

OCTOBER 2017



BIG BAND NEWS

by Music Librarian **CHRISTOPHER POPA**

A VERY SPECIAL SERIES OF **VAUGHN MONROE** *TRIBUTES*



Talented trombonist-bandleader Dan Gabel is now producing a great series of tributes to Vaughn Monroe (see the above poster for complete dates).

While each show has elements of interest and surprise, the October 15th performance at the Hanover Theatre in Worcester, Massachusetts, for example, will feature as special guest Bucky Pizzarelli, who played guitar in Vaughn's band in 1943 and from 1946 to 1952.

According to Gabel, "I won't let you in on all of my plans for this show (there are many tricks up my sleeve!), but know this: it is our goal to (re)create the look, feel, sound, and experience of seeing and hearing Monroe in 1949."

He will be choosing from 60 restored Monroe arrangements, to be played and sung by a cast of 24 musicians, including a quartet of new “Moon Maids” and a comedy singer a la Ziggy Talent.

I applaud Dan for his hard work and dedication; it's taken three or four years to bring this idea to fruition.

Gabel notes, “We are getting our start much as Vaughn did - through our home base of New England, and with as much publicity as we can get.”

A MILLER MUST!



My pick for compact disc of the month goes to Sepia's amazing 2-CD presentation of broadcast performances by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra, “Glenn Miller: live On The Air 1938-1942” (catalog no.1316).

This is a collection that a new generation of Miller fans has asked Sepia to bring to CD. All of the selections were played live on the radio, direct from the Paradise Restaurant, Glen Island Casino, the Meadowbrook, the Café Rouge of the Hotel Pennsylvania, and elsewhere.

Included are memorable renditions of *This Time the Dream's On Me*, *I Got Rhythm*, *A Handful of Stars*, *Jersey Bounce*, *I Guess I'll Have to Dream the Rest*, *My Buddy*, *The Lamp Is Low*, and over 40 more ballads, swing tunes, and novelties featuring Miller's vocalists Ray Eberle, Marion Hutton, Tex Beneke, and The Modernaires. Of course, the package begins with *Moonlight Serenade* and ends with *Slumber Song*, Miller's opening and closing themes, respectively.

In fantastic sound quality and complete with interesting notes, band personnel, dates, and broadcast locations.

Kudos to Sepia producer Richard Tay, and for the unclouded sound remastering by Robin Cherry and eye-catching graphics by Ray Leaning of Muse Fine Art & Design, Ltd.

MORE REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS



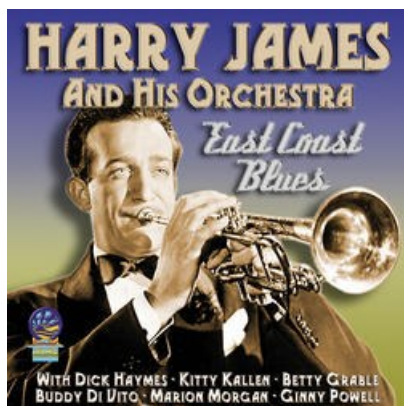
Music Boutique is now up to eight Ralph Flanagan CDs, an impressive total. Their latest is “They’re Playing Our Cha Cha!,” a former Imperial album that should have been, for better value, combined by Music Boutique into one disc with “They’re Playing Our Song.”



Music Boutique’s other new Flanagan release is “Dancing Down Broadway,” which long ago came out on RCA Camden, though I always thought that particular LP had tin can sound. At least for this CD there have been three songs added as “bonus tracks”: *Love Is Here to Stay*, *The Blues* from “An American in Paris,” and *Toreador*, to bring the total up to 15.



Sounds of YesterYear proceeds with their series of Stan Kenton “Concerts in Miniature,” now up to Part 20 (catalog no. DSOY2072). A couple of broadcasts to finish June and one to begin the month of July 1953.



