-righteousness of civilians fighting a "great crusade" (the war); the power of the organized Dries, falsely inflated by the absence of voters serving in France. But there has been no consensus on which factor or combination provided the kicker. Normal legislation could have been expected; an amendment was quite another matter. Prohibition was a watershed. As one temperate drinker observed many years later, "Everything stopped. Everything changed."

It seemed as though everyone was preoccupied with the subject. American slang expressions for the word "drunk" multiplied rapidly after 1920, so much so that more slang synonyms for the word exist than for any other. Naturally, most of the preoccupation stemmed from the efforts of millions of citizens to slake their alcoholic thirst in this new Great American Desert. Drinking became fashionable; you were nobody if you didn't drink.

In this social atmosphere song-

writers and jazzmen who noodled out their own melodies created an incredible number of tunes on the subject. The market for a booze number, like that for hootch itself, never died, and drink and drinking inspired probably more songs than any other topic aside from love. There were, among a multitude, "Alcoholic Blues," "In the Bottle Blues," "On the 'Gin 'Gin 'Ginny Shore," "Just a Little Drink," "Show Me the Way to Go Home," and "Hello, Montreal."

In addition to "Everybody Wants a Key to My Cellar," the masterful Bert Williams (1874-1922) recorded "The Moon Shines on the Moonshine," "Ten Little Bottles," and "Save a Little Dram for Me," all in the alcoholic vein. His best-known number was "Nobody," which he recorded for Columbia on two different occasions (1906 and 1913). His other recorded work—of which there is a considerable body from 1901 to 1922—is all excellent.

An immigrant from Nassau, Williams projected great natural dignity, a quality seldom associated with comedians. His professional work began in the eighteen-nineties with Lew Johnson's Minstrels and Selick's Mastodons. Williams formed a ten-year partnership with George Walker, and together they appeared on Broadway in *The Gold Bug* (1896), *In Dahomey* (1903, and in London later that year), *Abyssinia* (1906), and *Bandana Land* (1908). The team was also active in organizing the Negro Actors Society (1906). With Walker's health failing, the partnership was dissolved. Williams continued in vaudeville as a star single and appeared in one more all-Negro production, *Mr. Lode of Coal*, in 1909 before being signed by Florenz Ziegfeld for the *Follies of 1910*. With that, Williams became the first Negro to work in an otherwise all-white Broadway show. He continued as a headliner with Ziegfeld for ten years, both in single spots and in skits with fellow singers and comedians, the veteran W. C. Fields and the newcomer Eddie Cantor among them.

Side Two Band 1

The Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks

(Carey Morgan and Arthur M. Swanstrom)

Nora Bayes, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded July 10, 1920, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia A-2980.

The Argentines, the Portuguese, the Armenians, and the Greeks of this topical song represented those among the new immigrants who were often singled out as less desirable than the earlier arrivals who had “built America.” The engaging cleverness of the lyrics only thinly veiled a pervasive prejudice against newcomers from the Mediterranean world, the Near and Middle East, and Latin America. The theme here is developed along economic lines. The country was experiencing a depression, and the essential resentment stemmed from the impression that these new peoples were not only everywhere but successful. They were bootblacks and barbers, occupied the best rooms in the finest hotels, drove the swellest automobiles, and dated the most attractive American-born girls.

If such notions were simplistic and contained contradictions, they nevertheless had wide circulation in an America that was less self-assured than it had been under Theodore Roosevelt. Cuban baseball players whose pigmentation was “too dark” were not permitted in the major leagues; Bert Williams’ presence on an otherwise all-white stage remained exceptional; Al Smith, a Roman Catholic, would lose an election; immigration was being drastically restricted.

Nora Bayes (1880-1928), the great singer, was herself of obscure origin. Her real name was Goldberg, but there is some doubt whether her first name was Leonora (the most commonly accepted) or Dora. Not even her friends were sure of the place of her birth, which was reported variously as Chicago, Joliet, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee. Not that it mattered, but in her long

career of touring she never played Milwaukee. Such minor enigmas were part of the Bayes mystique.

She had plenty of genuine friends and was never without rivals—Sophie Tucker was one. Edward V. Darling was perpetually exasperated with her and more than once refused to book Bayes into the Palace. She married five times. Fluctuations between periods of warmth and of hostility that approached arrogance have been ascribed to her fourteen-year bout with cancer.

But Bayes was Big Time, an accomplished star. With her second husband, Jack Norworth, she wrote “Shine On, Harvest Moon,” the perennial favorite that the husband-and-wife team introduced in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1908*. She appeared in other *Follies* (1907 and 1909) in addition to other major Broadway productions from 1901 to 1922. She was a top-salaried vaudevillian who worked both sides of the Atlantic.

Bayes’s popularity was immensely helped by numerous recordings issued from 1910 to 1923. She never recorded Harry Von Tilzer’s delightful “Down Where the Wurzberger Flows” (1902), the song that established her. Equally regrettable, the Bayes-Norworth duet of “Shine On, Harvest Moon” for Victor was never released. But she had a flock of other records that showed her to good advantage: “Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?” (1910), “Over There” (1917), and the elegant ballad “The Japanese Sandman” (1920), to which she imparted her own elegance, were but a few.

The epitaph by her contemporary Douglas Gilbert in *American Vaudeville* (see Bibliography) was apt:

Nora Bayes was the American Guilbert, mistress of effortless talent in gesture, poise, delivery, and facial work. No one could outrival her in dramatizing a song. She was entrancing, exasperating, generous, inconsiderate—a split personality; a fascinating figure. [Yvette Guilbert (1867-1944) was a

French diseuse and chanteuse celebrated for her distinctive interpretations of folk songs. She is immortalized in Toulouse-Lautrec’s sketches and lithographs.]

Band 2

Mr. Radio Man (Tell My Mammy to Come Back Home)

(Ira Schuster, Johnny White,
and Cliff Friend)

Al Jolson, vocal; Isham Jones and His Orchestra. Recorded March, 1924, in Chicago. Originally issued on Brunswick 2582.

