

FEBRUARY 2017



BIG BAND NEWS

by Music Librarian **CHRISTOPHER POPA**

SYMPOSIUM IN SWING NO.2: DOWN SOUTH CAMP MEETING

Legendary clarinetist Benny Goodman [1909-1986] was called, rightly or wrongly according to some, the “King” of Swing, if I should include the quotation marks that author-historian Gunther Schuller added. I count among my own all-time personal favorite recordings plenty of Benny’s performances that, over an amazing 50-year period, captured what “swing” was all about. To name a few, *Down South Camp Meeting* [Victor, 1936], *Lulu’s Back in Town* [Columbia, 1951], *Liza (All the Clouds’ll Roll Away)* [London, 1969], *Good Morning Starshine* [Reader’s Digest, 1969], and, less than a year before his passing, *(I Would Do) Anything for You* [PBS-TV, 1985].

As Schuller wrote in his [The Swing Era: The Development Of Jazz, 1930-1945](#) (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1989), “It is true that Benny Goodman’s popularity epitomized the Swing Era for most people-and still does.”

When Goodman hired pianist Fletcher Henderson [1897-1952] as his chief arranger, it came at the right moment for both of them and would prove tremendously important to each, not to mention what became known as the Big Band Era. Only a few years previously, Henderson had led his own swinging orchestra, with a light but driving sound, and featuring a number of great soloists. However, it never reached the mass popularity that Benny’s band would. “If Benny was the ‘King,’ what then was Fletcher?,” Schuller remarked.

Musically speaking, it was Henderson’s arrangements for Goodman that first, and more than any others who later wrote for the band, that caught on with the public. The music had a good beat, was creatively orchestrated, setting off the brass and reeds in a call-and-response pattern that became the new, and now classic, prototypical style of big band swing.

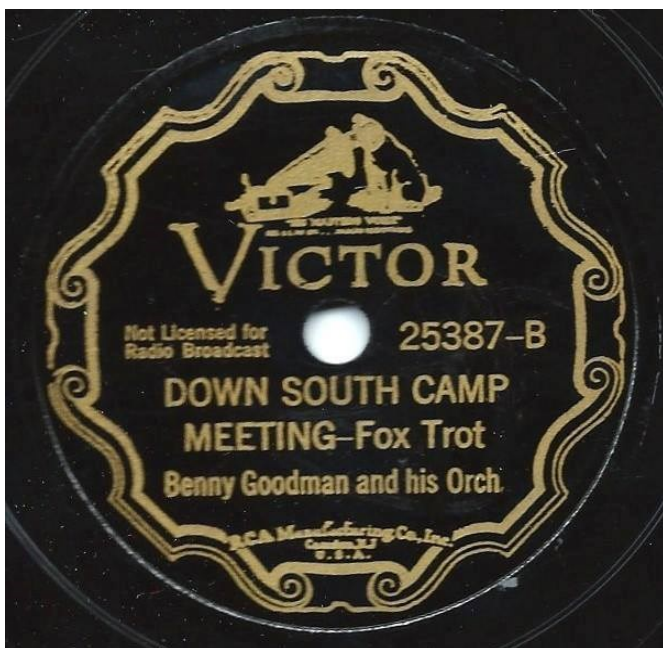
Among Goodman’s Victor records, *Down South Camp Meeting* employs that recipe and makes for magnificent listening - though, admittedly, Henderson recorded the same basic arrangement with his own group for Decca in 1934.

What, then, was the difference?

When I listen to Henderson's recording of *Down South Camp Meeting*, I can't help but like it. I hear an incredible collective drive, featuring a wonderful trumpet soloist (Henderson's trumpeters at the time were Russell Smith, Irving Randolph, and Red Allen) and a fine alto saxophone soloist (Henderson had Russell Procope and Hilton Jefferson), but it seems like the overall effort is slightly ragged, too.

So then, musically speaking, what did Goodman bring? Among other qualities, great talent and control. He was a strict and demanding leader who had an infinite attention to detail. He made his band go over and over things, so that they had the beat *and* the balance *and* the bite. There was technical perfection and polish.

In comparison, Goodman's *Down South Camp Meeting* comes off as more subdued — less choppy and less urgent. There's a short brass introduction and drummer Gene Krupa [1909-1973] shines right from the start. The saxes and brass playfully bounce things back and forth, then, in place of the trumpet solo heard in Henderson's version, we get a solo by Benny. Then a trumpet and alto sax trade two-bar matching phrases, with a creamy, polite sax soli led by Toots Mondello [1911-1992] emerging. More hypnotic interplay between the saxes and brass, before all the saxes switch to clarinets and invite the brass back for a rousing ending.



