

PEGGY LEE

I'M A WOMAN

A TASTE OF HONEY □ MACK THE
KNIFE □ I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN
FRANCISCO □ THE ALLEY CAT
SONG □ MAMA'S GONE, GOODBYE
□ ONE NOTE SAMBA □ I'LL GET BY
□ YOU'RE NOBODY 'TIL SOMEBODY
LOVES YOU □ THERE AIN'T NO
SWEET MAN THAT'S WORTH THE
SALT OF MY TEARS □ COME RAIN
OR COME SHINE □ I'M WALKIN' □
I'M A WOMAN □□□□□□□□□□

I'M A WOMAN

Peggy Lee

60th Anniversary Digital Expanded Edition

Newly Remastered

Includes 8 Bonus Tracks (5 Previously Unissued)

Booklet, Featuring New Annotation And Photos, Exclusively At
Peggylee.com

ORIGINAL ALBUM TRACKS

1. The Alley Cat Song

(Frank Bjorn aka Bent Fabric, Jack Harlen aka Al Stillman)

2. Mama's Gone, Goodbye

(Peter Bocage, Armand John Piron)

3. I'm Walkin'

(Dave Bartholomew, Antoine "Fats" Domino)

4. Come Rain Or Come Shine

(Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer)

5. There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth The Salt Of My Tears

(Fred Fisher)

6. I'm A Woman

(Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller)

7. Mack The Knife (Die Moritat Von Mackie Messer)

(Marc Blitzstein, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill)

8. You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You

(James Cavanaugh, Russ Morgan, Larry Stock)

9. I'll Get By

(Fred E. Ahlert, Roy Turk)

10. I Left My Heart In San Francisco

(George Cory, Douglass Cross)

11. A Taste Of Honey

(Ric Marlow, Bobby Scott)

12. One Note Samba (Samba De Uma Nota Só)

(Jon Hendricks, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Newton Mendonça)

BONUS TRACKS

13. Little Boat (O Barquinho)

(Ron Boscoli, Buddy Kaye, Roberto Menescal)

14. Please Don't Rush Me

(Peggy Lee)

15. Close Your Eyes (Session Outtake)

(Bernice Petkere)

16. A Taste Of Honey (Alternate Take)

(Ric Marlow, Bobby Scott)

17. Try A Little Tenderness

(Jimmy Campbell, Reg Connelly, Harry Woods)

18. I'm Walkin' (Alternate Take)

(Dave Bartholomew, Antoine "Fats" Domino)

19. Jealous (Alternate Take)

(Dick Finch, Little Jack Little, Tommie Malie)

Bobby Darin, Featuring Peggy Lee

20. I'm A Woman (Alternate Take)

(Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller)

RECORDING DATES

March 29, 1962: Tracks 9 and 14.

November 14, 1962: Tracks 6, 15 and 20.

January 2, 1963: Tracks 2, 8 and 12.

January 3, 1963: Tracks 3, 11, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

January 4, 1963: Tracks 1, 5 and 10.

January 5, 1963: Tracks 4 and 7.

February 6, 1963: Track 13.

ALBUM'S RELEASE HISTORY

Originally released in February 1963 as both monaural (Capitol T-1857) and stereophonic (Capitol ST-1857) vinyl. Also issued by Capitol on 8-track cartridge, reel tape, and for jukebox machines. Reissued on vinyl in 1977, as Capitol SM-1857.

During late February and early March 1963, the original LP entered the charts of both Billboard and Cashbox, the top periodicals of the American music trade. A top 20 peak, I'm A Woman became the 15th Peggy Lee album to make these charts. (Further chart specifics can be found in this booklet's liner notes.)

On compact disc, the album has been issued only once, as one half of a EMI twofer CD titled I'm A Woman - Norma Deloris Egstrom From Jamestown, North Dakota (2004).

Credit for the I'm a Woman cover photography on all aforementioned editions: John Engstead.

PEGGY LEE SESSION CREDITS

All Peggy Lee tracks produced by Dave Cavanaugh. Musical direction by Dick Hazard except on one track credited to Max Bennett (#13) and five tracks which were officially conducted by Benny Carter (#6, 9, 14, 15, 20). The songwriting-producing team known as Leiber & Stoller is reported to have unofficially taken over the conducting of tracks #6 and 20.

Most performances are believed to use head arrangements. A credited arranger was found only for three tunes: "A Taste of Honey" (Hazard), "I'll Get By" (Carter), and "I'm a Woman." On the latter, the rhythm chart was arranged by Benny Carter, the horn chart by Mike Stoller.

Rhythm musicians: Max K. Bennett (b), Mike Melvoin (p), and Stan Levey (d) are listed on all the November 1962 and January 1963 album

sessions. Al Hendrickson (g), and Manny Klein (t) are listed on all the January 1963 sessions, too, along with Justin Gordon (f) on two of the same dates.

Klein might have also been the unidentified trumpeter on the November 1962 date, which additionally featured Gene Quill on alto sax and John Pisano on guitar. Pisano's presence or absence in each of the January 1963 album sessions has yet to be ascertained. When present, Pisano would have either joined or alternated with fellow guitarist Hendrickson.

On the earliest of these sessions (March 1962), Bennett and Hendrickson are listed along with Harry Klee (f), Mel Lewis (d), Lou Levy (p), Jack Sheldon (t), and a second guitarist, Herb Ellis.

On the last of these sessions (February 1963), Francisco Aguabella (bo, cong) and Bob Corwin (p) join Max Bennet, Justin Gordon, Stan Levey, and John Pisano. Aguabella is also listed on the January 5 date, along with two musicians not named elsewhere, Paul Horn (r) and Dave Wells (tb).

BOBBY DARIN SESSION CREDITS

The Bobby Darin track (#19) comes from a Darin date produced by Nik Venet. The date generated five masters, one of them being "Jealous." Capitol label discographies credit Jimmie Haskell as both conductor and arranger, but do not identify the accompanying musicians. Guest Peggy Lee is heard on two alternate takes of "Jealous"—the one herein and another which remains unissued as of this writing.

REISSUE CREDITS

Producer: Holly Foster Wells

Project Supervision: Frank Collura

Mastering: Robert Vosgien

Production Manager: Cynthia Gonzalez

Product Manager: Fiona Dearing
Licensing: Sean Roderick
Art Direction (Front Cover): Vartan
Booklet Design and Annotation: Iván Santiago-Mercado
Special Thanks: John Pisano, Mike Stoller, Peter Stoller, Dodd Darin,
Andrew Daw, Seth Berg, Lellie Capwell, Mitchell Healey, Kenneth Goldman,
Drew Milford, Les Traub, Max O. Preeo, George Hewitt, Jim Pierson, David
Torresen, Iván Santiago

A NOTE ABOUT LINER NOTES

An expanded album edition deserves expanded annotation. Rather than a set of liner notes, we have prepared a four-essay series:

I. Boss Lady

Pages: 09-59

Portrait of the woman behind "I'm A Woman"; report on the "Woman" **session**.

II. Red-Hot Mama

Pages: 60-97

I'm a Woman overview—background, statistics and artistry behind the **album**.

III. Mama's Treats

Pages: 98-180

Mini-essays about each of this expanded *I'm a Woman* edition's **songs**.

IV. Bossa Lady

Pages: 00-00

Exploration of the bossa nova element in Lee's work, especially in 1962 and 1963.

We are calling this four-essay series *The Boss Mama Files*. Each essay combines print and audiotape quotes from many individuals—Peggy Lee included—with oral commentary provided by recent interviewees—John Pisano, Mike Stoller. Readers should feel entirely free to browse and delve as they see fit. (For several reasons, we have ultimately decided to exclude the fourth essay. Out of Lee's two original 1963 albums, it is not *I'm a Woman* but *Mink Jazz* that carries the strongest connection to the bossa **style**.)

Scroll down to the bottom of the document for a people **index** and a Lee **photo listing**. I should also clarify that this document exists thanks to the diligent initiative of Peggy Lee Associates, who commissioned it in its entirety. Here is hoping that fellow fans will enjoy our deep dive into the alluring, fascinating and (very) feminine world of *I'm a Woman*—the album, the song, and the artist known as Miss Peggy Lee.

THE *BOSS MAMA* FILES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
Track Listing	2-3
Original Album Tracks	2
Expanded Edition's Bonus Tracks	3
Recording Dates	3
Album's Release History	4
Credits	4-6
Personnel for Peggy Lee's Sessions	4-5
Personnel for Bobby Darin's Session	5
Personnel Responsible for This Reissue	5-6
A Note About the Liner Notes	6
Table of Contents	7-8
 The Boss Mama Files (An Essay Series)	 9-180
 I. Boss Lady	 9-59
Introducing the Lady Lee	10-12
Year of the Triumphant Normas - 1962	13-18
"I'm a Woman" - In Concert	19-22
Pisano and His Paisanos - Session Personnel	22-27
A Tale of Two Mikes - Melvoin, Stoller	27-30
"I'm a Woman" - The Session	30-33
Leiber & Stoller's "Woman-Lee" Experiences	34-39
Good Golly - Grievances ala Leiber	39-44
Portrait of a Lady in Charge	45-51
Fire, Sweat and Tears - The Pisano Portrait	51-55
I'm the Boss - A Self-Portrayal	55-56
Woman to Woman - Powerful Portraits	57-59

II. Red-Hot Mama	60-97
Enter "A Woman" - A 45 from a Forty-Something	61-65
<i>I'm a Woman</i> - An Album in the Making	65-68
<i>I'm a Woman</i> - Album Sessions	68-70
<i>Woman, Rush, Please</i> - Capitol's Command	70-73
<i>I'm a Woman</i> - Album Accolades	73-76
<i>I'm a Woman</i> - Peggy Lee Conceptualization	76-80
Blues	81-84
Bossa Nova	84-87
Love	88-89
Womanliness	90-93
Laughter	94-97
III. Mama's Treats	98-180
1. The Alley Cat Song	99-105
2. Mama's Gone, Goodbye	105-109
3. I'm Walkin'	109-111
4. Come Rain or Come Shine	111-114
5. There Ain't No Sweet Man (That's Worth ...)	114-120
6. I'm a Woman	120-136
7. Mack the Knife	136-140
8. You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You	140-143
9. I'll Get By	143-145
10. I Left My Heart in San Francisco	145-149
11. A Taste of Honey	149-153
12. One Note Samba	153-157
13. Little Boat	157-159
14. Please Don't Rush Me	159-162
15. Close Your Eyes	162-167
17. Try a Little Tenderness	167-171
19. Jealous	171-180
IV. Bossa Lady	000-000
People Index	182-188
Peggy Lee Photography Index	189-192



Boss Lady

"There are only three singers who move me emotionally: Peggy Lee, Frank Sinatra, and Ray Charles. If I want to be lullabied, I listen to Peggy Lee;

I don't care what the tempo is.
That's the boss lady.

(Singer Bobby Darin to
jazz critic Gene Lees,
during an interview
originally published in
Downbeat magazine,
May 12, 1960 issue)

Introducing the Lady Lee

A boss lady, indeed. During a lifetime spent as a professional singer, Peggy Lee (1920-2002) remained firmly in charge of her music career and artistic choices. Enhancing and contributing to that career's everlasting success was the public persona that she so successfully cultivated. Subtle yet commanding, the Lee persona was first and foremost—unapologetically and manifestly—a woman.

Lee's full period of professional activity (1934-1997) spans seven decades. The two earlier decades (1930s, 1940s) provided the young songstress with object lessons in the art and deal of collaborative partnership. Back then, her musical preferences had needed to find accommodation behind those of men such as bandleader Benny Goodman, for whom she worked from 1941 to 1943. Through most of that second decade, all significant

career decisions were also subject to conjugal consultation with guitarist Dave Barbour, whom she had married in 1943.

The couple's separation period in the early 1950s was a crucial period for Lee. It placed her on the road toward a willing, active search for full self-enfranchisement. Among various career readjustments made at that time, the most critical one was her dissolution of all ties with the Barbours' shared manager, Carlos Gastel. She officially granted a divorce to Barbour in May of 1951, and publicly announced her termination of Gastel's management in September of the same year. The Hollywood-based vocalist put further distance between herself and the two drinking buddies through a residential change to Manhattan, where she filled her calendar with continuous—and, at times, strenuous amounts of—work in radio and television.

The former Mrs. Barbour returned to Los Angeles in mid-1952. Over the ensuing months and years, she would occasionally give a backwards glance to her past life of domesticity, and would even entertain the prospect of a marital reconciliation with the beloved—and, eventually, sobered-up—father of her child. By no means did she keep herself idly awaiting, though. In addition to still maintaining a grueling work schedule, the lady heartily indulged in dating plenty of proper gentlemen, never

missing on a rich love life. And not just dating. Miss Lee got married on three more occasions—each time all too briefly. On at least two of those marital unions, she found herself facing *the* working woman's dilemma: man or career, as the latter had become a stumbling block for the former, and a choice had to be made. Ultimately, Lee's career won over, every time.

In truth, the divorcée had steadily taken the reins of her professional life in 1951, and from then onwards she would seldom ever let go of those reins. Aside from a couple of short-lived retirement periods (neither of which qualified as a full cancellation of all her ongoing artistic activities, and both of which she ended up deeming ill-advised), the direction of Miss Lee's working life was not dictated by a husband, a man-manager, or a man-producer. "I had complete control of my career," she would point out in her later years, adding that "it was essential to me that I always knew what I was doing" (as said to the *Oakland Daily Review's* Curt Morgan, 1987). From the 1950s onwards, Lee surrounded herself with top-notch management agencies and highly skilled musicians, whom she herself had picked or approved. All those men were expected to cater to the artistic needs of this highly creative and emotionally sensitive, full-flesh-and-blood (at times sensual, at times maternal, at times temperamental) woman.

Year of the Triumphant Normas (1962)

In the ensuing report, we will be catching up with *the* woman during a successful two-year period that culminated in the release of her self-manifesting album *I'm a Woman* (Capitol Records 1857). Recorded partly in 1962 and partly in early 1963, the album and its lead single were a dual success: both became Grammy nominees and both managed to infiltrate the music charts.



{Page 9 (essay's top photo): Lee, captured in a shot taking in the early 1960s. Page 13: rehearsal for President John F. Kennedy's 45th birthday.}

The year 1962 brought two events of distinction into Lee's work schedule. On December 7, a special concert by the 42-year-old artist was slated to make its debut at New York's classically oriented Philharmonic Hall. Brand new at the time (having opened its doors in September of that year), the hall was being closely monitored by its *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts* board, who had established a rigorous application process.



{Page 14: Lee, posing with poster for Kennedy event.}

Artists who merely wanted to perform their regular repertoire there could expect their requests to be summarily denied (on the basis of a lacking "creative point of view"), and artists to whom admission was granted could feel justifiably proud of the feat (all the more so if they belonged to the fields of folk, pop or jazz). The approved Peggy Lee project was a musico-historical hybrid (concert, conference) for which she had even conducted research at the New York Public Library. Titled *The Jazz Tree*, its aim was to trace the roots and branches of jazz in America.

Held on May 19, 1962 at the Madison Square Garden, the *Birthday Salute to President Kennedy* was the other notable event which took place within this year of the artist's life. Peggy Lee (birth name: Norma Deloris Egstrom) was among several major acts who performed their mini-sets in front of the president and a fundraising audience of about 15,000 attendees.

Competing for public and presidential attention during that Saturday evening were the likes of Harry Belafonte, Maria Callas, Bobby Darin, Jimmy Durante, and Ella Fitzgerald, among others. By most accounts, each of those acts was well received and appreciated, Lee included. She had even received flattering word of mouth before the start of the show, to the effect that the president's favorite singer was no other than she.



{Page 16: at the Kennedy gala. Lou Levy (piano), Max Bennett (bass), Mel Lewis (drums). Out of view: Benny Carter, conductor; Chino Pozo, bongos; Howard Collins, guitar.}

Ultimately, however, neither Norma D. nor any of the other aforementioned stars was able to prevail over the others. The spotlight was grabbed from all of them by one Norma J. Mortenson, who came into the proceedings to tipsily sing "Happy Birthday" to her Mr. President.

After all was said, sung and done, perhaps our Norma found some solace in the fact that she had been instrumental to the success of the other Norma: Marilyn

Monroe's sheer dress and curvy figure had been expertly illuminated by Lee's own lighting director, the celebrated Hugo Granata. (The blonde bombshell had sent out word asking to borrow him. Our natural blonde had greenlighted the idea. Thanks in no small measure to Granata's strategically applied lighting, Norma Jean enacted an act for the ages.)



{Page 17: Norma Deloris and Norma Jean, caught in the act of performing, back to back, at the Kennedy salute.}

In tandem with those two watershed events, the year 1962 also brought acclaimed concert engagements and

prestigious television appearances for Lee. Preeminent among the latter were a star turn as the very first guest of the debuting *Andy Williams Show* (September 27) and a lead spot at a Carnegie Hall tribute honoring Richard Rodgers, televised as an *Ed Sullivan Show* special (November 4).

Prominent among the gigs on Lee's 1962 schedule were her two runs at the Basin Street East nightclub, one in March and the other in November. Highly publicized and typically jam-packed events, such gigs had made the name Peggy Lee synonymous with the club, where she had first played in 1959. So critically and financially successful had Lee become at Basin Street East that, for her engagement in November of 1962, she had boldly requested the tearing down, relocation and remodeling of the club's stage. Her wishes and commands had been dutifully fulfilled by the main owner of Basin Street East, Ralph Watkins.

{Page 19 (below): Basin Street East entrance and marquee, with patrons lining up on the sidewalk. March or April 1963.}



"I'm a Woman" — In Concert

At this November 1962 engagement, one fresh number immediately caught heat: "I'm a Woman." The audience's fervor can be gleaned from an account of the opening night, written by attendee Earl Wilson for his syndicated column *It Happened Last Night*. After commending Lee

for "doing an hour and a half of songs on your return to Basin St. East," and after also pointing out that "the five white ropes or hawsers, against the back wall" were her idea, Wilson adds, "and we liked it when they begged you to repeat *I'm a Woman* and you said, 'why not? I'll learn the lyrics that way!'" For their part, *Billboard* would characterize the tune as "a great driving blues" and *Cashbox* would deem it "a specialty blues number" that "gets a big mitt from Miss Lee's cool handling of some sharp lyrics."

Evolving in a manner similar to the way her hit "Fever" had earlier on at New York's Copacabana (1958), this new tune was drawing such enthusiastic audience reaction that Lee's designated producer at Capitol, Dave Cavanaugh, decided to fly from Los Angeles to New York as soon as his schedule permitted it. He had as his express purpose the recording of the number for rush release, before the year's end. (When it came to Lee's concert successes, Capitol had learned to pay attention the hard way. In 1952, the label had basically dismissed the singer's request to set up a recording session for her newly minted treatment of the standard "Lover." That treatment had also been generating huge enthusiasm from her NY audiences. After being met with apathy at Capitol, an undeterred Lee jumped ship to rival label Decca and recorded "Lover" there. Decca promptly found itself with a million-seller in their pockets.)



{Page 21: rehearsing at Basin Street East, 1962.}

The second of the 1962 Basin Street East engagements ran for the entire month of November. It did not lack its trials and tribulations. On the evening of Friday the 17th, right after the first of her three scheduled shows, Lee discovered that a bandit had made his way into her dressing room and sneaked away with her entire wardrobe, except for a lace evening wrap. "I guess he

didn't like that one," she was heard to say. The shows still had to go on, even without any of her customary wardrobe changes. Lee performed all three shows in the same pink chiffon gown. Aside from this loss (an estimated \$21,000 worth of gowns), the entire run was an unqualified financial success for Miss Lee and Basin Street East (according to *Variety*, which also mentioned Robert Goulet at the Plaza Hotel as the only other current act in town doing nearly as well).

Pisano and his Paisanos — A Personable Personnel

Benny Carter was recruited to serve as musical director for the November recording date. Long-term music friends, Carter and Lee had first worked together in the 1940s and would keep on doing so periodically, the last time being in the mid-1990s. He actually conducted most of her engagements for the year 1962, including both Basin Street East gigs (spring, fall) and summer festival appearances at the Seattle Opera House. Carter was also scheduled to be the conductor of her *Jazz Tree* concert at the Philharmonic. But the critical Carter contribution for us to consider was his arrangement of "I'm a Woman"—by which we specifically the song treatment heard in Lee's concerts. To sum up, there could have hardly been a more sensible choice of conductor for the date.



{Page 23: another 1962 Basin Street East rehearsal shot. Benny Carter in white shirt, Max Bennett on bass. The barely seen musician on this and the preceding photo remains unidentified. It might be a guitarist, in which case Howard Collins, Jeff Kaplan, and John Pisano would rank among possible candidates.}

Also enlisted to play at the date were the rhythm musicians with whom Lee had been making her November nightclub appearances. Part of a 19-piece orchestra at the club, this rhythm section included two longtime Lee regulars and two new additions to Lee's fold. The longtimers were bassist Max Bennett and drummer Stan Levey, both excellent instrumentalists. Later on, in their more senior years, each man would unequivocally express a great sense of respect for their

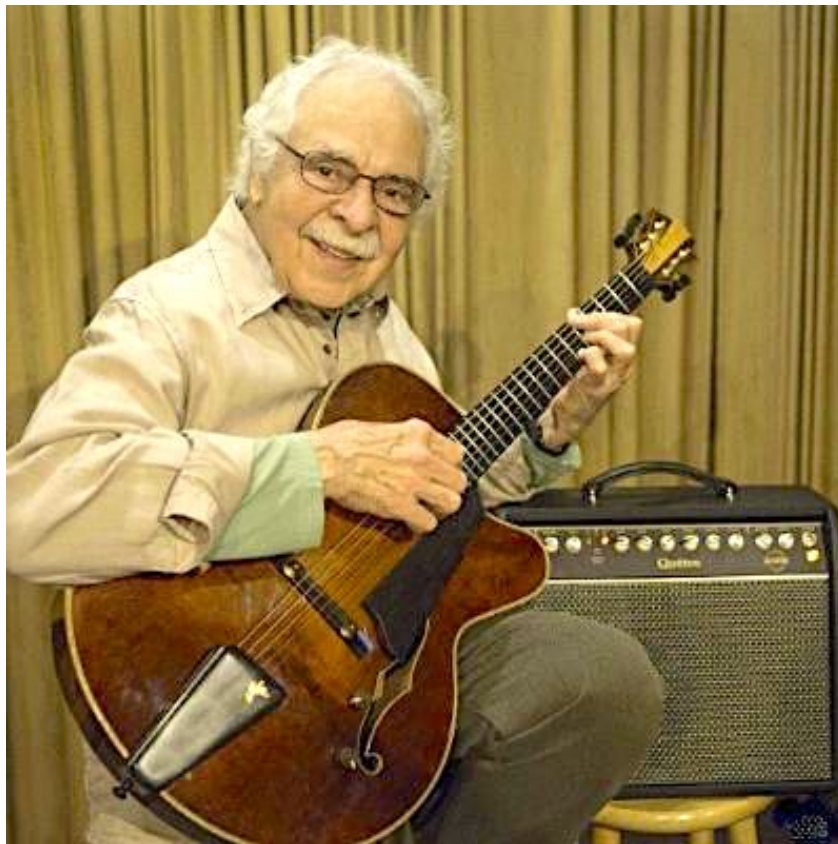
boss lady. Check, for instance, the following commentary, made long ago by the now-departed Levey (1926-2005) to *The Independent*: "She was a very nice lady, a great musician and a terrific singer." Or take this character depiction, provided by the late Bennett (1928-2018) on his own website: "Working with Peggy Lee was a unique experience. She was totally professional and presented a great show with a great band, great lighting and a plethora of songs to totally entertain her audience. I worked with her for several years and enjoyed it immensely."



{Page 24: Stan Levey.}

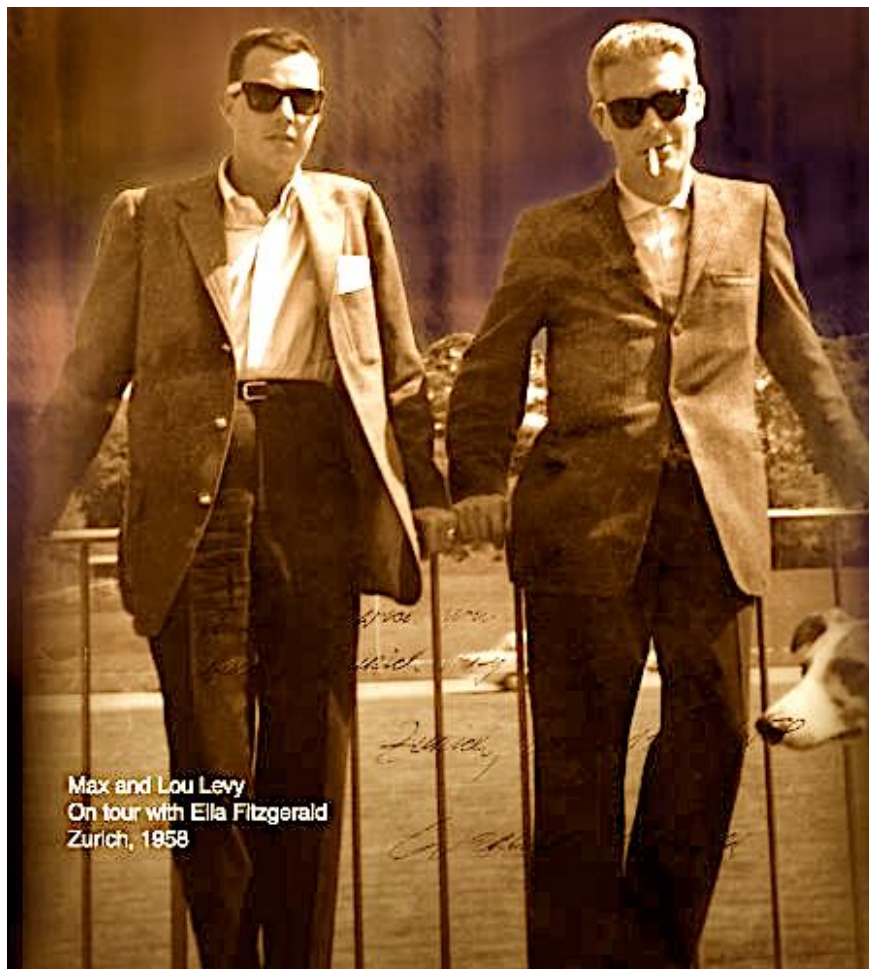
As for the new additions to the rhythm section, guitarist John Pisano was one of them. He had joined on the recommendation of Max Bennett. Today a well-

respected, celebrated musician with a distinguished career behind him, the 92-year-old Pisano kindly agreed to being interviewed for this expanded edition of *I'm a Woman*. As he recalled in early March of 2023, "I had been working with Max and he mentioned that she was looking for somebody. So he's the one that connected us. We played with her at Basin Street East during that time. I think it was the first time I worked at Basin. I went on to do several Basin gigs with her; I think maybe three of them. Of course I was really, really comfortable being with Peggy: I grew up listening to her records with Dave Barbour. Some great singing."