There's a lot of good music, like *Strictly Instrumental*, *I'm Beginning to See the Light*, *Sleepy Lagoon*, *Music Makers*, and *The Man with the Horn*, on the Harry James "East Coast Blues" CD by Sounds of YesterYear (catalog no. DSOY 2074). But, if I were you, I'd instead purchase the various superior James CDs from Hep and the 3-CD Hindsight box "Bandstand Memories," which have some of the same or better performances.



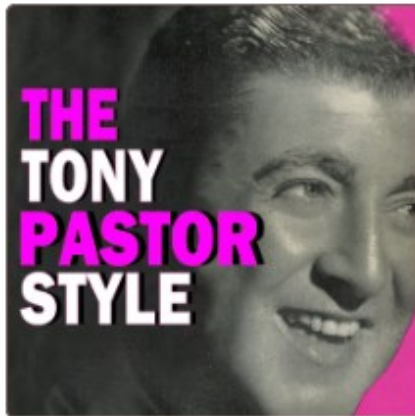
Evidently Sounds of YesterYear doesn't realize that the woman pictured on their "I've Heard That Song Before" CD (catalog no. DSOY 2069) is NOT Helen Forrest. For that reason alone, NOT recommended!



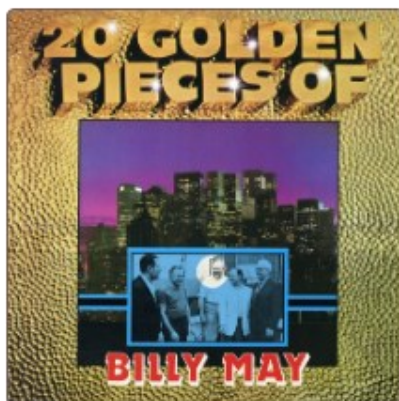
If you want some CDs by former big band singers in the 1950s, you can't go wrong with either of these from Real Gone Music: "Rosemary Clooney: I Feel a Song Coming On: Lost Radio Recordings" and "Jo Stafford: It Had to Be You: Lost Radio Recordings." Both are very well-done, each with 24 previously-unreleased broadcast selections in excellent fidelity, fine notes, and rare photos. Put forward without hesitation!



Another possibility is “Mindy Carson with The Dorsey Brothers,” from the Boundee label in Japan (catalog no. XQAM-1084). Carson appeared with Tommy and Jimmy in 1954 on some National Guard “Let’s Go to Town” radio programs as well as the Dorseys’ “Stage Show” TV broadcasts.



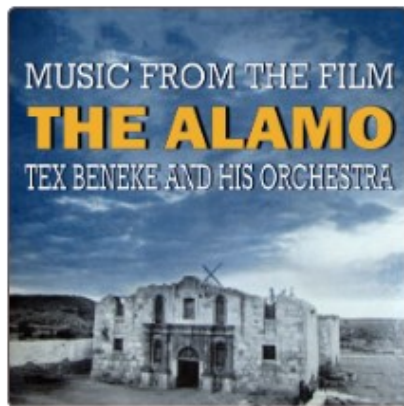
Music Boutique has transferred an old Tony Pastor Camden LP to CD, including such selections as *Get Happy*, *I’ve Got You Under My Skin*, *Let’s Do It (Let’s Fall in Love)*, and *You Can Depend On Me*, but I think they missed the opportunity to add in seven other songs from a 10” “X” album, “Tony Pastor’s Best” (catalog no. LXA-3025), including *Paradiddle Joe* and *Dance with a Dolly*. That’s a shame because it could have made a really good CD.