In his autobiography [The Kingdom of Swing](#) (New York City: Stackpole and Sons, 1939), Goodman had written, "Without Fletcher I probably would have had a pretty good band, but it would have been something quite different from what it eventually turned out to be."

During the early 1950s, Goodman re-recorded *Down South Camp Meeting*, in sound approaching high-fidelity and using all-star studio musicians. He was still playing the tune when he did the 1985 PBS-TV special. Even down such a familiar road, listening to it remained quite enjoyable. Dancing to it became optional.

COMPACT DISCS OF THE MONTH



Count Basie and His Orchestra
“Live In Berlin 1963”
Jazzline (G) N 77 026

Recorded in concert at the Sportpalast in Berlin, Germany on September 9, 1963, the Basie band is in fine form. The 15 selections include favorites like *One O’Clock Jump*, *Lil’ Darlin’*, *Jumpin’ At the Woodside*, and *Corner Pocket*, as well as later additions to their book, like *Moon River*, *The Swinging Shepherd Blues*, *I Needs to Be Bee’d With*, and *Misty*. Of special note is the guest vocalist for the program, Jimmy Rushing, who sings *Mr. Five By Five*, *I Want a Little Girl*, and *I’m Coming Virginia*.



Frank Sinatra, Jr. with the Sam Donahue Orchestra
“Young Love For Sale”
Music Boutique CD-R

Here’s something that should have been on CD a long time ago: Frank Sinatra Jr. with what had been The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra directed by Sam Donahue. By 1965, when this recording was made, Dorsey’s name was being phased out, though Donahue, Sinatra, The Pied Pipers, and trombonist Larry O’Brien remained for the moment. The album, made for Reprise at Bell Sound Studios in New York City, was produced by former bandleader Sonny Burke, and arrangements were by Walt Stuart and Chuck Sagle.

REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS



Various Artists
"This Is The Big Band Era"
Music Boutique CD-R

One of my introductions to the bands while growing up. Issued by RCA in 1971 during a big wave of nostalgia, besides the usual Dorsey, Goodman, Miller, and Shaw, this has Barnet, Basie, Berigan, Clinton, Elman, Hampton, Erskine Hawkins, and Moten.



Lawrence Welk
"Rare Broadcast Singles"
Music Boutique CD-R

2-CD set of material done in the 1950s, including *Say It with Music*, *Softly As in a Morning Sunrise* (Dick Kesner, violin), *Blueberry Hill* (Jerry Burke, organ), *A Little Bit of Heaven* (Joe Feeney, vocal), *Jersey Bounce* (Buddy Merrill, guitar), etc.



Stan Kenton and His Orchestra
**"BYU & Synthesis Present
A Kenton Celebration"**
Tantara Productions T2CD-1132

2-CD set with a newly-discovered 1959 Kenton concert (*Frenesi*, *Kingfish*, et al) plus today's Brigham Young University Synthesis Big Band playing lost Kenton late '40s treasures (*Pepper Pot*, *Opus a la Kenton*, *Blue Moon*, and more.)



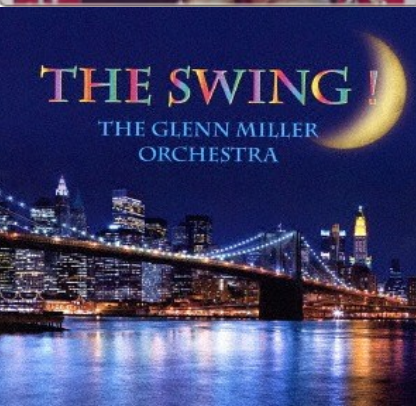
Buddy Johnson and His Orchestra
"At the Savoy Ballroom"
Sounds of YesterYear (E) DSOY 2049

25 broadcast performances by Johnson's jump band, such as *Walk 'em*, *Night Shift*, *Traffic Jam*, *One O'Clock Boogie*, and vocals by Johnson's sister, Ella, and young Arthur Prysock.



Lawrence Welk
"Musical Memories with Lawrence Welk"
Music Boutique CD-R

Only 10 songs, including features for Myron Floren, Henry Cuesta, Tom Netherton, Norma Zimmer, The Lennon Sisters, Guy and Ralna, Jo Ann Castle, and Larry Hooper, with the band sounding nicest on *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*.