{Page 25: Pisano, today.}

The "I'm a Woman" session marked Pisano's first studio collaboration with Lee. "That's the one session I remember," he says today, "'cause I was doing a lot of studio work in LA at the time. But I'm from New York originally, and this was the first time I got into a recording studio there. I remember the recording vaguely. I played a little guitar break there, trying to imitate rock 'n' roll—that is to say, what was supposed to be "rock 'n' roll bending strings," and some kind of silly stuff like that. And it went well."



{Page 26: Max Bennett and Lou Levy, 1958.}

The rhythm section's other brand new recruit was Mike Melvoin. He had been hired as a temporary replacement for Lee's regular pianist, Lou Levy. A member of her rhythm section since 1955, Levy had stepped out to tour with Ella Fitzgerald, for whom he had also been playing periodically since 1957. The pianist thus alternated between the two songstresses. Nicknamed "the good gray fox" by the blonder one, he had last played piano for Lee at the Seattle Opera House, in a series of June 1962 concerts that were part of that city's hosting of the Century 21 Exposition (aka the 1962 World's Fair). Levy would be back with Lee by the second half of 1963. In the meantime, the substituting Melvoin would prove vital to the spotting of the song "I'm a Woman" and its addition to Lee's repertoire.

A Tale of Two Mikes — Melvoin's Telling and Stoller's Retelling

The hiring of Mike Melvoin took place in either the summer or fall of 1962. At the time, a busy Lee was in the midst of her annual touring schedule, which typically lasted about 14 weeks. New demo tapes had begun to pile up at home and on the road as a result, each one containing at least one song waiting for her to audition it. Perhaps as a test of his taste and mettle, the recent graduate (Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, 1959) was

given a special task on his very first day of work for Lee. As he conveyed the story to one of her biographers, the singer had told him that she needed to leave for a hairdresser's appointment (presumably scheduled as part of her grooming preparation for an upcoming evening of performance). In biographer Peter Richmond's telling of the story, the 25-year-old pianist receives the following directive: "here's a stack of demos. See if you like anything." Trial by fire.



{Page 28: Melvoin, around 1966.}

This anecdote was also shared by Melvoin with Mike Stoller, the composer of "I'm a Woman." Stoller retells it in his autobiography, which he co-wrote in collaboration with his lifelong professional partner, Jerry Leiber. According to Stoller, Melvoin's motivation for singling out the demo of "I'm a Woman" was its songwriting credit: "he saw 'Leiber & Stoller' and he picked it out 'cause he knew that we were writing songs, knew some of the songs we'd written. So he selected it." Youth probably played a tacit role in the selection, too. Melvoin would have been more hip and alert to the Leiber & Stoller brand (the creative source behind several major rock 'n' roll hits of the 1950s and 1960s) than, say, a more strictly jazz-oriented, older pianist such as Lou Levy (1928-2001).

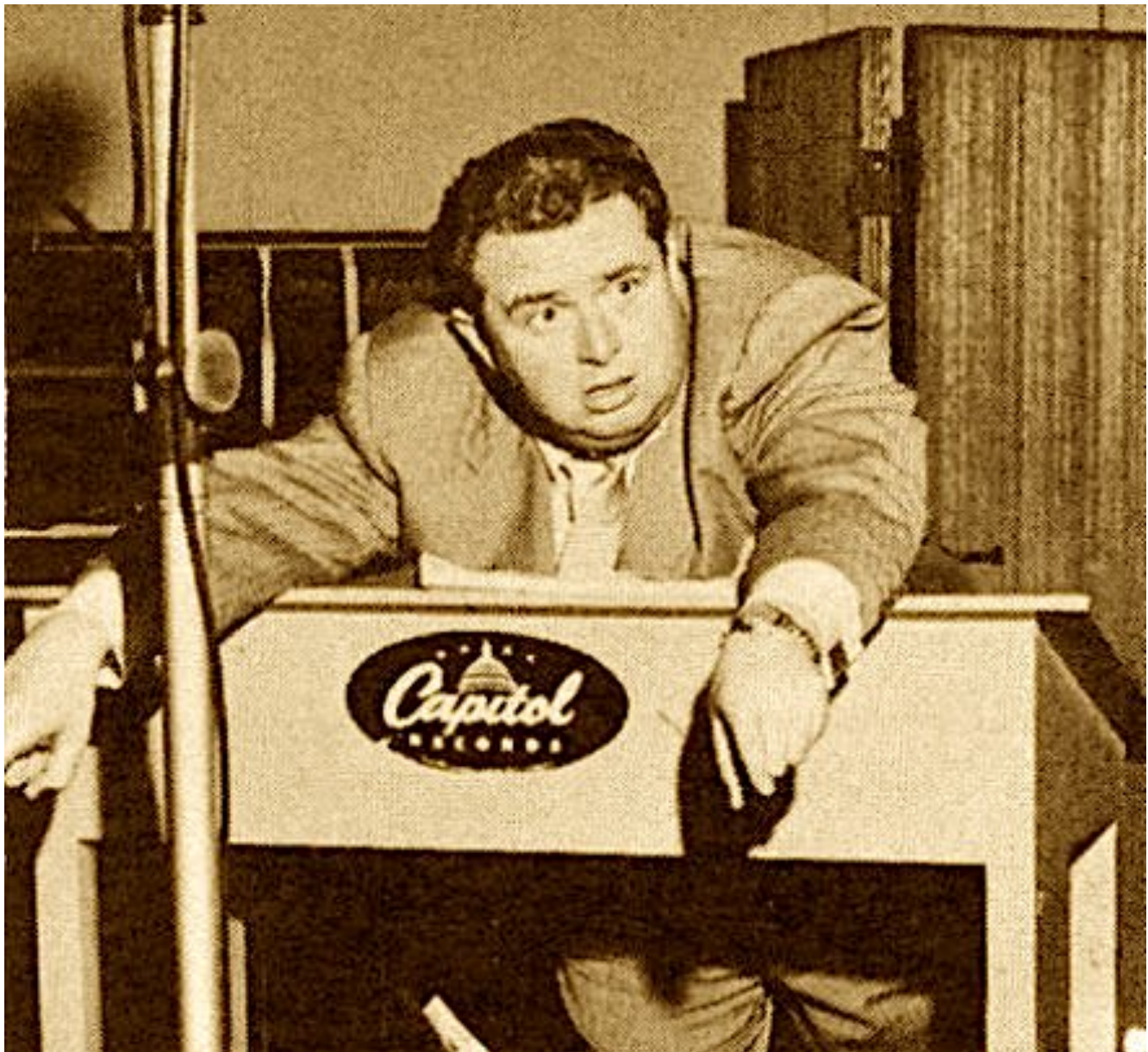
As for the singer's own course of action in this story, it is in step with an assertion that she made often. Over the years (e.g., *New York Post*, 1963; *Melody Maker*, 1968), she reiterated her appreciation of musicians in general, asserting that she loved, respected and had learned a lot from them. Case in point: after her new pianist alerted her to the "Woman" item on the pile of demos, she gave it a listen, and came away with the conviction that they were listening to a potential hit. Lee then proceeded to ask Benny Carter to devise an arrangement for an interpretation that she wanted to take at a rapid-fire, fairly fast-paced tempo. As she told radio announcer Jim

Harlan many decades later (1992), in answer to his query as to why she had decided to record this particular tune, "when a song is a hit you seem to know it right away."

"Im a Woman" — The Session

The recording session was scheduled for November 14, 1962— right smack in the middle of the Basin Street East engagement. On that Wednesday afternoon (2:00-5:00), Lee and her rhythm section came into Capitol's Manhattan studios, at West 46th Street, and proceeded to record two songs. Then, in the evening, the group returned to Basin Street on East 48th Street, where they fulfilled their quota of two shows nightly (three on weekends).

The studio date generated a total of 15 takes. The first 10 feature the song "I'm a Woman." Half of those are complete performances, and half are so-called false or aborted starts. The other five takes would be spent on the recording of a second song, "Close Your Eyes." Three of those (#1, 3, 5) are complete performances. The other two were quickly stopped because the producer and the singer heard sonic interferences. (The exact nature of such interferences is not clarified on the surviving audio from the session.) For both songs, the last full take (#10, #5) was ultimately designated as the master.



{Page 31: Dave Cavanaugh at the Capitol studios, playfully striking a "producer" pose for the camera, 1954.}

The surviving "I'm a Woman" Capitol session audio is not highly revelatory—no surprise there, as this is commonly the case at most record labels, and for most contract

artists. Tape was typically stopped between takes, which is when most chatter would be taking place. (An exception to this general rule is the work of Frank Sinatra for his own Reprise company.) That being said, many a reel still preserves mildly interesting, typically truncated bits of chatter. Lee's Capitol tapes do feature plenty of those. Preceding take nine of "I'm a Woman," for example, we can hear some communal consultation and directive. Cavanaugh reminds a session musician about "doing the beat" on "the third chord." Lee uses a playfully squeaky intonation to ask Carter about the way in which she is singing the final line of the song ("And that's all! Eeeeh ... Benny, is that right?"). Right as the group is about to embark on the first take of "Close Your Eyes," somebody in the control room asks a personnel member to "keep the bell close to the mike." (The person is addressed by name, but the audio is not clear enough to make out the name with absolute certainty. Options include "John L.," "Don L.," "John O.," and "Don O.")

Cavanaugh and Lee's plan was obviously to issue "I'm a Woman" on the A-side of their prospective Capitol 45 single, and "Close Your Eyes" on its flip side. Naturally, the bulk of the allotted session time was dedicated to waxing the brand new tune—the one that was slated to serve as the single's A-side. The other one had to make do with just spare time.

If challenged, Lee and her rhythm section could have probably done "Close Your Eyes" with their eyes closed. The relatively uncomplicated, low-key piece was actually an old standard with which all session participants would have been familiar to a greater or lesser degree. More to the point, "Close Your Eyes" was yet another number that Lee and the musicians had been regularly performing at the Basin Street East gig. Hence, at the record date, this tune could and would be dispatched without much fuss or deliberation.

Not carelessly or dismissively, though. On the contrary: Peggy Lee probably cared a lot about this particular selection. Granted that there is no record of her thoughts on the matter, the statistics speak for themselves: she actually waxed "Close Your Eyes" twice (first at the session under discussion, then shortly thereafter), and she also chose to sing it on a contemporaneous, high-profile TV appearance. Onstage, she had been interpreting the ballad in a quietly intimate manner that had been garnering strong applause from the Basin Street East club clientele. Besides, we should bear in mind that "Close Your Eyes" was woman's work (Bernice Petkere, words and music)—a known fact that enhanced its qualifications, making the tune all the more suitable as a companion to an anthem as feminine as "I'm a Woman."

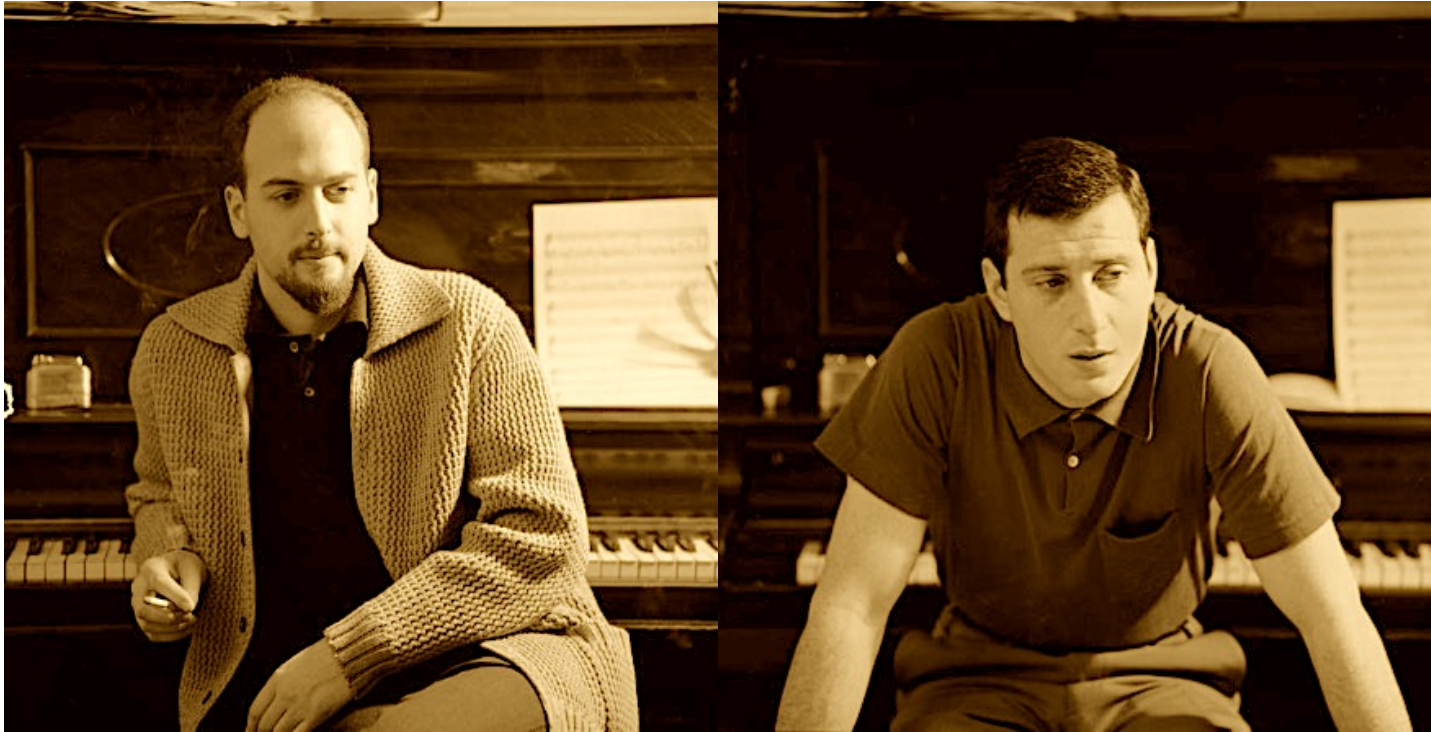
Leiber & Stoller's "Woman-Lee" Experiences

Mike Stoller was also in attendance at the November 1962 session, and so was his work partner, Jerry Leiber. Both were actively involved in the making of "I'm a Woman."

Like the aforementioned John Pisano, Stoller is now a nonagenarian—his 90th birthday having taken place on the same month that saw the release of this expanded edition *I'm a Woman*—and he also kindly agreed to being interviewed for the purpose of these liner notes. Asked to describe the music item that Mike Melvoin picked out of a stack back in 1962, Stoller confirmed for us that it was "obviously a demo with Jerry singing and me playing piano. We had made that demo in our little studio in the Brill Building and sent it out to Dave Cavanaugh, and then pretty much forgot about it. The reason it was sent to Cavanaugh was, absolutely, because of Peggy Lee. We thought it would be great for her."

Jerry Leiber (1933-2011) is, unfortunately, no longer with us. But, back when he was still around, the lyricist offered his take on the matter as well (more than once, actually). Here are the thoughts he shared with National Public Radio in 1999: "she had that kind of smoky, bluesy sound in her voice, and she had a great sense of humor. She knew how to play with words very well. So

it would be either Peggy Lee or some funky female black blues singer. That was sort of the choice." Both Leiber and Stoller have thus verified that Lee was their choice of artist to record the song—hence their decision to send the demo expressly to her Capitol Records producer.



{Page 35: Mike Stoller on the left, Jerry Leiber on the right, both probably in the 1950s.}

Leiber & Stoller's autobiography (2009) relates the events that transpired between Lee's auditioning of the demo and Cavanaugh's recording of the song. Stoller fleshed them out a bit further in his recent interview with us (2023). The ensuing text borrows from both accounts to present a single, comprehensive narrative:

"Months passed. By chance I picked up the *New Yorker* and noticed an item about Peggy Lee at Basin Street East ... According to the reviewer, the highlight of the show was 'I'm a Woman' ... So I went to Basin Street East and sure enough it was our song. She was doing it but we had never heard back from them, and nobody had notified us before. I went to her dressing room after the show. Twenty minutes later, I was ushered in. And that was the first time I ever met Peggy. Naturally, I was nervous. After all, this was Peggy Lee ... She was nice. She was very nice ... And, you know, I was much younger. I was in my late 20s. I introduced myself, and we spoke. I explained that I had co-written 'I'm a Woman.' 'Wonderful job. Lovely song,' she said sweetly. 'Dave is coming out; we are going to do a session.' And that was it.

Next morning I called Cavanaugh. A little flustered, he explained that Peggy did indeed like the song and would soon record it. 'We are going to do it the way she does it at the club, with a quartet. 'How about a little more instrumentation,' I urged. 'It could just have two horns ...

How about a trumpet and a sax?' And he said, 'yeah! That won't cost too much.' "

Cavanaugh was probably very game to Stoller's suggestion. This Capitol producer was, after all, a tenor sax player by trade. He had even played the instrument on some of Lee's sessions from the mid-1940s. We do not currently have a full personnel listing in our possession, but we do know that saxophonist Gene Quill was belatedly brought into the date. Thus, for this one time, he played with Lee's rhythm section (Bennett, Levey, Melvoin, Pisano, plus a drummer that remains unidentified).



{Page 37: alto sax player Gene Quill, who was also a capable clarinetist.}

Peggy Lee's reaction to the incorporation of sax and trumpet is not on record, but chances are that she readily (or, otherwise, eventually) loved it, too. Another blues-oriented Leiber & Stoller composition, "Kansas City," had been previously recorded by her in a similarly bold and brassy, big-band swinging style.

"We were invited to the session at Capitol's New York studios," continues Stoller. "We wound up contributing quite a bit. I wrote a horn chart, voicing the alto sax above the trumpet, something I took from Ray Charles' bag of arranging tricks." The breakneck tempo of the original, in-concert version was modified for the studio version, too. The slower groove facilitated the showcasing of the instrumentation at play, and probably gave Lee more room to breathe (literally and figuratively). In Stoller's recollection, "Peggy did, I think, a few takes, and Jerry thought Peggy was just, you know, warming up to the song. But Dave Cavanaugh told her, 'perfect, you'd never do it better,' and that was the end of that."

It was also the beginning of dissension between Lee and Leiber, for whom her interpretation sounded "too correct" to his liking. "She simply sat on the beat," Leiber would still grumble many years later. "I didn't get it ... She didn't play with the rhythm in the manner of Billie Holiday." "I

got it," his partner Stoller would counter. "The public got it" (2009).

On the specific matter of record production styles, Mike Stoller has made a valid comparative point. Leiber & Stoller's own working method differed from the manner of recording that they experienced at the Capitol session: "Jerry and I were used to work with singers who were not as ... well, they were new, and sometimes it took lots of takes to get the best vocals." In fact, the dynamic duo became known in the music industry for favoring this "take-a-ton" practice. Lee herself would experience it several years later (1969), when she got together with the producers for the making of a single that generated a total of—according to Leiber—37 takes. "But I think Dave was right on this one," Stoller further told us in 2023. "Ultimately I love Peggy's recording of 'I'm a Woman.' There's no problem with that released version."

Good Golly — Grievances ala Leiber

Stoller's partner sang a different tune. From the very outset, at the session itself, Leiber made his disapproval of Lee's interpretation amply clear. Although the specifics have been lost to the mists of time, we can still gather the gist of what happened from his own remarks. Evidently, Lee did not take well to his attempt at reshaping her

interpretation: "in 1962 I tried to tell her how to sing, and she told me to mind my own business."

"[T]here wasn't much I could do," a resigned Leiber would further remark, many years later. "I immediately saw that you could only push this gal so far" (2009). Their stylistic disagreement would have lasting consequences for the relationship between vocalist and lyricist. Feeling uneasy about Leiber's stance, Lee appears to have remained at least mildly cautious about the prospects of any future collaboration. Such unease might explain why, to the puzzlement of the songwriting-producing duo, the singer-songwriter never actively pursued them for any additional teamwork.

Stoller has framed the state of their affairs as follows: "She was always friendly yet distant but in our case it was like a seven-year plan. She didn't talk to us for seven years after we gave her 'I'm a Woman'" (2010). Indeed, the songwriters themselves would have to persistently take the initiative, as they successfully did when, in 1969, they brought to her two of their recently written compositions, and she became positively fascinated with one of them ("Is That All There Is").

In spite of the "at-arms-length" posture experienced by the two men in private, in public Peggy Lee had nothing but praise for the duo. Her general feeling of admiration

for their songwriting skills only seem to have intensified as the years went by. "Leiber & Stoller were always writing something interesting and colorful," the singer conveyed to the BBC's Alan Dell in 1991. "I think they are brilliant," she elaborated one year later, while chatting with former *Make Believe Ballroom* radio personality Jim Harlan. "I see them occasionally. I've done I don't know how many tributes to them."



{Page 41: Stoller, Lee & Leiber, 1975.}

Leiber's dissatisfaction with Lee's approach to his lyric was by no means an isolated case, though. Firmly opinionated and sometimes humorously abrasive, the lyricist is known to have taken sharp exception to several other interpretations of the Leiber & Stoller songbook. We might want to playfully brand his stance "Leiber loathing." The earliest exhibit can be traced all the way back to the days in which he and Stoller were on the verge of their first big success.

It was 1952, and the dynamic duo was attending Big Mama Thornton's rehearsal of a number that they had written for her, "Hound Dog." Understandably baffled by Big Mama's choice to croon instead of belt the rock 'n' roll tune, Leiber tried to tell her how to correctly sing it—as he would do again 20 years later, with Lee. "Big Mama, that ain't the way it goes. Maybe if you'd attack it with a little more ..." he managed to convey to her, before a very vexed Mama pointed at her crotch and tauntingly interjected, "Attack this, white boy!"

Luckily, Leiber's close encounter with the six-foot-tall, 200-pound, no-holds-barred Big Mama had a happy outcome for everybody, including the far-less-imposing lyricist himself (standing at 5'3", and weighing about 130 pounds when wet). The session's producer talked Thornton into listening to Leiber's own vocal demonstration, which he had styled in the manner of the

growling, rowdy mammas of yore. She liked it, and agreed to try his approach. The fact that the song became Big Mama's only charting hit ever—and a major one, at that—lends full legitimacy to the vocal advice that Leiber prescribed for her.

Barbra Streisand was yet another singer whose approach to a Leiber & Stoller number failed to meet the lyricist's standards. He was less than enthused by her 1978 recording of "Honey, Can I Put Your Clothes?" In Leiber's estimation, Streisand "ruined the feeling of that song" (2006). It is worth pointing out that the piece was intimately autobiographical, and thus dear to him.

Be that as it may, Leiber was entirely within his right to object to any interpretation of his material. To our knowledge, Leiber passed away without changing his adverse opinion on the merits of these and several other interpretations of the Leiber & Stoller songbook. Given his status as the creator of the words on paper, his assessments held and shall forever continue to hold weight.

It is thus with pleasure that we will report about Leiber's mellowing of his perspective on Peggy Lee's "Woman." It happened during the lyricist's later years, when he was heard making the following concession to BBC radio: "yes, she tends to sing [it] on the beat, but she can do that

in a way that is more sultry, oddly enough, than anybody who sings on the beat" (2010). More generally, and however much might have objected to some of her interpretation, Leiber's admiration for Lee's musical skills never wavered. As he put it in the Leiber & Stoller autobiography, "Peggy Lee knew her music. Her stylistic flexibility let her handle materials in virtually every genre" (2009).



{Page 44: Lee live; more live shots further below.}

Portrait of a Lady in Charge

"I've always found my own style," Peggy Lee once said to disc jockey Dick Biondi, adding that "if someone had told me what to do, I'd probably gone the other way" (1972). Simply put, pushiness was never a winning strategy with Lee. When faced with Leiber's attempt at "telling her how to sing," Lee's contrarian reaction had been par for the course.

Many stories bear witness to the singer's adamant defense of her artistic choices. One such story pertains to the making of the 1959 album *Beauty and the Beat*, for which Dave Cavanaugh paired Peggy Lee with pianist George Shearing. During the rehearsals, the unsighted musician suggested that, instead of treating the brand new composition "There'll Be Another Spring" as a ballad, Lee should "take the tempo up with a real Billie Holiday mid-tempo swing to it." In Shearing's own recollection, she "quipped back, 'Oh, come on, George, are you trying to tell me how to sing?'" Mortified by the response, the sensitive pianist decried to Cavanaugh that, unless there was an apology, he would not proceed with the making of the album.

Lee, who always professed to greatly admire Shearing's musical mastery, did apologize on the very next day. But she still interpreted this self-penned lyric in the way that

she had originally intended. (This story is told by Shearing in his autobiography, published in 2004.) It was not necessarily that Lee had found the idea objectionable. By all accounts, the vocalist was perfectly willing to let the colorations of the iconic Holiday inform her singing—but only when and if she felt that the song at hand merited it. In other words, it had to be on Lee's own terms. Like the boss she was.

