

# 1954



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC



*Little Things meant a lot to Kitty Kallen in 1954.*



*Tony Bennett*

It was a Sunday morning in the fall of 1953, and Edith Lindeman, the entertainment editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, was excited. She had just written the lyrics to a song and was on the phone to her collaborator, Carl Stutz. "I think I've got something, but I don't know whether it's a song or not," she said. "Can you come over?" Stutz was soon examining a set of lyrics called *Little Things Mean a Lot*. After he nodded approval, Edith said, "That's the way my husband and I have lived. I knew how much this meant to me, and I was hoping it would mean this to someone else."

Stutz, though somewhat bothered by Lindeman's extended bridge, crafted a melody. The problem was finding a publisher. Lindeman and Stutz were not exactly novices—a few months earlier they had written and sold *Red Headed Stranger*, a "comeback" hit years later for country singer Willie Nelson—yet the new song bounced around eight or nine New York publishers before it was accepted. When it reached Decca, A & R head Milt Gabler's reception was lukewarm, but by coincidence, veteran big-band singer Kitty Kallen was in his office that day. She was looking for material and perked up when she saw **Little Things Mean a Lot**.

Decca, still hesitant about what they considered a "woman's song," figured that none of the big male singers like Como or Fisher would touch it. Kallen and her husband offered to underwrite the cost of the recording session themselves, if Decca would recompense them once disc sales passed the 50,000 mark. Decca agreed, and in late February 1954 *Little Things*

was released.

By May, the song was on the TV program *Your Hit Parade*, which counted down the top 10 hits of each week. It moved from No. 10 to No. 6 to No. 3. Lindeman and Stutz anxiously waited to see if their song would make No. 1 before the show broke for the summer. Stutz even tried to find out where *Little Things* would place on the last *Hit Parade* of the season—information normally kept as secret as Academy Award winners. Two days before the program aired, Stutz got a call from New York; an unidentified voice at the other end uttered a single word: "One."

The song topped the charts throughout most of the summer, and at year's end *Billboard* announced that it was the biggest hit of 1954. More than 60 other artists covered *Little Things*, and it also found its way into commercials for White Cloud tissue and Sheraton hotels.

Significant changes greeted popular music in 1954. For the first time, record companies sold more of the new 45 rpm "doughnut discs" (as they were then called) than 78s. Consumer interest in "high-fidelity" sound accounted for the more than \$61 million spent on record players. All the major companies now issued "long-play" albums, which sold for a list price of \$3.98. Rock 'n' roll was waiting in the wings: Bill Haley's *Shake, Rattle and Roll* made the charts late that fall. And it seemed that the classic Tin Pan Alley cabaret style that had dominated the scene since the Second World War had reached its zenith.

This was the year of the love ballad, and a surpris-

ing number came from Hollywood. Doris Day's third million-selling record, **Secret Love**, was used in *Calamity Jane*, a rambunctious Western that garnered a 1953 Academy Award for the song—although Day's single didn't chart until February 1954. Another ballad won the 1954 Oscar: **Three Coins in the Fountain**, sung by the Four Aces. Don Cornell's **Hold My Hand** was in the Dick Powell-Debbie Reynolds comedy *Susan Slept Here*. Arguably, the year's most powerful ballad was **The Man That Got Away**, written by Ira Gershwin and Harold Arlen for the movie *A Star Is Born*, starring Judy Garland. Many of her fans associated the song with Garland's comeback from her 1950 nervous collapse. Her recording eventually sold more than a million copies.

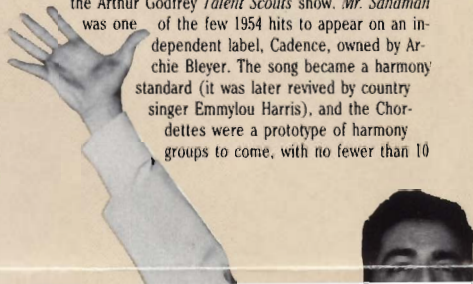
Broadway was the source for two other classic ballads, Tony Bennett's **Stranger in Paradise** and Rosemary Clooney's **Hey There**, both of which ended up in the year's top 10. *Stranger in Paradise* is from *Kismet*, a musical based on the opera *Prince Igor* by the 19th-century Russian composer Alexander Borodin. The well-known melody to *Stranger* is actually a theme from one of his *Polovtsian Dances*. *Hey There* was part of *The Pajama Game*, the Richard Alder-Jerry Ross musical about the garment industry. According to Clooney, producer Mitch Miller called her and said, "Columbia has bought the rights to all the recordings of *The Pajama Game* and they want some hit records from it. So far we haven't had one. I think you can change that." Clooney did, accompanied by harpsichord and her own overdubbed harmony.