Along with Nora Bayes and Bert Williams, Al Jolson typified the performers whose charisma assumed legendary proportions in early twentieth-century America. While his powerful and very personal singing style drew heavily from the creative work of black performers, from fellow song belters of European origin who needed no amplification to be heard in the cavernous theaters, and from cantors who intoned their sacred music in American synagogues, Jolson’s singing remained unmistakably his.

He had an enormous ego and was always pleased with his successes. They were plentiful. Yet he was forever proving himself, perhaps never shaking the insecurity of his origins or never quite at ease in an America that was quick to show indifference to past achievement.

The outline of Jolson’s life is too well known to require elaboration. He was born Asa Yoelson in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1886, and remained dynamic until his death in 1950. He first appeared in minstrel shows, then in burlesque, vaudeville, and Broadway musicals, achieving top billing by 1912 in *The Whirl of Society*. He worked in radio, enjoyed the distinction of singing in 1927’s pioneer part-talking movie *The Jazz Singer*; then appeared in other motion pictures, in nightclubs, and on television. He entertained servicemen during World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

Jolson's recorded work for Victor, Columbia, Brunswick, and Decca spanned four decades. Fortunately, he recorded numerous hits with which he remains associated: "You Made Me Love You" (1912), "Hello, Central, Give Me No Man's Land" (1918), "Avalon" (1920), "April Showers" (1921), "Sonny Boy" (1928), and many, many more.

A lot of his songs were topical, humorous, or maudlin, and "Mr. Radio Man" is certainly both topical and maudlin. Although the impact of radio in American homes was new in 1924, the inspiration for the lyrics went straight back to "Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven" of 1901 and the more recent imitation "Hello, Central, Give Me No Man's Land." The tune of "Mr. Radio Man," if not original either was at least melodious and well suited to Jolson's style.

Apparently Jolson really did not enjoy working in radio until his appearances, late in life, with Bing Crosby. Other Broadway personalities, however, switched from the stage to the air lanes with eagerness and success.

Radio's growth and influence in the decade following the war were phenomenal. The radio industry was virtually nonexistent in 1920. But by 1924 there were some three million sets in American homes. With little expense, people in even the remotest parts of the nation were transported to concert halls, sports fields and arenas, and dance halls; political events, lectures, songs, drama, and comedy were free. Radio advertising seemed to reap the biggest profits for big business. But in the end—even considering the dubious quality of the fare and radio's inability to communicate with those in heaven—new vistas were being opened. A powerful influence on American taste and aspirations had been created, and the public ultimately benefited most.

Band 3

Alabama Bound

(B. G. DeSylva, Bud Green, and Ray Henderson)

Blossom Seeley, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded January 29, 1925, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia 304-D.

This tune still enjoys a healthy popularity. Its staying power owes nothing to recent nostalgic glances back toward steam engines or railroads: the song has an above average melody and a superb lyric. Since it stands high on the list of standards, it is also superior among the numbers that have been inspired by the railroads.

And there have been a great many. Moreover, many that have no reference to the subject in their titles refer to engines, boxcars, diners, baggage cars, cabooses, tracks, stations, and whistles in their lyrics. For example, Bert Williams in "Nobody" bemoans the lack of assistance in extricating himself from "that railroad wreck." And the booze-seeking traveler in "Hello, Montreal" is joyously singing while riding the train northward out of Manhattan. The twenties produced other fine train songs in "Toot Toot, Tootsie," the haunting "Dream Train," and the humorous "Where Do You Work-a, John?" (to which the answer was "on the Delaware-Lackawan"). Despite their fascination with airplanes and automobiles, with liquor and radios, Americans have always loved to write and sing songs about railroads.

In the twenties American railroads were at their peak. The decade opened with 252,845 miles of track in operation, only slightly less than in the peak year, 1916. The steam locomotive was becoming more efficient and more powerful; passenger equipment became heavier, safer, and more luxurious; and the nation's freight moved largely by rail. Everything and everybody took the train, so it seemed, for local excursions, for short trips, or for long-distance travel. It was a distinct pleasure to "put your tootsies in an upper berth."

Blossom Seeley (1891-1974), who had traveled some herself, lends the song her special jazz-era enthusiasm. She had first achieved prominence in San Francisco singing "Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey" and "Toddlin' the Todalo" in 1908. She was a headliner in her own right but was married on two occasions to prominent men. The first was the great baseball pitcher Rube Marquard, now in the Hall of Fame. The second was entertainer Benny Fields, with whom she teamed on stage.

Seeley's better-known recordings included her hit "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" (1922) and the lively, typically twenties number "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" (1925). Unfortunately, she did not record some of her other hits, "I Cried for You," "Jealous," and "Somebody Loves Me." From 1911 to 1928 she appeared in seven musical productions in addition to her work in vaudeville. The shows in which she starred during the peak of her popularity include *The Whirl of Society* (1912), *Maid in America* (1915), and *Stop! Look! Listen!* (1915). Like that of some other headlined women in the musical theater of the period—Nora Bayes, Fannie Brice, Helen Morgan, and Ruth Etting—Seeley's life became the subject of a Hollywood picture, *Somebody Loves Me* (1952).

Band 4

All Alone

(Irving Berlin)

Lewis James, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded 1924 in New York. Originally issued on Victor 19495.

The tenor Lewis James prolifically recorded for Victor and Columbia as well as other companies. Like many other singers who had started their careers before 1920, he had worked primarily for the phonograph trade, unseen, as it were, and under pressures to succeed that were different from those of singers whose work on the stage assured a market for their records. Singers such as James, Henry Burr (Harry McClaskey), Billy Murray, Walter Van Brunt (who

changed his last name to Scanlon), and Harry Macdonough were among those whose names were learned principally through credit lines on record labels. These singers made occasional tours, but this was to sustain record sales at a level probably already won by good performances on discs and cylinders.

By the middle twenties, however, this changed for James and a few of his colleagues. As the Revellers—which included Franklin Baur, Elliot Shaw, Wilfred Glenn, and Ed Smalle—James and his friends found their success enlarged by work in radio and vaudeville. They even toured England in 1926. On Columbia this group was known as the Singing Sophomores and on Brunswick as the Merry-makers.

James, a native American, had worked to some extent locally in concerts and in churches and was active in recording from well before World War I. He had received a blurb in Victor's 1925 catalogue which stated, in part: "He sings with great feeling and in the most simple of styles, both in the joy and the tragedy of being."

