

# On the Records

A critical analysis of the latest record releases, covering both the musical and commercial angles of each disk reviewed. Reviews of greater length are given to recordings that possess unusual interest as to artist, selection, or both.

Paragraphs in heavy type are designed for operators of automatic phonographs as a guide to the potential value of recordings in music machines.

Key: FT—Fox Trot; W—Waltz; VC—Vocal Chorus; V—Vocal Recording.

By M. H. ORODENKER

## CHARLIE BARNET (Decca 18541)

*That Old Black Magic*—FT; VC. *I Don't Want Anybody at All*—FT; VC.

**A**FTER an absence of many weeks Decca comes forward with a new release of records. In doing so it brings up one new song in particular that is a certainty to soar the popularity heights. It is Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's *That Old Black Magic*, and apart from the strong possibilities the issue is a timely one. Song is from the star-studded *Star-Spangled Banner* movie released this month, and the flicker looms as a big-timer. That it is the screen score's major plug song is indicated by the fact that disk entries are coming up from all the wax factories. And Decca has it serving double duty, since the same release finds Judy Garland also tackling the tune. Linking the Charlie Barnet band with a *Black Magic* song title would indicate, on the face of it, that it might be another one of those jazz hot dishes fashioned in the jungle and jive style that Barnet grooves so well. Instead the song title cloaks a love ballad, the likes of which has not been heard since Johnny Green's *Body and Soul*. The *Black Magic* refers to the spell of love. And the reference is full of sensuality and passion, the lyrical expressions touching up a fire of desire that gives the body-and-soul theme a sensitized whirl. Moreover, there is plenty of witchcraft in the repetitious note that strings the melody together. And it is a throbbing note with magical powers when blended with the lyrics. Song structure goes beyond the conventional 32 bars and, as may be expected, interest in the side is centered on the vocal interpretation. Here Barnet scores a bull's-eye in calling upon Frances Wayne to provide the lyrical delights. Gal created no small furor last summer at New York's Famous Door and has been winning wide circles of plaudits as a solo singer along the nitery circuits. As far as it is known, this is her first disk effort, and it certainly listens to excellent advantage. Miss Wayne not only has a good voice but an exceedingly excellent control of it. Makes every note ring out and count, singing from way deep down and not merely from the throat. Adding an exotic touch to a tune that is in itself an exotic one, Barnet mixes up the fox-trot rhythm with the rumba beats. Roll of the bongo drums serves as an introduction to set the stage for Miss Wayne's singing of the opening chorus, taking it at a medium tempo. Barnet's tenor sax, in what is pure sorcery, picks it up at bridge, and for the last half Miss Wayne returns to again delve into the very personal qualities of this thing which Tin Pan Alley now calls *That Old Black Magic*. *I Don't Want Anybody at All*, for the mated side, is quite a contrast in song material. One of those wishy-washy sentimental ballads, this one by Jules Styne and Herb Magidson from the *Sleepy Time Gal* screen score, Barnet casts sentimentality aside to give it a much more effective rhythmic twist. Takes it at a medium tempo, with a growling trumpet and a subdued trombone sharing the opening stanza. Huck Andrews brings up the vocal refrain for a second chorus, and then the real musical meat starts grinding. Barnet's sax sets the mood with his mad and hot improvisations for a half chorus and then the band joins in for a full ensemble riff chorus that rides well until the end.

"*That Old Black Magic*" is a cinch to cast a magic spell on the music boxes even before the screen show gains wide circulation. Barnet's entry will not be alone in the song sweepstakes, but the others coming up will have to go a long way to top this one, especially Frances Wayne's singing.

## ART DICKSON (Beacon 109)

*She Gave Her Heart to a Soldier Boy*—FT; V. *The Man of the Hour, General Eisenhower*—FT; V.

**T**HE North African war scene sure to take over the newspaper headlines again at any moment, the Beacon label figures on scoring a scoop with the topical *Man of the Hour* dedicated to General Eisenhower. Altho missing out now by a month or two, the general may still have his fling in songdom as did General MacArthur, in which case the side is bound to reap its harvest. However, it is only on the strength of the title, and its success will unquestionably be conditioned by the prominence of General Eisenhower in the public's eye. Art Dickson, radio singer of the robust type, known as the Texas Ranger, takes these spirited and fighting lyrics in good stride. For the backing it is a quartet of harmonicas, the Polka Dots, a familiar name to many radio listeners. Dickson sings it at a lively march tempo, with the harmonica lads cutting in for the chorus interludes. *Soldier Boy* for the mated side is a hillbilly type of "wolf" song, warning the lads at home in civvies that "she gave her heart to a soldier boy and she won't give her heart to you." However, Dickson makes no attempt at song subtlety, singing it in straightforward fashion in a lively marching-fox trot tempo.

