

RCA VICTOR'S

# GROOVE

IN THE

FEBRUARY, 1949



*Spike Jones*



SPOTLIGHTS YOUR HIT RECORDS AND FAVORITE BANDS



# riot on 24<sup>th</sup> street

OR

## *The Fearful Tale of What Went On After Mr. Petrillo and RCA Victor Executives Said "I Do"*

BY CHARLES SCHAFHAUSER

CARTOONS BY JOE KRAMER

**I**T was in the gayest spirits imaginable, with a holiday ring in every peal of laughter, that a strangely assorted bunch of people trouped into the long unused RCA Victor recording studios on East 24th Street in New York City one December day. The casual observer, who happened to like music and the people who make it, would have been left a little breathless by this mingled and slightly confused parade. He would have noticed right off that at the head of the troupe, chatting with a beautiful, buxom, well-dressed lady, was a fellow known far and wide as Perry Como. And if our observer looked carefully, he would surely have realized that the lovely lady Mr. Como was joking with was Gladys Swarthout.

### R HOUR

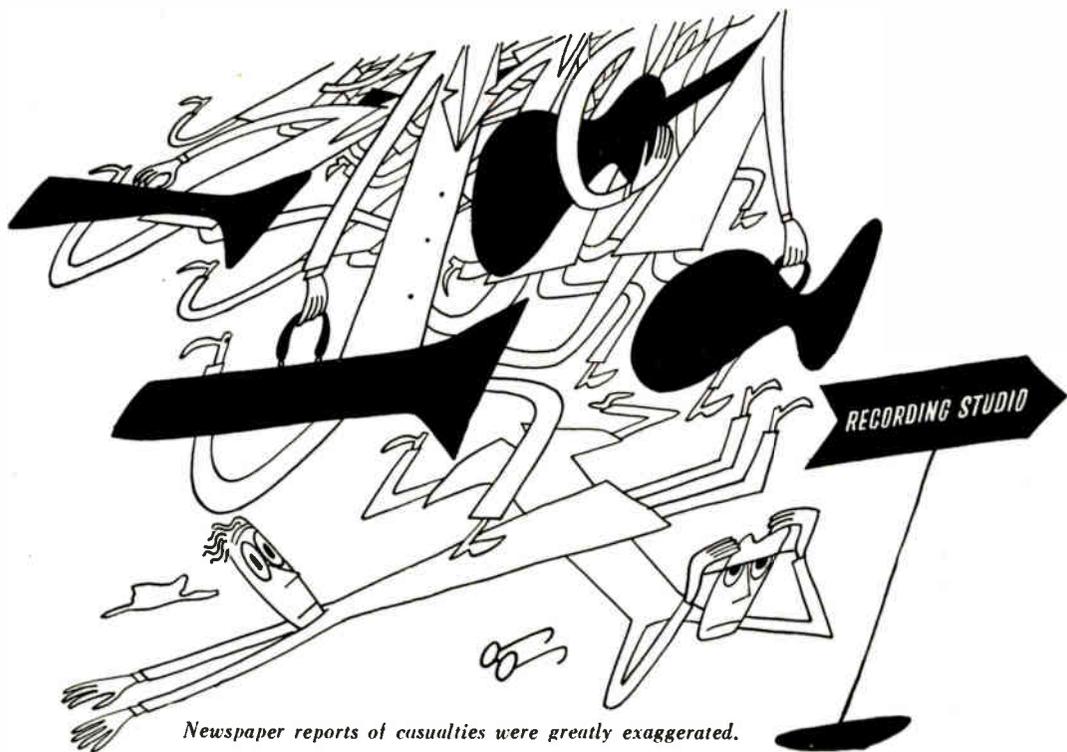


*The first record went on wax in spite of 15 technical advisors, some of whose talented hands are pictured here.*

Now this is a peaceful enough beginning, but what followed was anything but peaceful; in fact it made some of the most turbulent history the realm of music has ever known.