Two other fine ballads were European imports. Kay Starr's **If You Love Me (Really Love Me)** was introduced in France in 1949 as *Hymne à l'Amour* by the legendary chanteuse Edith Piaf, the tragic "Little Sparrow" of Paris clubs. Geoffrey Parsons, who wrote the English words for this song, also supplied the lyrics for **Oh! My Papa**, the biggest hit of Eddie Fisher's career. The song had been a smash instrumental in

ham's California crusades in the late 1940s. Hamblen had written the song after his chance discovery of an old miner dead in his cabin in the High Sierras. Rosemary Clooney and Mitch Miller had a knack for converting country songs into pop hits, and *This Ole House* was a prime candidate. The singer recalls, "Mitch had not wanted it to come through quite so raucously as it did. But who argues with hits?"

Two of the year's most infectious songs came from a remarkable 55-year-old native of Troy, Pennsylvania, named Francis Drake (Pat) Ballard. In 1953, he wrote **I Get So Lonely (When I Dream about You)**. The opening phrase, "Oh baby mine," came from a 19th-century minstrel tune. Ballard began performing the piece in a hoked-up hillbilly style, and it soon came to the attention of the Four Knights vocal group. Their Capitol recording cracked the charts in early 1954, featuring the booming bass of Oscar Broadway on the "Oh baby mine" part.

That fall, the Chordettes discovered a second Pat Ballard song called **Mr. Sandman**. A group of college students who had first come together as an all-girl barbershop quartet, the Chordettes began their career in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Like so many young performers in the 1950s, their ticket to fame was punched by the Arthur Godfrey *Talent Scouts* show. *Mr. Sandman* was one of the few 1954 hits to appear on an independent label, Cadence, owned by Archie Bleyer. The song became a harmony standard (it was later revived by country singer Emmylou Harris), and the Chordettes were a prototype of harmony groups to come, with no fewer than 10



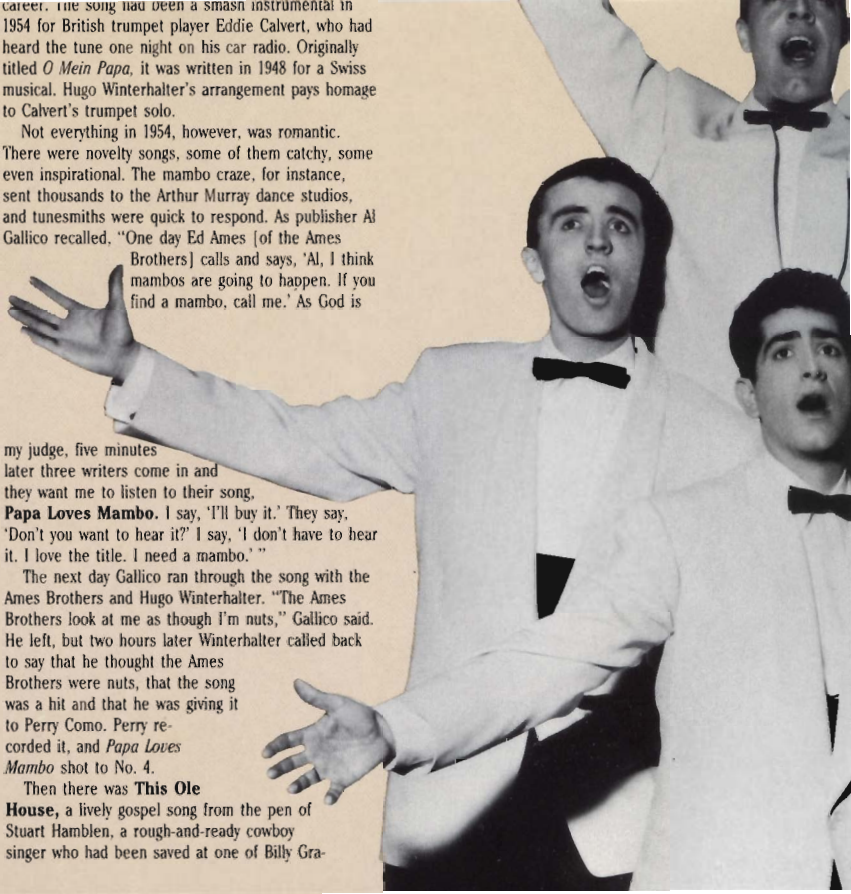
career. The song had been a smash instrumental in 1954 for British trumpet player Eddie Calvert, who had heard the tune one night on his car radio. Originally titled *O Mein Papa*, it was written in 1948 for a Swiss musical. Hugo Winterhalter's arrangement pays homage to Calvert's trumpet solo.