Contemporaneous portraits of the lady paint her as a full-dimensional being—a human one, made of flesh and blood ... and allure. The person born as Norma Egstrom was intellectually curious and emotionally complex, her "Peggy Lee" persona manifestly sensual and feminine. In a 1963 article titled "Peggy's Blues," the *New York Post's* Joseph Wershba described her this way: "Onstage, she comes over as the apotheosis of one of her songs, 'I'm a W-O-M-A-N.' Offstage, she has been quite properly compared to a friendly, small-town librarian." Wershba was echoing a description offered by an anonymous *Newsweek* reporter in a 1960 article titled "Hot as a Torch": "for any female who can look so sexy and sing so lowdown, Peggy offstage is surprisingly reminiscent of a small-town librarian. She's pretty, she's friendly, she's intelligent ..."



{Page 47: the performer in command. Lee at Basin Street East in 1962—the month being either November or, more likely, March.}

For his part, *The Saturday Evening Post's* Thomas C. Wheeler offered a more in-depth, revelatory profile:

"She is partly a temperamental siren and partly a tough farm girl. She can be a crybaby at one moment and a tomboy the next. At a closing-night party in New York recently, her eyes were brimming with tears as she berated her drummer for shifting his wallet to another pocket during the performance. An hour later she was challenging a young public-relations man to an Indian-wrestling match, which she won. She will complain bitterly over a spotlight which does not please her. Then, when all is in order, she will offer up her face to the stagehands for kisses on the cheek, remarking, 'This is a love that has to do with our work' ... Her generosity is boundless. She lavishes presents on everyone connected with her shows and has helped a number of musicians out of debt and out of trouble. Her lawyers, who control her money, admonish her not to carry her own cash, considering her not only an

easy prey of beggars but a sucker to her own gift-buying habits" (1964).

"She was a very difficult woman to deal with but I also learned a great deal," opined public relations agent Peter Levinson. "I was with her four different times over the years between 1968 and about 1991. She was very generous ... I must say that. But she was also very demanding. She demanded the best ... and that kept you on your toes, you know. I learned a lot about professionalism from her because that's what she was, a very exacting person who wanted things done a certain way and that improved anything I probably could do for her" (*Big Band Jump Newsletter*, 2007). Answering for herself, Lee once declared that "from necessity, I learned to keep my eyes on everything. I used to resent this taking me away from creative things, but I've learned to enjoy it" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1978).

The burden of being in charge. The privilege of being a boss—and a lady.

"All girl singers are a pain in the ass," blunt arranger-conductor Billy May once proclaimed, while in conversation with music critic Will Friedwald. "She's no exception," May continued, "but she knew what she wanted. Like Frank [Sinatra], if she made a change, there was a good musical reason. So you respect people like

that. She knew what she wanted, and she was very good about that." The sentiment was echoed by Dave Cavanaugh. In informal conversations with his friend Les Traub (chairman of the Musical Theatre Guild in Los Angeles, and reviewer for the American Songbook Association's Cabaret Scenes), the Capitol producer offered the following assessment: "she could be a pain in the ass because of her perfectionism but the results were worth it. [For me,] nobody was more exciting in person, on the stage, than Peggy" (ca. 1980).

The musicians who worked for Lee have also had plenty to say about their boss lady. Take, for instance, the aforementioned Mike Melvoin, who went from playing piano for her in the 1963 album *I'm a Woman* to conducting and arranging two of her albums at a later time period (1969-1970). "There was no way you could escape her spell," he would remark in 2010, during an exchange over the phone with one of her biographers. "There was no way you couldn't believe every word she said" (2010). Another testimony preserved in print comes from Grady Tate, who launched his 20-or-so years as Lee's drummer around 1968. His impressions are cited in the liner notes of a Peggy Lee CD (*Blues Cross Country*) from the Capitol Jazz imprint: "Guys who worked with her said, 'oh man, she was tough to work with. And she was tough to work with. She demanded 150% every time you sat down because she was giving it. But we were all

amazed at her musicality. The voice was sensational, the intonation unbelievable. She could swing, and she had an ability to sing as quietly as anyone in the world and maintain the pure voice, the projection."

Fire, Sweat and Tears — The Pisano Portrait



{Page 51: Pisano around 1958 on the left, and around 2015 on the right. He tells us that these days he has been having a recurring dream in which he is happily playing guitar again for Peggy Lee.}

Then there is the John Pisano report. During our recent interview with the guitarist, he disclosed that "she would fire some people that she didn't like" sometimes. This would happen mostly while rehearsals for an upcoming gig were in progress, at which time she could sometimes come to the determination that her standards were not being met by a given local musician, hired to fill the orchestra or complement her rhythm section.

Moreover, Pisano candidly recalled how, in 1975, Peggy Lee talked him into becoming a conductor for the very first time. Reluctant from the outset, Pisano found the experience trying. More than three weeks of rehearsal with a different conductor had elapsed when he took the job, which featured challenging, strings-heavy material (the songs from the Leiber & Stoller *Mirrors* project) and a large orchestra.

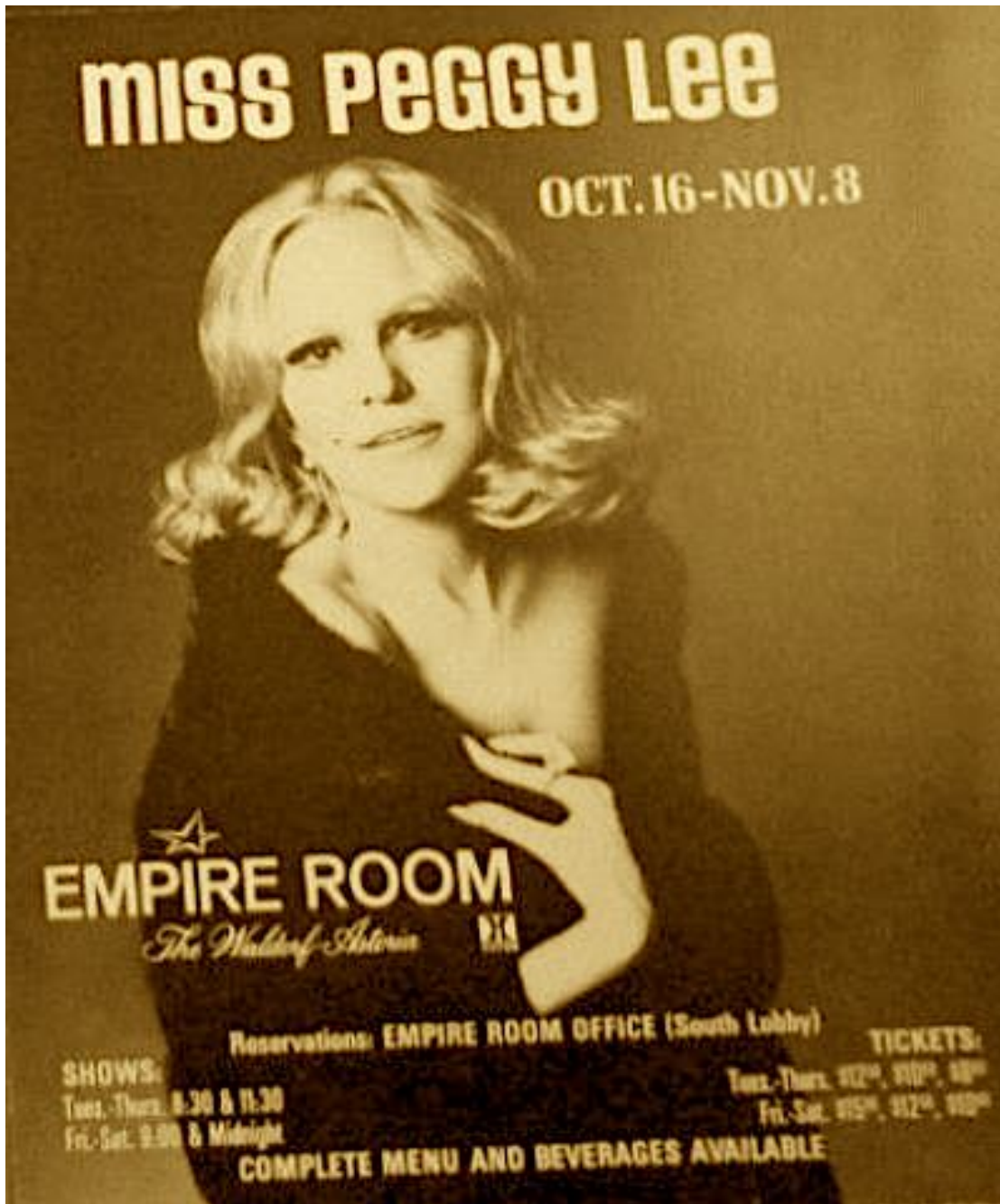
Compounding his (di)stress back in 1975 was a minor tiff with Lee. As he conveyed the situation to us, "she would just take a dislike, if somebody didn't do" as she asked or expected. Pisano was hard at work rehearsing the orchestra when he overheard her make a critical, disapproving remark about the way in which he was operating. A hurt Pisano dutifully finished the rehearsal, and then waited for Lee to go into her dressing room. The newly baptized conductor reminded the boss lady that he hadn't really wanted to take such an unfamiliar, grueling

job, and that he had no actual need for it. "I'm getting out of here; get somebody else," he recalls saying to her. To his surprise, she burst into tears, and immediately apologized to him. "It was the only incident that I had with her," Pisano underscores.

Seemingly but not necessarily unrelated, a comment made by Lee around this time may provide a window into her thoughts and feelings about the Pisano episode. Asked by journalist Marshall Berges how well she understood herself, Lee mused, "not nearly well enough. Sometimes I lose sight of the humor in a situation and I'm abrupt or lose my temper with people who are very dear to me. If they don't listen to what I say, or if I have to repeat myself more than twice, I blow off steam. Afterward I'm sorry" (*Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1975).

As trying as it was initially, conductor Pisano passed his Peggy-Lee-dictated debut with flying colors. There is one specific recollection that he holds forever dear: "I wound up conducting for her at the Waldorf-Astoria [in New York, and we were] held over a couple of weeks ... I remember one night in particular. My folks came in, my mom and dad. They were celebrating one of their anniversaries, and Peggy announced their presence [to the entire audience]. That was one of the highlights of my career." What's more, he found himself being singled out for praise in some of the run's reviews (the *New York*

Times: "the pacing, under John Pisano's conducting, is tight, crisp and right on the button").



{Page 54: table tent card advertising Miss Peggy Lee's *Mirrors* run at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, for which John Pisano served as conductor. 1975.}

"Of course, it was always fun to work with her, and I've worked with a lot of people," Pisano added during the 2023 interview. "She just couldn't help herself sometimes, but she had a huge sense of responsibility. And the stress that she would have, before shows. But I always hanged in there. I would trust her, and would only just respect her 'cause she was great at making musical decisions and having a vision, aside from being a great artist. And I was one of the few people that still called her Peg; most everybody else used Miss Lee. I mean, I understood her and loved her very much."

I'm the Boss — A Self-Portrayal

Peggy Lee would have probably appreciated Pisano's knowing reference to her "huge sense of responsibility." "I work harder now than I've ever done in my life, because I'm the boss," Lee explained to the *London Times* in 1970. "I pay for anything and I'm responsible ... I'm asked a lot about durability, about why there are so few big women singers ... I don't really know the answer ... I suppose it takes a lot of strength. You have to be strong."

She further expounded on the matter during an interview conducted by her beloved mentor and friend, WDAY Fargo station manager Ken Kennedy: "I do get a very fine salary but I carry a good many people with me. And the best musicians. There's a tremendous overhead, with

transportation, public relations, and gowns—wardrobe—hairdressers ... Everyone who is in the entourage works very hard, and they have to be on their toes ... because ... each show has to be at least as good as the last" (1972). "We do it the hard way," her pianist, Lou Levy, had confirmed at an earlier point. "We may spend \$15,000 in new arrangements alone and maybe a total of \$35,000 before we even hit the road. But ... people come to hear Peggy ... they come to hear her, whatever she's doing" (1969).



{Page 56: one last 1962 Basin Street East portrait of the lady Lee.}

Woman to Woman — Powerful Portraits

Ultimately (and not surprisingly), Peggy Lee was best understood by the fellow women who were closest to her. "She wanted to be a headliner just like the men who were her contemporaries—like Frank Sinatra, and Nat King Cole, and Dean Martin, and Louis Armstrong," declared her granddaughter Holly Foster Wells, who alternately traveled or stayed with Lee for most summers (from the 1970s onwards), and who is now in charge of her legacy. Foster Wells further explains:

"She wanted to be one of them and be treated that way, and paid that way. And she wasn't afraid to fight for that. And it was difficult. And it took a lot of courage. I look at some of the things she did—she made a lot of waves, and she did cause some controversy, and she got called a lot of names. But she was not afraid to fight for what she thought was right, and she did actually end up paving the way for other artists, to have it be a little easier for them ... She didn't have a path, really, to follow. She created her own path. It's just as amazing, especially when you consider her humble beginnings—her

challenging beginnings. She was just a survivor; she was also vulnerable. She had both sides to her."

(A Centennial Celebration of Miss Peggy Lee, sponsored by the Mabel Mercer Foundation, 2021)



{Page 58: on the left, Phoebe Jacobs (1919-2012). On the right, Holly Foster Wells, in a recently taken shot (2023).}

To wrap up this essay about our boss lady, let us also quote the discerning words of publicist Phoebe Jacobs, who first met Peggy Lee in the late 1950s, and remained a friend for life:

"Now, she knows better than anyone else ... the kind of spotlight she wants, but at the same time she will ask you, what do you think? And if you come up with a good enough reason, she's not gonna be a control freak. She's only giving her opinions with strength because she believes them to be correct. I would never call her a control freak. I would call her an in-charge lady. She was in charge, honey. And you knew it."

(NPR's Jazz Profiles, 1999)



Red-Hot Mama

Buxom, hippy, leggy, in a low-scooped, clinging, sequined blue gown, Peggy Lee ha[s] a new flip side ... She beat out “Fever” and “I’m a Woman” with come-ons of arms and

hands, and a barrage of sinuous
body movements from the cha-
cha-cha to an amplified twist,
and even an uninhibited bump
and grind ... She ma[de] the
evening a housewarming,
liberally blending hot and cold,
sweet and spicy, soft and loud,
slow and fast ... Peggy Lee,
mellowed with sex and
burnished with skill—youngest
of the red-hot mamas.

From "Red Hot Mama"
(*Newsweek*, 1965)

Enter "*A Woman*" — A Feverish 45 from a 40-Something

"Capitol Records is rushing into release single of Peggy Lee's 'I'm a Woman,' her current showstopper at New York's Basin Street East," announced *Billboard* on its December 1, 1962 issue. At that point in time, the record was indeed red hot—just off the presses. Advance pressings had been made available within two weeks since the waxing of the tune on November the 14th.

Cashbox's issue for the week of December 1, 1962 offered even better promotion for the single: not a mere

announcement but an advance review. The *Cashbox* reviewer characterizes the song as both a blues (or "a blueser") and a "semi-narrative ... which tells of a gal who'll bet there's nothing she can't do, from being a housewife to painting the town red." Overall, the tune strikes the reviewer as "engaging," and Lee's interpretation "delightful." His closing prediction: "may score, with big deejay interest."



{Page 60 (essay's top photo): Lee, lady in red, early 1960s. Page 62: Ad on *Cashbox*. December 22, 1962.}

It did score. "I'm a Woman" spent nine weeks on the *Billboard* charts, six weeks on *Cashbox*'s. Admittedly, the

peaks were not particularly high (#54 at *Billboard*, #71 at *Cashbox*), but such middling slot placements are less an indication of unpopularity than they are a reflection on substandard chart tabulation practices. During the first half of the 1960s, the music industry began to actively separate artists of Lee's vintage from the mainstream, relegating them to a mold especially set up to contain them. As Wesley Hyatt explains in his *Billboard Book of Number One Adult Contemporary Hits*:

"When it became apparent by the late 1950s that rock and roll definitely was there to stay, some radio stations ... wanted to keep playing current hits, a format which had appealed to their listeners for decades, yet they did not want to play that frenetic beat. A programming approach emerged whereby airplay was given to songs without the heavy sounds ... Having written several articles about the phenomenon, *Billboard* ... decided to list the top records in this genre ... In the issue dated July 17, 1961, the magazine unveiled its first ... chart of the most-played tunes in easy-listening stations. It remained a top 20 chart through the issue dated October 17, 1964 ...

Since the Adult Contemporary chart listed only 20 tracks, *Billboard* readers were left in the dark about the placement of any numbers which peaked slightly under that ballpark. Such might very well have been the fate met by not only "I'm a Woman" but also many contemporary single from the established, still-active interpreters of Tin Pan Alley and the classic American songbook. But, if we shall want to look for a silver lining, we will find it in the fact that, despite the fact that its interpreter was a so-called adult contemporary artist, "I'm a Woman" still managed to make the *Hot 100* (and, besides, a #54 *Billboard* peak is nothing to sneeze at.)



{Page 64: original "I'm a Woman" 45 single.}

Peer and fan reception provide a better-calibrated barometer of success. "I'm a Woman" garnered a 1962 Grammy nomination for Peggy Lee. It constituted her fifth consecutive showing in the category of *Best Solo Vocal Performance, Female* (one for each year since the 1958 inaugural awards ceremony). Similarly, Lee had continued to command a high-ranking position in the year-end popularity polls conducted by the nation's top jazz-and-pop magazines. For instance, she ranked third in *Downbeat's* female singers poll for the year 1962. Over two decades after her starting point, she was still one of *the* women in the business of making successful records.

I'm a Woman — An Album in the Making

After spending all of November and part of December performing in New York, Peggy Lee returned to Los Angeles for the holidays. This home stay was timetabled to last until around mid-February, at which time she would be going back on the road to appear at several establishments on both coasts (among other venues, the Diplomat Hotel in Florida, the Latin Casino in New Jersey and, once more, Basin Street East in New York).

However, Lee had no intention to while away this entire Hollywood interlude resting and daydreaming. Quite to the contrary: Capitol was planning to keep her busy, and

she was ready and willing. Following the aforementioned promise shown by the "I'm a Woman" single in December of 1962, the team of Capitol, Cavanaugh, and Lee agreed to schedule a series of *Woman* sessions after the holidays. Those were held over four consecutive days, from the second to the fifth of January. (On top of that, the first week of February found the team fully engaged in her ensuing *Mink Jazz* album sessions.)

During personnel selection process for the *I'm a Woman* dates, availability on short notice probably played a key role. Luckily, Lee's rhythm session (bassist Max Bennett, drummer Stan Levey, pianist Mike Melvoin, guitarist John Pisano) had had enough advance notice. They were all on hand to play mostly head arrangements fashioned in the same bluesy style that they had developed under conductor Benny Carter at the earlier "I'm a Woman" session. Performing alongside the rhythm session were three or four other musicians (Justin Gordon on sax and/or other reeds, Manny Klein on trumpet, Al Hendrickson as a second guitarist), none of whom are known to have been present at that previous date (November 14, 1962).

Conducting duties were taken up by Dick Hazard, probably at Peggy Lee's express request. A trusted, recurrent collaborator, Hazard's work for Lee would span three decades. Back in 1950, he had written arrangements for a couple of her Capitol singles. Far further ahead, he

would conduct as well as arrange her album *Close Enough for Love*, a 1979 production.



{Page 67: Dick Hazard and Peggy Lee, rehearsing at her home's so-called Yellow Room, 1969.}

As for Benny Carter, his association with Lee was probably never slated to last beyond 1962, for he too had to tend to his own busy schedule. (Carter spent the first half of 1963 in Europe, traveling as a member of that year's iteration of Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic. He also spent some of that time recording a Parisian album series under the auspices of his own production company, Panel. The musician returned to the US in the summer. Through the rest of the year, Carter was enlisted to conduct and arrange on sessions for several other singers of note—Sarah Vaughan at Roulette, Ray Charles at ABC-Paramount.)

I'm a Woman — Album Sessions

Lee's 1963 *Woman* sessions appear to have gone without a hitch. Based on our auditioning of one of the session tapes, we can report that the atmosphere in the studio was casual, gregarious, and collaborative. The musicians are overheard chatting between takes, one of them apparently in the process of giving others directions to the location of an unspecified establishment.

We hear Dave Cavanaugh stop one take and amicably declare its abortion to be his "own fault" entirely. He then goes into a tongue-in-cheek spiel about those who are not to blame for the mistake, beginning with "John" (Pisano, I

presume) and ending with what sounds like an unexpected swipe at Sinatra's recently created label (Reprise). At another point, Cavanaugh is dissatisfied with one take's intro, and asks for it to be remade. We are also privy to further instructions given to Pisano, as part of the remake process: "And John, in the very last part, if you can get down to, like, an 8th/7th feeling, it may be of help for me."



{Page 69: Capitol record producer Dave Cavanaugh.}

Some of the takes are stopped by Lee as well. Once or twice, we hear her point out a technical shortcoming (e.g., "wait a minute ... I've got an echo") . In other instances,

she utters phrases such as "one more start" or "one more for me" to communicate to Cavanaugh, the musicians and the engineers her need to fix a vocal error.

Woman, Rush, Please — Capitol's Commercial Command

The rush to release *Woman-Lee* material stretched from her 1962 single to her prospective 1963 album. The collective hope was to have the LP ready for release while heat was still being generated by its lead 45 single. Hence the company had provided a small-time window for the preparation and completion of *I'm a Woman*. It was nothing that Cavanaugh and Lee could not expertly handle, though.

Everybody else involved in the process worked at a steady pace as well. With the album sessions completed during the first week of 1963, tape editing and track programming was dispatched quickly enough for the LP to be cut, pressed and ready for early distribution by the first half of February. *Cashbox* was the first trade periodical to publish a review, in its February 16, 1963 issue.

Although no concrete evidence on the matter has ever surfaced, chances are that *I'm a Woman* began life in the form of an executive directive to create a LP centered

around Lee's potential hit. This brass directive would have been communicated to Cavanaugh, who would have in turn proposed it to Lee for her approval or refusal. Clearly, she approved.



{Page 71: above-mentioned *Cashbox* review.}

The naming of an album after a hit is one of the simplest strategies by which a record label tries to maximize record unit sales. Let's call such a product, for lack of a better term, the hit-flaunting album. *I'm a Woman* obviously falls under the category, and so do albums like Frank Sinatra's *Nice 'n' Easy*, which Dave Cavanaugh produced for Capitol three years before Lee's title. (Sinatra's *My Way* and Lee's *Is That All There Is?* are additional examples from the respective catalogues of these artists. Both of those LPs were released in 1969. Each is titled after a signature hit that the artist had recorded months before most of the other masters on the given album.)

With the passing of the decades, more and more hit-flaunting albums have been spawned by the music industry, to the point that the practice is now fairly standard. But, back in the early 1960s, the practice was not yet all *too* common—not, at least, in the fields of pop and jazz. Hence why, in 1963, while examining Capitol's batch of releases for that year's month of February, *Cashbox* found it worthwhile to point out the existence of two such albums amidst the bunch: "Peggy Lee's *I'm a Woman* takes its title and theme from the blonde vocalist's click single, in the same manner that Bobby Darin groups a batch of country-flavored tunes around his hit, *You Are the Reason I'm Living*." (Of course, the magazine's statement was also motivated by several other factors, one of them being its mission to keep subscribers informed about the most current, up-to-date hit singles in the nation.)

{Page 73 (below): "Hit-flaunting" albums on display. This full-page ad was published on the August 10, 1963 issue of *Cashbox*. Note that Peggy Lee is the only female act in view. The main text reads, "Capitol proudly presents five great albums that are paralleling their original Hit forerunners—up the charts and into the limelight of international recognition and acclaim."}



Internationally Acclaimed / Every One a Winner

<p>Capitol proudly presents five great albums that are paralleling their original Hit forerunners — up the charts and into the limelight of international recognition and acclaim.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p>	<p>THOSE LAZY-HAZY-CRAZY DAYS OF SUMMER NAT KING COLE Nat Cole's happy collection of summer fun love tunes in the style of the hit single (SJT-1932)</p> 	<p>18 YELLOW ROSES Bobby Darin Bobby Darin's new album has been assured success by the tremendous response to the title tune. (SJT-1942)</p> 
<p>I'M A WOMAN Peggy Lee Sultry, swingin' Peggy Lee's hit album is as excitable throughout as the hit tune. (SJT-1857)</p> 	<p>KINGSTON TRIO #16 Kingston Trio This album keyed by the REVEREND MR. BLACK includes 11 other dramatic ballads. (SJT-1871)</p> 	<p>I LOVE YOU BECAUSE Al Martino The sweet, soothing sounds of Al Martino romance their way throughout the title tune and other great ballads. (SJT-1914)</p> 

Capitol Records International Corp. 1750 North Vine Street, Hollywood 28, California
 Cable Address: Capirecords, Hollywood

I'm a Woman — Album Accolades

The album *I'm a Woman* was made available nationwide as Capitol 1857 in early March of 1963 (mid-February in some special markets). It opened to generally favorable

reviews and—for a classic pop/jazz album from this period by a female singer—solid chart action. At *Billboard*, the monaural LP version of the album peaked at #18, the stereophonic version at #27. At *Cashbox*, the same monaural version peaked at #21, the stereo at #20. Hardly any fellow female artist of Lee's age and vintage (born 1920) had such fine showings in the 1963 album charts. Riding high on her ultra-catchy top 10 hit "Blame It on the Bossa Nova," even her younger peer Eydie Gormé (born 1928) was met with a market that did not respond as excitedly to the album of the same title. (It peaked at #121.)

By *Billboard*'s own reckoning (July 6, 1963 issue), Peggy Lee also qualified as the only female artist to make the monophonic chart twice that year (first with *I'm a Woman*, then with *Mink Jazz*), thereby joining a select eight-act club consisting of Dion, Robert Goulet, the Kingston Trio, Jimmy Smith, and the Ventures, along with triple-charting threats the Boston Pops and Mantovani. All male acts but Lee.