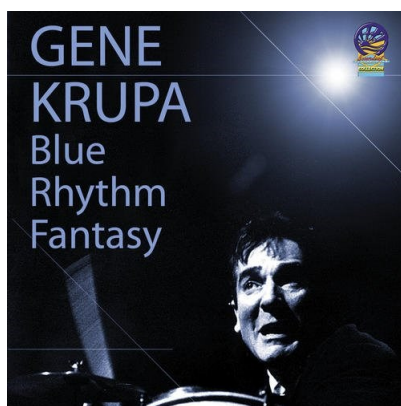
Twenty of Billy May’s recordings [sic!] for Reader’s Digest were collected by the Bulldog label in England around 1981, and now this album has been transferred to CD by Music Boutique. But it’s sort of an odd lot—there’s one tune done in 1969, *Little Green Apples*, which features his old boss, Charlie Barnet, and a bunch of May’s arrangements that evidently were recorded by a large orchestra with strings in London in 1970 conducted by Charles Gerhart, yet issued as “Billy May and his Orchestra.” Strangely, the cover photo which Bulldog used shows May and fellow Glenn Miller alumni Beneke, Bundock, Schwartz, and Best at a Time-Life recording session.



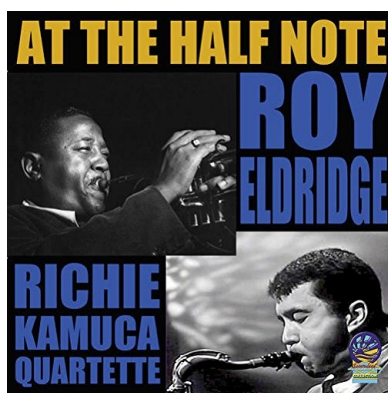
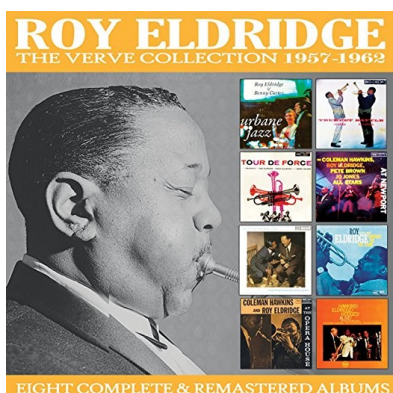
The Blue Moon label in Spain has lately been putting a big push on with CDs by Les and / or Larry Elgart. New is BMCD 894, which joins together two old Columbia albums, “Sound Ideas” and “Les & Larry Elgart and their orchestra.” It’s really nicely done, as usual, with original artwork and liner notes and fine sound. Larry Elgart even named both albums as among his “favorites,” saying they were “wonderful.” The only problem is that in 2003 Collectables, through the Sony Music Custom Marketing Group, already released “Sound Ideas” on CD (COL-CD-7579).



Tex Beneke’s 1960 RCA Camden stereo album of music from the film “The Alamo” never had an official release on CD, but six of its selections did show up on a Sounds of YesterYear Beneke compilation, “Here’s To The Ladies (Who Sang With The Band),” in 2010. Music Boutique has now made a CD-R transfer of everything from the LP, including Tex’s four vocals: *Ballad of the Alamo*, *The Green Leaves of Summer*, *Here’s to the Ladies*, and *Tennessee Babe (Oh Lisa!)*.



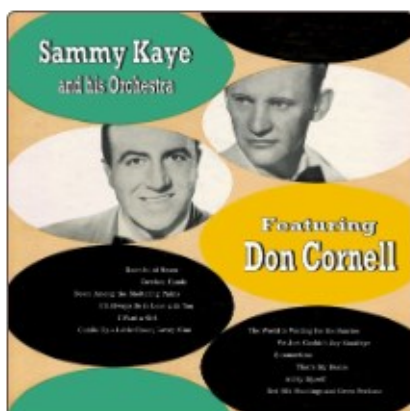
Gene Krupa is shown in action on the cover of the new CD “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” from Sounds of YesterYear (catalog no. DSOY 2078). The title song was originally a two-part 78 rpm recording by the Krupa band, arranged by Elton Hill and Chappie Willet, for the Okeh label on January 2, 1940.



