

The Good Ol' Boys Club

The Good Ol' Boys Club is a unique collection of a variety of popular male vocal groups of the 1950s and '60s, a teaming of popular singers of the day, and rare solo performances. So how do Patti Page, Margaret Whiting, and the Andrews Sisters fit into the collection? Inspiration came from remembering back to this era when the Eddie Chase radio programs were heard around the country. He would regularly feature fifteen minute segments with a focus on one particular band, singer, or vocal group on his "Make-Believe Ballroom" segments, often incorporating canned applause and lively ads. His early evening shows consisted of "The Top Ten Tunes of the Week". If he featured only male vocal groups, he might easily add in a female singing star as a *guest*. He would often make statements such as "Mag Whiting has just flown in from Hollywood to join us"; "*The Singing Rage* Miss Patti Page is now stepping up to the mike to join Don Cherry"; or following a commercial for one of the car companies: "Patty, Maxene, and LaVerne have just stepped out of a shiny new 1957 Buick to appear as guests here at the Ballroom".

And now to the gentlemen who comprise this set:

The Mills Brothers were one of the most respected vocal groups of the 20th Century. Their hit records for Brunswick, Decca, and Dot encompassed nearly forty years. Some of their most dynamic sessions were arranged and conducted by Sy Oliver during the 1950s, which included *That's Right, All the Way 'Round the World, Don't Get Caught*, and *I've Changed My Mind*. Also included here are their sensitive readings of *On This Christmas Eve* and *My Christmas Song for You*, with a simple guitar accompaniment.

The Ames Brothers – the unique blend of three baritones and a bass – were the first to record for Coral Records, a subsidiary of Decca. Their first major hit record was the double-sided million-seller, *Sentimental Me* and *Rag Mop*. *The Good Fellow Medley*, recorded early in their career, was comprised of six songs often associated with male vocal groups: *Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here; For He's a Jolly Good Fellow; Auld Lang Syne; A Hot Time in the Old Town; Home Sweet Home; and Good Night Ladies*. *Al-Lee-O! Al-Lee-Ay!*, recorded with Ray Bloch and His Orchestra, was issued in 1952 as a "B" side of *My Favorite Song*, and *The Alphabet*, a catchy lyric based on the books of the *Bible*, was recorded the following year, shortly after the brothers moved to RCA Victor.

Johnny Desmond, Don Cornell, and Alan Dale were under contract to Coral Records during the same time period in the 1950s. A&R executives brought them together for *Heart of My Heart* in 1953, the only time the three baritones recorded together, producing a best-selling single. Also featured here are three solo tracks: Desmond, *Trying*; Cornell, *Keep God in the Home*; and Dale, *The Ten Commandments*.

The Lancers were frequent guests on a wide variety of television shows during the 1950s. They were also part of Kay Starr's night club act for two years at about the time they recorded their first sides for Capitol with Nelson Riddle. By 1953, Coral Records had signed the quartet, and they began recording with Les Brown, **Lawrence Welk**, Dick Jacobs, Van Alexander, Jack Cathcart, and as back-up for Teresa Brewer on *Let Me Go, Lover*. Included here are two of their large production show tunes: *Joey, Joey, Joey*, featured in "The Most Happy Fella", and *Never Leave Me*, part of Gordon Jenkins' "Manhattan Tower".

Shortly after the departure of The Satisfiers, **Perry Como** was scheduled to record *If You Had All the World and Its Gold*. **The Mariners**, who were just beginning to achieve national recognition on the Arthur Godfrey shows, were called to the recording studio by RCA Victor to sing backup, the only time they were to record with Como. In 1950, Como and **The Ray Charles Singers** recorded *The Story of The First Christmas* expressly for children and issued on RCA's Little Nipper label. Excerpts from this session are presented here in this format for the first time.

Jimmy Wakely recorded the best selling record of his career when he joined Margaret Whiting for *Slipping Around* in 1949. In this collection, however, is his later solo recording of this country mega-hit, penned by Floyd Tillman. During an earlier session, he recorded his only tracks with **Bob Hope** of two songs featured in one of Hope's films, "Son of Paleface": *There's a Cloud in My Valley of Sunshine* and *Four-Legged Friend*.

Capitol Records signed **Al Martino** to a recording contract in 1952 shortly after the enormous success of *Here In My Heart*, issued on the independent B.B.S. label. Several singles were issued during the next four years, all of which achieved only modest success. When his contract was not renewed, he secured a recording agreement with 20th Century Fox, and *My Side of the Story* was issued. Martino's greatest success, however, began with his return to Capitol in 1963 where he recorded a succession of hit singles and best-selling albums.

Gordon MacRae was the star of the celebrated "Railroad Hour" radio program when he recorded his somewhat forgotten *The Wedding of Lili Marlene*, a song closely associated with the Andrews Sisters. He was sometimes teamed with other Capitol artists such as Jo Stafford, Gisele MacKenzie, and June Hutton, as well as with trumpeter

Ray Anthony in their only session together that produced *The Surrey With the Fringe on Top* and *People Will Say We're in Love*, both featured in Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma".