The exact date was Tuesday, December 14, the time about 1.30 P.M. of a nippy winter day. After entering the RCA Victor Building on 24th street, the party proceeded to Studio No. 2, and began to shed its respective overcoats, mink wraps, sheared beaver chubbys and what not. In no time at all someone was pounding the studio piano and a nice-looking man with a fine voice named Lawrence Tibbett was singing *Sweet Adeline*. He was joined by another pleasant-voiced fellow named Ferruccio Tagliavini, who happens to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company. Soon Gladys Swarthout added her soprano, and here are the others who joined in various old-time songs: Jan Peerce, Jinx Falkenburg, Perry Como, Tommy Dorsey, Dorothy Kirsten, Chloe Elmo, Marilyn Cotlow, Thomas Heywood, Fran Warren, Leonard Warren (no relation) and a studio handyman named Adolph.

# R HOUR MINUS THREE



*Newspaper reports of casualties were greatly exaggerated.*

They all applauded Adolph after each number.

But soon the initial gayety wore off. A tenseness pervaded the studio and gripped the tempers of everyone. You see, an hour had gone by and still they hadn't received word that once again they could resume their business . . . the business of making records.

That, it seems, is what they were there for. To make records. Instead they made jokes. Good ones and bad ones. Twenty union musicians tramped in and unlimbered their various instruments. In no time at all studio 2 began to sound like the small mammal house at Central Park Zoo.

They began to laugh at the noises the musicians were making. They made noises to rival them. It was a fascinating spectacle to see such honored artists as Gladys Swarthout making incredible cat-calls at an out of tune saxophone player. The minutes and hours rolled by, and as they did the atmosphere seemed to wind up like a great spring. Five O'Clock arrived and with it, the announcement that then was a miracle. Perry Como rushed into the studio and practically screamed. "It's Okay. They signed the papers. We can go to work." A small mammal house has never seen anything like what happened then.

Everybody yelled at once. Then they all began practicing the song they came there originally to

record, *I'm Just Wild About Harry*. What bedlam!

Lawrence Tibbett kept singing "I'm just wild about Swarthout," and everybody insisted on dancing it through. Then into the studio marched Caesar Petrillo, Brigadier General David Sarnoff, RCA Victor Vice-President Jim Murray and other dignitaries . . . the bosses . . . the guys who just made the making of records possible again. If there had been noise before, now there was pandemonium. Mr. Petrillo made an impromptu speech, which was recorded first. Then they all joined in on *I'm Just Wild About Harry*. The record was rushed through regular processing and sent to President Truman in Washington.

Things had just begun to quiet down when the reporters and photographers came charging in. Cameras flashed, and here's what they recorded: Lovely Gladys Swarthout in a brown wool dress with a huge, what looked like, five carat diamond ring c.) her delicate finger; Dorothy Kirsten in clinging black silk; Jinx Falkenburg (who recorded the whole affair for her radio program), in a red plaid wool dress, a multi-colored semi-precious stone brooch and a gorgeous gold ring; Fran Warren flattered intriguingly by a gray wool ensemble set off by her striking red hair and an impressive string of pearls.

So much for the record. That day was history and humorous, colorful history at that.

# perry took it big

## Como Cuts His First Record In A Year Under Great Pressure

We finally caught up with Perry Como, and talked to him in detail, two days after the events recorded on the two previous pages. He sat, it seemed immovably, in his quiet office on Seventh Avenue and he wore a quiet brown suit and white shirt, in contrast to the electric blue shirt and sport togs he affected at the first recording session. The question of course was, "Perry, what was that first session like to you?" From there on the story is his. He talked with intensity, with sincerity. He said:

"Gosh what a kick that was. What memories. For example, the great Lawrence Tibbett, capering around like a little boy because he was so happy. And the whole bunch singing "I'm Just Wild About Como" or something like that, just because I brought the news. Of course the best of all was making the first record, *Faraway Places*. You know, we cut that tune about a dozen times. I couldn't hear myself sing half the time with news photographers scampering around and flashing bulbs in my face. For a couple of minutes it was like a surrealist dream. The

air was heavy, I felt dizzy, the flashes in my face, the glimpses of those great people around me; the whole atmosphere was unbelievable.