Roy Eldridge has had not one, but two recent CD releases, including “The Verve Collection 1957-1962,” a 4-CD set from the Enlightenment label (the same company that has done Buddy Rich, Coleman Hawkins, and many others not within the scope of my website) and it’s packed with good jazz from eight of Eldridge’s old albums. Those LPs were: “Trumpet Battle: roy eldridge / dizzy gillespie” (MG V-8109), “Roy Eldridge and Benny Carter: urbane jazz” (MG V-8202), “Tour De Force: The Trumpets Of Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, and Harry Edison” (MG V-8212), “The Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Pete Brown, Jo Jones All Stars: At Newport” (MG V-8240), “Coleman Hawkins And Roy Eldridge At The Opera House” (MG V-8266), “Laughin’ to keep from cryin’: Lester Young, Roy Eldridge and Harry Edison” (MG V-8316), “Roy Eldridge: ‘Little Jazz’: Swingin’ On The Town” (MG V-8389), and “Hawkins! Eldridge! Hodges! Alive!” (V-8504). The other current Eldridge CD is “At The Half Note,” when Eldridge led a small band with saxophonist Richie Kamuca. It’s on the Sounds of YesterYear label.



It’s not quite Christmas yet, but Jasmine Records is getting the jump with “Christmas Way Back Home: Joint Sessions And Rarities,” a 2-CD set (catalog number JASCD 846). There are a total of 57 tracks but it’s certainly not all big band performers. However, there are a half-dozen bands included: Billy May (*Joy to the World*, *Silent Night*, *The First Noel*, and *O Come, All Ye Faithful*); Sammy Kaye (*Santa Claus Is On His Way*), Russ Morgan (*Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! and Willy Claus*), Guy Lombardo (*Winter Wonderland*), Glenn Miller (*Jingle Bells*), and Vaughn Monroe (*Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *The Jolly Old Man in the Bright Red Suit*, *A Marshmallow World*, and *Snowy White Snow and Jingle Bells*).



If you like Sammy Kaye and, in particular, his vocalist Don Cornell, you should enjoy this CD-R from Music Boutique. They're all RCA Victor recordings, and it was originally released as an LP on the "X" label (LXA-1014) in 1955. You might compare the track listing to the 2-CD Acrobat set of Cornell's hits that I wrote about in the July "News," because it has some of the same and others by Cornell after he left the Kaye band.



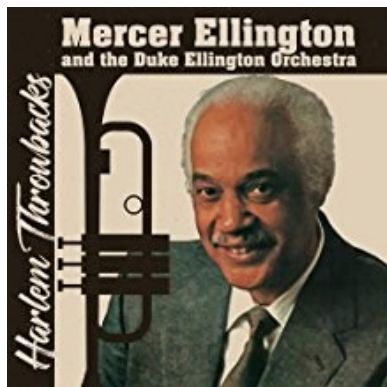
Music Boutique has transferred two old mid-'60s Capitol compilation albums featuring The King Sisters vocal group, and both were attempts to cash in on their popularity as part of the King Family television program. On the one, "Love At Home," there are four tunes included by Alvino Rey (*Mama Blues*, *Nighty Night*, *Cumana*, and *Strummin' On the Old Banjo*) and one by Del Courtney (*Rose Room*). On the other, "TV's Wonderful King Sisters," Rey backs up the Sisters only on certain selections.



There's no shortage of Louis Prima CDs with the songs he's associated with, and here are the two latest—the one on the right, for example, is a double-disc import from Spain from the Rama Lama Music label (catalog no. R0 55502). But you might as well stick to the authorized Capitol CDs which are still available in one form or another.



Add Duke Ellington to the roster of those multi-disc Enlightenment sets I mentioned earlier in this month's "News." This 4-CD set, "His Classic Collaborations 1956-1963" includes eight old albums' worth of the Duke, with special guest stars Rosemary Clooney, Mahalia Jackson, Johnny Hodges, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Mingus, and John Coltrane. Of course, all of this material has been out before, but if you were too young to get it the first time on LP or not able to afford to buy the authorized CD incarnations, this is a quick, if in my opinion less satisfying, way to build your collection.