That assessment was borne out by James's recording of "All Alone." This lovely song, though not particularly inventive for Berlin, shows a quiet sensitivity and tenderness for the situation described by the lyrics and the mood established immediately by the opening words. And although the telephone is an important part of the setting, this song is anything but the typical ditty inspired by a gadget.

The lyrics' appeal goes beyond the immediate depression of a lover's loneliness. The words delineate something that was being felt increasingly in a country that had grown crowded with people and things. After all, it was still personal relationships that mattered most—relationships that, even in the most populous cities, became painful when contact was lost, when the telephone did not ring. (A full disc devoted to Irving Berlin is New World Records NW 238.)

Band 5

The Little White House (at the End of Honeymoon Lane)

(Eddie Dowling and James F. Hanley)

"Frank Harris" (Irving Kaufman), vocal; Howard Lanin and His Orchestra. Recorded October 1, 1926, in New York. Originally issued on Columbia 762-D.

During the first third of this century most Americans took the dream of owning a home seriously. The basic dream was often supplemented by a desire to reside quietly, away from the overcrowded, older, dirtier city. Such dreams came true for many during the prosperous years of the postwar decade. The fantasies were not diminished because everyone else seemed to have a little white house in the new developments or that green blinds and white gates were to be seen everywhere. Inside the little white houses were mass-produced sofas, chairs, dining-room sets, bedroom suites, kitchen ranges, wall and floor coverings, electrical fixtures, and bathtubs and flush toilets, all of standard patterns. Could one really be an individual, with so much sameness?

It did not matter. People clung to the notion that one's own home was unique. To a large extent they were right. And the desire to live in moderate isolation still persists vigorously. Relatively lower-priced homes and mortgages at reasonable rates, however, provided honeymooners of the twenties with better opportunities to translate into reality their dreams for a home "on the outskirts of town" (the phrase is virtually without meaning in today's megalopolis).

Despite its spare lyric content, "The Little White House" conveys the sense of joy in having the best of all domestic worlds: privacy at the end of Honeymoon Lane and an entrance that would welcome one's close friends and perhaps even a few genial strangers. It was the commuter's idea of the house by the side of the road. The image cre-

ated by the song's simple words, together with the equally simple step-wise melody, gave the number an appeal that carried beyond its original theatrical setting. The song, well recorded, was a hit.

It was the title number for the musical *Honeymoon Lane*, a substantial success that opened at the Knickerbocker in New York on September 20, 1926, and ran for 353 performances. Eddie Dowling (Joseph Nelson Goucher; 1894-1976), the show's lyricist, also wrote the book and starred in the production. Dowling had begun his successful acting career in 1909, toured England, and debuted in New York in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917*, and is perhaps best remembered for his performance as Tom, Laura's brother, in the first production of Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie* in 1945. He was a prolific lyricist and enjoyed success as author or coauthor of other productions, *Sally, Irene and Mary* (1922) and *Thumbs Up* (1934) among them. He earned a Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for *The Time of Your Life* in 1939. Evidence of Dowling's talent is apparent in the effective economy of words in "The Little White House."

The composer, James F. Hanley (1892-1942), was also prolific, and wrote essentially although not exclusively for Broadway. Among his many melodies that became standards are "Indiana" (1917), "Rose of Washington Square" (1920), "Second Hand Rose" (1921), "Just a Cottage Small" (1925), "Little Log Cabin of Dreams" (1928), and "Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart" (1935).

The big sound of Howard Lanin's orchestra echoes the trend of larger dance bands of the second half of the twenties, but this band is a bit smoother than most, and it is easy to understand why his group was a favorite of New York society. Howard's brother Sam recorded hundreds of tunes for many record companies and is the best remembered of this musical family (there were also Joe and Lester). The singer, identified on the Columbia label as Frank Harris, is Irving

Kaufman, a veteran who had appeared on stage and had recorded as a member of the Avon Comedy Four as early as 1916. Throughout his career he sang with the good diction and full volume associated with the theatrical style prevalent before the use of loudspeakers. On occasion he sang duets on record with his brother Jack, and both Kaufmans always gave the impression that they totally enjoyed their work.

There is scarcely a pre-1930 record company for which Irving Kaufman did not work. Unfortunately, there is no complete list of his records. Frequently the record labels did not identify him, although, like Henry Burr's or Billy Murray's, his voice is fairly easy to identify. Kaufman sang any type of song with seeming ease with any type of band. He was reputed to have perfect pitch and the ability to work without special preparation or arrangements. As a consequence he was much in demand for providing the vocals for groups that were patched together for making records. His singing style, if powerful like Jolson's, seemed lighter and was just right for novelty numbers such as this.

Band 6

Lindbergh (the Eagle of the U.S.A.)

(Howard Johnson and Al Sherman)

Vernon Dalhart, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded May 23, 1927, in New York. Originally issued on Victor 20674.

"Event" songs are generally not among Tin Pan Alley's most significant work but have had more importance (as music and as statements in popular literature) in the field once known as hillbilly. For some reason, the best of those were usually composed in commemoration of the more spectacular train wrecks. Alley men wrote many songs about morbid happenings such as the sinking of the *Titanic* or the death of well-known people like Enrico Caruso or Rudolph

Valentino, but as a rule such tunes should have remained unwritten.

Charles A. Lindbergh's nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927 was, to Americans, the most glorious event of the decade because of its significance in terms of technological success and personal courage and achievement. Americans could well appreciate the magnitude of young Lindbergh's triumph, for millions had made the Atlantic crossing as immigrants aboard slow steamships. Many Americans had also crossed the ocean—both ways—on troop transports less than ten years before. Lindbergh's airplane, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, was soon enshrined at the Smithsonian Institution, a reminder of the accomplishment and a symbol of encouragement for anyone who would aspire to do great deeds in a peaceful world.

Would it be unfair to expect such an event as Lindbergh's flight to have inspired an enduring song, an anthem? Sigmund Spaeth in *A History of Popular Music in America* (see Bibliography) expressed disappointment that of more than a hundred songs written to celebrate Lindbergh's feat, not one was remembered twenty-one years later. Spaeth was probably correct in assuming that these tunes were ground out purely for profit. On the other hand, the mere fact that more than a hundred were inspired by the event seems rewarding enough, no matter what the motivation. If Lindbergh's flight failed to inspire quality in these songs, the event's musical statistics are certainly gratifying.