"We made three cuts of the tune and each time we were baffled by strange sounds in the music. Peculiar clicks. Finally we caught on. It was the cameras, clicking throughout the entire session. The miracle is we got anything on wax at all.

"Actually we worked from 5.02 till 6.00. Then I had to knock off to do the Supper Club Show. I was back at 7.30 P.M. and we worked right through till 10.30 P.M. They tell me my first record was on sale just 12 hours after I finished making it. That seems unbelievable but . . ."

We interrupted Perry here, telling him it was absolute truth, but that was another story! "What time did you get home, Perry?"

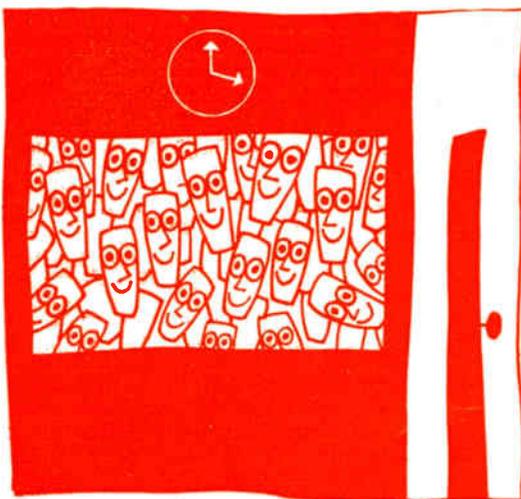
"I finally arrived home at 3 A.M. I jumped into bed immediately. What a night!"

"You took it pretty big, didn't you," we asked.

"Yes," he said intensely, "I took it all pretty big."