In tune with the headlines, "*The Man of the Hour, General Eisenhower*" has definite phono possibilities. By virtue of its treatment here appeal is stronger at the country locations, at which corners the coins should also click for the hillbilly-typed "*She Gave Her Heart to a Soldier Boy*."

## KAY LORRAINE (Standard T-2077)

*Then I'll Forget You*—FT; V. *Take a Look at My Heart*—FT; V.

The Standard label takes another dip into the pop field and comes up with an attractive songstress in Kay Lorraine. Gal possesses plenty of warmth in her pipes, and with a fine sense of rhythmic and lyrical qualities gives full meaning to both of these comparatively unknown songs. Most attractive is *Take a Look at My Heart*, a professional rhythm ditty, with Miss Kay "fessing up that she's in love. Taken at a bright and medium tempo, starts off with the verse and into the chorus. For the second chorus gives a hot trombone the releases for the first half and has the last half all to herself to sing it out. *Then I'll Forget You*, on the mated side, is a torch ballad with a repetitious melody that strikes a somber tone. Miss Lorraine sings the opening chorus. Orchestral interlude for half a chorus is taken up by the muted trombone flanked by the fiddles, and Miss Lorraine brings up another full chorus to sing it out. Harold Grant's orchestra gives the excellent musical support for both sides.

With the radio-plugged song material so rare on the records these days, phono operators may find an appreciative audience for "*Take a Look at My Heart*."

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# On the Stand

Reviews of orchestras playing hotel, night club and ballroom locations and one-nighters. Comment is based upon the present or potential commercial value of the band, as well as its musical quality.

## Abe Lyman

(Reviewed at Hotel Lincoln, New York)

**A**FTER he ostensibly hung up the baton for the duration, Lyman's enlistment was turned down and he's back on the bandstand with a package of surprises. First pleasant surprise was the smoothness with which his newly assembled crew operated; second was the amount of youthful swing the vet leader dished out; third and biggest was the addition of a genuine vocal find, Frank Connors.

Connors is the reincarnation of Morton Downey, with fuller, richer tonal content. Youngster is making his first appearance with a straight dance band after a half dozen years of stagershow and night club seasoning and is sure to mean plenty to Lyman in the way of upped radio and theater interest soon as word gets around.

The ork itself is standard Lyman plus modern swing in the person of Johnny Austin, trumpeter, sparking the five-man brass section, and a superb rhythm department with Sid Weiss plucking the bass, Bill Clifton plunking the piano and Bob Spangler really beating the drum skins. Five saxes, doubling on the usual assortment of reeds, blend extremely well, but four fiddles are a bit thin.

When the boss is on the stand he sticks to the business at hand, leading with his back to the dance floor. When he goes table-hopping (and in New York the guy has a million pals) Marty Gold gives the one-two with his fiddle bow or Rose Blane, Lyman's stand-by these many years, waves the stick in zestful style.

With Miss Blane handling the rhythmic vocals in ringing tones, Connors to melt the feds, and the new swing boys to heat things up, Lyman is ready to move in on the band biz with a stronger aggregation than he's had in a long time. Grennard.

## Joe Reichman

(Reviewed at Palmer House, Chicago)

**A**LTHO hit by Uncle Sam like the rest of his tribe, Reichman managed to round up enough good musicians to sustain the musical quality that has always marked the outfit carrying his name. A member of the old school, Reichman is a showman verbally, and musically when he becomes the "Pagliacci of the Piano." The man sells every minute he is on the stand, makes the check payers feel that they are welcome, and that goes a long way in building trade and keeping patrons happy.

The present Reichman group is commercial all the way and the sets are plenty versatile. They range from pops to standards to show tunes to classics and, finally,

to Latin familiars. Many of the standards, in particular, are arranged around Reichman's flashy piano work, which draws attention.

Instrumentation, in addition to Reichman's keyboard, includes four rhythm (second piano doubling on accordion), four reed (one of them doubling on fiddle) and three brass. The brass men stand out thruout the sets and show music.