Not everything in 1954, however, was romantic. There were novelty songs, some of them catchy, some even inspirational. The mambo craze, for instance, sent thousands to the Arthur Murray dance studios, and tunesmiths were quick to respond. As publisher Al Gallico recalled, "One day Ed Ames [of the Ames Brothers] calls and says, 'Al, I think mambo's are going to happen. If you find a mambo, call me.' As God is

my judge, five minutes later three writers come in and they want me to listen to their song. **Papa Loves Mambo.** I say, 'I'll buy it.' They say, 'Don't you want to hear it?' I say, 'I don't have to hear it. I love the title. I need a mambo.'"

The next day Gallico ran through the song with the Ames Brothers and Hugo Winterhalter. "The Ames Brothers look at me as though I'm nuts," Gallico said. He left, but two hours later Winterhalter called back to say that he thought the Ames Brothers were nuts, that the song was a hit and that he was giving it to Perry Como. Perry re-recorded it, and *Papa Loves Mambo* shot to No. 4.

Then there was **This Ole House**, a lively gospel song from the pen of Stuart Hamblen, a rough-and-ready cowboy singer who had been saved at one of Billy Gra-



hits over the next seven years. They helped make 1954 a mellow year in popular music and a watershed in the onward march of the hit parade.

—Charles K. Wolfe

## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest chart position

### SIDE 1

- 1. This Ole House** Rosemary Clooney • Music and lyrics by Stuart Hamblen. Columbia 40266. No. 1\*
- 2. I Need You Now** Eddie Fisher • Music and lyrics by Jimmie Crane and Al Jacobs. RCA Victor 5830. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 1\*
- 3. Make Love to Me!** Jo Stafford • Music by Leon Roppolo, Paul Mares, Benny Pollack, George Brunis, Mel Stitzel and Walter Melrose, lyrics by Bill Norvas and Allan Copeland. Columbia 40143. Courtesy of Corinthian Records. No. 1\*
- 4. Hold My Hand** Don Cornell • Music and lyrics by Jack Lawrence and Richard Myers. Coral 61206. Courtesy of MCA Records. Inc. No. 2\*
- 5. Stranger in Paradise** Tony Bennett • Music and lyrics by Robert Wright and George Forrest (based on Borodin's Polovtsian Dances). Columbia 40121. No. 2\*