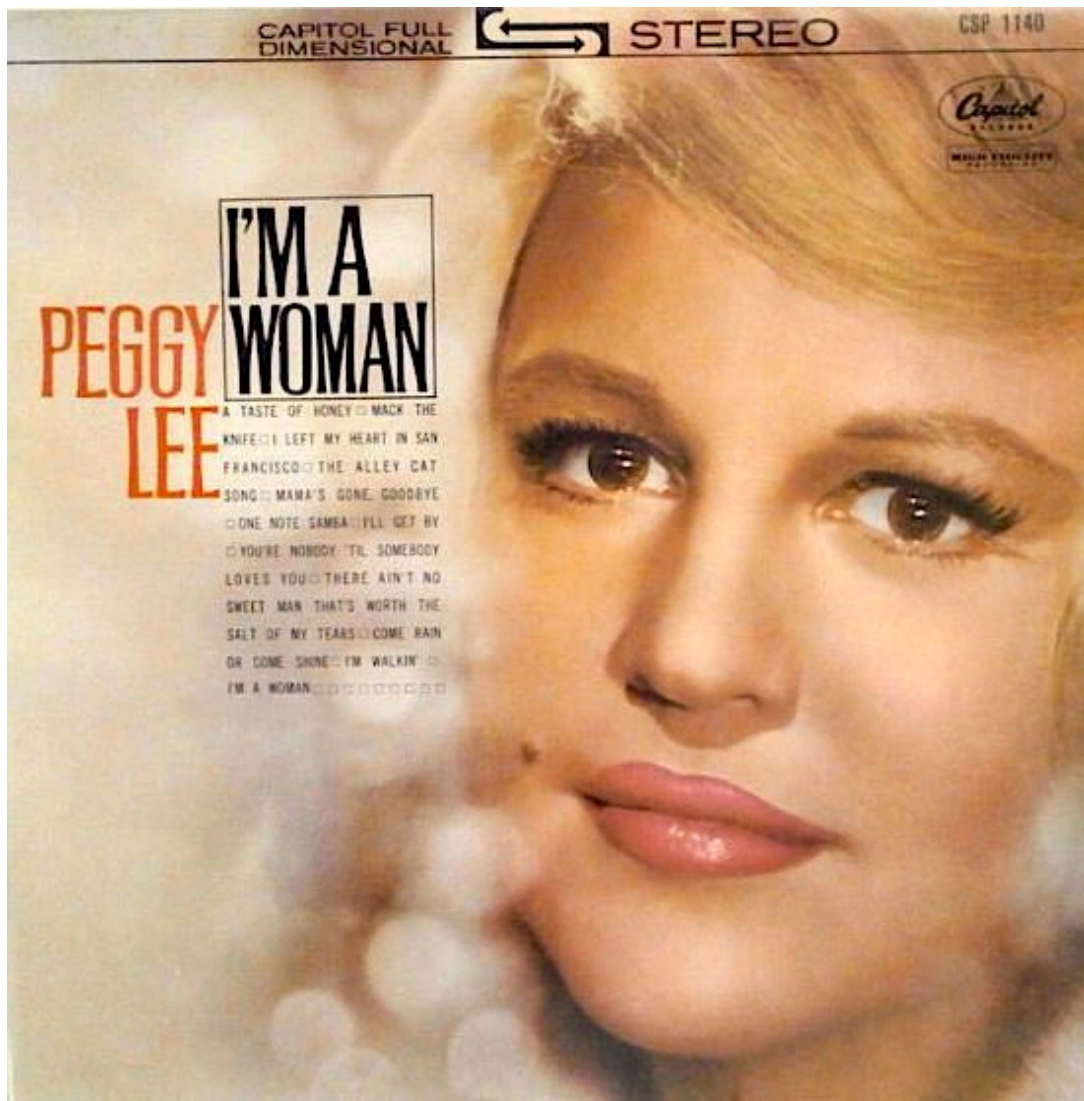
There are two other yardsticks by which the success of *I'm a Woman* could be measured in 1963. Longevity was one of them. At *Billboard*, the monaural LP edition scored 26 weeks; at *Cashbox*, 20 weeks.



{Page 75: *Billboard* review. February 23, 1963 issue.}

Peer appreciation was the other indicator of the album's success. *I'm a Woman* enjoyed the distinct honor of being nominated for a Grammy in the category of *Best Performance, Female, 1963*. (Having been released back

in December of 1962, the single had also been nominated, as already mentioned, for the period covering the preceding year.)



I'm a Woman — Peggy Lee's Conceptualization

Lee made her share of conceptually or thematically cohesive albums (among others, *The Man I Love*, *Dream*

Street, Miss Peggy Lee Sings the Blues). She was clearly pleased with how those came out.

However, when left strictly to her own devices, Lee favored an eclectic repertoire both onstage and on record. “I like variety,” she pointedly told the *New York Post*'s Joseph Wershba in 1963, “I keep getting deeper into the songs. I learn from musicians. Folk songs, jazz ... Variety. That’s always been my conception of singing.”

Validation of Lee's own personal assessment has been supplied by her fellow singers, observant fans, and music critics alike—especially, those who have thoroughly explored her catalogue. “She was sort of eclectic [decades] before it was considered hip to be eclectic,” vocal jazz critic Will Friedwald remarked in 1999, while being interviewed for a Lee profile on National Public Radio. “She's always kind of reaching out for these kinds of fusions with different kinds of music,” he continued. “She was an early supporter of bossa nova, and [there are] certainly all these different kinds of sounds that have always had a place in what she was doing, from the very beginning.”

A self-declared longtime Lee fan, singer k.d. lang has also expressed admiration for the eclectic quality of the elder artist's craft. As she thoughtfully declared at a panel set up by the Grammy Museum to celebrate Lee's centennial,

"Peggy Lee to me is sort of the mommy of vocalizing. She contains humor, saltiness, sweetness, romance, intellect, sarcasm—all these amazingly complex emotions, simultaneously—and she delivers it all in a way that is still completely accessible to the listener. And man, I think that it takes a lot of internalization, a lot of spirituality, to be able to stand—to be able to deliver something that complex but in a straightforward delivery" (2020).



{Page 78: another shot from the same photo shoot that generated the front cover photography of the album *I'm a Woman*. Page 76: front cover of a Japanese LP pressing.}

I'm a Woman is a primary example of this Lee love for variety or eclecticism. As we will shortly be discussing in detail, the artist put together an album whose core concept is variety—yet not a *random* variety by any means.

To facilitate the upcoming discussion of *I'm a Woman* as a conceptual work, I would like to indulge in an extended metaphor. It is often said that diehard fans worship at the temple or altar of their favorite artists. Let us imagine ourselves, then, as worshippers visiting the temple of the divine Miss Lee. Come along with us to explore her temple and approach her altar, where prominent display is currently being reserved for *The Gospel According to Lee*—a sacrosanct codex which the populace knows better by its alternate title, *I'm a Woman*. Let us also marvel at the four pillars of musical artistry on which Lee's temple leans: love, laughter, bossa nova and the blues.

Actually, there is yet one more pillar, conspicuously located at the very center of the sanctuary: womanliness. This fifth, overarching pillar functions as an interlocking point for the other four columns. It is with an inspection of all five of these figurative columns that our full-scale appraisal will conclude.

{Page 80: the back cover of the LP *I'm a Woman*, in a New Zealand pressing which suitably uses—unlike any of the other countries' pressings—pink coloring as a signifier

of the artist's femininity. Written by Dave Cavanaugh, the accompanying text is the same one found on the original American cover. The producer stresses the femininity that is innate to the artist and the variety that is inherent to her repertoire. He starts off by recalling that "there used to be a phenomenon in the music business known as an all-girl orchestra." Peggy Lee, he continues, "is an all-girl orchestra, and oh how she is orchestrated! ... Her singing communicates an immediate image of a lady warm and tender and loving and yielding and even, should the song call for it, ever so slightly wicked."}

T 1857

DECCA RECORDS
RECORDING

PEGGY LEE
sultry,
sweet and
swinging

I'M A WOMAN

THERE USED TO BE A PHENOMENON IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS KNOWN AS AN ALL-GIRL ORCHESTRA. PEGGY LEE IS AN ALL-GIRL GIRL, AND OH HOW SHE IS ORCHESTRATED!

For Peggy Lee to confide "I'm a Woman" is rather as if Niagara were to tell us all "I'm a fall." This we can see! A woman Miss Lee unmistakably is — a woman, moreover, who is just plain wonderful to look at and equally wonderful to listen to. Her singing communicates an immediate image of a lady warm and tender and loving and yielding and even, should the song call for it, ever so slightly wicked.

Certain songs seem made to order for the special feminine warmth Peggy radiates, and twelve of these were assembled for this album. *Mama's Gone, Goodbye* and *There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears* showcase Peggy's sultry blues side. *A Taste of Honey* and *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* are "just right" vehicles for her gentle, soft, romantic ballad style. *One Note Samba*, *The Alley Cat Song* and *I'm Walkin'* allow the lady successively to samba, swing and rock! And there are surprises. Peggy's *Mack the Knife* is hip and humorous in a way that makes her version about the most individualistic on record. And *I'm a Woman*, her sensational vocal which became an overnight bestseller as a single, is witty, bluesy and earthy in a totally new Peggy Lee way.

Benny Carter conducts on *I'm a Woman* and *I'll Get By*. Dick Hazard on all the rest. The instrumentalists include such topflight jazz musicians as trumpeter Manny Klein, drummer Stan Levey, pianist Mike Malvoin, bassist Max Bennett, guitarists John Pisano and Al Hendrickson, and others equally distinguished, who play with skill and subtlety that provide Peggy Lee with plenty of room in which to swing!

Produced by DAVE CAVANAUGH

side one

THE ALLEY CAT SONG
MAMA'S GONE, GOODBYE
I'M WALKIN'
COME RAIN OR COME SHINE
THERE AIN'T NO SWEET MAN
THAT'S WORTH THE SALT
OF MY TEARS
I'M A WOMAN

side two

MACK THE KNIFE
(from "The Merry Widow")
YOU'RE NOBODY 'TIL
SOMEBODY LOVES YOU
I'LL GET BY
I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO
A TASTE OF HONEY
ONE NOTE SAMBA
(Samba De Uma Nota So)

Capitol

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THIS RECORDING IS PLAYABLE ON MONO OR STEREO 33 1/3 R.P.M. GRAMOPHONES

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IMPORTANT

This mono masterpiece recording (which became obsolete) has been carefully engineered to provide the finest mono performance from any gramophone — and at new, mono or stereo. Like all high-quality efforts, it is a top-quality product of the recording art, and will continue to be a source of outstanding sound reproduction, now and in the future.

Blues

"I've always loved the blues, [since] I was a little girl," a 75-year-old Peggy Lee shared with the appreciative audience that was listening to her at a 1995 Carnegie Hall concert appearance. "That kind of music always fascinated me," she then reiterated.

Lee's innate affinity for the blues has generated especial interest from jazz historian Will Friedwald, who produced, compiled and annotated a noteworthy CD anthology on the subject (*The Best of Peggy Lee's Capitol Years - Blues & Jazz Sessions*, 1997). "The '60s were easily Lee's bluest decade," argues Friedwald in his liner notes for that anthology. "[A]t points it seems like fully a quarter of a third of her total output in these years had a touch of the blues."

Friedwald's argument is well-founded. Several Peggy Lee albums could be fondly renamed *Blues Ala Lee* on the strength of their ratio of bluesy material. Foremost among those would be *I'm a Woman*. Two songs from this album ("Mama's Gone Goodbye," "I'm a Woman") made it into Friedwald's anthology, which ranges chronologically from 1947 to 1972, the latter being her very last year at Capitol. In addition to those two tracks, the album's versions of "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears" and "I'm Walkin'" are

imbued with a bluesy flavor, even if such a flavor has been blended with overtones from other musical traditions (pop, rock).

"Bluesy" (rather than "blues") is how listeners of a more scholarly or exacting bent may duly describe the Lee vocals just-mentioned. Rightfully so. Proper blues songs have a formally identifiable, repeated four-bar structure, which is absent from most of the performances under consideration. However, classic singers of the American songbook tend to subscribe to a less formal, more wide-ranging conception of the blues genre, and Peggy Lee is one of those singers. While she did sing her share of songs constructed in the official blues pattern, Lee's own understanding of the genre did not restrict itself to that one structure. Her personal understanding went instead beyond form and pattern to encompass most every song of loss, mournfulness, or regret.

Nuance was another quality that the singer associated with the blues. This association was pointed out by Lee at a press interview conducted by Broadway theater reporter Patricia O'Haire, of the *New York Daily News*, in 1988. While recalling how glued to the radio she used to be during her teen days, Miss Lee shared the following musings with Miss O'Haire: "I still love those kind of blues, the kind you have to be real careful with, when you sing the lyrics. Most of the words have four or five

different meanings, and if you don't do 'em right, people don't get all the nuances." On record, her attraction toward that type of blues is in evidence as far back as 1942 ("Why Don't You Do Right?"). It could still be detected twenty years later, in her fondness for the song with which she chose to open the 1963 album under examination: "The Alley Cat Song" (not a blues or even a bluesy lyric, but certainly a multi-layered, if simple, novelty).

In several other press interviews, Lee also stressed her conviction that the blues do not necessarily have to be shouted. Nor do the blues need to be sung, in her estimation, at the rough 'n' ready 'n' loud volume which was once expected from its leading female exponent, Bessie Smith, back in the 1920s.

I hasten to clarify that Lee's perspective was by no means a value judgment on the singing of Smith herself. Lee actually thought of the so-called empress of the blues as a primary musical influence—one whose portrait she proudly kept, as an adult, on a home wall, and to whom she listened over the radio in younger years (or so she believed, on the basis of vague memories). No, the volume issue being raised by Lee was instead a matter of personal affinity, stemming from her softly feminine persona. In Peggy Lee's own (song)book, the blues shall

forever be not just fine and mellow but also neat and nuanced.



{Page 84: British EP, 1963.}

Bossa Nova

For the purposes of this ongoing exploration of Lee's craftsmanship, the "pillar" that we are calling "bossa nova" stands as a representative of all new and current trends in music. As we will shortly see, Lee's musical artistry endorsed the "new" and favored the "now."

Though derived from Brazil's ever-vigorous samba rhythms, the bossa nova is a cool, low-key musical style in all regards but one: its self-touting name. *Nova* is the Portuguese adjective for "new," and *bossa* is a homegrown Brazilian term that has been loosely translated into the noun "beat" (even if, in actuality, its old original meaning remains indeterminate). The bossa nova style thereby promotes itself as "the new beat." It does its self-promotion in a manner that is obviously not only brazen but—given the style's unavoidable exposure to the passing of time—not all too sensible.

At the time that these *I'm a Woman* sessions were recorded (1962-1963), the "nova" moniker fully applied to the musical trend question, though. Back then, bossa nova was the latest thing in jazz circles. Its novel beat and its newness were thus bound to attract artists who actively pursued fresh musical perspectives—artists like Lee.*

Her very artistic beat was *nova*-esque. While never ignoring or neglecting to praise the tried-and-true standards of yore, Lee kept a gleaming, watchful eye on new musical trends of the day. Her keen interest in fresh music is actually well documented. It is also a topic about which she spoke often, and with focused enthusiasm. Asked once how a singer such as she could account for

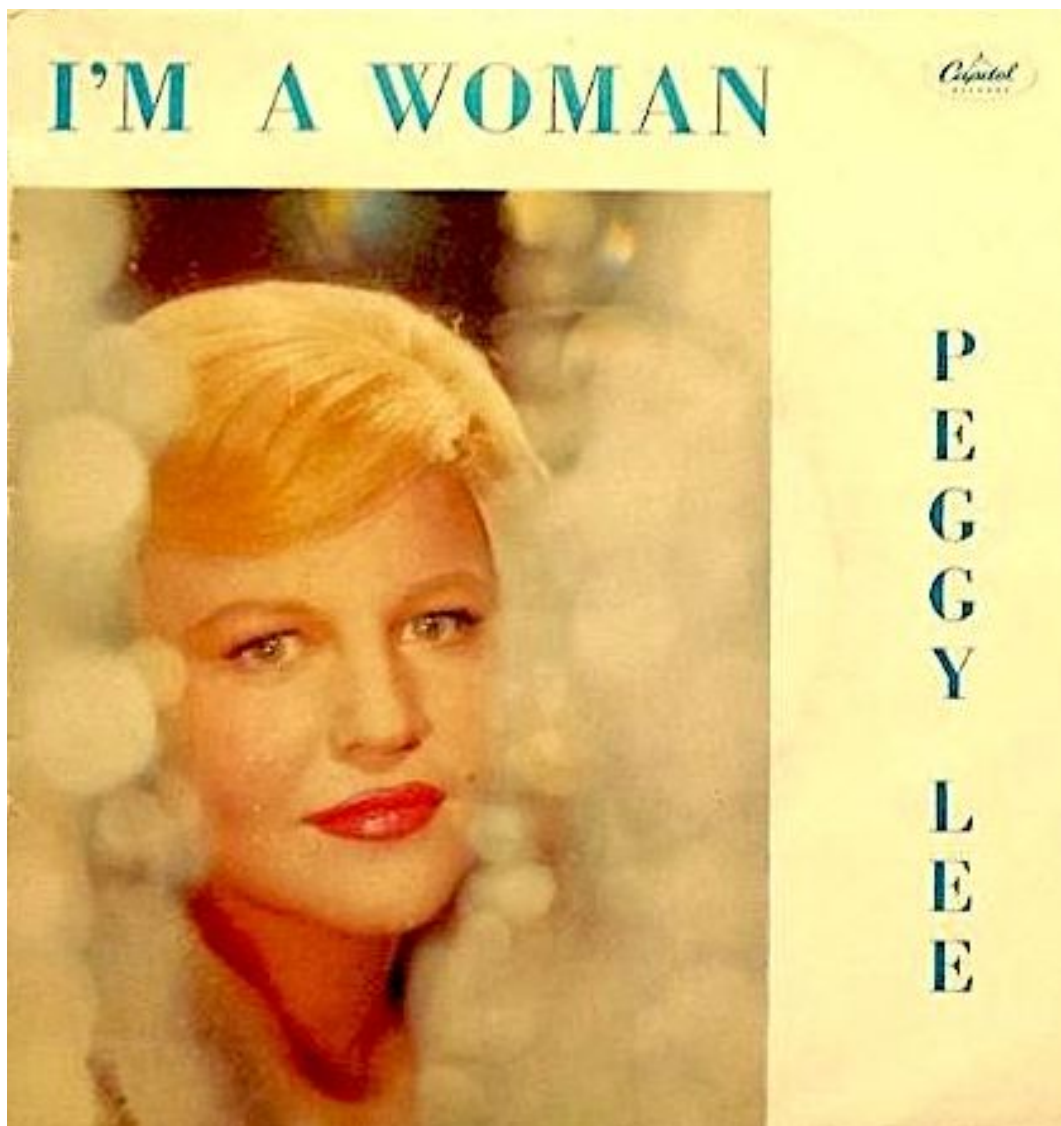
her longevity in the business of popular music, Lee mused that "interpretation does play a part in it," but the most basic element is the choice of song material: "material which is commercial yet good musically" (*Newsweek*, 1960).

As part of this same affection for music in general and fresh music in particular, Lee reacted ever-so-glowingly to any instrument that qualified as a recent discovery for her, or which she was newly incorporating into her act (e.g., the French horn and the harmonica, both additions to her dates of the 1960s). Moreover, she spoke admiringly of instrumentation in general. Her 1967 TV show *Something Special* provides a full, hourlong case exhibit. Each segment on that special purposefully highlights one musical instrument or, otherwise, an ensemble of them. What's more, the vocalist prefaces several of her show's performances with anecdotal and historical commentary about some of the instruments at play, from an acoustic bass owned by Max Bennett to the French horn.

Compelled by the allure that the "now" and the "new" exerted on her, Lee also recorded up-to-date material more readily, appreciatively and eagerly than other contemporary artists with whom she shared a pedigree (including, for instance, Frank Sinatra, who exhibited vociferous distaste for some of his own hits of the 1960s).

The 1963 album of our interest is a case in point. *I'm a Woman* is evenly split into, on one hand, venerable standards of Peggy Lee's liking and, on the other hand, songs of recent vintage, all of which were probably suggested by either Cavanaugh or Lee herself ("One Note Samba," "I'm a Woman," "A Taste of Honey," "The Alley Cat Song," "I'm Walkin'," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco").

Among the recent songs, there are of course exercises in the art of the bossa nova. To be more precise, one authentic bossa title is part of the album mix ("One Note Samba") and another is in an adjunct single ("Little Boat"). Then there is "Mack the Knife." Although that tune is formally a descendant of European traditions (English folk balladry, Weimar-era German theatrical music), stylistically Lee's treatment has struck many listeners as bossa nova-inspired (one of those listeners: Nigel Hunter, who reviewed the album on the British magazine *Disc*). Fainter echoes of the new beat have been additionally detected in "The Alley Cat Song." But, no song and no one in this album is more bossa (to echo a pronouncement once made by Brazilian musician José do Patrocínio Oliveira, to the effect that the word "bossa" was originally used to give enthusiastic praise to musicians for their craftsmanship) and more nova-loving than Peggy Lee herself.



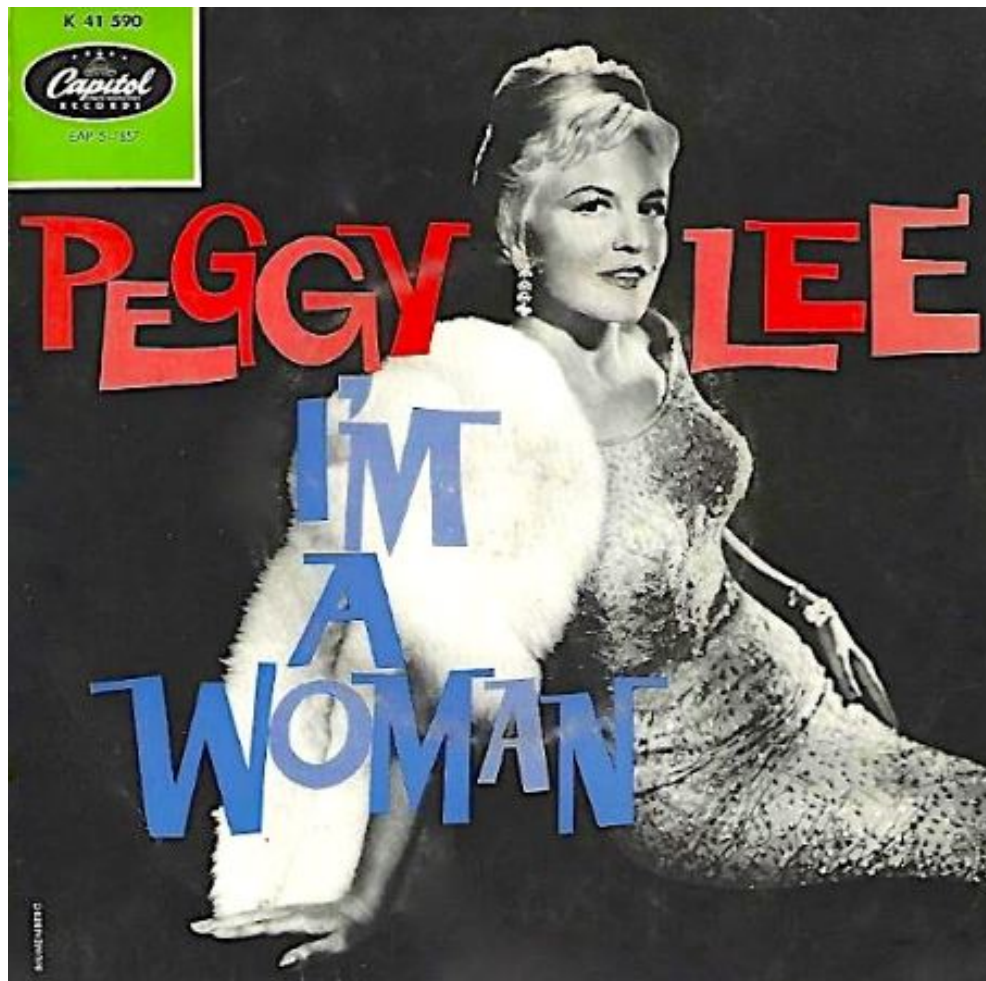
{Page 88: Australian EP, 1963.}

Love

This writer should have no need to expound on how that ole subject called love deeply infuses the catalogue of a jazz-pop singer such as Peggy Lee. Passion and romance

are, after all, universally acknowledged as the quintessential hallmarks of the classic pop songbook.

Accordingly, plenty of romantic tunes were chosen for inclusion on *I'm a Woman*. To wit: "Come Rain or Come Shine," "You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You," "I'll Get By," "A Taste of Honey" ... There is even a love letter to a golden city by a bay ("I Left My Heart in San Francisco"), where we are told that a lover awaits.



{Page 89: German EP, 1963.}

Womanliness

The March 14, 1963 issue of *Billboard* magazine reports on a trek that 23 Princeton University collegians were making, on that very day, from New Jersey to New York. The main motivation for the testosterone-fueled stampede was Peggy Lee's opening at the big city's Basin Street East nightclub. Asked why this musky mass migration was happening, Lee kiddingly replied, "'cause I'm a woman"—to which the *Billboard* columnist retorted, "you bet your sore feet!"

Gender was a central construct of the Peggy Lee persona. Onstage, viewers alternately gazed or gaped at a voluptuously Rubenesque, enticingly gowned creature. On record, this persona produced a marvelously warm, sensuous sound. That was the Peggy Lee who, according to music critic Will Friedwald in an article written for *Pulse* magazine, "sold flat-out eroticism long before the '60s sexual revolution" in songs such as *Fever* and *I'm a Woman*, virtually "invent[ing] the song of seduction" (1995).

That is also the Peggy Lee persona who, in the album *I'm a Woman*, treats us to many a caressing yet self-assertive musical touch. Those touches punctuate, in particular, her confident readings of the feminine anthems "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears,"

"Mama's Gone Goodbye," and, of course, the title track. Along with several others ("Mack the Knife," "The Alley Cat Song," and "I'm Walkin'"), those album numbers fixate on a topic perennially favored by members of the fair sex members: men and their wanton ways. As best conveyed by Nigel Hunter in his aforementioned review of *I'm a Woman* for *Disc* magazine, "if anyone ever doubted the fact expressed in the album title, this record will certainly set them right. Peggy glides smoothly and silklike through another varied collection of high-grade songs, rightly described as sultry, sweet and swinging" (1963).