In the rush, Vernon Dalhart (Marion T. Slaughter; 1883-1948) recorded "Lindbergh (The Eagle of the U.S.A.);" for Victor. Dalhart had been born in Jefferson, Texas, and had composed his stage moniker by combining the names of two Texas towns. Among his many records the best seller by far was "The Prisoner's Song" coupled with "The Wreck of the Old 97" on Victor. Recorded originally in 1924, they were remade when electrical recording was introduced. The 1920

Victor catalogue describes Dalhart as "one of the best light-opera tenors in America," a statement that might surprise many who remember him principally for his commercialized country songs on record. This ex-cowboy had, however, appeared on stage professionally in 1912 and had worked with the Century Theater Company in New York. In many of his recordings, Dalhart's Texas twang—veneered onto his schooled voice—lent an individuality to his performances that set him apart from other phonograph artists during his most active period, the decade following 1917. Most listeners found his style quite pleasing.

Band 7

Henry's Made a Lady out of Lizzie

(Walter O'Keefe)

The Happiness Boys, vocals; studio orchestra. Recorded 1928, probably in New York. Originally issued on Victor 21174.

In 1928 over twenty-one million registered cars were traveling on the nation's streets and highways. In that year alone the nation's factories reported that almost four million cars had been sold. Although prosperity was continuing, as auto sales indicated, the trend was toward lighter, cheaper vehicles. Many of the improvements previously available in the more expensive models were now being incorporated as standard equipment in the more economical cars.

In 1927 Ford had faced lagging sales and phased out production of its Model T—the storied Tin Lizzie—after mass-producing them since 1908. When the last one rolled off the line, on May 14, someone calculated that 15,007,033 had been built. Ford took about six months to change its tools and production lines and then introduced the Model A, a car that seems more attractive and durable today than it did even then.

This is not to say that many were

not greatly impressed with the new Ford at the time. Walter O'Keefe, a nightclub and vaudeville entertainer who would later perform "The Man on the Flying Trapeze" and the zany "Tattooed Lady," decided to sing the praises of the new Ford early in 1928 by composing "Henry's Made a Lady out of Lizzie," an exaggerated, inaccurate, but entertaining pastiche whose tempo moved as quickly as the new cars. O'Keefe made a recording of his song at Victor, but the company chose not to issue it.

The spirited version here was well handled by the Happiness Boys, Billy Jones (William Reese Jones; 1889-1940) and Ernest Hare (1883-1939). Both artists had appeared on stage and made numerous records before becoming partners in 1921 as a result of a successful test record. They soon were regularly featured on radio, becoming one of the top acts during the new medium's first decade. Jones and Hare had a half-hour show for Happiness Candy when network radio was introduced in 1926 and continued together until Hare's death. Their theme, "How Do You Do?"—which they recorded for Brunswick—was for nearly two decades among the best-known musical signatures in broadcasting. Although limited essentially to the pre-Depression years, their records included many novelty and flapper numbers such as "Collegiate" "Thanks for the Buggy Ride" "She Knows Her Onions," and "She's the Sweetheart of Six Other Guys."

Band 8

If I Had a Talking Picture of You

(B. G. DeSylva, Lew Brown, and Ray Henderson)

Belle Baker, vocal; studio orchestra. Recorded October, 1929, in Los Angeles. Originally issued on Brunswick 4550.

"Black Bottom," "Broken Hearted," "You're the Cream in My Coffee," "Button Up Your Overcoat," "If I Had a Talking Picture of

You": all were by B. G. "Buddy" DeSylva, Lew Brown, and Ray Henderson. This songwriting partnership of seven years duration (beginning in 1925) provided some of the most memorable songs of the decade. DeSylva and Brown's lyrics were good to excellent and on occasion arresting. They combined simple words and homely expressions into phrases that have become part of our daily language. Henderson's melodies still rattle around in the mind's ear after half a century. His tunes were often fluid yet constructed with musical logic and with areas for breaks that gave jazz musicians ideal opportunities for inventive embellishment and variation.

Belle Baker (1895-1957) was a top performer in vaudeville who could command \$2,500 a week as a headliner. She appeared in *Vera Violetta* (1911), the short-lived *Betsy* (1927), and the film *Song of Love* (1929). Her recordings—mainly ballads—were made from 1919 to 1940 for several companies, including Pathé, Victor, and Brunswick. Nine masters were recorded in London in 1935 while she was on tour working in cabarets and music halls. Although top box-office, Baker never gained the appeal of Tucker, Bayes, or Etting. But her style was engaging, and she provides a good example of it in "If I Had a Talking Picture of You," one of the big hits of 1929 and a superior song about a wonderful technological innovation.

This tune about the talkies seems an apt choice to close this survey of topical songs that contributed to the democratization of American taste. The ultimate impact of sound motion pictures—a revolutionary development in entertainment—was not to be properly assessed until the next decade. What was clear was that by the end of 1929 silent movies had become as passé as prosperity.

Many Americans would rank 1929 as the most significant year of the century. Something came to an end that year, something more important than the termination of the wild ride on the stock market, though the end of the ride—the

Crash—soon became recognized as the punctuation, the period.

It was somewhat like the start of Prohibition. But it was also a great deal more. Looking back from the end of 1930, the greater change was clearly discerned. Events could not be reversed; the former essence could not be recovered.

If the confidence of the prewar years had been lost with Prohibition, the twenties had seen the emergence of something in the nature of a new faith. This had been nurtured by plenty of jobs in the cities. Farmers had their problems, true, but many moved to town. The faith was nurtured not only by wages but by the proliferation of mass-produced things on a scale undreamed of. And most of these things were real improvements: better roads, automobiles, and trucks; better and faster trains; better plumbing and heating; a better diet; better mail service; more electrification, telephones, and radios; better tractors and reapers; better housing, schools, and hospitals.