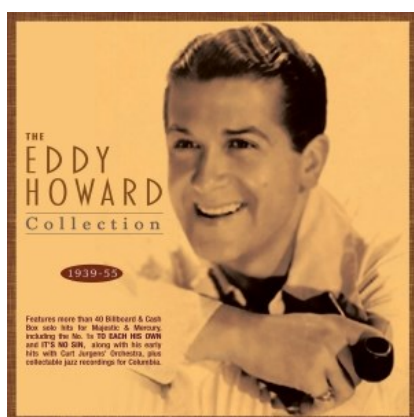
Ten years after he took over the leadership of The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Mercer Ellington led the band in these 1984 recordings. Several Ellington alumni, including trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall, trombonists Chuck Connors and Art Baron, drummer Rocky White, and vocalist Anita Moore, participated. The performances were issued by Doctor Jazz Records first as an LP, "Hot and Bothered (A Re-creation)," then on CD. Now, Squatty Roo Records has released them on CD, too.



Squatty Roo has also released another CD of The Duke Ellington Orchestra under Mercer's direction, taped live at the "Jazz Jamboree" in Warsaw, Poland in October 1977. But be warned that this has just three selections: *Three Black Kings* (16:40), *New World A-Coming* (13:22), and *The River* (29:43). Polish pianist Adam Makowicz was guest soloist.



These 50-year old performances are a, sort of, surprise CD-R issue by Sony Music, considering that there are plenty of other things that should have come out on compact disc first. Sony didn't bother very much with this, as there are no liner notes, no personnel, no recording dates, no bonus tracks (just the same 11 that were on the 1967 LP release). The total playing time is 31:30, which makes for a paltry CD. Couldn't Sony at least have combined this with one of DeFranco's other Miller Orchestra RCA albums?



“The Eddy Howard Collection: 1939-53” (Acrobat ADDCD 3214) features a total of 52 songs on two CDs, including more than 40 that made the charts in Billboard or Cash Box. The first six on the set are actually Dick Jurgens and His Orchestra with vocals by Howard (like *Careless*), there are three which Howard did with a group of all-stars on Columbia, then the rest are Howard's own band (such as *To Each His Own*) either on Majestic or Mercury.



Meanwhile, “The Helen Humes Collection: 1927-62” (Acrobat ADDCD 3213) presents 49 songs on two CDs, including, to choose a few titles, *He May Be Your Man*, *Million Dollar Secret*, *Blame It On my Last Affair*, and *I Would If I Could But I Can't*. Helen is heard with the big bands of Harry James, Count Basie (12 of them with him), Dizzy Gillespie, Red Norvo, and other jazzmen.



“Paris Sessions: 1954-1956,” a 2-CD set from Fresh Sound Records of Spain, (catalog number FSRCD 939 2), brings together two small groups, “The Herdsmen,” former members of Woody Herman’s band such as Ralph Burns, Cy Touff, and Dick Collins, and “The Kentonians,” including Carl Fontana, Curtis Counce, and Mel Lewis, who were associated with Stan Kenton’s band. The recording sessions were done in Paris for the French record labels Vogue, Swing, and Club des Amateurs du Disque.



A 2-CD set from Crystal Stream Audio in Australia (catalog numbers IDCD 362~3) with 28 original recordings used in the 1978 BBC-TV production “Pennies From Heaven” and 22 “alternate” ones, among them five songs by Ray Noble.

JERRY LEWIS (1926-2017)



The comedian-actor-director-humanitarian Jerry Lewis, who died at age 91 on August 20, 2017, may seem like a curious choice to be mentioned in a big band newsletter. For starters, watch his films “Cinderfella” (1960) for Count Basie and His Orchestra, “Ladies Man” (1961) for Harry James and His Music Makers, and “The Nutty Professor” (1963) for Les Brown and His Band of Renown. Then read the February 6, 1957 issue of Down Beat with the cover article “Jerry Lewis: ‘I Dig Bands.’” And, of course, in the ‘40s and ‘50s when Lewis was paired with Dean Martin, they had saxophonist Dick Stabile as their Music Director. Many thanks for your taste, humor, and heart, Mr. Lewis. Rest in peace.