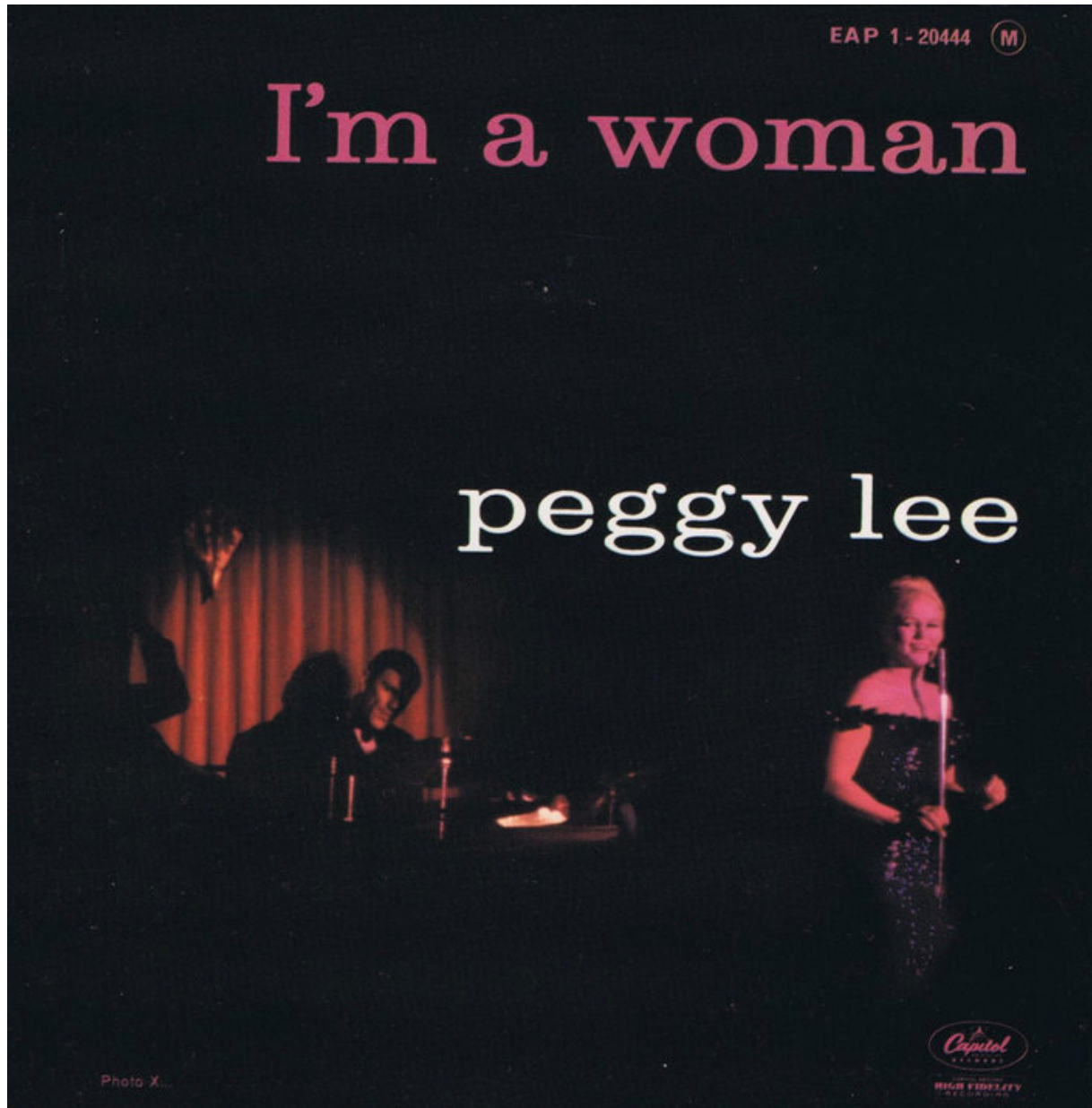
"When I was a kid I thought she was the hottest thing on wheels. I thought she was sexier and prettier than Lana Turner. Well, Lana couldn't sing a lick. Peggy looked to me like a Vargas girl. The other ones were pretty, no doubt about it. I just thought she was out of sight."

So we hear Jerry Leiber proclaim on National Public Radio—for every man and woman to hear—during an installment of the show *Jazz Profiles*. The occasion was a tribute episode honoring Peggy Lee (1999).

The lyricist of "I'm a Woman" was not alone in his admiration of Lee's womanliness. Fellow females fell for her, too. "She always made you feel something. And it was very sexy," admitted the *other* woman who made a hit of "I'm a Woman," blues vocalist Maria Muldaur. "She did have a real kind of sensuality, appealing to men and women alike, and she had an elegance and a grace and a kind of mesmerizing magical stage presence" (2003). "She's always had great humor and great sensuality," reaffirmed Frank Sinatra's good friend Sylvia Syms, herself a superior singer with well over a dozen albums under her belt. "Her sound is like a reed. She walks away from any other singer. The colors in her voice are pastel rather than the bright greens and blues of so many other singers" (1985).

Lest some of the preceding comments create a misguided impression in any reader for whom the singer might not be too familiar, I should point out that there was more to 1960s Peggy Lee than the siren of stage and records. Once away from all nightclub spotlights and recording reels, the person with whom people in general interacted during these years was an earthier version of herself—a version perhaps more in tune with the individual who had once been born in North Dakota and baptized as Norma Deloris Egstrom. "For any female who can look so sexy and sing so lowdown," mused the anonymous author of a *Newsweek* piece tellingly titled *Hot as a Torch*, "Peggy

offstage is surprisingly reminiscent of a small-town librarian. She's pretty, she's friendly, she's intelligent ..." (1960).



{Page 93: French EP, 1963. Behind Lee, drummer Stan Levey. A shot from one of her earlier Basin Street East nightclub dates.} {Page 97: Laughing Lee, ca. 1963.}

Laughter

"All entertainers have, to use Noël Coward's phrase, a talent to amuse," wrote Nancy Franklin in her brilliant *Peggy Lee Postscript* (2002) for *The New Yorker*, "but Peggy Lee had something else as well: a talent to be amused. She swung with a sense of humor, and handled lyrics with an uncynical knowingness, letting you in on the little secret of whatever song she happened to be singing, or, at least, letting you know that she had a secret." A sense of humor was indeed intrinsic to Lee's music and personality. The singer loved many a manner of jest (from whimsical to mildly bawdry to macabre), and even availed herself of a droll mantra which she called "The Laughing Song." In more senior years, Lee would additionally become known for phoning her peers just to exchange jokes. "Humor? I don't know how I'd live without it," she remarked in 1977, while being interviewed by *Melody Maker* critic Max Jones. "I automatically like anyone who has a sense of humor."

This strong affinity for the funny aspects of life manifested itself in many of the interpretative choices made by the singer. The playful, gently humorous side of her personality is certainly at the forefront of *I'm a Woman*. Humorous touches lighten the album's atmosphere right from the very outset, with "The Alley Cat Song." Note also how, in its original LP

configuration, *I'm a Woman* opens its A side with this tongue-in-cheek number, its B side with the playful "Mack the Knife." Those are parallel interpretations with shared motifs and a similarly humorous approach. Both numbers acquaint us with no-good but, oh-so-fetching he-scoundrels. They are cads whose manly, prowling ways charm and amuse woman, man, and child alike. In a more serious context, we would be talking about society's dangerous fascination with outlaws, rebels, gangsters, and gigolos. Not in this album's subtext, though. Herein the danger is neutralized through the singer's softly feminine readings which are, to top it all off, peppered with many a gently comical touch. (To give credit where credit is due: the vocalist is ably aided and abetted by the head arrangements. That being said, she probably had a hand in the direction of those, too, as tended to be her wont).

Tellingly, three tracks from *I'm a Woman* continued to be regularly performed by Peggy Lee for the next two or three years that followed the album's release: "The Alley Cat Song," "Mack the Knife," and the title song. These particular tunes bring to light—as already illustrated—the more playful side of Peggy Lee's multi-faceted personality. She is breezy here, kittenish there, impish over yonder.

And that was not the end of it all. Lee of course continued to perform the hit song "I'm a Woman"

throughout her career, sometimes tagging to it an instrumental interlude during which she paraded herself across the stage with tongue-in-cheek, slightly burlesque movements, to the tune of David Rose's "The Stripper."

In the mid-1970s, she also dusted off her interpretation of "Mack the Knife" for additional performances which she would preface by characterizing her reading as "a gentle satire." Call it *Satire Ala Lee*.

Many more years later (at a time when illness had rendered the artist no longer able to do live performing), Lee was queried by Roy Rogers of *Interview* magazine about her take on "I'm a Woman." She labeled the tune "a funny song, if you look at the lyrics," adding that her treatment of the number was something that "people get a kick out of" (1997). Fun was the operative word.

Let us sum up. We have identified Peggy Lee's own inclination toward eclecticism (or variety) as the grounding concept behind her album *I'm a Woman*. We have also posited that the album rests on several pillars fundamental to her artistry. Femininity and humor come across as the firmest of those pillars—the ones that pervaded not only this album but also Lee's life. As the all-too womanly performer categorically assured us, once and for always, on an article aptly titled *Peggy Lee's Serene Tempo in Life*, "I would just like to be remembered

as someone nice with a sense of humor. My epitaph? She laughed a lot.”





Mama's Treats

Webster defines the word vamp as a woman who uses her seductive charms to seduce. Peggy Lee's picture could be placed on that page. Her public persona was that of a female sexpot whose most

noteworthy talents were entertainment skills. But after spending a couple of hours with Peggy Lee, as we just have, you realize that Peggy's never been anyone puppet. She's pulled her own strings. And has been totally in control of one of the greatest careers any woman has ever mastered in American popular music.

Jim Harlan, host of
In the Spotlight and
Make Believe
Ballroom, 1992

1. The Alley Cat Song

"I love those cats songs!," remarked Peggy Lee in 1965, as she and disc jockey Jack Wagner were about to play her purring version of a tune titled "Sneakin' Up on You." The singer's love for feline tunes is indeed reflected on her song cat-alog, which ranges from "All the Cats Join In" (1946) to "Some Cats Know" (1975). She even wrote one kitty number that has acquired iconic status among kids of all ages, "The Siamese Song" (1955). Lee is thus likely to have fallen for the lissome lyrics of "The Alley

Cat Song" upon her very first listening of them—lickety-split, the pun lovers among us might want to say.

The singer also loved tunes that carried more than one layer of meaning, and this catchy hit from the 1962 summer season is most certainly multi-layered. The lyric is figuratively about a feline of the roaming kind, literally about a human of the roving type. Both kinds of creatures were very much to our lady's liking—at times perhaps in equal measure.

When handled by an interpreter of Lee's caliber (a subtle, nuanced interpreter, with lots of life and love experience), "The Alley Cat Song" is just bound to ooze sex appeal. This is, after all, a ditty that playfully calls itself the *tale of a lonesome frail and her Cat-sanova*. Or should we rather say that the song saucily refers to itself as the *tail of a lonesome frail and her Cat-sanova*? (Bear in mind that the noun "tail" also carries a figurative meaning, most commonly heard as part of the colloquial expression "getting tail." Moreover, this word has been informally used as a synonym for "buttocks" since at least the 15th century.)

Being a lover of music as well, Lee was doubtlessly hip to yet one more layer of meaning behind the noun "cat"—a meaning confined to the music world. Men might all very well be dogs in the world at large, but in the field of jazz

every male musician is known to be a cat. Herself a field player (in jazz and elsewhere, in the realms of music), Lee led a life filled with its fair share of such cats—stray ones, many of them.

Let us pause here so that we can provide a definitive answer to one of the crucial questions in every human being's life, including Lee's own: cats or dogs? (I am referring to pets, not men, in this instance.) Truth be told, Miss Peggy Lee was far more partial to dogs than to cats in her everyday life. All through her adult years, she kept canine friends with her—oftentimes multiple ones at once.

Not so, however, in later years. The foremost pet companion of her golden age was a puss, tellingly named Baby. Lee being Lee, she could not help but celebrate this feline friend in song. "I've Got a Brand New Baby" is a gentle vocal-and-guitar swinger, co-written with guitarist John Chiodini in Baby's honor. Lee loving-lee preserved her own version of the song on demo tape.

{Page 98 (essay's top photo): Lee in the late 1960s—both a mama and a grandmama by then, but still a hot vision in red. Page 101: No alley cat, Baby abides by the backyard door of her mistress' home. Prominently visible in the backyard garden is the Peggy Lee rose, a light pink hybrid tea rose officially named in her honor in 1983. }



Before it was recorded by Lee—or, for that matter, by any vocalist—"Alley Cat" existed in its primordial form: as an instrumental. It began life as a theme called "*Omkring et Flygel*" ("*Around the Piano*"), conceived for a 1961 Danish TV variety show. Bent Fabric, an entertainment industry personality whose many skills included piano playing, was both the host of that show and the theme's composer. He renamed it "Alley Cat" for its ensuing commercial release as an instrumental 45 single on

Metronome Records in Europe and Atco in the United States. A full Fabric LP named *Alley Cat* was also issued by Atco.

Next, the song's title was expanded into "The Alley Cat Song" for its vocal debut, also on Metronome. Fabric was actually a top executive at the Danish branch of that multi-national label. Commissioned to write the lyric was American songwriter Al Stillman, whose work over the years would also include English words to several other popular non-American melodies ("The Breeze and I," "And That Reminds Me," "In Spain They Say 'Sí, Sí, Sí'").

On the Metronome vocal single, singing honors were conferred to a little-known vocalist named David Thorne, who is accompanied by Richard Wolfe & His Orchestra. Following that debut vocal from the Brook-Benton-soundalike, Lee did the second vocal version to ever be recorded—at least to my knowledge. In addition to serving as the opening track on the album *I'm a Woman*, Lee's version was also issued on a Capitol single that came out about a month after the LP. Vocal groups took over the number afterwards, with only two or three exceptions. (To wit: teen pop idol Bobby Rydell on an album that was released, like Lee's, in 1963; Danish singer Grethe Ingmann on a 1970 Metronome album

dedicated to the compositions of Mr. Fabric, who accompanies her throughout.)



{Page 104: alley cat sightings. Top row: European Metronome single and USA Atco LP, both featuring the Bent Fabric instrumental version. Bottom row: the two earliest vocal versions of the song, on singles respectively released by Metronome (1962) and Capitol (1963).}

The only other well-established solo singer who this writer knows to have recorded "The Alley Cat Song" is Holly Cole, on her self-titled 2006 CD. It is worth noting, in passing, that Cole has named Lee as one of the artists whose work she is consistently interested in interpreting. (Source: Ottawa Jazz Festival interview, 2022). And so she has: re-interpretation of numbers such as "Don't Smoke in Bed" and "You're My Thrill"—both strongly associated with her senior peer—can be cited. Chances are that Cole's own re-interpretation of "The Alley Cat Song" was also inspired by Lee's gently humorous, whimsical take on the tune.

2. Mama's Gone, Goodbye

Mama and papa songs such as this one were a minor but notable sub-category within the blues tradition.

Particularly in vogue during the 1920s, these numbers were recorded by the likes of Marion Harris ("You've Gotta See Mamma Every Night, or You Can't See Mamma at All"), Alberta Hunter ("Aggravatin' Papa"), Ma Rainey ("Little Low Mamma Blues"), Bessie Smith ("Mama's Got the Blues"), Clara Smith ("Papa, I Don't Need You Now"), Mamie Smith ("Mamma Whip! Mamma Spank!"), Victoria Spivey ("One Hour Mama," "No, Papa, No"), Sophie Tucker ("I'm the Last of the Red Hot Mamas"), and Ethel Waters ("No Man's Mamma").

Although back in the day some of those same numbers were also assigned to male recording artists (per the more genderless approach to song during that early era), mama songs have a distinctly feminine perspective. Many of these lyrics give voice to each and every woman who has felt wronged by—or who has been less than thrilled with—the romantic and sexual exploits of her man.

Peggy Lee was among several notable jazz and pop singers of a later era who kept this old subgenre alive. One mama song favored by Lee was the aforementioned "You've Gotta See Mamma Every Night," which she had recorded in 1956 and revived again for her concert engagements of 1963. Audience and critical reaction to her live versions evinced considerable enthusiasm—especially from male critics who were familiar with the tradition that she was honoring. At the Riviera in June of 1963, a reviewer ranked her as "almost a red-hot mama" after seeing how she had strutted across the stage suggestively to the tune of this song—while also smiling warmly.

About a year and a half later, *Newsweek* would indiscreetly reveal that the "buxom, hippy, leggy" Miss Lee had a five-month-old grandson for whom she was a red hot mama, too. Or, at least, some sort of mama, per Lee's own disclosure: "he calls me 'Blama'... You know, grandma" (1964). Fast forward to a couple more years,

and we find the toddler's blama mama treating the audiences of *The Andy Williams Show* to so red-hot a version of "Put the Blame on Mame" that a whole fire squad had to be summoned, to put out all that fire.



{Page 107: snapshots from a 1966 episode of *The Andy Williams Show*, in which Lee is seen performing "Put the Blame on Mame." She actually alters the famous film tune to fit her own fiery schemes; we hear her sing the titular line as "Put the Blame on Me."}

"Mama's Gone, Goodbye" made its debut in December 1923 as an instrumental composed and recorded by bandleader Armand J. Piron, with songwriting credits also given to the band's violin and trumpet players. Versions with lyrics were recorded by both Clara Smith and Sippie Wallace the following year. Over a dozen more female singers had covered the tune before Lee chose it for inclusion in *I'm a Woman* (1963).

Lee probably became (re)acquainted with the number as she was in the process of conducting research for her concert program *The Jazz Tree*, scheduled to be performed on December 7, 1962 at the then-recently opened New York Philharmonic Hall (nowadays better known as the Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall). According to a contemporaneous article in *The New York Times*, Lee was researching the origins and development of jazz, and the Library of Congress was serving as her main source of information. Benny Carter, who was conducting her ongoing shows at New York's Basin Street East nightclub, was expected to also accompany her on this venture. The press was tentatively announcing their

inclusion of songs popularized by the two all-time greatest blueswomen, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.

Postponed and tentatively rescheduled for the spring of 1963, the concert does not seem to have actually happened then or thereafter. We are thus fortunate to count Lee's excellent version of "Mama's Gone, Goodbye" as a likely vestige of the cancelled 1963 evening. It is not the only vestige extant, though. In 1989, Lee would additionally perform a song cycle which might have been an offshoot of this cancelled evening of early jazz music. Premiering at the Ballroom nightclub in New York, her cycle of song and narrative was called *The Blues Branch of the Jazz Tree*.

3. I'm Walkin'

With the 1957 release of this song on a 45 single, independent label Imperial Records went on to enjoy yet another hit in a long succession of million-selling smashes conceived by its roster's main artist, the highly influential rock 'n' roll pianist and songwriter Fats Domino. He worked in tandem with Imperial's A&R man Dave Bartholomew, who is officially credited as his songwriter partner on this hit and many another one. Imperial continued to capitalize on the pianist's hit catalog by recording a full tribute album titled *Frances Faye Swings*

Fats Domino (1958), on which "I'm Walkin'" is included. Herself a pianist as well as a singer, Faye was thus the first woman to swing this popular rock 'n' roll piece, predating Lee's own treatment by several years.

Lee and Faye knew one another. In 1961, they played back-to-back concert engagements at the same New York nightclub. Attentive listeners of the Capitol album *Basin Street East Proudly Presents Miss Peggy Lee* might be able to hear Lee promote Faye's upcoming act by sneaking, in the middle of her rendition of "It's a Good Day," the words "don't forget Frances Faye tomorrow!"



{Page 110: waving and *Walkin'* women. Peggy Lee in the early 1960s, Frances Faye in the mid-1960s.}

Thanks to our incorporation of an alternate take into these proceedings ([track #18](#)), our expanded edition of *I'm a Woman* features twice as much "Walkin'" from Lee—figuratively speaking—as the original 12-track LP. Though arguably less fully realized than the master, this alternate allows us to hear a tiny but curious utterance. It is the speaking voice of a perplexed Lee that we hear for a fleeting moment at the outset, immediately after producer Cavanaugh's identification of the take number for tape and logging purposes. He seems to have inadvertently skipped one digit in the numerical take sequence, and she appears to have caught on to the possible error on his part—hence her quizzical repetition of the take's number.

[4. Come Rain or Come Shine](#)

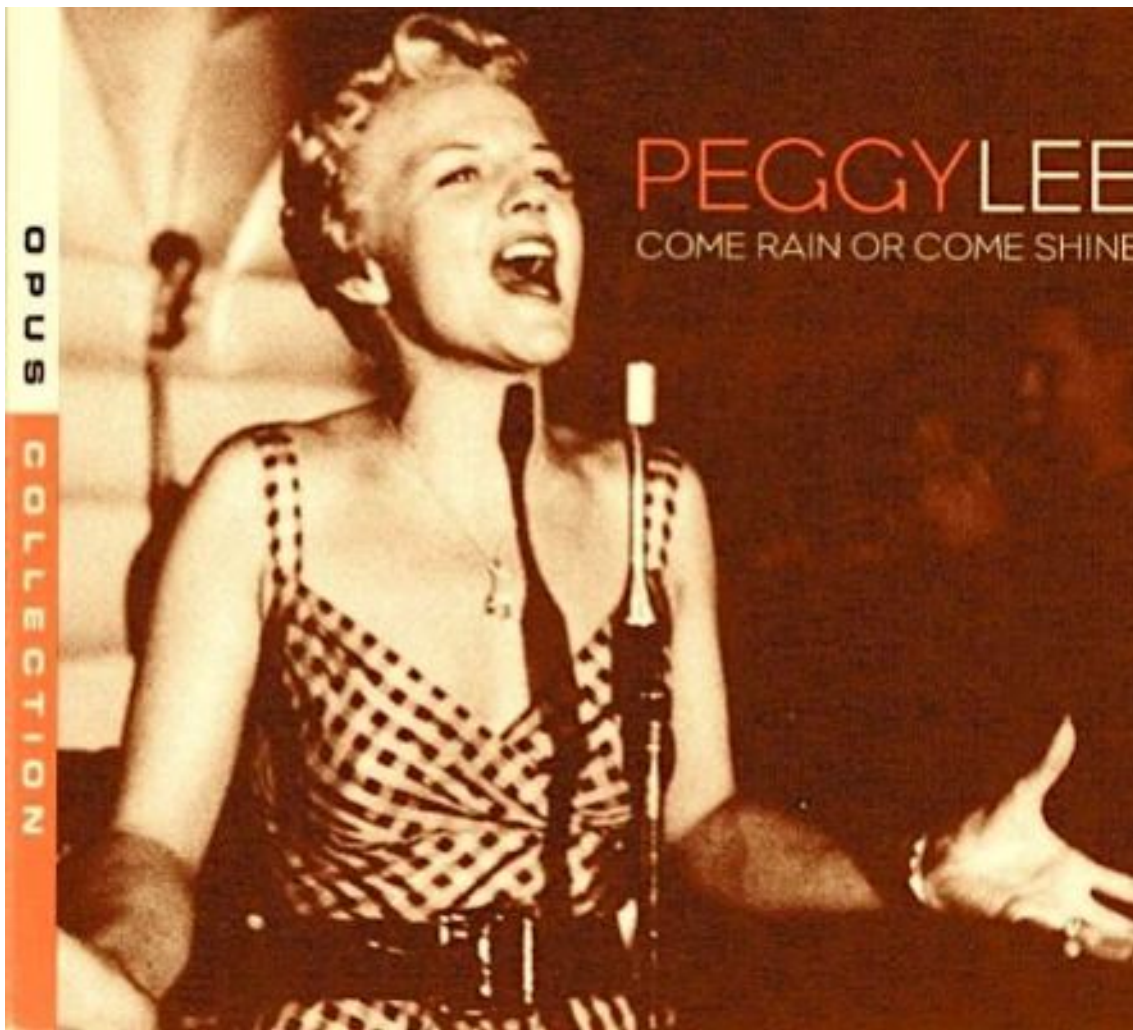
American songwriting giants Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer co-wrote "Come Rain or Come Shine" for the score of their Broadway musical *St. Louis Woman*, which had its premiere in March of 1946. It was performed in the musical as a love duet between the male and female leads.

Mercer was the one who made arrangements for the number to make its commercial debut—as a solo, rather than a duet. Being not only a songwriter but also one of Capitol's co-founders, he wisely assigned "Come Rain or

Come Shine" to his protégée Margaret Whiting, who recorded it in February (i.e., a month in advance of the Broadway premiere). By June, she had turned the tune into a top 20 hit.

Since then, the number has been sung solo by just about every major singer of standards, male and female—Lee of course included. Her version on this album made enough of an impression to be picked and highlighted as the title of a CD anthology released by Starbucks in 2010, to great chart and sales success. The otherwise excellent annotator of that anthology misses the mark when he implies that Lee waited two decades to cover the evergreen. Quite to the contrary, the Capitol artist's first recording of the number dates back to the debut year of the song. Lee recorded the number in June of 1946, for Capitol Transcriptions. (The latter was a company division dedicated to gathering material exclusively for radio consumption.)

That 1946 rendition would turn out to be one out of many Lee versions of the evergreen. In addition to recording the number for another radio transcription service (World) in the mid-1950s, the artist performed it on radio and television over and over (1949, 1952, 1955, 1956), before finally committing to commercial issue during our 1963 *I'm a Woman* album sessions.



{Page 113: named after the Lee rendition currently under discussion, the CD *Come Rain or Come Shine* was a #2 hit on *Billboard's Jazz Albums* chart.}

Lee clearly had a personal affinity for this moody love piece—an affinity that became all the more palpable when she performed the song live. "Every emotional and musical synapse the listener possesses is zapped from the moment Peggy Lee eases into *Come Rain or Come Shine*," declared *Chicago Tribune* music critic Larry Kart

once, after watching her do the song onstage in the Windy City, around 1968. Kart then continued as follows:

... [E]ven though there are standards by which she can be measured, influences that can be traced, and words that can describe her art, one first has to ask, what is she? A woman and a singer are obvious but quite inadequate answers. While every woman was once a female child, Lee never has been less than mature—a repository for all the worldly and otherworldly wisdom that women have acquired through the ages.