There was, moreover, a renewed faith in people and the individual. It could take the form of publicly expressed adulation of Rudolph Valentino or Babe Ruth, Charles Lindbergh, or Samuel Gompers. If Al Capone had grown powerful, Edison still lived and Toscanini was just arriving. The preoccupation with personalities during the decade went much deeper than hero worship and did not entirely spring from a self-satisfaction gained vicariously from the material things that had been produced not only numerous but well. No generation was that naive or that stupid. This faith was a trust in the abilities of the people who had produced these things and had overcome difficulties to achieve not only on a grand scale but with excellence. Americans had developed not a perfect but a better faith in themselves and in each other. That was the essence of the twenties.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL REISSUES ON LONG-PLAYING RECORDS

This includes reissues on twelve-inch monaural and stereophonic records that have become commercially available since 1965. These are essentially composed of material usually classified as popular, and vocal selections dominate. Some items normally classified as jazz, blues, dance, or country are included if reissued selections have a topical or thematic orientation. Most of the material was originally recorded before 1930.

Commercially reissued records are not usually programmed within the cutoff dates of this album. Commercial LP reissues often showcase particular artists or orchestras—a perfectly logical way to approach reissues, but one that sacrifices opportunities to view original work in broader contexts. To re-create a context, it is often necessary to assemble and handle a lot of records that contain numerous tracks that do not apply to the task at hand. Despite such drawbacks, the reissues cited below will amplify the recorded program offered here, which is also restricted—by its brevity.

The greatest disappointment in commercially reissued original works is the scarcity of recordings from before 1925. Before mid-1925 records were made by the acoustical method. Apparently the narrower range of fidelity of the earlier recordings has suggested to some that the performances lacked quality. Obviously fidelity and performance are two different things. For that matter, early commercial acoustic discs were very well recorded, and present-day electronic reproduction systems have been able to render the pre-1925 recordings very satisfactorily. Fortunately, more material from before 1925 is being reissued, but the richness of those archives still remains largely unavailable on LP.

Works reissued under the two large parent companies, Columbia and Victor, appear first; the others follow alphabetically.

Columbia

C2L-24. *Stringing the Blues*. Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti. Includes “In the Bottle Blues” (Lang, Williams, and Oliver). Joe “King” Oliver, Eddie Lang, Lonnie Johnson, Clarence Williams, and Justin Ring are the instrumentalists heard on the Prohibition song, recorded in 1928.

C3L-35. *The Original Sound of the 20's*. Various artists, including Irving Kaufman, Blossom Seeley, Bix Beiderbecke, Seger Ellis, and George Gershwin, are heard on songs by Irving Berlin, the Gershwin brothers, Jerome Kern, DeSylva-Brown-Henderson, and Walter Donaldson. Ruth Etting sings “Button Up Your Overcoat,” and Cliff “Ukelele Ike” Edwards does “Sunday.”

CL-2830. *Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra*. Note especially “Get Out and Get Under the Moon,” sung by a quartet composed of Bing Crosby, Jack Fulton, Charles Gaylord, and Austin Young on May 22, 1928.

CE2E-201. *The Bing Crosby Story*. Bing’s version of “If I Had a Talking Picture of You” (October 16, 1929) is only one among thirty-two worthwhile numbers. There are songs by Cole Porter, Richard A. Whiting, and Oscar Levant.

CL-855-58. *The Bessie Smith Story*. In this four-volume reissue are plenty of songs with topical orientation. Smith was magnificent singing any song and is at her best doing “The Gin House Blues,” “Me and My Gin,” “Take Me for a Buggy Ride,” “Send Me to the ‘Lectric Chair,” “Shipwreck Blues,” and “Empty Bed Blues.”

ML-5050. *The Original Recordings of Ruth Etting*. She does her revival of the Nora Bayes-Jack Norworth hit “Shine On, Harvest Moon.” Etting’s well-remembered “Ten Cents a Dance” is an elegant recording also included here.

Victor

LPM-1649. *The King of New Orleans Jazz: Jelly Roll Morton*. The famed Red Hot Peppers that Morton assembled for some of the finest recordings ever made at Victor. Like other composers of his day, Morton gave his song titles added appeal by using the names of common things. How much these objects really inspired a man of Morton’s genius may not matter much, but the titles are of interest: “The Pearls,” “Steamboat Stomp,” “Sidewalk Blues,” “Cannon Ball Blues” (which also credits Charlie Rider and Marty Bloom). This collection also includes Charles Luke’s “Smokehouse Blues,” W. C. Handy’s “Beale Street Blues,” and Morton’s “Kansas City Stomps.”

LPV-532. *The Railroad in Folksong*. All within the stated theme, and all worthwhile. Vernon Dalhart’s electrically recorded version of “The Wreck of the Old 97” (remade on March 18, 1926) is included.

LPV-534. *Women of the Blues*. Lizzie Miles recorded an absolutely marvelous number in “Electrician Blues” just a few months after the Crash.

LPV-538. *Stars of the Silver Screen*. Includes “He’s a Good Man to Have Around” by Sophie Tucker and “Love (Your Magic Spell Is Everywhere)” by the outstanding matinee idol Gloria Swanson. Fannie Brice is also represented.

LPV-540. *Jugs, Washboards and Kazoos*. “Overseas Stomp (Lindbergh Hop),” as performed here by the Memphis Jug Band, is a potential contender as a good Lindbergh number of lasting interest, with references in the vocal to “Lindy Bird” and the like.

- LPV-554. *Waring's Pennsylvanians*. Includes two topical songs of some nuisance value and extremely dubious quality: "Any Ice Today, Lady?" (1926) and "I've Never Seen a Straight Banana" (1927). Two others present are much better: an acoustical side, "Nashville Nightingale" (1924), and "Sleep" (1928).
- LPV-557. *1926*. One of several good reissues in this series, which includes *1927* and *1928*. Unfortunately, the emphasis on the electrical-recording period skews the total impression in an otherwise excellent survey of twenties music and performances. One feels that there should have been a reissue for each year of the decade. On this one there is a fine "Sunday," sung by the Keller Sisters and Lynch with the great Jean Goldkette Orchestra, and the engaging "Little White House (at the End of Honeymoon Lane)," sung by Tom Waring with his brother Fred's dance band.
- LPV-560. *Originals: Musical Comedy, 1909-1935*. An excellent, fast-paced survey of original material of the sort that should be kept in print at all times. It provides the rare opportunity to hear Blanche Ring singing "I've Got Rings on My Fingers" (June 24, 1909) and Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth doing "Mister Moon-Man, Turn Off the Light" (April 24, 1911). Al Jolson has a song from *Vera Violetta*, in which he starred in 1911. Elsie Janis, Fannie Brice, Beatrice Lillie, Helen Morgan, Eddie Cantor, and the team of Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake are also heard to good advantage.
- LPV-561. *Fannie Brice/Helen Morgan*. Brice's startling and haunting "Song of the Sewing Machine" (1927) is the outstanding contribution to this collection of her recordings, although "My Man" (1927) is also a treat. Morgan's songs from her Broadway shows largely provide the answer to why she was a legend in her time.