On vocals, Reichman has a find in Penny Lee, small, pert and pretty, who sells rhythm numbers as well as ballads like a veteran. Has a commercial delivery and her appearance is A-1. Heard less frequently is Artie Wayne, who leaves his guitar now and then to sell a ballad. During Reichman's standard Gershwin medley (now cut down to seven minutes), a glee club formation comes in for brief but impressive work. Honigberg.

## Mario Armellini

(Reviewed at Jefferson Hotel, Richmond, Va.)

**M**ARIO ARMELLINI has put together a combination of sweet music directed at the atmosphere of the older, more staid hostelrys and seems to have hit his target. The maestro, who has headed hotel orchestras for the past three decades, has built a slow, sweet group, a la Meyer Davis, and seldom swings into the faster tempos.

Bob Boykin is top man of the three reeds, drawing all the solo spots. Bob Post handles the brass piece in the combo, maestro's fiddle and three-man rhythm section completing the instrumentation.

Vocal assignments are handled by Ruth Vale and Catherine Allen. Miss Vale, a real looker with all that it takes, wows 'em. She joined Armellini after long sessions with Dean Hudson and Richard Himber. Second canary, Miss Allen, fails to get over. Her voice has undoubtedly been well trained but appears out of place with a dance aggregation. Use of up-in-the-head tones in an effort to get away from her natural concert soprano style is of no avail.

Maestro Armellini's violin playing, which at times smacks of sophisticated swing, is excellent. With any sort of breaks, the band should go places in its particular field. Eddington.

## Dunham Minus One Canary; Claire Gets Male Songmate

**N**EW YORK, Jan. 23.—Sonny Dunham's two-girl vocal department is no more. Mickle Roy, newly acquired canary, was checked off last week after co-stander Dorothy Claire gave out with indications of professional temperament. Don D'Arcy, male, was called in as replacement. Roy gal traveled 3,000 miles from the Coast to warble with Dunham.

She's been auditioning for a CBS network spot, having appeared last week on Raymond Scott's *Jazz Laboratory* show. Latter is an experimental, featuring Scott's new 18-piece outfit, heard Monday nights over wires outside New York.

of the program.

As far as the music goes, it doesn't go far enough. Brass is used as ensemble filler and only for two brief moments was a trumpet solo heard. Good, too. A little more use of this and the other brass instruments would provide color that is now missing. Especially could the brass be used to advantage on a "bouncy number" heard, with the bounces coming from fiddles.

No girl in the outfit, and one for rhythmic would be a welcome addition.

# On the Air

Comment on dance remote programs from the standpoint of showmanship, presentation and general listening appeal rather than the musical ability of the bands reviewed.

ELLIOTT GRENNARD

## Lou Breese

(*Chez Paree, Chicago, Blue Network, Tuesday (19), 12-12:30 midnight*)

**C**OME-ON, *Breezing Along With the Breeze*, is a misleading cue. Breese and his boys linger and linger. And the more they linger, the more one is reminded of another trumpet-playing "B"—Busse. Right down to his shuffle rhythm.

Band, sticking to the straight and narrow, overdid it when it turned *Brazil* into a plain fox trot. Only off-beats used for the samba were some shuffle stuff.

Kay Allen has a pleasing voice and frequently raises the level of the band music, but six vocals out of nine tunes played proved a wee bit too much Allen. She was at her very best in *Touch of Texas*, taken at a lively clip and swung out in spirited fashion.

Another voice, male, would provide an extra fillip. As it stood, Miss Allen's

vocals and Breese's sweet and hot (in quotes) trumpet tootling did not furnish enough compensation for those who stayed up late expectantly.

## Carl Ravazza

(*Hotel Statler, Detroit, Blue Network, Monday (18), 11:30-11:55 p.m.*)

**A** LOT of potentials inherent in the Ravazza voice and music are left unexploited, judging from this particular remote. Fairish society dance stuff, nice vocals and decent tempos are brewed into an innocuous dish of tea dansant served at midnight.

Most potent item in the collation is Ravazza's song contributions. His rather average tenor voice, thru assimilation of the Sinatra-Eberly baritone tricks of tone swellings, intonations, etc., becomes more personal and masculine. And his warbling of themer *Vieni Su* indicates that he's missing a good bet by sticking exclusively to Yankee tunes the balance

HAVE YOU HEARD  
**BETTY RANN?**