5. There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears

Curiously and paradoxically, this anthem of female self-affirmation became first known in a version by an all-male ensemble—and in spite of the fact that a woman had recorded a concurrent version. The woman was no other than Libby Holman, a theatre actress, singer and socialite whose daring, liberated love life proved to be catnip for the gossip press of her time.

The notorious Holman probably made her recording on January 20, 1928. (A few sources give it instead an approximate dating within the month of February.) Another notable lady singer from the period, Annette Hanshaw, would record the song in March. So-called First Lady of Radio Vaughn DeLeath would follow suit in September, and so-billed Comedienne of Song Ann Suter about six months later.

Alas, none of those distaff versions gained enough traction to distract public attention from what jazz critic Gary Giddins has facetiously nicknamed "the de facto original gay recording." Bandleader Paul Whiteman and his Rhythm Boys (Harry Barris, Bing Crosby, Al Rinker) recorded "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears" in February of 1928. Crosby sang the main vocal line without changing gender pronouns—as required by song publishers back then.

Actually, the Rhythm Boys' take on "There Ain't No Sweet Man" may still be the most popular of all vocal versions—not at all unfairly, given its superior musicianship. It features solos played by various notable instrumentalists—foremost among them, one of jazz's most celebrated early twentieth century musicians, cornetist Bix Beiderbecke. And then we have the vocal trio's brief but catchy exercise in scatting, which makes the proceedings all the more memorable.



{Page 116: Libby Holman and vices—cigar, man, co-dependency. The gender-compromised scenes on display are from the show-stopping sketch that skyrocketed her Broadway career, and which also found her performing the premiere version of a soon-to-be standard, "Moanin' Low" (*The Little Show*, 1929).}

Meanwhile, Holman's debut interpretation has remained largely obscure, and is still awaiting the due that it deserves. Though admittedly sung in all too typical 1920s style—and thus bound to sound old-fashioned to modern ears—Holman's version is commendably peppered with humorous touches. Better yet, it features many lines not unheard in any other interpretation. Take, for instance, the closing verse: "Rather than be his'un / I would go to prison / And give three cheers / There ain't no sweet man / That's worth the salt of my tears." (*His'un* might simply be a contraction of "his one," or it could instead be a portmanteau of sorts, standing for "his honey.")

After the debut recordings of 1928, "There Ain't No Sweet Man" had to wait some sixty years to pick up steam again. It did so thanks largely to the swing revival of the 1980s and 1990s. Today, jazz and swing fans have become moderately familiar with the tune through the occasional recording from an established act (namely, Rebecca Kilgore with Dave Frishberg in 1994, British folk singer Norma Waterson in 1996, Diana Krall in 2012,

and bandleader Vince Giordano with his Nighthawks on the soundtrack of the HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* series, for which he and punk/blues singer David Johansen recreated the Whiteman-Crosby original).

But, before the 1980s, the tune had seldom been recorded—barely at all, actually, from the 1930s through the 1950s. Even within the decade of our greater interest (the 1960s), the total number of versions on record is miniscule; this writer is aware of just two. Both are bluesy swingers, and both were made for Capitol. Peggy Lee's eminently feminine interpretation from her *I'm a Woman* sessions (1963) has a decisively masculine counterpart in Bobby Darin recording from his *Venice Blue* dates (1965). A manly approach to the lyric is evident from Darin's substitution of the song title's chief noun ("man") with a word more to his liking ("gal"). It is also evident from his riff near the song's end, during which the guy protests that he'd "rather die" than let any "girl" make him cry. Additionally, the riff contains commentary of a possibly autobiographical nature. The singing artist fully acknowledges his own heartbreak but still retains a position of command in front of the heartbreaker, who is first given a request to dispose of his wedding ring and then told that she "ain't worth much."

Although this reading is very much a personalized take on the number, we might still want to consider the possibility

of a direct link between Darin's version and Lee's. Could it be that the earlier version served as a catalyst to the creation of the later one? Do we have any comments from Darin which might point in such direction? The answer to the second question is that we do not have any, and the answer to the first is that there could be a connection. Coincidentally or otherwise, the 1965 session on which Darin recorded this number was filled with tunes which Lee had previously added to her own catalog. One of them was "A Taste of Honey," also covered on her album *I'm a Woman*. The other two had just been included on Lee's latest LP, released just a month before this Darin date. Admittedly, all that sharing of repertoire could certainly be chalked up to the fact that those three numbers were popular songs of the day. We should certainly bear in mind that Darin and Lee were but two of the many singers who were covering numbers such as "I Wanna Be Around" and "Dear Heart" during these same years.

On the other hand, we should not lose track of the facts relevant to the specific song under discussion (i.e., how relatively rare recordings of "There Ain't No Sweet Man" were, and how Lee had been the only well-known singer to cover it in about a decade or more). Nor should we lose sight of Darin's avowed love for Lee's singing. Based on that fondness (evident in his earlier recordings of Lee-associated songs, such as "Similau" and "Black

Coffee"), we can at least suggest that Lee's version of "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears" might have served as the original model inspiration for "Ain't No Sweet Gal Worth the Salt of My Tears" (the latter being the renaming given to the number on the front cover of the *Venice Blue* album).

As for how the tune first came to Lee's own attention, no answers to that question have yet been forthcoming. One plausible scenario would have Lee chancing upon the 1928 number while doing research for the aforementioned *Jazz Tree* concert special for the Philharmonic. Even more plausible is, in my opinion, a scenario where Lee's exposure to the tune would have happened through the auspices of her reliable Capitol record producer. Back in December of 1947, Cavanaugh had directed a combo on a Kay Starr date whose resulting Capitol masters had included this old tune. Originally a session player, he had memorably played sax at that date, too. Fifteen years later, the musician-turned-producer could have very well recalled the song from Starr's date, and point to Lee that, with its self-assertive lyric, "There Ain't No Sweet Man" suited the tenor of the *I'm a Woman* album sessions to a T.

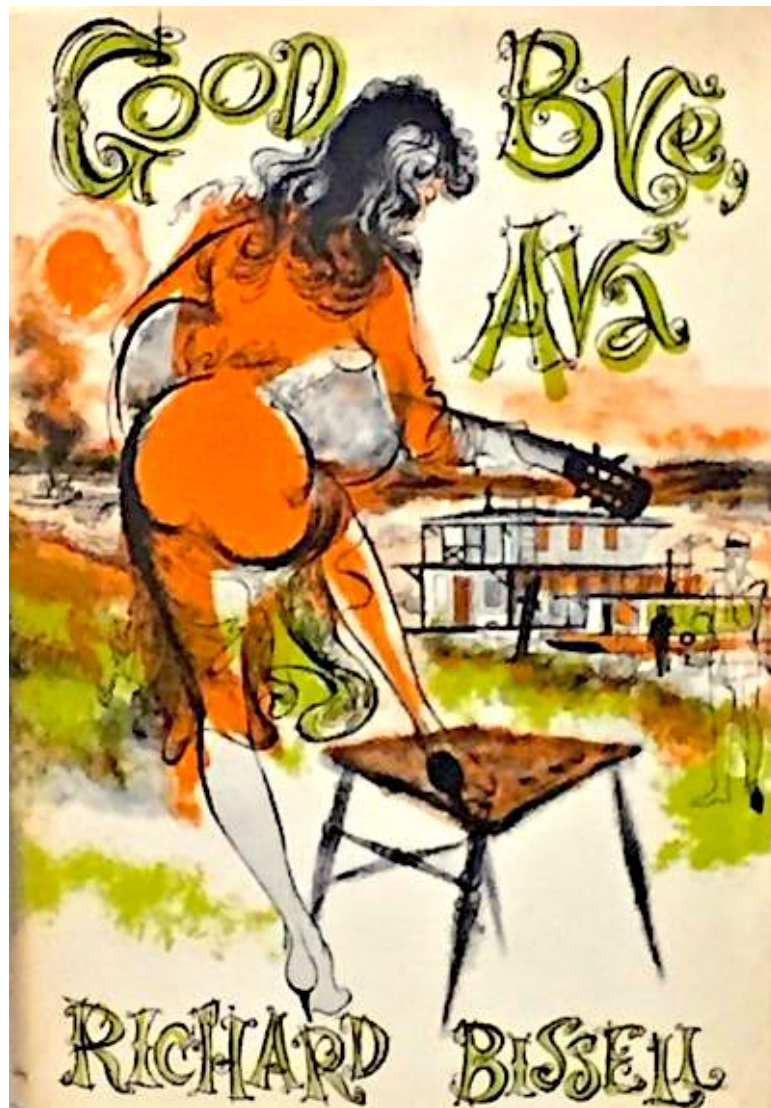
6. I'm A Woman

Jeri was from Beardstown on the

Illinois River. She had very white skin and very white teeth ... And a shape that made you want to bust out crying. When [my friend] Clyde married her she had the greatest body in the Illinois River valley from Grafton clear to Joliet. You can include Calumet and Chicago ... [S]he is the stubbornest dame in the world. Facts mean absolutely nothing to her.

From *Goodbye, Ava*

Richard Pike Bissell's *Goodbye, Ava* acquaints us with the dreams, trials and tribulations of several houseboat dwellers in a Mississippi river town. Written in a conversational style that is reminiscent of Mark Twain, this novel's prose is engagingly idiomatic, with a tone or mood that is, overall, quite lighthearted. Although the first-person narrator fantasizes at times about a far-away, unattainable Hollywood star (Ava Gardner), his gaze and attention are more frequently focused on Jeri Valentine, his buddy's wife. Jeri's most common day-by-day activities include "doing the dishes in her bra"—houseboat visitors notwithstanding—and writing amateurish songs for whose publication she expects to be duly paid. She also aspires to sing on local radio and at the motorboats and houseboats in the area.



{Page 122: first printing of *Goodbye, Ava*. 1960.}

Considering how relentlessly a spotlight is cast on this female character, *Goodbye, Ava* could have just as well been titled *Hello, Jeri*. The narrator acquaints us with an unrepentantly self-assured dame. His buddy's missus might live in domesticity, but shy and tame she isn't. Nor are her anatomical gifts easy to ignore. Upon first meeting her ("sitting there, mostly unbuttoned as usual"),

one of the narrative's shadier male characters (Rip) exclaims, "Hey, that's all woman."

Mrs. Valentine is probably the main inspiration behind the song "I'm a Woman," which songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller conceived early in the decade of the 1960s. This direct connection between "I'm a Woman" (1962) and *Goodbye, Ava* (1960) had not been fully made before the publication of the present essay, for which this writer eagerly pursued the matter. The groundwork for my pursuit was laid by Mike's son, Peter Stoller. He made inquiries into the song's origins during his preparation process for the release of the CD that he annotated and co-produced back in 2005, *Peggy Lee Sings Leiber & Stoller*. Relying on conversations held with his father and his father's work partner, Peter's highly informative liner notes state that the song "was written for a proposed musical based on the work of Richard Pike Bissell, whose novel, *7 1/2 Cents*, had been adapted as *The Pajama Game*."

Back in 2005, a lapse of nearly 50 years had momentarily prevented Leiber & Stoller from recalling the name of the Bissell work in question. I am happy to report that Stoller was further queried on the matter this year (2023), and his present recall proved fundamental to identify the Bissell text in question. "There was a houseboat; like, on the riverboat; something like that," recalled the 90-year-old

composer/producer, during the interview that we conducted exclusively for this expanded edition of the album *I'm a Woman*.

As for the aforementioned musical based on the Bissell novel, the senior Stoller tells us that he and his now-departed partner Jerry Leiber met with its prospective producers, Hal Prince and Robert E. Griffith, during the pre-production period. (Griffith and Prince's stellar co-production credits include not only novelist Bissell's own *Pajama Game* but also *Damn Yankees*, *New Girl in Town*, and *West Side Story*.) This producing pair tasked our songwriting pair with the creation of numbers tailored for one character actor in particular. In Stoller's own words: "Jerry and I, we were looking for songs for this gal who was gonna be the star of that Broadway musical. And Hal loved 'I'm a Woman' when we did it for them. He said, 'that's our gal!' ..."

"It was our lyric they sought; they were taken," Mike Stoller further elaborates. Leiber's lyric had multiple sources of inspiration. In addition to looking into Bissell's novel, he drew from his own thoughts and recollections about family life. While the Valentine character informs the sexiest lines in "I'm a Woman," the lyricist's own mother is the other voice behind some of the song's proclamations of strength and self-reliance. A widow and family breadwinner since Jerry's early

childhood years, Manya Leiber actually served as partial or full role model for several of his son's lyrics—most notably, "Ready to Begin Again," another number recorded by Lee.

Leiber also drew from a third, more stylistic source of inspiration. The words of "I'm a Woman" are heavily influenced by the musical subgenre known as the answer song. As suggested by its name, an answer song is written in response to a song already familiar to listeners. More often than not, gender reversal is also at play: the answer is written from the perspective of a member of the opposite sex. Gradually infiltrating the fields of country, rock 'n' roll and blues music as time marched on, by the early 1960s this subgenre had already been around for decades. (It remains operational to date, with examples available in most current vocal music genres.)

As Leiber specifically acknowledged during one of his conversations with Peter Stoller, his lyric was "really inspired by Muddy Waters' 'I'm a Man' ... I brought that lick and sang the words, and Mike took it and did the rest." In passing, and for the sake of accuracy, I should clarify that Leiber's comment conflates what is a string of records at issue. The 1955 R&B hit number "I'm a Man" was actually written by Bob Diddley on the basis of the 1954 Muddy Waters blues hit "(I'm Your) Hoochie Cooche Man," which is a Willie Dixon composition with

a distinctive, notably repetitive and, ultimately, highly influential stop-time guitar-and-harmonica riff. It was not until a few months after the appearance of Diddley's version that Waters wrote and recorded his own follow-up song, titled "Manish Boy." In any case, it was thanks to Leiber's forethought that this string of boastfully manly tunes evolved into a proudly defiant ode to feminine prowess.



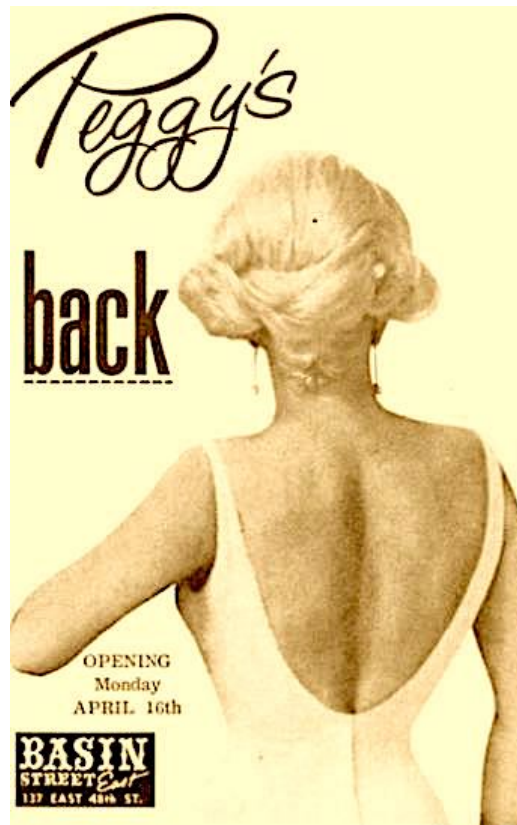
{Page 126: from Muddy's "*Man*" to Mariah's "*Woman*." Six singles mentioned in the ongoing essay. Top row: Muddy Waters' and Bo Diddley manly items (1954-1955). Bottom row: single pressings of "I'm a Woman" by Christine Kittrell (1962), Peggy Lee (1963), and Maria Muldaur (1975).}

Let us now jump back into Leiber & Stoller's 1961 audition of their song, "I'm a Woman," for Prince & Griffith's theatrical adaptation of *Goodbye, Ava*. We have already referred to Stoller's vivid recall of the hugely enthusiastic reaction with which the lyric was met by producer Prince. "The other guy—I *think* it was Griffith—was as taken," Stoller further mused at his interview in 2023, "but he was more concerned that we didn't have a track record in the theater." There was no follow-up after the audition—no messages from the producers for either Leiber or Stoller. Today, the nonagenarian composer cannot help but wonder if the ostensible cooling of interest stemmed from Griffith's aforementioned concern with lack of a theatrical track (a lack that Leiber & Stoller would finally rectify in the 1990s). A more consequential factor to take into consideration is—in the opinion of this writer—Griffith's passing in the summer of 1961. His death might have also been the primary reason why this theatrical *Goodbye, Ava* adaptation project never managed to advance beyond its pre-production stages.

Once it became apparent that no follow-up from Griffith and Prince was likely to be forthcoming, the songwriters decided to send the song specifically to Peggy Lee, via her producer Dave Cavanaugh. Leiber was a lifelong fan of Lee's artistry, and thus keen on the prospect of hearing her sing his lyrics. "I told Mike that when I was 10, I bought my first phonograph record and it was Peggy Lee," he would reveal to *USA Today* many years later, right after the vocalist's passing (2002). "I was mesmerized by her voice then, and I'm still mesmerized."

In 1962, the songwriting duo's desire to bring the new song to the singer's attention must have also been motivated by the fact that she had recently covered one of their compositions. Her swinging treatment of "Kansas City" would meet with everlasting approval from them. As Mike Stoller would succinctly declare more than 40 years later, when queried by his son Peter: "among my favorites." "Big city swing band style ... really the way it should have been done," Leiber would concur.

More prurient thought might have also played a role in their pick of Lee to perform "I'm a Woman." In his lifetime, Leiber's physical attraction toward Lee was frankly and bluntly expressed. He overtly focused on an anatomical feature of hers for which she had received—according to him—wide praise from the opposite gender.



{Page 129: *Peggy's back*. On its surface, this ad is just announcing Miss Lee's return to New York's Basin Street East nightclub, for an engagement starting on Monday, April 16, 1962. The visual aids alert us to the advertiser's desire to engage in wordplay with us: we are shown the singer from her back rather than her front. But, could there also be some subliminal advertisement at play—a winking hint at talked-about anatomical assets? Calling all fans, and also any lover of jokes on the [back]side.}

It so happens that this same anatomical feature is enhanced on the drawing of Jeri Valentine that graces the front cover of *Goodbye, Ava*. The drawing was spontaneously mentioned by Stoller during our 2023

interview. "I saw the cartoon drawing of this Richard Bissell novel," he told us, without further elaboration. This writer is left to wonder about the initial impressions that the drawing might have made on the songwriters, back in 1961. Could it be that the gluteal gifts of the Valentine cartoon conjured up memories of Lee in Leiber's mind—memories which would further incite him to offer the Valentine-inspired song to her? Only he—or his subconscious—might have known. For us, it will have to be deemed just food for thought—and fodder for those among us with any interest in the psychological and the subliminal.

Having gone through all the above-discussed reasons why Leiber & Stoller expressly sent this song to Lee, the reader might be surprised to learn that she was not the very first woman to record "I'm a Woman." It was instead Christine Kittrell, a Chicago-based R&B artist who cut her version for the Vee-Jay label in March of 1962. She is also known to have repeatedly claimed that Leiber & Stoller had written the song for her. The songwriters would eventually refute the claim, pointing out that Kittrell's name was unfamiliar to them in the 1960s. She might have just meant her words loosely, as part of an effort to signal that she had made the record debut.

In answer to an online query about this same matter, Peter Stoller would further point out that "artists have to get

permission to issue a first recording of a song, as opposed to being automatically granted a compulsory license for a cover/remake. I imagine such permission was granted, but Mike no longer remembers sending the demo out to anyone other than Peg." At his more recent interview (2023), Stoller speculated that "maybe Jerry submitted it ... after we didn't hear back ..." from Capitol.

Leiber could have very well sent out the song to other parties, after having experienced not one but two instances of executive non-responsiveness (Griffith & Prince first, Cavanaugh & Capitol next). One of those thirdly targeted parties might have been Vee-Jay Records' West Coast sales manager Randy Wood. At the time, Vee-Jay still had their main offices in Chicago, where Christine Kittrell was based for much of her career. In any case, the number was released on the B side of her second single for that label. Released at some point between May and July of 1962, the 45 single was critically well-received, but did not generate any significant chart action.

For her part, Peggy Lee had been performing the song live on that same year—as detailed in the *Boss Lady* essay for this *I'm a Woman* writing series. A 1962 rehearsal version, notable for its fast and clipped pace, has survived on tape, and remains commercially unreleased.

At her November 1962 Capitol recording session, Lee sang five takes to full completion, including the master. As a bonus track, our expanded edition of *I'm a Woman* offers the very first of these takes (track #20), which was also the very first performance to be taped at the session. It includes a full chorus that Lee does not sing in the album's master, and which is also absent from most other versions that have been subsequently recorded. There is no current knowledge or recollection as to why the decision was made to leave out those lines ("I can stretch a greenback dollar bill from here to kingdom come," etc.). Perhaps Lee felt unhappy with her rhythmic handling of that specific chorus. Or, as Stoller pondered:

maybe they felt the record should be shorter for airplay. In those days, they were trying to make much shorter records in order to make the disc jockeys at the stations happy, 'cause that way they could get more advertising in. Oh my goodness. That was a big thing for a while. They wanted sort of the proscribed length of the record as 3 minutes, but sometimes they wanted to have two minutes and even less, 'cause that'd get them to play more ads and records.

This bonus also preserves the sound of producer Cavanaugh's speaking voice, heard at the very start of what is a very worthwhile alternate.

Lee's master take of "I'm a Woman" was originally released as the A-side of a Capitol single whose flip side was occupied by the standard "Big Bad Bill Is Sweet William Now." Taken from the singer's 1962 album *Sugar 'n' Spice*, this standard was a suitable companion to "I'm a Woman" on the basis of its lyric, which is voiced by a woman who has totally, triumphantly tamed a lion of a man.

The single entered *Billboard's Hot 100* during the week of January 5, 1963, and spent nine weeks on the chart, peaking at #54. It would subsequently garner a Grammy nomination for her, in the category of "Best Solo Vocal Performance, Female."

Capitol's brass clearly considered "I'm a Woman" a valuable Lee track, too. From the mid-1960s onwards, the company reissued on numerous non-original singles, typically to back either one of the artist's other top signature hits ("Is That All There Is," "Fever"). The 1962 number would even be oddly recycled into the 1969 album *Is That All There Is?*, whose other nine tracks were newly recorded cuts.



{Page 134: two curious duet interpretations of "I'm a Woman." Miss Peggy Lee and Mister Johnny Cash on his show, 1970. Rachel Welch and Lee's avatar, Miss Piggy, on *The Muppet Show* in 1978. Honorable mention: Sammy Davis with Count Basie (Lee's chief musical influence) on their 1965 album *Our Shining Hour*.}

Just as Lee had not released the debut record of "I'm a Woman," hers would not hit the highest spot on the charts, either. That honor went to Maria Muldaur, who first recorded "I'm a Woman" as a member of Jim Kweskin's Jug Band (1965) and then as a solo artist, for her second solo album (1974). The latter became a #12 *Billboard* charting single for the noted folk-blues singer, who was merely 21 years old at the time.

Nearly 39 years later, Muldaur would record a tribute CD titled *A Woman Alone with the Blues ... Remembering Peggy Lee* (2003). On that album's annotation, the New

Yorker transports herself to her teenage days as she muses:

"I have always loved Peggy Lee's cool, sexy, and thoroughly classy style of singing, starting with "Fever," which was the first song of hers I ever heard. I played it often on jukeboxes in various bars in Greenwich Village. One night ... I decided to play side B on the jukebox. It was a song entitled "I'm a Woman, W-O-M-A-N"... I instantly fell in love with it, and played it repeatedly, at least a dozen times, scribbling all the lyrics on a napkin. When I got home, I picked up the guitar and fooled around with the few licks and chords I knew how to play and turned the song into funky little R&B tune that became, and has remained, my theme song for over forty years ... Since I first heard her, I've felt a special affinity with Peggy Lee, both for her sultry style and for her impeccable sense of song selection."

"I'm a Woman" would also go on to serve as a theme song for Lee—and a staple at her concerts, of course. Answering to fan requests, Lee was still singing the sexy

smash when she had reached the ripe age of 70. Audience response was as rip-roaring then as it had been back in the early 1960s. The effect of her renditions was perhaps best conveyed by Jim Harlan, host of the memorable radio shows *Make Believe Ballroom* and *In the Spotlight*, during a chat with Lee in 1992: "you really wreck 'em on 'I'm a Woman.' I mean, when you do that, there's feminism in there, but it's very feminine. It is feisty but it is very sexy." To which an obviously pleased Miss Lee responded, "good, good, good. That's what we need."

7. Mack The Knife

The Beggar's Opera is a 1728 European classic whose storyline satirizes the socio-political corruption of its time. This British ballad opera also makes a point of mocking the time's most fashionable musical trend, Italian opera. On the occasion of the *Beggar's* 200th anniversary, German playwright Bertolt Brecht, collaborating with composer Kurt Weill, presented an updated but still satirical version which was initially subtitled *The Scoundrel's Opera* (Die Luder-Oper), and permanently retitled *The Threepenny Opera* (*Die Dreigroschenoper*) later on. Serving as the work's opening and closing musical number was a newly written song, devised by Weill (with lyrics by Brecht) in the traditional *moritat* manner—the latter being a medieval style of street

balladry which relishes in graphic re-tellings of infamous murders and macabre incidents. The German team named their number "Die Moritat Von Mackie Messer."

With Weill's approval and preliminary collaboration (shortly before his passing in 1950), American composer Marc Blitzstein's own adaptation of the ballad opera premiered in 1952 and gained traction during the next few years, primarily through a long-running (1954, then 1955-1961) off-Broadway production. The musical play's greatest success was its *moritat*. Set to Blitzstein's catchy, idiomatic translation into English, the song became known to American theatergoers as "The Ballad of Mack the Knife." Over 20 versions were recorded just between 1955 and 1956 and at present the song boasts a grand total well past the 500 mark. Out of all of these versions, Louis Armstrong's pioneering 1955 vocal (a top 20 chart hit) still ranks as one of the three recordings most widely acknowledged as definitive, the other two being the 1959 chart-topper by Bobby Darin and the 1960 top thirty hit concert performance by Ella Fitzgerald.