OTHER LABELS

- Audio Rarities LPA-2290. *They Stopped the Show*. Another superior collection drawn from the early archives of the acoustical-recording period. It has work by Weber and Fields, George M. Cohan, Nat Wills, and the fabulous Eva Tanguay—her only known recording of "I Don't Care." The other standout is Bert Williams' "Nobody," the version made for Columbia in 1913 but incorrectly ascribed in the notes to 1915.
- Biograph BLP-C11. *Ruth Etting*. "You're the Cream in My Coffee," the charming "Glad Rag Doll," and "Button Up Your Overcoat," all from 1929. The accompaniment on these and the Etting records previously cited was usually by well-known jazz instrumentalists.
- Pelican LP-102. *Stars of the Ziegfeld Follies*. Eddie Cantor, Nora Bayes ("Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?"), Bert Williams ("Nobody" again), Will Rogers (a spoken "Timely Topics"), Van and Schenck ("Mandy"), John Steele, Helen Morgan, and Franklin Baur ("Florida, the Moon and You"). An excellent collection that includes many selections made in the acoustical period.
- Totem 1010. *"Broadway Al": Al Jolson*. A good showcase of Jolson before his electrical-recording years, when he was at the height of his early popularity. Includes "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers" (1914), "Toot, Toot, Tootsie" (1922), and "Waiting for the Evening Mail" (1923). The other recordings also fall between 1914 and 1923 and include his well-known "Avalon," a song from *Sinbad* (1920).

New World Records

The anthologies listed below contain rare, out-of-print recordings that have not been available for decades. Each album includes multi-page program notes that not only discuss the composers and the performers but also the historical events and social environment that influenced the music and lyrics. Bibliographies and discographies are also included.

- NW 270. *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? American Song During the Great Depression*. The varied emotions—ranging from optimism to protest—felt by the people during the Depression years, reflected in popular hits interpreted by Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallee, Kenny Baker, Dick Powell, and Shirley Temple; as well as Big Bill Broonzy, Uncle Dave Macon, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger. Program notes by Charles Hamm, musicologist and authority on American popular music.
- NW 215. *Follies, Scandals, and Other Diversions: From Ziegfeld to the Shuberts*. A survey of Broadway revues from the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1921* through the George White *Scandals of 1939* and *The Straw Hat Revue* (1942). Performers include Bert Williams, Fannie Brice, Gallagher and Shean, Libby Holman, Danny Kaye, and Carmen Miranda. Program notes by playwright and critic George Oppenheimer.
- NW 248. *The Music Goes Round and Around: The Golden Years of Tin Pan Alley 1930-1939*. Great songs performed by the stars who created them or made them famous. Includes such artists as Bing Crosby, Connee Boswell, Mildred Bailey, Guy Lombardo, Martha Raye, and Ella Fitzgerald. Program notes by Nat Shapiro, record producer, author, and compiler of the six-volume *Popular Music: An Annotated Index of American Popular Song from 1920 to 1969*.
- NW 238. *The Vintage Irving Berlin*. Songs from 1918 to 1935: performed by the composer, Grace Moore, Al Jolson, Ruth Etting, Clifton Webb, Ethel Merman, Ginger Rogers, and others. Program notes by George Oppenheimer.

NW 240. *Where Have We Met Before? Forgotten Songs from Broadway, Hollywood, and Tin Pan Alley*. Songs written between 1931 and 1947 that should have made the hit parade but didn't. Composers represented include Richard Rodgers, Vernon Duke, Harold Arlen, and Jerome Kern; interpreters range from Fred Waring and Eddie Duchin to Judy Garland. Program notes by composer Milton Babbitt.

NW 279. *Yes Sir, That's My Baby: The Golden Years of Tin Pan Alley 1920-1929*. The first of a two-record (see NW 248, above) anthology. Performers include Al Jolson, Ethel Waters, Sophie Tucker, Blossom Seeley, Ruth Etting, Paul Whiteman, and Louis Armstrong. Program notes by Nat Shapiro.

ORIGINAL RECORDINGS

These items—no longer in issue—are not as obscure as one may believe. They can be found in some of the larger libraries and in many private collections. Most collectors are helpful to students.

Steamboats

"Steamboat Bill" (1910). Irving Kaufman, Columbia A-2809. Collins and Harlan, Victor 16937.

"Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" (1912). Heidelberg Quintet, Victor 17141.

Railroads

"Casey Jones" (1909). Irving and Jack Kaufman, Columbia A-2809. Billy Murray, American Quartet, Victor 16483.

"When the Midnight Choo Choo Leaves for Alabam'" (1912). Collins and Harlan, Columbia A-1246 and Victor 17246.

"Toot, Toot, Tootsie" (1922). Al Jolson, Columbia A-3705. Billy Murray and Ed Smalle, Victor 19006.

"Choo Choo (Gotta Hurry Home)" (1924). Gene Austin, Vocalion 14916. Van and Schenck, Columbia 197-D.

"Dream Train" (1928-29). Ford and Glenn, Columbia 1720-D.

Automobiles

"In My Merry Oldsmobile" (1905). Billy Murray, Victor 4467.

"The Little Ford Rambled Right Along" (1914-15). Arthur Fields (later remade by Frank Crumit; same no.), Columbia A-1754. Billy Murray, Victor 17755.

"Gasoline Gus and His Jitney Bus" (1915). George O'Connor, Columbia A-1806. American Quartet, Victor 17838.