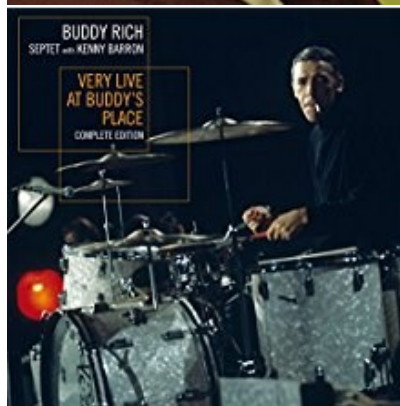
**The Glenn Miller Orchestras directed by
Buddy DeFranco and Larry O'Brien**
"The Swing"
Victor (J) VICP-65429

A mixture of 22 select recordings under DeFranco's or O'Brien's direction (nothing previously unreleased), including three Christmas songs. Issued for the GMO's latest Japan tour (the first was in 1964).



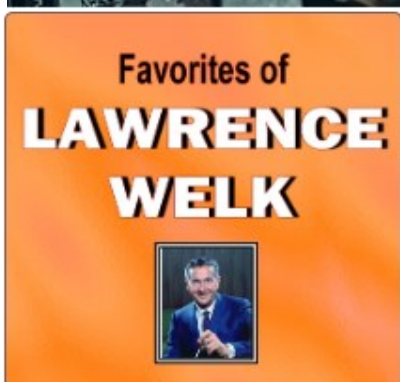
Stan Kenton and His Orchestra
“Concerts In Miniature: Part 17”
Sounds of YesterYear (E) DSOY 2050

Two NBC radio broadcasts—both from the Birdland jazz club in New York City—in their original, complete form. Tunes include *Peanut Vendor*, *Limelight*, *Taking a Chance On Love*, and *Harlem Nocturne*. If you're keeping track, they're now up to May 5, 1953.



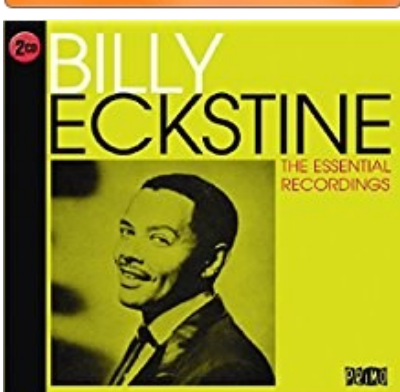
The Buddy Rich Septet
“Very Live At Buddy's Place:
Complete Edition”
Phono Records PHN 149449

Buddy took a step away from his big band in 1974, with this septet. Everything from the original Groove Merchant LP plus *Howie's Tune*, *The Bull*, and an alternate of *Billie's Bounce*. Sal Nistico (tenor sax) and Kenny Barron (piano) are two of his sidemen.



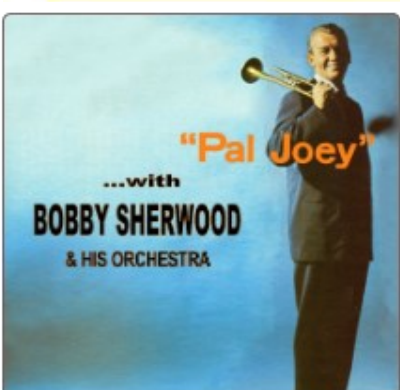
Lawrence Welk and His Orchestra
“Favorites of Lawrence Welk”
Music Boutique CD-R

In my opinion, this is a ripoff, with only 10 selections. It's a shame that the owners of Welk's Dot and Ranwood masters let them sit idle. The band plays *South and Deep Purple*, and Betty Cox sings *Red Sails in the Sunset*, if you have to have this.



Billy Eckstine
“The Essential Recordings”
Primo PRMCD 6204

A 2-CD compilation with the Eckstine songs you would expect (*I Apologize*, *Everything I Have Is Yours*, and so forth) and then some you might not (*Intrigue*, *Be My Love*, *Gigi*, *Easter Parade*, etc.). Missing for me is *Dedicated to You*, one he did with Sarah Vaughan.



Bobby Sherwood and His Orchestra
“Pal Joey”
Music Boutique CD-R

“Pal Joey” premiered on Broadway as a stage musical in 1940, but I guess Sherwood did this for Jubilee after the 1957 movie adaptation came out. Lots of good Rodgers and Hart songs here. Includes the liner notes from the Jubilee album.



Benny Goodman and His Orchestra
“The Gang's All Here”
Kritzerland KR 20031

Benny Goodman is one of my most favorite bands, but I consider the music in this movie to be very weak (and I couldn't care less about Carmen Miranda and her bananas). Still, I thank Bruce Kimmel for doing it (and “Sun Valley Serenade” / “Orchestra Wives” and “Stormy Weather”), but I wish that he would try to release the soundtrack from Artie Shaw's “Dancing Co-Ed” on CD. Even if as Bruce says it would be “just impossible” dealing with Warner Brothers, musically it would be well worth it. C'mon, Bruce! Maybe Will Friedwald can help get it done.