Taking their cue from the definitive interpretations (swing-ers, all three of them), just above every other pop or jazz version of "Mack the Knife" is heavily immersed in the swing idiom. Hence fresh takes on the song have long been needed—even as early as in 1963, by which

total of over 175 versions, most of them swung, had already accumulated.



{Page 138: crime scene from a 1963 episode of *The Andy Williams Show*. Mack's manly hand does its mean thing as Miss Lee—that bard of ballad—immortalizes the wicked deed on a *moritat*.}

Peggy Lee offered one such refreshing take by deemphasizing swing patterns and stressing instead original text elements: the macabre humor of the *moritat*, the satirical stance which permeated the ballad opera. We are thus confronted with a paradox. Her fresh, offbeat, seemingly unorthodox version ends up being more faithful than most to the literary and musical traditions that spawned this international classic.

To help her in the pursuit of a comparatively more traditional, less overwhelmingly swinging treatment, Lee enlisted the help of conductor Dick Hazard. The pair succeeded at remaking the song into the sarcastic piece that it was originally intended to be. She applies tongue-in-cheek humor to the lyric; he adds gag sounds to the melody—the distinctive whistle of a tugboat, the noisy counting of pennies. (Hazard's sound-mimicking approach happened to be simpatico with Weill's own. While writing the melody, the composer is said to have drawn inspiration from street noises.)

Another novel yet traditional feature of this 1963 version of "Mack the Knife" is its incorporation of classical music. Hazard and the musicians quote from either Paderewski's *Minuet in G Major* or Leonard Gauthier's *Le Secret* (or both). Lee might have suggested those quotes herself (being, as she was, a lifelong fan of classical

music). If she did not, then she must have, at the very least, enthusiastically voiced her approval of them.

Toward the end of 1963, Lee performed "Mack the Knife" on television. That performance from *The Andy Williams Show* provides further evidence of her vision for the song. Dressed in clothes reminiscent of a long bygone era (perhaps the Victorian Britain of Jack the Ripper), she sings the number in the company of dancers who gamely enact most of the wicked deeds described in the lyrics. The backing music is the same one heard on the album, and the enactment of the lyric as mockingly macabre as ever. Overall, the combination of vocal, musical and visual effects succeeds at teleporting us back into the original *Scoundrel's Opera* theatrical context.

8. You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You

Peggy Lee's extensive catalog of song happens to contain a full folder—as it were—of "somebody/nobody/someone" titles. The entries go back to the year 1941, when she recorded two such titles on the same November date with Benny Goodman and his orchestra: "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place" and "Somebody Nobody Loves." The first title, co-written by a then-well-known bandleader named Russ Morgan, became Lee's first major hit.

Also co-written by Morgan, "You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You" was originally a hit for the bandleader himself, who also did the singing. He took his 1946 debut version to the top 15 of the singles charts. In the following decade, a fine non-charting Decca version by the popular Mills Brothers became moderately known as well, gradually taking over Morgan's hit as the recording with which 1950s mainstream listeners felt most familiar.

Then, within the first half of the 1960s, "You're Nobody" found itself enjoying renewed attention from Capitol artists, beginning with Dean Martin in May of 1960. Probably factoring into Martin's choice to record the tune was his familiarity with the work of the Mills Brothers—an act which he highly favored, naming it as a main musical influence. In September of the same year, Tennessee Ernie Ford contributed another version, this one as part of a concert medley taped and released by Capitol. "You're Nobody" was tackled next by two Capitol somebodies within a one-day span: Peggy Lee (January 3) and Bobby Darin (January 4, 1963). Also on Capitol, Darin's protégé Wayne Newton followed suit later that year, as did teen idol Bobby Rydell in 1964.

However, Martin went on to have the last word, by re-recording the number in 1964. Improving on the popularity of both his own earlier version on Capitol and

the one by the Mills Brothers on Decca, Martin's take on Reprise resulted in a top 30 *Billboard* hit which has remained the most widely known interpretation ever since.



{Page 142: Dean Martin and Peggy Lee in 1966, during one of her many stellar appearances on his televised show.}

With a minimum of one or two newly recorded versions per year, "You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You" is nowadays a bona fide American songbook standard. Short and sweet, bluesy and mellow, Lee's own rendition of this standard can be counted among the many ones still deserving wider attention—as Dino would most assuredly agree, even at his most punch-drunk.

9. I'll Get By

An ode to contentment in the face of trouble, "I'll Get By" came out at the outset of the Great Depression (1928). It immediately saw its fortune rise, buoyed by no less than three popular versions (Ruth Etting, Nick Lucas, and Aileen Stanley, the first a major bestseller).

The song went on to generate even higher revenues some 15 years later, when it was sung twice on film. Female lead Irene Dunne sang it in the 1943 MGM film *A Guy Named Joe*, Dinah Shore in the 1944 Universal musical *Follow the Boys*. Not surprisingly, new commercial recordings of the song started to pop up during that same period of screen notoriety. A Harry James version with

vocal by Dick Haymes topped the charts in 1944, and interpretations from both the Ink Spots and the King Sisters landed within the top 12.

It was probably during this second round of popularity that the young Lee became closely acquainted with "I'll Get By." At the time, the song's message strongly resonated with her. Newlyweds Peggy Lee and Dave Barbour were then trying to make ends meet, as they had recently taken up house, with neither partner holding a steady job.



{Page 144: Lee, singing "I'll Get By" on the tube (1962) and onstage (1984).}

The song's message of hope and love (in the face of need) must have found a permanent dwelling place in the back of Lee's mind: the singer seemed to revisit this number every 20 years or so. Take, for instance, the early 1980s, when "I'll Get By" was often reprised onstage by a Miss Lee who was financially settled thanks to a life of hard work, though no longer married. At those concert performances, the sexy sexagenarian would present her audiences with ample evidence that poverty had not, after all, come to her. Joking-lee, she would sing the words "I'll Get By" while staring at the expensive personal (non-wedding) ring that adorned one of her fingers.

10. I Left My Heart in San Francisco

Upon listening to Peggy Lee's rendition of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" for the very first time, *Night Beat* columnist Don Branning felt inspired to philosophize about the art of female singing. Songstresses "create a kind of poetry as they go," he muses in the March 3, 1963 issue of the *Miami News*, "as if spinning quietly in their own inner dreams." Yes, Lee's vocal had momentarily turned the *Night Beat* journalist into an amateur philosopher.

This song might have become famous in a version sung by a male singer, but we should not forget the adage that, behind a successful man, there is often a great woman. The woman in this case was San Francisco Opera contralto Claramae Turner, who introduced "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" in live performances (1953) and also on a 1954 demo for which she was backed by one of the song's writers, pianist George Cory—a longtime friend of hers. (The other member of the team was lyricist Douglass Cross, who was, in turn, Cory's life partner at the time.) In the years that followed Turner's performances, the song is known to have been offered to at least two singers, to no avail. Both Tennessee Ernie Ford and Frankie Laine are known to have passed. Men.

The songwriters eventually gave a copy of the sheet music to Tony Bennett's pianist Ralph Sharon, who dutifully stored it in his drawer and otherwise ignored it. Then, while in the process of retrieving a shirt and packing for an upcoming Bennett engagement in San Francisco, the pianist took note of the title on the sheet music in his drawer. Sharon came up with the idea of trying the song just for the San Francisco engagement, and Bennett acquiesced.

Notwithstanding positive audience reaction at the engagement, Bennett was not initially enticed with the tune, either. Men, again. He wound up recording it

somewhat unenthusiastically at the end of a Columbia session. The label consigned it to the B-side of a 45 single. Bennett's version began to gain traction mostly thanks to disc jockeys who favored playing it over his single's A-side.

As Sharon remembered matters for an interview conducted by Les Tompkins in 1988, the recording (a #19 *Billboard* hit in 1962) was not quite the huge, immediate success that nowadays is assumed to have been: "It took two or three years for it to actually hit. What happened was: other singers picked it up and started singing it and then it became a worldwide hit."* If Sharon's take on the song's history is accurate, then Lee's interpretation can be counted among those post-Bennett recordings—about 25 between 1962 and 1963, beginning with one by Frank Sinatra—which contributed to make the song globally familiar.

{Page 148: a smokin' trio. Peggy Lee in April of 1962 at her Basin Street East dressing room with two visitors, one of them being Tony Bennett. The other is an unidentified woman who looks like First Lady Jackie Kennedy. In the month following this engagement, Lee would be performing for President Kennedy at his birthday gala.}



Like Bennett, Lee was a regular, longtime performer at the Venetian Room of the San Francisco Fairmont Hotel. Both artists might have thus felt motivated to do this number on account of their annual visits to the city. A liking of the song and the city may have also factored into Lee's decision to cover the number in early 1963. Her local appearances dated back to a mid-1940s billing at the Golden Gate with Benny Goodman. They were still happening in 1987, when she gave a critically acclaimed concert at the city's Marines' Memorial Theater. Her affinity for San Fran is also evident from the fact that she wrote and recorded two songs in its honor, "San Francisco Blues" and "Fisherman's Wharf" (both 1962). Clearly, she

was fairly familiar with the sights and streets of that city by the bay.

* Released later than the single, the album bearing the song's title was the long-term, actual big seller for Columbia and Bennett. It made its debut on *Billboard's* album's chart in August of 1963, and did not reach its #17 peak until early 1964. I should also point out that, with the passing of time, "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" ended up becoming not only Bennett's signature tune but also the one song which he would typically single out as his utmost favorite.

11. A Taste of Honey

In January of 1963, Peggy Lee and Barbra Streisand became the first *women* to go into the studio to record this song. Lee did so early that month, Streisand late into the month. (Streisand had also been singing "A Taste of Honey" live in late 1962. For her part, Lee had been singing "Strawberries and Wine," a more obscure number with a vibe somewhat similar to "A Taste of Honey.")

On record, the women's interpretations had been preceded by commercial releases from three other vocalists. The debut vocal had been released by screen actor Billy Dee

Williams (December 1961). *West Side Story* star George Chakiris had included a lightly swinging version in one of his own Capitol albums (October 1962). The remaining recording, by mainstream pop singer Lenny Welch (August 1962), had actually been the only vocal—out of all five so far mentioned—to be issued on a US 45 single.

Around December of 1962, Welch's single would elicit opposite reactions from two members of an up-and-coming British band. Paul McCartney liked "A Taste of Honey" well enough to want to add it to their concert repertoire; John Lennon disliked it to such a degree that he would go on to nickname it "A Waste of Money." Manager Brian Epstein made the final decision on whether to please McCartney or humor Lennon. Deeming it suitable to counterbalance the group's hard-rocking numbers, Epstein made the soft-sounding song part of the Beatles' live repertoire in late 1962. Once an instrumental version by British clarinetist Acker Bilk climbed to the top 20 of the UK charts, Epstein had the Beatles record a vocal version as well (February 1963), for inclusion in the group's debut album.

"A Taste of Honey" actually counted with a British pedigree that preceded the assimilation of the song into the catalogues of Bilk and the Beatles. *A Taste of Honey* was in the beginning (1958) the name of a debut play by a 19-year-old British woman, Shelagh Delaney. It did not

become a song title until two years later, when the pianist of the Broadway adaptation of the play saw it fit to create a recurrent instrumental theme. He also recorded that instrumental on his own album, *Bobby Scott Plays His Original Music for A Taste of Honey* (1960).

As already mentioned, the first vocal version was sung by Billy Dee Williams, who played a secondary but key role in the Broadway production (i.e., that of a black sailor in a sexual relationship with the problem ridden, nineteen-year-old Caucasian protagonist). I have not found any indications of him or anyone else trying the lyric onstage, though. Instead, Williams released the vocal on his own debut album (December 1961), issued by a label that was making its debut as well, Lively Arts Records. (The album's musical director happened to be George Cory, the aforementioned composer of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco.")

An uncorroborated claim posits that lyricist Ric Marlow wrote the words for "A Taste of Honey" with Tony Bennett in mind. If true, then Bennett must have not deemed the lyric a recording priority, because his version had to wait until September of 1963 to be made. He did go on to score a minor chart hit with the song, taking it to #94 on the *Hot 100*. It was not until 1965, however, that Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass re-configured "A Taste of Honey" into the offbeat, trumpet-charged instrumental

for which they are still remembered. Listeners responded by sending the catchy version to the top ten of the American music charts.



{Page 152: the Billy Dee Williams album which featured the debut vocal version of "A Taste of Honey," and the Tony Bennett single which became the first and only vocal version of that song to enter *Billboard's* top 40.}

To close this "Taste of Honey" song capsule, let us return to our starting topic of discussion: versions of note by female singers. Foremost among those is Morgana King's, whose highly orchestrated, sumptuous and grandiose interpretation has been critically acclaimed ever since its release in 1965.

But Peggy Lee's delicately moody, introspective interpretation is no slouch either. Singled out by two or three 1960s critics as the very best track in from *I'm a Woman*, her "Taste of Honey" has also received admiring praise from modern-day listeners, who cite it among the most distinctly feminine renditions on record.

For the consumption of such avid listeners, we have poured more "Honey" onto this expanded edition of the album. Our previously unissued alternate (track #16) is most noteworthy for its closing line—different from the one with which Lee ends her vocal on the master, though just as fine and mellow yellow.

12. One Note Samba

Antonio Carlos Jobim (1927-1994) and Newton Mendonça (1927-1960) were childhood friends and nightclub scene piano players who pioneered bossa nova writing. Meeting mostly at Mendonça's apartment in Prudente de Moraes (Southeast Brazil), the pair co-wrote a total of 17 titles before his untimely death, from a second heart attack, at the age of 33. Jobim was left to go on and disseminate the bossa nova style, becoming its most famous exponent both in and outside of Brazil. The 17 noteworthy titles that he co-wrote with Mendonça include the likes of "Desafinado," "Caminhos Cruzados,"

“Meditação” and the composition currently under discussion, which was originally titled “Samba De Uma Nota Só.”

This late 1959 composition was probably written by them as a tongue-in-cheek response to dismissive criticism being hurled at the bossa nova style during its initial years of popularity in Brazil. Major and influential pre-bossa nova composers (e.g., Ary Barroso and his followers) were declaring themselves less than impressed by what they perceived as all-too simple harmonies and melodies, among other alleged shortcomings. The two earliest Portuguese recordings of the supposedly one-note samba were made by João Gilberto and Sylvia Telles—themselves top names in the world of bossa nova.

The style crossed over into the United States in the early 1960s, and so did “Samba De Uma Nota Só.” One of several early instrumental recordings was included in *Jazz Samba*, a very popular album collaboration between Stan Getz and Joao Gilberto which Verve Records released in 1962. That same year, vocalese singer Jon Hendricks wrote the best known of various adaptations of the song's lyric into English.

Actually, Hendricks—a fervent bossa nova admirer—wrote not one but two sets of lyrics. The most frequently recorded set (“In Brazil, they have a samba / With a

simple melody / Just a single note is sounded / And repeated constantly") came out initially in October 1962, on a single that deservedly—if only momentarily—lifted Chicago-based singer Pat Thomas from obscurity. It earned Thomas a Grammy nomination in the category of *Best Solo Vocal Performance, Female*, which meant that she suddenly found herself in competition for this trophy with heavyweights like Fitzgerald and Lee. In December, her version of the song was additionally released on what was probably the very first US vocal album of bossa novas, *Desafinado*.



{Page 155: Pat Thomas' pioneering English-language bossa nova single. The top-row pressings are American, the first on Verve, the second on MGM. The bottom-row pressing are European, the one on the left from Sweden, the one on the right from Germany.}

Following the 1962 album and single entries from Miss Thomas, a 1963 album titled *Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan Recorded Live at Basin Street*, featured the same set of English lyrics for "One Note Samba." The concert on that album had been taped by Hendricks and his fellow group members back in September 1962. This is the set of lyrics that Peggy Lee went on to sing next, on January 2, 1963. Two days later, Eydie Gormé recorded the other, rarer set of lyrics for her own album of bossa material, *Blame It on the Bossa Nova*. (Lyric sample: "This is just a little samba / Built upon a single note / Other notes are bound to follow / But the root is still that note").

Whether in its original Portuguese or on its English adaptation, this song was very much on the radar of all major record labels at the time, Capitol included. From 1962 to 1963, it was tackled by no less than eight Capitol acts of varying note: the Bossa Nova All Stars, the vocal quartet known as the Brothers Castro, singer June Christy, guitarist John Gray, bandleader Onzy Matthews, guitarist Howard Roberts, pianist George Shearing, and, of course, Peggy Lee. While there is no received knowledge on the

question of how she first became acquainted with the tune, "One Note Samba" was becoming too ubiquitous in both jazz circles and contemporary records (including former collaborator Quincy Jones' 1962 Mercury album *Big Band Bossa Nova*) to go unnoticed.

13. Little Boat

Embraced by jazz-oriented musicians, the bossa nova beat traveled from Brazil to the United States at the start of the 1960s, bringing along a catalog of Portuguese lyrics which were promptly translated or adapted into English, for the consumption of the American market. From Frank Sinatra and filmland's Doris Day to Ella Fitzgerald and TVland's Andy Williams, most pop and jazz singers of the day did their share of singles and albums cut in the new style.

Peggy Lee was no exception. Her catalog of Brazilian songs sung in English range from Luiz Bonfá's "Sweet Happy Life" ("Samba de Orfeu") to Ivan Lins' "Love Dance" ("Lembrança"). Though she recorded it in 1966, the former became a hit record for her quite belatedly—in 2002, the very year of her passing.

In 1963, we find Lee recording not only "One Note Samba" (for inclusion on the album *I'm a Woman*) but also another bossa tune, "Little Boat," for release on an

adjunct single. This expanded edition of the album sequences the two tunes back to back. Here is hoping that the double dosage will inspire Lee fans to continue to explore her incursions into bossa nova on subsequent LP releases (e.g., "How Insensitive" on the album *In Love Again*, or "The Boy from Ipanema" on the album *In the Name of Love*).



{Page 158: released in 1963, Capitol single #4992 features "Little Boat" on one side and the opening track of the LP *I'm a Woman* on its other side. Also in view above is an exclusive 1964 Brazilian single that combines bossa nova tunes from two of Lee's albums.}

Brazilian torch singer Maysa was actually the first artist to record the song under scrutiny in its original language

("O Barquinho"). For her part, Peggy Lee was the very first singer (male or female) to record the song in English, under the title "Little Boat." The English lyric is among several lasting contributions to the word of bossa nova from the pen of American lyricist Buddy Kaye. Among his other ones is the evocative translation of "Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars" ("Corcovado"), which also features lyric work from Lee's friend and fan, songwriter Gene Lees.

14. Please Don't Rush Me

Most Peggy Lee albums of the 1960s feature at least one song co-written by her. Those that lack a self-penned number might have also actually included one in their preliminary stages. For instance, Lee wrote an excellent lyric titled "Latin Ala Lee" for the 1960 album of the same name, but the number was ultimately excluded and never recorded.

The original edition of *I'm a Woman* is another case of a pen-less-Lee LP. Our expanded edition of the album rectifies the matter by incorporating into the program a Lee composition (both words and music) recorded on the same session as the album's ninth track, "I'll Get By." Close listening of this lyric reveals one reason why the song, though perfect for an album titled *I'm a Woman*, was actually left unreleased in 1963, and not retrieved from

the vaults until well into the more permissive CD era (1998).

Female orgasm is the taboo topic that the lyric of "Please Don't Rush Me" conjures up. It does so through liberal use of metaphors. Decisively a woman, the persona singing these lyrics professes to be on the "verge" of an "overwhelming urge"—one of an unspecified but not-too-difficult-to-figure-out nature. Though overall with her man—one handsome brute, according to her description—she has some bones to pick when it comes to his *modus operandi*. The main one is his rush. She also makes a point of deploring the lack of stamina typically displayed by "big plane" models, which tend to turn "cold" much sooner than the more common, non-flashy types. In short, this persona in song advocates for all personal intimacy to reach a desired conclusion, as opposed to ending anticlimactically. Toward the song's ending, a series of suddenly surging musical strokes suggest that there indeed is rising potential for a roundly successful outcome.

Daring for their time and place (early 1960s mainstream America), these double entendre lyrics rest comfortably within the old tradition of the bawdy blues. They may even be considered a personalized attempt, on the singer's part, to update the tradition (the blues being one of the deepest musical currents underlying Lee's balladry). The

tradition to which we are referring is the same one that once upon a time gave us the likes of "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl," a so-called dirty blues that was whipped into shape back in 1931 by the booming voice of Bessie Smith, the Empress of the Blues.



{Page 161: late 1960s shot of Lee—playfully suggestive while still remaining sophisticated.}

To the extent that it further qualifies as musical erotica, "Please Don't Rush Me" also looks forward into music's future. It does so by foreshadowing the work of female songwriters who came into the music scene at a much

later date. Granted, seldom are those later entries into the annals of female vocal eroticism as sophisticated as Lee's earlier attempts, or as timeless as Smith's classic. Some are defiantly crude (Donna Summer's "Love to Love You Baby," Divinyls' "I Touch Myself," Madonna's *Erotica*). Others are rather cryptic (Cyndi Lauper's "She Bop," Sheena Easton's "Sugar Walls," Ariana Grande's "Sweetener"). They do share the same underlying topic, though, if not necessarily the same pedigree.

Pedigree matters in this case. As worthy of mention as all those latter-day songtitles are (many having been co-written by female acts in collaboration with male partners), none can claim being the work of an artist who was alive and kicking all the way back, at the height of the blues era (the 1920s), and who would go on to spend seven decades of professional activity as both a singer and songwriter. By 1962, Lee had already earned the right to not only sing her own blues, but also treat them to as slow a hand, or as fast a stroke, as she darned pleased.

15. Close Your Eyes

Once dubbed the Queen of Tin Pan Alley, Bernice Petkere was a pianist and tunesmith who had her most successful songwriting period in the early 1930s. Two songs co-written by her, "Starlight" (1931) and "Lullaby of the

Leaves" (1932), became big band hits at that time. They were followed by "Close Your Eyes" (1933), a composition for which she wrote both words and music.

While it did not have the hit success of its predecessors, her 1933 creation had something better: longevity. "Close Your Eyes" ranks today as the best known of her compositions, with "Lullaby of the Leaves" placing a relatively close second. Both have become jazz standards. Though moderately well known in comparison to the works of songwriters such as her employer Irving Berlin, these two Petkere numbers have also managed to break out of the jazz and Tin Pan Alley molds—"Lullaby of the Leaves" in the form of an 1961 instrumental version by the surf-rock band The Ventures (a #69 *Billboard* hit), "Close Your Eyes" in a 1955 rock 'n' roll treatment by, of all people, Tony Bennett (a top 20 *Cashbox* hit, re-recorded by him as a ballad in 1961).

"Close Your Eyes" has found favor in other unexpected places, too. John Lennon's fondness for this standard ran counter to his aforementioned distaste for "A Taste of Honey." While the latter proved a source of amicable dissension between Lennon and McCartney, the former had once helped tighten the bond that they shared. We read about this bond on an article and interview published on the May 2012 issue of the British webzine *Sound on Sound*. Interviewer Richard Buskin relays to us that,

according to Macca, "John Lennon wasn't just into rock & roll when the two first met. Instead, his favourite songs also included numbers such as *Little White Lies* ... and *Close Your Eyes* ... which was recorded by the likes of Ruth Etting, Harry Belafonte, Tony Bennett and Humphrey Lyttelton." In McCartney's own words, "those were the kind of songs that we'd been listening to, and that attracted me to him. And I do think they did have quite an influence on us melodically."

On the adjunct topic of how Lee herself became acquainted or reacquainted with this 1933 song in 1962, we can only be speculative. By then, the growing number of versions preceding hers had already raised to about a quarter. She could have certainly been familiar with any or even many of those. That being said, there is a fair though fully uncorroborated chance that the direct source of transmission was a January 1962 album (*Linger Awhile*) by her Capitol labelmate Vic Damone, whose singing she favored.

Be that as it may, this song was incorporated by Lee into her Basin Street East nightclub concert engagement for the month of November, 1962. That same month, she recorded the previously unissued master being heard on this expanded edition of *I'm a Woman*. Lee fans should be already familiar with another master take of "Close Your Eyes," recorded by her a few months after this one (in

February of 1963), and originally issued as part of her album *Mink Jazz*. The two takes are fairly similar yet still noticeably different in certain spots (especially on an instrumental interlude midway through, and at the very end, on the line with which the vocal concludes). Lee might have been driven to re-record the number by a personal assessment. It was not infrequent for her to feel that there was more room for improvement, or capacity for further experimentation, either vocally or instrumentally.



{Page 165: Lee, on the December 9, 1962 episode of *The Ed Sullivan Show*, performing "Close Your Eyes" as part of a dynamic three-tune medley. The other two songs on this love medley were "Nice 'n' Easy" and "Almost Like Being in Love."}

In more recent decades, the lilting intimacy of Lee's approach has inspired younger, admiring peers to model their own recorded versions after hers. Queen Latifah covered "Close Your Eyes" on the Grammy-nominated, top 20-charting *Dana Owens Album* (2004), which marked her debut in the genre of jazz. That album's credits include the statement "arrangement based on the Peggy Lee recording." Indeed, the audio treats us to vocalization that closely follows Lee's original. An established entertainer today and a fine vocal interpreter even back in her rapper days, Latifah is actually another avowed fan of Lee's singing, singling out for praise her way with a melody and what she has rightly characterized as Peggy's "relaxed, swing vibe."