One of the most aggressive sounding groups of the 1950s was **The Four Coins**. These four young men – all trained musicians – hailed from Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, and were brought to Columbia Records where they were signed to its subsidiary, Epic. *I Love You Madly* charted early in 1955, followed by a revival of *Memories of You*, featuring a brilliant and uncredited trumpet accompaniment. Their very best seller was *Shangri-La*, which remained on the Billboard charts for nearly six months. Other memorable releases include *The Song That God Sings*, *Buon Natale*, and *Serenade of the Bells*.

Don Cherry sang briefly with Tommy Dorsey and Victor Young prior to signing with Decca Records where he scored with *Thinking of You* and *Vanity*. He joined chief clarinetist and band man **Artie Shaw** for a memorable session that produced *Just Say I Love Her* and *Don't Worry 'Bout Me*. His duet with **Patti Page**, a very rare studio recording, was pre-recorded specifically for Patti's television show.

Harry Babbitt is best remembered for his recordings *On a Slow Boat to China*, *Serenade of the Bells*, *Who Wouldn't Love You*, and *Jingle Jangle Jingle*, with Kay Kyser and His Orchestra. Upon leaving Kyser, he recorded for Columbia, Mercury, and Coral, but was unable to match the success of his earlier releases. *Parade of Wooden Soldiers* was recorded shortly before he departed Columbia Records.

Beginning in 1945, **Billy Eckstine** scored high on the Billboard charts until the mid-1950s. With only weeks remaining until the expiration of his contract with MGM, he was called to the studio to record *Lonely Avenue* and *You'll Get Yours*, where he was joined by **The Pied Pipers**, the dynamic group that first achieved recognition with Tommy Dorsey. He began recording for Mercury in late 1956, and the following year recorded, *If I Can Help Somebody*, the inspirational song that was chosen to generate interest in the effort to eradicate tuberculosis during the 1957 Christmas seals campaign. **George Beverly Shea**, the great Gospel singer largely known for his work with The Billy Graham Association, also recorded this title for RCA Victor, issued during the same year.

The Everly Brothers were still in their teens when they recorded for Columbia Records, an association that did not work well for them. Soon afterward Archie Bleyer brought them to the much smaller Cadence Records where their recordings caught fire, so to speak. Four of their many hits included *Bye Bye Love*, *Wake Up Little Susie*, *All I Have to Do Is Dream*, and *Let It Be Me*, a ballad introduced on national television by Jill Corey.

New York-born **John Gary** had sung for many years, including a stint on Don McNeil's "Breakfast Club" radio program, before securing a contract with RCA Victor in 1963. There were many single releases for more than seven years, but it was his album collections that became best-sellers. *Thank the Lord (For This Thanksgiving Day)* was recorded in 1959 during his brief association with Ohio-based Fraternity Records.

Bing Crosby occasionally recorded with **Fred Waring and His Pennsylvanians**. One of their most popular recordings was *Way Back Home*, which climbed the charts in 1949. Four years later they issued *Hush-A-Bye*, featured in the film, "The Jazz Singer". Crosby and **Frank Sinatra** recorded *Well, Did You Evah?* as part of the soundtrack for "High Society", a film in which they appeared with Grace Kelly, Celeste Holm, and Louis Armstrong.

The Four Lads came to the United States from Canada and were soon brought to the attention of Mitch Miller who signed them to record for Columbia Records. They sang back-up for Johnnie Ray, Doris Day, Dolores Hawkins, Toni Arden, and several others before their own releases caught on with the public. Their first major hit was *Istanbul*, followed by *Skokiian*, *Moments to Remember*, *No Not Much*, *Standing on the Corner*, *The Eyes of God*, *Who Needs You?*, and several others. Included here are their later recordings for Dot Records: *Sweet Mama Tree-Top Tall*, *The Winter Snow*, and *Not That I Care*.

Dean Martin was scheduled to record *Long, Long Ago* and *Open Up the Doghouse* with Frank Sinatra, but for some unknown reason, was instead joined by **Nat King Cole**. Both songs received considerable airplay, but this was the only time the two baritones recorded together. Cole later recorded the high energy *My Love* and *Steady* with **Stan Kenton and His Orchestra**. **The Four Knights** occasionally provided back-up for Cole, as in the case of *My Personal Possession*. Also featured here are two of the best remembered hits of The Four Knights: *I Get So Lonely* and *The Glory of Love*.

The Four Aces released their first major hit (*It's a Sin*) in 1951. Their Decca recordings permeated the Billboard charts for much of the 1950s, including *Tell Me Why*, *It's a Woman's World*, and *Stranger in Paradise*. They found great success by recording some of the great film themes of the era. Lead singer Al Alberts left the group in the late '50s, continuing to record for Decca.

There was a musicians' union strike in 1948 when **Dick Haymes** recorded *Anytime* and *Bouquet of Roses* for Decca. **The Troubadours** sang back-up, minus any instrumentation, on the two favorites, both of which have become country classics. Not long after the strike was resolved, Haymes recorded the ballad, *Every Time I Meet You*, with the accompaniment of **Gordon Jenkins and His Orchestra**. **Margaret Whiting** also recorded the same song for Capitol with **Frank DeVol and His Orchestra**. Both versions are included here.

And so, Good Fans, let's take a step back to the '50s and early '60s to a time when a wide variety of male vocal groups and dynamic teamings on radio, television, the concert stage, and in night clubs provided two decades of entertainment. The Good Ol' Boys definitely provided some Good Ol' Times!

Robert Nickora
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