Airplanes

"Up, Up, Up in My Aeroplane" (1909). Hayden Quartet, Victor 16340.

"Going Up (You Start to Sway)" (1917-18). Gems from *Going Up*, Victor 35672.

"Wait Till You Get Them Up in the Air, Boys" (1919). Billy Murray, Columbia A-2794 and Victor 18628.

"Poor Little Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now" (1919). Belle Baker, Pathé 22208.

"Lucky Lindy" (1927). Male quintet with Nat Shilkret and the Victor Orchestra, Victor 20681.

"Mister Aeroplane Man" (1927). Vaughn DeLeath, Brunswick 3683.

Pianos

"Movin' Man, Don't Take My Baby Grand" (1911). Al Jolson, Victor 17081.

"I Love a Piano" (1916). Billy Murray, Victor 17945.

Telephones

"Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven" (1901). Byron G. Harlan, Victor 4067 and 17447.

"Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon" (1910). Ada Jones, Columbia A-855. Ada Jones and American Quartet, Victor 16508.

"Hello, Central, Give Me No Man's Land" (1918). Al Jolson, Columbia A-2542. Edna Brown, Victor 18479.

"Maybe (She'll Write Me—She'll 'Phone Me)" (1924). Dolly Kay, Columbia 70-D.

Topical

"The Trolley Car Swing" (1912). Elida Morris, Victor 17048.

"Where the Oceans Meet in Panama" (1914). Irving Kaufman, Victor 17699.

"How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?" (1919). Nora Bayes, Columbia A-2687.

"Barney Google" (1923). Arthur Hall with Missouri Jazz Band, Regal 9486.

"Cross-Word Puzzle Blues" (1925). Duncan Sisters, Victor 19527.

"The Flapper Wife" (1925). Gene Austin with the International Novelty Orchestra, Victor 19638.

"I Can't Sleep in the Movies Anymore" (1929). Unknown vocalist with Radio Syncopators, Madison 50051.

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POPULAR MUSIC (not including works devoted primarily to individual composers, jazz, ragtime, or folk or country music)

- Goldberg, Isaac. *Tin Pan Alley: A Chronicle of American Music*. New York: Ungar, 1961. Updated paperback of original edition of 1930. Still a very useful book. Includes Introduction by George Gershwin and Supplement: "From Sweet and Swing to Rock 'n' Roll" by Edward Jablonski.
- Klamkin, Marian. *Old Sheet Music: A Pictorial History*. New York: Hawthorn, 1975. A good but brief survey with emphasis on cover artwork; well illustrated. Some topical aspects.
- Palmer, Tony. *All You Need Is Love: The Story of Popular Music*, ed. Paul Medlicott. New York: Viking, 1976. An impressionistic but balanced popular history that properly takes into account the profound influence of black music makers. Well illustrated.
- Sablonsky, Irving. *American Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969 (paperback). A brief but scholarly survey that deals with other aspects of American music besides popular tunes.
- Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans: A History*. New York: Norton, 1971 (available in paperback). A very important scholarly work that brings most aspects of this special but dominant segment of American musical history into one focused piece. Southern gives attention to some previously neglected black writers and performers.
- Spaeth, Sigmund. *A History of Popular Music in America*. New York: Random House, 1948. Reprinted through 1971. Spaeth's well-known monumental work surveys thousands of songs. His perceptive comments are still valuable; his song lists are impressively long and, though incomplete (as one must expect—copyright titles fill volumes), still furnish one of the best starting points for students.
- Whitcomb, Ian. *After the Ball: Pop Music from Rag to Rock*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973. Baltimore: Penguin, 1974 (paperback). A very well-written history. The author is sensitive to the many social and professional forces that have influenced songwriting. The role of important performers is given primary emphasis.
- Wilder, Alec. *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950*. Edited and with an Introduction by James T. Maher. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. One of the most valuable works on the subject, and undoubtedly the most perceptive from the viewpoint of the songs' compositional content.
- Wilk, Max. *Memory Lane: The Golden Age of American Popular Music, 1890 to 1925*. New York: Ballantine, 1973 (paperback). A charming and valuable, if too brief, pictorial review of sheet music; useful for some topical aspects of American song.

PERFORMERS

Books and articles on performers are numerous, and biographies of well-known individuals, as single works or in biographical dictionaries, are easily located. Some important information can sometimes be found in the literature dealing with the American drama, musical-theater, film, or radio industries. Former recording artists are often difficult to trace, and a few bare statistics—such as date and place of birth—may be gleaned from almanacs of the period. The following should not be overlooked.

- Gilbert, Douglas. *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times*. New York: Whittlesy House, 1940. New York: Dover, 1963 (paperback). Invaluable for insights on performers such as Nora Bayes, Nat Wills, Sophie Tucker, and W. C. Fields.
- Pleasants, Henry. *The Great American Popular Singers*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974. Other titles by this author are also useful, but this work is of great value for commentaries on singers like Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Bing Crosby, and Ethel Waters, all active in the twenties.
- Seldes, Gilbert. *The Public Arts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956 (paperback). Provides important commentary on many aspects of popular entertainment and the media as well as critical insights into the art of performers such as Jack Benny and Bing Crosby.
- Walsh, Jim. "Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists," *Hobbies: The Magazine for Collectors* (a continuing series). This learned author has for many years written on popular singers identified with the early recording industry. Walsh has provided not just the best but the most or the only information in print on certain performers; his articles simply cannot be missed. They also provide important discographical information from time to time.

DISCOGRAPHIES AND THE PHONOGRAPH INDUSTRY

- Gelatt, Roland. *The Fabulous Phonograph: From Edison to Stereo*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1954; revised edition 1965. An important narrative history of the phonograph industry that includes many insights into the conditions, social and economic as well as technological, that had an impact on recorded music.
- Hoover, Cynthia. *Music Machines—American Style: A Catalog of the Exhibition*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian

Institution Press, 1971. A most informative illustrated survey that goes far beyond a review of machines. A must for gaining a good perspective.

Kinkle, Roger D. *The Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz, 1900-1950*. 4 volumes. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1974. An incredibly large survey that deals not only with records but with many aspects of popular music, composers, lyricists, and hundreds of performers. The index is excellent for getting at obscure songs, in either recorded or published form.