Then there is San Francisco-based song stylist Veronika Klaus, who picked "Close Your Eyes" as one of the tracks to be featured on her CD *Lee ala V* (2014). An expert interpreter of song with a solid musical education (and transgender life experience which she has shared in a one-woman show, but otherwise kept separate from her onstage musical performances), Klaus received very positive critic reviews for a Peggy Lee tribute show which she took from San Francisco's Rrazz Room to New York's Joe's Pub in 2013, and then revived at Mr. Tipple's (also San Francisco) in 2022. The credits on her 2014 tribute disc include the following acknowledgment of her main musical influence: "These songs were either written, co-

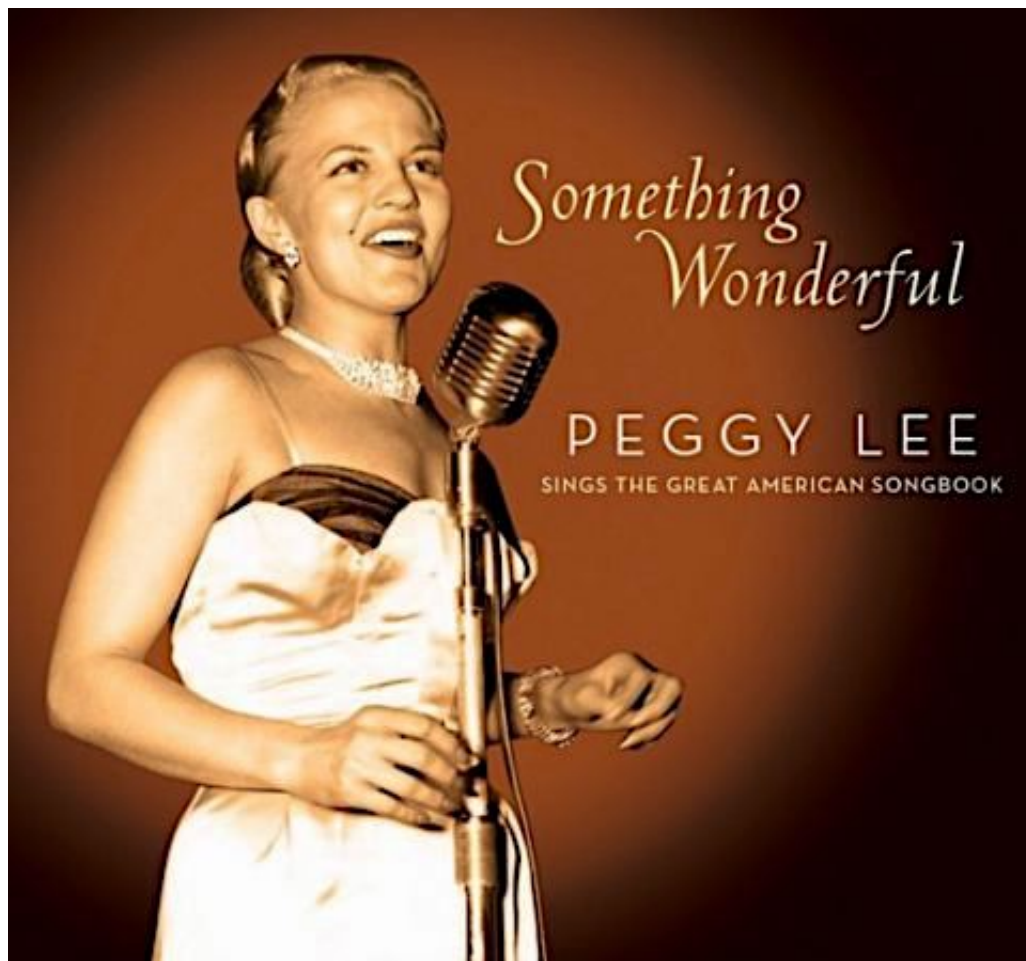
written or recorded by Peggy Lee in the years from 1942 to 1993 and are some of my favorites ... Her recording and writing career spanned much of the 20th Century and is a rich and varied catalog."

17. Try a Little Tenderness

"Play this to any husband suffering from guilt pangs and/or a hangover and the woman [shall have] the whip hand[y] for the next few days," warns record producer-annotator Michael Brooks, while reviewing Bing Crosby's version of the number on his *Centennial Collection* CBS LP series (1978). Brooks further let us know that "Try a Little Tenderness" is "also known as the male remorse song." All joking aside, female listeners have perennially shown a high appreciation for this song's sentimental if superficial expressions of concern, particularly when they have been intoned by such enticingly masculine voices as those of Bing Crosby (1933), Frank Sinatra (1946), and Otis Redding (1966).

Harking back to the Depression era, this 1932 American songbook standard is emblematic of the now-outdated mores under which it was conceived. Those were times of not only nationwide financial depletion but also robustly patriarchal paternalism. Faced with her partner's inability to provide material goods for her, the poor

Woman of the Depression was reduced to sigh wearily at the sight of her tattered old clothes, and woefully pine after those new fashions that "she may never possess." Or so would this lyric seem to submit.



{Page 168: "Try a Little Tenderness" was one of many classics of the Great American Songbook that Lee sang over the radio airwaves. The above-pictured two-CD anthology offers a liberal amount of them. Further details below.}

By virtue of belonging themselves to the fairer sex, female singers are better equipped to dilute this tune's underlying tone of condescension. And yet, none of the dozens of feminine readings in existence have attained the hit status that has been granted to several male versions, including even one by an all-male group—i.e., the rock band Three Dog Night, whose 1969 recording maintains that all "young girls" get weary from looking at old "funky" dresses). The sole exception to all this male favoritism has been a top 20 version by the so-called American sweetheart of song, Ruth Etting, who counted with the relative advantage of being able to grab the song when it was brand new, in 1933. (Her hit status was still bested by contemporary bandleader Ted Lewis, with a top 10 version that, to top it all off, was not even formally sung, but delivered *parlando*.)

Self-avowedly sentimental during her young days, Peggy Lee (1920-2002) must have been initially exposed to "Try a Little Tenderness" when she was an adolescent. Her long-lasting weakness for the dulcet tune is apparent from the fact that she chose to sing it twice on her own radio show (1951), then once on radio transcription (1955), and yet once more nearly ten years later, in the form of the presently included outtake from her *I'm a Woman* album sessions (1963).



{Page 170: Opening and closing pages from the booklet of *Something Wonderful: Peggy Lee Sings the Great American Songbook*. Released in the year 2020, the double Omnivore CD features not only solo vocals sung by Lee but also duet performances with four illustrious writers of the American songbook who guested on her radio show—Hoagy Carmichael, Matt Dennis, Frank Loesser, Johnny Mercer.}

Deserving of special attention is a 1951 radio version of "Try a Little Tenderness," available on the aforementioned CD anthology *Something Wonderful: Peggy Lee Sings the Great American Songbook*. In this version, we hear Lee not only sing the old-fashioned, infrequently heard verse (about how women in love idolize their men) but also preface it with this piece of

advice: "and now, for all you fellows who have been snoozing under your Sunday paper, wake up and take a look at [your] wife over there ... Pretty cute, isn't she? Whoa, why don't you tell her. Come on, say it!" Stepping out, as it does, from another era and another time, her message might be charmingly dated, but still worth imparting (with a few indispensable modifications, such as the upgrading of her man's readings, from paper to digital print) ...

19. Jealous

Chance and circumstance are behind the creation of this very special bonus track, which we have culled from the Capitol sessions of Peggy Lee's friend and labelmate, Bobby Darin. To set up the scene that led to the creation of the track, we will be returning to the swinging sixties, and more specifically to the year during which the *I'm a Woman* album sessions were conceived.

Following all holiday festivities for the end of 1962, the recording studios at Hollywood's Capitol Tower were re-opened for business on January 2 of 1963. Two superb swingers came in through the revolving doors on that very first opening day, both of them resolved to spend the entire first week of January ensconced at the studios. Each was actually in the throes of generating enough

session material to fill Capitol's required quota of albums and singles. In Lee's case, the prospective album was, of course, *I'm a Woman*.

Darin's case is more complex. While Lee had finished up by Saturday the 5th, Darin's recording activity would continue into the second and third weeks of the month. Twelve of the resulting masters were properly released on his 1963 album *You're the Reason I'm Living*, but the majority of the other tracks remained unissued until the CD era. From an inspection of those unissued titles, we can glean that the album being planned by Darin and company was to be musically steeped into swing style traditions, and thematically split into a set of, on one hand, 1920s oldies, and on the other hand, a set of 1960s newbies.

Not being privy to the reasons why Capitol never released any such album, this writer can only offer an educated guess to inquiring fans. The company might have originally postponed album preparations because Darin kept on recording new material throughout this year and the next one. Such material would have been prioritized for release because it consisted of mostly contemporary titles, as opposed to the 1920s revival sessions that were still awaiting in the vaults. Then, in 1965, the postponed album might have been cancelled for good, due in part to the artist's departure from the label, and in part to lack of

company interest (the latter stemming from disappointing revenue generated by his most recent album release).

Be all that as it may, "Jealous" was for certain one of the oldies intended for inclusion in Darin's album of swinging oldies and newbies. The song dated back to 1924, when popular actress-singer Marion Harris had scored a big hit record with it. A tune revival of sorts had also happened once (1941), resulting in several competing new versions in the market, among which a Decca recording by The Andrews Sisters would attain hit status.

Now, on his second consecutive 1963 day inside the Capitol studios, Darin was putting his own stamp on this dowdy ditty by making it swing. All in all, the session produced over 15 "Jealous" takes—a good portion of them naturally being false starts or aborts. The master take made its digital debut in 2013 thanks to Universal Music, which also re-released it in 2016 (again only digitally). In that master take, Darin sings solo throughout. The same goes for the majority of the other takes, with two notable exceptions.

On those exceptional alternates, Darin enjoys the company of Peggy Lee. She is heard doodling cheerfully in the background while he sings the vocal in the foreground. Courtesy of Universal Music and the Darin

estate, our 60th anniversary edition of *I'm a Woman* treats fans of both singers to one of these alternate takes.

The chosen take stands out for its inclusion of some opening banter, during which Lee jokingly says to Darin that he's ruining her career, and he wittily retorts that she is going to make his. In the middle of the banter, the listener will also hear Lee interject a self-encouraging mantra: "oh, inhale." (Following the mantra, Lee also utters a statement of action—"I'm gonna ..."—which is either left unfinished by her or cut off on the tape.)

Mantras such as the one heard herein—another one being "breathe baby"—were sometimes uttered by the singer right as she was about to start a number. The issue of lung power was probably a top concern in the back of her mind. About a year and a half before she joined Darin on this amiable collaboration, Lee's lung capacity had been compromised by a bout with pneumonia—her first and, unfortunately, not her last.

A wee bit more of Darin-Lee interaction happens before the aforementioned banter. First we hear Lee's voice as she quickly reads a couple of lyric lines to herself. Then she amicably submits, "I'll come back anywhere I know it, alright?" Both Darin and his record producer, Nik Venet, answer with an "okay!" (This bit remains unreleased; it is preserved only on the session tapes.)

But how, exactly, did this one-time studio meeting of those musical minds (Darin's, Lee's) come to happen? Darin producer Nik Venet has recounted some of the key events which transpired on that day (January 3, 1963) at the Capitol Tower. It all started with a fortuitous bathroom rendezvous, followed by a very decent proposal to Lee. Yes, you read that right; all of it true.

Venet's recollections are cited by Jeff Bleiel in his book *That's All: Bobby Darin on Record, Stage & Screen*. "While Tom Morgan was producing Peggy Lee in one Capitol studio," Bleiel relays to us, "Venet was recording Darin in another. The two producers met in the men's room and decided to get the superstar vocalists together for a track."



{Page 175: a Capitol crowd at the Copacabana, where Peggy Lee was performing when this shot was taken (early November 1965). Capitol producer Tom Morgan is at far right. The gentlemen flanking the lady are Earle Doud and Alen Robin, a comedy duo that was signed to Capitol Records at this time.}

Venet's assertion that Tom Morgan was Lee's producer is somewhat askew. Dave Cavanaugh was her regular record producer from 1958 to 1967, and he is listed as such on the album *I'm a Woman*. Morgan is not mentioned at all. That being said, an uncredited Morgan could have been present at the date in a secondary, assistant role to Cavanaugh. (Indications of collaborative work between these men can be found in contemporaneous albums such as Billy May's *Bill's Bag*, Van Alexander's *Swing Stage for Sound*, and the George Shearing Quintet's *Mood Latino*, all of which credit them jointly as producers.)

To sum up, the origin of this collaboration has been accounted for, and its outcome can be heard in the form of the alternate take being released for the very first in this expanded album edition. All good. We are less fortunate in our ability to gather data about what we might want to call the intermediary process (or the negotiations) pertaining to the collaboration. No extant sources reveal how the singers reacted to the proposal.

Nor am I aware of any source that might explain why "Jealous" became the song of choice for either Darin or Lee. There were, after all, four other tunes from which to readily choose. In addition to "Jealous," the Darin date generated renditions of "Beautiful Dreamer," "When My Baby Smiles at Me," "When You Were Sweet Sixteen," and even one number which Lee had previously recorded (and which would have definitely made for a fun duet), "I Ain't Got Nobody."

Leaving aside the likelihood that some of these songs were more familiar to Lee than others, the ultimate selection of "Jealous" could have been predicated on a familiarity with the revival version by the Andrews Sisters, whose vocals have a suitably collaborative quality. In addition to the sisters' own singing in unison, their 1941 recording features an assortment of male voices in the background, collectively backing the siblings with both sung words and brief, occasional humming.

As for Lee's initial reaction to the idea of collaborating on one track, there could have been some initial trepidation on her part. Though clearly uttered in jest, her bantering commentary ("ha, you are ruining my career!") could actually be a vestige of an earlier discussion with her record producer, Cavanaugh.

But, if there was any initial sense of trepidation, it must have dissipated in no time. After all, Lee had already gladly and willingly collaborated on the album sessions of another Capitol labelmate (Mel Tormé's 1949 *California Suite*). For those, she had been credited under a pseudonym (Susan Melton).

Even more of a reason for both Lee and Darin to relax at his date was the fact that this 1963 collaboration was a meeting of friends. Just 26 years at recording time, Darin would have been thrilled to have one of his biggest musical influences accompany him on a track. As for the 45-year-old Lee, she cherished Darin, whom she had first met in the 1950s. She tells us in her autobiography that he "had often come to visit me at my home and we became very close," adding that "some people thought he was a smarty. Well, he was smart, but not a smarty." Here is also her concise but confident verdict on the younger friend, a life-long rheumatic fever patient who passed away at the young age of 37: "Bobby was very mature for his age."

{Page 179: publicity shot for another Darin-Lee collaboration, this one on TV in 1973. It was the very last episode of *The Bobby Darin Show*, with Lee as his only guest. Unfortunately, this second collaboration did not go as well as the one from 1963. To blame were a series of circumstances, some pertaining to Darin's ill health, and

others to Lee's mortified mood, the latter motivated by less-than-professional practices from the show's production team. During the show's taping, Darin did his best to keep his health challenges secret. A sad Lee finally learned about them after his passing. Readers interested in more detail should retrieve the comments made by Darin's longtime manager, Steve Blauner, who was present at the proceedings. (Other sources give inaccurate information, especially when it comes to Lee's involvement.))



Finally, here are, as well, Lee's remarks about the deeply shared connection that she and Darin shared: "It was like instant love. It was as though we'd known each other forever." Such concentrated feelings (his deep admiration for her, her enduring affection for him) doubtlessly infuse this cordial, charming collaboration—one which was all too suitably recorded during the same fine week in which he turned in so many other tasteful swingers, while she was simultaneously wrapping up her wonderful *Woman* sessions.

Ivan Santiago
Spring of 2023



A snapshot from the December 9, 1962 episode of *The Ed Sullivan show*. Here is Peggy Lee, as she closes her performance of "I'm a Woman" with the words *that's all*.

THE *BOSS MAMA* FILES

INDEX OF PEOPLE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
Alexander, Van	176
Alpert, Herbert & The Tijuana Brass	151
Andrews Sisters, The	173, 177
Arlen, Harold	111
Armstrong, Louis	57, 137
Barbour, Dave	11, 25, 144
Barris, Harry	115
Barroso, Ary	154
Bartholomew, Dave	109
Basie, Count	134 (caption only)
Beatles, The	150
Beiderbecke, Bix	115
Belafonte, Harry	15, 164
Bennett, Max	16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 37, 66, 86
Bennett, Tony	146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 152, 163, 164
Berges, Marshall	53
Berlin, Irving	163
Bilk, Acker	150
Biondi, Dick	45
Bissell, Richard Pike	121, 123
Blauner, Steve	179 (caption only)
Bleiel, Jeff	175
Blitzstein, Marc	137
Bonfá, Luiz	157
Bossa Nova All Stars, The	156
Boston Pops, The	74
Branning, Don	145

Brecht, Bertolt	136
Brooks, Michael	167
Brothers Castro, The	156
Buskin, Richard	163-164
Callas, Maria	15
Carmichael, Hoagy	170 (caption only)
Carter, Benny	16, 22, 23, 29, 32, 66, 68, 108
Cash, Johnny	134 (photo only)
Cavanaugh, Dave	20, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 50, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 80, 87, 111, 120, 128, 131, 133, 176, 177
Chakiris, George	150
Charles, Ray	9, 38, 68
Chiodini, John	101
Christy, June	156
Cole, Holly	105
Cole, Nat King	57, 73 (photo only)
Collins, Howard	16 (caption), 23 (caption)
Cory, George	146, 151
Coward, Noël	94
Crosby, Bing	115, 167
Cross, Douglass	146
Damone, Vic	164
Darin, Bobby	9-10, 15, 72, 73 (photo only), 118, 119-120, 137, 141, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 177, 178, 179, 180
Davis Jr., Sammy	134 (caption only)
Day, Doris	157
Delaney, Shelagh	150
DeLeath, Vaughn	115
Dell, Alan	41
Dennis, Matt	170 (caption only)
Diddley, Bob	125, 126, 127 (caption)

Dion	74
Divinyls	162
Dixon, Willie	125
Domino, Fats	109
Doud, Earle	175-176 (photo only)
Dunne, Irene	143
Durante, Jimmy	15
Easton, Sheena	162
Epstein, Brian	150
Etting, Ruth	143, 164, 169
Fabric, Bent	102, 103, 104
Faye, Frances	110
Fitzgerald, Ella	15, 27, 137, 155, 157
Ford, Tennessee Ernie	141, 146
Foster Wells, Holly	57-58
Franklin, Nancy	94
Friedwald, Will	49, 77, 81, 90
Frishberg, Dave	117
Gardner, Ava	121
Gastel, Carlos	11
Gauthier, Leonard	139
Giddins, Gary	115
Getz, Stan	154
Gilberto, João	154
Giordano, Vince	118
Goodman, Benny	10, 140, 148
Gordon, Justin	66
Gormé, Eydie	74, 156
Goulet, Robert	22, 74
Granata, Hugo	17
Grande, Ariana	162
Gray, John	156
Griffith, Robert E.	124, 127, 128, 131
Hanshaw, Annette	115
Harlan, Jim	29-30, 41, 98-99, 136
Harris, Marion	105, 173
Haymes, Dick	144
Hazard, Dick	66-67, 139

Hendricks, Jon	154-155, 156
Hendrickson, Al	66
Holiday, Billie	38, 45, 46
Holman, Libby	114, 115, 116, 117
Hunter, Alberta	105
Hunter, Nigel	87, 91
Hyatt, Wesley	63
Ingmann, Grethe	103
Ink Spots, The	144
Jacobs, Phoebe	58-59
James, Harry	143-144
Jobim, Antonio Carlos	153-154
Johansen, Dave	118
Jones, Max	94
Jones, Quincy	157
Kaplan, Jeff	23 (caption only)
Kart, Larry	113-114
Kaye, Buddy	159
Kennedy, Jackie	147 (caption), 148? (photo)
Kennedy, John F.	13, 14, 15, 147 (caption)
Kennedy, Ken	55
Kilgore, Rebecca	117
King, Morgana	152
King Sisters, The	144
Kingston Trio, The	73 (photo only), 74
Kittrell, Christine	127 (caption), 130, 131
Klaus, Veronika	166-167
Klein, Manny	66
Krall, Diana	117
Kweskin, Jim	134
Laine, Frankie	146
lang, k.d.	77-78
Latifah, Queen	166
Lauper, Cyndi	162
Lees, Gene	10, 159
Leiber, Jerry	29, 34-35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 91, 123,

	124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131
Leiber, Manya	124-125
Lennon, John	150, 163, 164
Levey, Stan	23, 24, 37, 66, 93 (photo)
Levinson, Peter	49
Levy, Lou	16 (photo), 26 (photo), 27, 29, 56
Lewis, Mel	16 (photo; cropped)
Lewis, Ted	169
Lins, Ivan	157
Loesser, Frank	170 (caption only)
Lucas, Nick	143
Lyttelton, Humphrey	164
Madonna	162
Mantovani	74
Marlow, Ric	151
Martin, Dean	57, 141, 142, 143
Martino, Al	73 (photo only)
Matthews, Onzy	156
May, Billy	49-50, 176
Maysa	158
McCartney, Paul	150, 163, 164
Melton, Susan (Peggy Lee pseudonym)	178
Melvoin, Mike	27-28, 29, 34, 37, 50, 66
Mendonça, Newton	153-154
Mercer, Johnny	111, 170 (caption only)
Mills Brothers, The	141, 142
Monroe, Marilyn	16, 17
Morgan, Curt	12
Morgan, Russ	140, 141
Morgan, Tom	175, 176
Muldaur, Maria	92, 127 (caption), 134, 135
Newton, Wayne	141
O'Haire, Patricia	82
Oliveira, José do Patrocínio	87
Paderewski, Ignacy Jan	139

Petkere, Bernice	33, 162-163
Piron, Armand J.	108
Pisano, John	23 (caption), 24-25, 26, 34, 37, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 66, 68, 69
Pozo, Chino	16 (caption only)
Prince, Hal	124, 127, 128, 131
Quill, Gene	37
Rainey, Ma	105, 109
Redding, Otis	167
Richmond, Peter	28
Rinker, Al	115
Roberts, Howard	156
Robin, Alen	175-176 (photo only)
Rogers, Roy	96
Rose, David	96
Rydell, Bobby	103, 141
Scott, Bobby	151
Sharon, Ralph	146, 147
Shearing, George	45, 46, 156, 176
Shore, Dinah	143
Sinatra, Frank	9, 32, 49, 57, 69, 71, 86, 92, 157, 167
Smith, Bessie	83, 105, 109, 161
Smith, Clara	105, 108
Smith, Jimmy	74
Smith, Mamie	105
Spivey, Victoria	105
Stanley, Aileen	143
Starr, Kay	120
Stillman, Al	103
Stoller, Mike	29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 123, 124, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132
Stoller, Peter	123, 125, 128, 130-131
Streisand, Barbra	43, 149
Summer, Donna	162

Suter, Ann	115
Syms, Sylvia	92
Tate, Grady	50-51
Telles, Sylvia	154
Thomas, Pat	155, 156
Thorne, David	103, 104 (photo only)
Thornton, Big Mama	42, 43
Three Dog Night	169
Tompkins, Les	147
Tormé, Mel	178
Traub, Les	50
Tucker, Sophie	105
Turner, Claramae	146
Turner, Lana	91
Twain, Mark	121
Vaughan, Sarah	68
Venet, Nik	174, 175, 176
Ventures, The	74, 163
Wagner, Jack	99
Wallace, Sippie	108
Waters, Ethel	105
Waters, Muddy	125, 126, 127 (caption)
Waterson, Norma	117
Watkins, Ralph	18
Weill, Kurt	136, 137, 139
Welch, Lenny	150
Welch, Rachel	134 (photo only)
Wershba, Joseph	46, 77
Wheeler, Thomas C.	48-49
Whiteman, Paul	115
Whiting, Margaret	112
Williams, Andy	157
Williams, Billy Dee	149-150, 151, 152
Wilson, Earl	19-20
Wolfe, Richard	103
Wood, Randy (at Vee-Jay)	131



Peggy Lee at her home in 1970. Even as a glamorous 50-year-old Hollywood star, she could still starch and iron and then go out swing 'til 4 a.m. and give shivering fits to many a man—all of it 'cause she was a woman (a w-o-m-a-n).

PEGGY LEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Pictorial Category

Page(s)

Albums

<i>I'm a Woman</i> (Digital Expanded Edition)	1
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (EP - Front Cover - Australian)	88
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (EP - Front Cover - British)	84
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (EP - Front Cover - French)	93
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (EP - Front Cover - German)	89
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (LP - Front Cover - American)	192
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (LP - Front Cover - Japanese)	76
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (LP - Back Cover - Kiwi)	80
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (Ad - Cashbox)	73
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (Review - <i>Billboard</i>)	75
<i>I'm a Woman</i> (Review - <i>Cashbox</i>)	71
<i>Come Rain or Come Shine</i> (CD - Front Cover)	113
<i>Something Wonderful</i> (CD - Booklet)	170
<i>Something Wonderful</i> (CD - Front Cover)	168

Avatars, Pets and Other Curiosities

Baby (cat)	102
Miss Piggy (marionette)	134
Peggy Lee Rose, The (plant)	102

Concert Performances

Basin Street East Nightclub, Manhattan, NY	19, 44 47, 56, 148*
Copacabana Nightclub, Manhattan, NY	175**
45th Birthday Salute to President Kennedy, Madison Square Garden, NY	16, 17
Resorts International Casino, Atlantic City, NJ	144

* dressing room

** backstage

Portraits and Profiles

9, 60, 78, 97, 98, 110, 161, 189
--

Rehearsals and Promotion

Basin Street East Nightclub	21, 23, 129
Birthday Salute to President Kennedy	13, 14
Residence, Tower Grove Drive, Yellow Room	67
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Empire Room	54

Singles

"The Alley Cat Song" (Original 45 Single)	104
"Garota de Ipanema / Insensatez" (45 Single)	158
"I'm a Woman" (Ad on <i>Cashbox</i>)	62
"I'm a Woman" (Original 45 Single)	64, 126
"Little Boat" (Original 45 Single)	158

Television

The Andy Williams Show	107, 138
The Bobby Darin Show	179
The Dean Martin Show	142
The Ed Sullivan Show	144, 165, 181
The Johnny Cash Show	134

With Company

With Benny Carter	23
With Bobby Darin	179
With Dean Martin	142
With Dick Hazard	67
With Earle Doud and Alen Robin	175
With Jackie Kennedy?	148
With Johnny Cash	134
With Leiber & Stoller	41
With Musicians	16, 23
With Tom Morgan	175
With Tony Bennett	148

Below

Here is a rare Capitol LP compilation (a Columbia House Club exclusive) titled after La Lee's self-defining 1962 hit, *I'm a Woman*.