- 6. Mr. Sandman** The Chordettes • Music and lyrics by Pat Ballard. Cadence 1247. Courtesy of Barnaby Records. No. 1\*
- 7. Papa Loves Mambo** Perry Como • Music and lyrics by Al Hoffman, Dick Manning and Bix Reichner. RCA Victor 5857. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 4\*
- 8. Hernando's Hideaway** Archie Bleyer • Music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. Cadence 1241. Courtesy of Barnaby Records. No. 2\*
- 9. Little Things Mean a Lot** Kitty Kallen • Music and lyrics by Edith Lindeman and Carl Stutz. Decca 29037. Courtesy of MCA Records. Inc. No. 1\*
- 10. Misty** Erroll Garner Trio • Music by Erroll Garner, lyrics by Johnny Burke. Mercury 70442. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 30\*
- 11. Three Coins in the Fountain** Four Aces • Music by Jule Styne, lyrics by Sammy Cahn. Decca 29123. Courtesy of MCA Records. Inc. No. 1\*
- 12. Secret Love** Doris Day • Music by Sammy Fain, lyrics by Paul Francis Webster. Columbia 40108. No. 1\*
- 13. Cross Over the Bridge** Patti Page • Music and lyrics by Bennie Benjamin and George Weiss. Mercury 70302. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 2\*
- 14. Young at Heart** Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo • Music by Johnny Richards, lyrics by Carolyn Leigh. Decca 29054. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 24\*
- 15. Hey There** Rosemary Clooney • Music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. Columbia 40266. No. 1\*
- 16. (The Gang That Sang) Heart of My Heart** Don Cornell, Alan Dale and Johnny Desmond • Music and lyrics by Ben Ryan. Coral 61076. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 10\*
- 17. If You Love Me (Really Love Me)** Kay Starr • Music by Marguerite Monnot, English lyrics by Geoffrey Parsons. Capitol 2769. Courtesy of Capitol Records. Inc. No. 4\*
- 18. The High and the Mighty** Les Baxter • Music by Dimitri Tiomkin, lyrics by Ned Washington. Capitol 2845. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 4\*
- 19. I Get So Lonely (When I Dream about You)** The Four Knights • Music and lyrics by Pat Ballard. Capitol 2654. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 2\*
- 20. If I Give My Heart to You** Doris Day • Music and lyrics by Jimmie Crane, Al Jacobs and Jimmy Brewster. Columbia 40300. No. 3\*
- 21. Oh! My Papa** Eddie Fisher • Music by Paul Burkhard, lyrics by John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons. RCA Victor 5552. Courtesy of BMG Music. No. 1\*



Music, No. 1\*

**22. Teach Me Tonight** Jo Stafford • Music by Gene de Paul, lyrics by Sammy Cahn. Columbia 40351. Courtesy of Corinthian Records. No. 15\*

**23. The Happy Wanderer** Frank Weir • Music by Friedrich Wilhelm Moeller. English lyrics by Antonia Ridge. London 1448. Under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 4\*

**24. The Man That Got Away** Judy Garland • Music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by Ira Gershwin. Columbia 40270. No. 22\*

*Three Coins in the Fountain* was one of several movie title songs performed by the Four Aces.

# 1954

- 1 **This Ole House** Rosemary Clooney
- 2 **I Need You Now** Eddie Fisher
- 3 **Make Love to Me!** Jo Stafford
- 4 **Hold My Hand** Don Cornell
- 5 **Stranger in Paradise** Tony Bennett
- 6 **Mr. Sandman** The Chordettes
- 7 **Papa Loves Mambo** Perry Como
- 8 **Hernando's Hideaway** Archie Bleyer
- 9 **Little Things Mean a Lot** Kitty Kallen
- 10 **Misty** Erroll Garner Trio
- 11 **Three Coins in the Fountain** Four Aces
- 12 **Secret Love** Doris Day
- 13 **Cross Over the Bridge** Patti Page
- 14 **Young at Heart** Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo
- 15 **Hey There** Rosemary Clooney
- 16 **(The Gang That Sang) Heart of My Heart**  
Don Cornell, Alan Dale and Johnny Desmond
- 17 **If You Love Me (Really Love Me)** Kay Starr
- 18 **The High and the Mighty** Les Baxter
- 19 **I Get So Lonely (When I Dream about You)** The Four Knights
- 20 **If I Give My Heart to You** Doris Day
- 21 **Oh! My Papa** Eddie Fisher
- 22 **Teach Me Tonight** Jo Stafford
- 23 **The Happy Wanderer** Frank Weir
- 24 **The Man That Got Away** Judy Garland



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1954 was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with CBS Special Products. Digitally remastered at K-Disc, Hollywood, Calif.; Ken Perry, engineer.

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