Read, Oliver, and Welch, Walter L. *From Tin Foil to Stereo: Evolution of the Phonograph*. Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1959; second revised edition 1976 (paperback). The most detailed recent history of the industry. Primary emphasis on the history of the phonograph's technology.

Record Research. An important journal for many years, still being published by Leonard Kunstadt, 65 Grand Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. Includes a catalogue of the popular dance and jazz records issued by Perfect, Pathé, and the Hit-of-the-Week company; certain Edison issues; and others. It has valuable information about many recording artists and is as important as Jim Walsh's work cited above for information about pre-World War II records.

Rust, Brian. *The American Dance Band Discography, 1917-1942*. 2 vols New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1975. A monumental 2,066-page work. Since many vocals were rendered on dance records, this book is indispensable.

_____. *The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2 (1925-1936)*. American edition. Stanhope, N.J.: Allen, 1970. An important discography of all Victor masters for the popular, jazz, and country market during the initial period of electrical recording at Victor. Indexed by both song title and performer. For the period covered, *nothing* is omitted. The first of a projected multi-volume work.

_____. with Allen G. Debus. *The Complete Entertainment Discography: From the Mid-1890's to 1942*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973. An excellent discography treating the work of those active in vaudeville and musical comedy. Occasional omissions (John Steele and Irving Kaufman, for example) are easily overlooked in praising this truly remarkable and valuable book.

Side One - Total time - 23:19

| | |
|--|------|
| 1 OCEANA ROLL (Roger Lewis and Lucien Denni) | 2:46 |
| <i>(publ. Jerry Vogel Music Co., Inc.)</i> | |
| Eddie Morton | |
| 2 HELLO, FRISCO (Gene Buck and Louis A. Hirsch) | 3:02 |
| <i>(publ. Warner Bros. Music, A Division of Warner Bros., Inc.)</i> | |
| Elida Morris and Sam Ash | |
| 3 THE GIRL ON THE MAGAZINE COVER (Irving Berlin) | 3:17 |
| <i>(publ. Irving Berlin Music Corporation)</i> | |
| Harry Macdonough | |
| 4 ON THE 5:15 (Stanley Murphy and Henry I. Marshall) | 2:49 |
| <i>(publ. Warner Bros. Music, A Division of Warner Bros., Inc.)</i> | |
| American Quartet | |
| 5 HE'D HAVE TO GET UNDER, GET OUT AND GET UNDER (TO FIX UP HIS AUTOMOBILE) (Grant Clarke, Edgar Leslie, and Maurice Abrahams) | 3:13 |
| <i>(publ. Robbins Music Corp.)</i> | |
| Will Halley | |
| 6 COME, JOSEPHINE, IN MY FLYING MACHINE (Alfred Bryan and Fred Fisher) | 2:37 |
| <i>(publ. Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.)</i> | |
| Blanche Ring | |
| 7 TAKE YOUR GIRLIE TO THE MOVIES (Edgar Leslie, Bert Kalmar, and Pete Wendling) | 2:36 |
| <i>(publ. Mills Music, Inc./Edgar Leslie, Inc.)</i> | |
| Billy Murray | |
| 8 EVERYBODY WANTS A KEY TO MY CELLAR (Ed Rose, Billy Baskette, and Lew Pollack) | 2:41 |
| <i>(publ. unknown)</i> | |
| Bert Williams | |

Side Two - Total time - 25:00

| | |
|--|------|
| 1 THE ARGENTINES, THE PORTUGUESE AND THE GREEKS (Carey Morgan and Arthur M. Swanstrom) | 2:57 |
| <i>(publ. Edward B. Marks Music Corp.)</i> | |
| Nora Bayes | |

| | |
|---|------|
| 2 MR. RADIO MAN (TELL MY MAMMY TO COME BACK HOME) (Ira Schuster, Johnny White, and Cliff Friend) | 3:13 |
| <i>(publ. Leo Feist, Inc.)</i> | |
| Al Jolson; Isham Jones and His Orchestra | |
| 3 ALABAMY BOUND (B. G. DeSylva, Bud Green, and Ray Henderson) | 2:48 |
| <i>(publ. Shapiro Bernstein & Co., Inc./Anne-Rachel Music Corp.)</i> | |
| Blossom Seeley | |
| 4 ALL ALONE (Irving Berlin) | 3:06 |
| <i>(publ. Irving Berlin Music Corporation)</i> | |
| Lewis James | |
| 5 THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE (AT THE END OF HONEYMOON LANE) (Eddie Dowling and James F. Hanley) | 2:56 |
| <i>(publ. Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.)</i> | |
| Frank Harris; Howard Lanin and His Orchestra | |
| 6 LINDBERGH (THE EAGLE OF THE U.S.A.) (Howard Johnson and Al Sherman) | 3:22 |
| <i>(publ. Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.)</i> | |
| Vernon Dalhart | |
| 7 HENRY'S MADE A LADY OUT OF LIZZIE (Walter O'Keefe) | 3:02 |
| <i>(publ. Chappell & Co., Inc.)</i> | |
| The Happiness Boys | |
| 8 IF I HAD A TALKING PICTURE OF YOU (B. G. DeSylva, Lew Brown, and Ray Henderson) | 3:08 |
| <i>(publ. Chappell & Co., Inc./Anne-Rachel Music Corp.)</i> | |
| Belle Baker | |

Full discographic information and a complete list of the performers for each selection may be found within the individual discussions of the works in the liner notes.

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Our thanks to CBS Records for "Hello, Frisco"; "He'd Have to Get Under, Get Out and Get Under (To Fix Up His Automobile)"; "Everybody Wants a Key to My Cellar"; "The Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks"; "Mr. Radio Man (Tell My Mammy to Come Back Home)"; "Alabamy Bound"; "The Little White House (At the End of Honeymoon Lane)"; and "If I Had a Talking Picture of You": to RCA Records for "Oceana Roll"; "The Girl on the Magazine Cover"; "On the 5:15"; "Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine"; "Take Your Girlie to the Movies"; "All Alone"; "Lindbergh (The Eagle of the U.S.A.)"; and "Henry's Made a Lady out of Lizzie."

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