MILLER ORCH IN FL, AZ

Glenn Miller Orchestra (USA) directed by Nick Hilscher

Feb 1, 2017—Bienes Center for the Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Feb 3, 2017—Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center, Ormond Beach, Florida
Feb 4, 2017—private
Feb 6-7, 2017—Spanish River Church, Boca Raton, Florida
Feb 8-9 and 11, 2017—Kings Point Theatre, Delray Beach, Florida
Feb 12, 2017—Maxwell C. King Center, Melbourne, Florida
Feb 13-14, 2017—Spanish River Church Boca Raton, Florida
Feb 19, 2017—Popejoy Hall, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Feb 22, 2017—Yuma Art Center, Yuma, Arizona
Feb 24, 2017—private
Feb 25, 2017—Yavapai College, Prescott, Arizona
Feb 26, 2017—Chandler Center for the Arts, Chandler, Arizona
Feb 28, 2017—Buena Performing Arts Center, Sierra Vista, Arizona

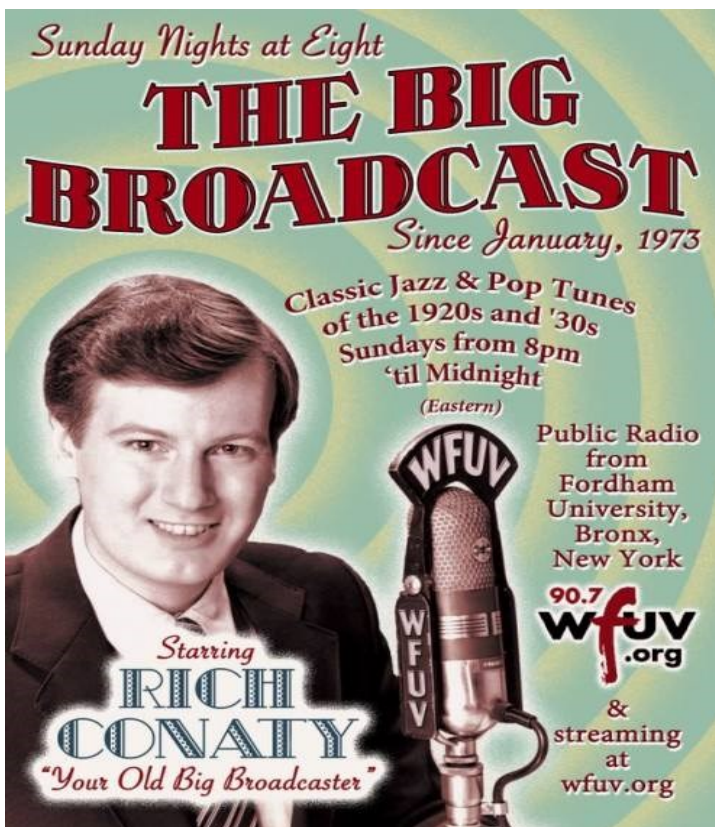
Glenn Miller Orchestra (Europe) directed by Wil Salden

Feb 8, 2017—Theater, Hameln
Feb 9, 2017—Musik und Kongresshalle, Lubeck
Feb 10, 2017—Deutsches Haus, Flensburg
Feb 11, 2017—Kiel Castle, Flensburg
Feb 12, 2017—Rudolf Oetker Halle, Bielefeld
Feb 15, 2017—Stadthalle-Theatersaal, Gifhorn

Glenn Miller Orchestra (Sweden) directed by Jan Slottenas

Feb 12, 2017—Motala Convention Centre, Motala
Feb 19, 2017—The Theatre, Avesta
Feb 24, 2017—City Theatre, Skodva
Feb 25, 2017—Concert Hall, Gothenburg
Feb 26, 2017—Ahaga, Boras

RICH CONATY (1954-2016)



Rich Conaty, a long-time New York disc jockey specializing in the jazz and popular music of the 1920s and 1930s, like Paul Whiteman, Louis Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, Red Nichols, Rudy Vallee, and Cab Calloway, died December 30, 2016 at the age of 62. His primary show, "The Big Broadcast," was heard at various times on WFUV and WQEW, though he even once manned a victrola on comedian Jon Stewart's syndicated TV show. Thanks for all of the music, passion, and fun, Rich!