### R HOUR PLUS ONE

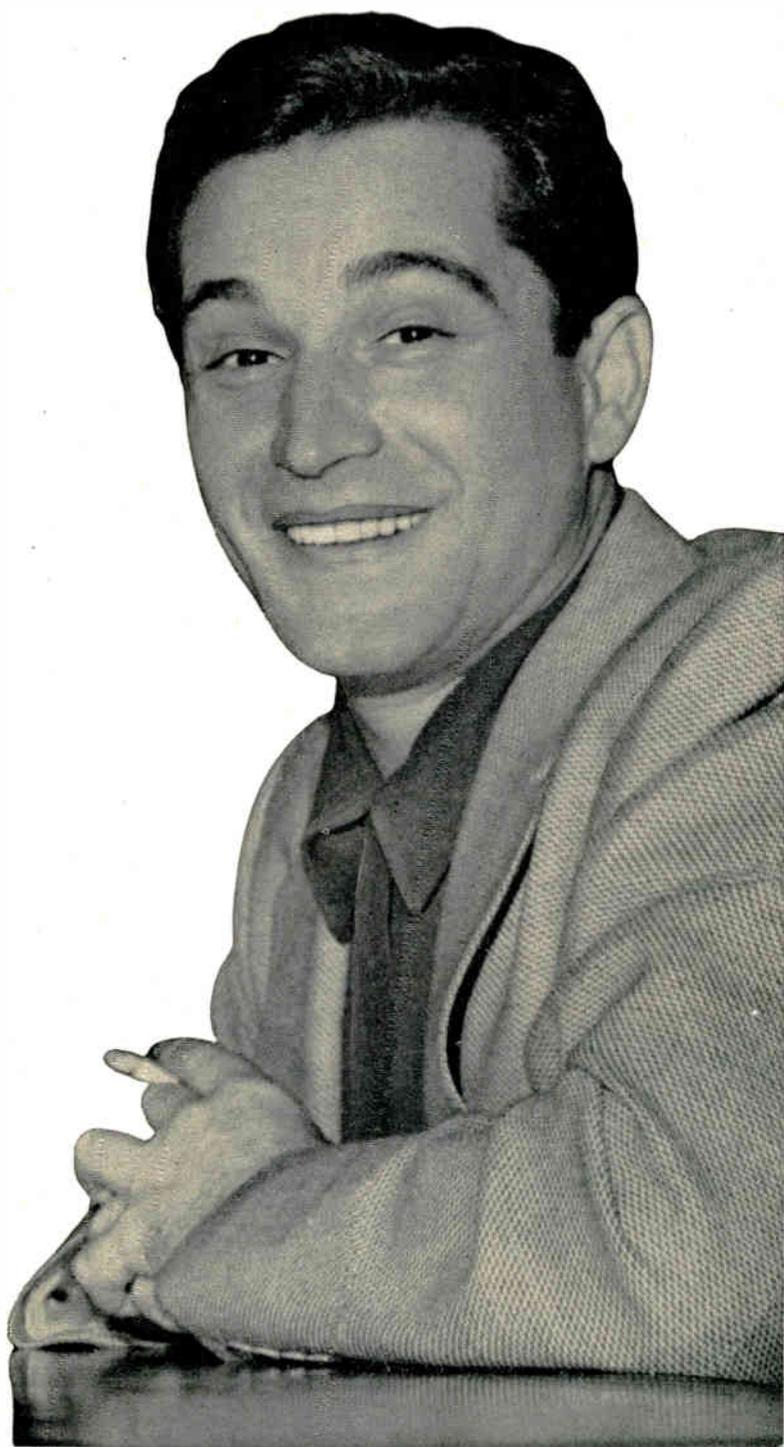
### R HOUR PLUS THREE



*A few well-wishers dropped in.*



*Our engineer managed to restrain himself*



# t. d. takes it on the

## **Dorsey Keeps First Post-Ban Disc Date in the Wee Hours**

The day, labeled by our calendar, December 14, ground on till its culmination at midnight and then two hours later Tommy Dorsey began to make some history along with a lot of other people.

In fact it was exactly 2.45 A.M., that Tommy flexed the slide of his trombone, dropped a cue and began a test on what seems to be one of his greatest records, *Down by the Station*.

And what a story Tommy has to tell. A story punctuated by pails of boiling hot coffee, the only lubricant that, according to Dorsey, could possibly keep that old tram sliding. Tram being short for Trombone.

So they went on into innumerable takes. Producers blew their tops. Tommy blew his. Band members blew theirs. Then they made a great record. But only after they had sweated over every eighth note in the arrangement, and until everyone had begun to feel grimly inadequate.

You know Tommy had come from his regular date at the Hotel Pennsylvania to make this recording session. He came in impeccably dressed in white coat, bow tie, and crisp dickey. He left with starched shirt in hand, tie askew, hair mussed, glasses fogged and a moderate mad on. You see, Tommy had set out to record two records, four sides at that session. But the third side held him up. There were clinkers in the hasty arrangement. The band was actually exhausted.

Ye Gods! It was 7 A.M. Tommy threw up his hands, not too energetically, and called it off. They're going to make that tune later, when the vocals are cleaned up, etc., etc., etc.

We talked to Tommy later as he ate a leisurely brunch at Toots Shor's. He was relaxed and, unlike his very understandable mood at the recording session, he was cheerful. "How did it feel, Tommy?" we asked. "How did it feel to make your first record in a year?"



He grinned. "It felt," he said, "it felt . . . well I wish I was naive enough to say how it felt. But what would my fans and a lot of the people I work with say if they knew I was so thrilled I had to wipe my glasses a dozen times. Gosh, I don't know. It seems records are my medium. I'm at my best there."

He grinned. "Maybe I'm getting old, but I sure felt at home again in that recording studio."

Tommy ate a prodigious meal, we shook hands and he departed. For a man who has been emotionally disturbed, he certainly has a fine appetite.

chin till 7 a. m.





# Sammy Kaye Works Hard To Get First Record On Market "Powder Your Face With Sunshine"

**T**HE stage was set once again and though the audience was much smaller this time, the players were none the less tense—none the less determined to do their best. Sammy Kaye had the principal role in this little tableau and it is less than needless to say Sammy always does his best.

He hardly smiled once during the entire session even though the tune they were recording, the first in a year, was titled *Powder Your Face with Sunshine*.

"Look, boys," Sammy said, "this is our first record in a year. We're happy about it, see? Happy." (he looked sadder by the minute) "Now put a smile in your voices. You especially Cornell."

After three solid hours of rehearsal Don Cornell looked turgid and worn. "Look, Sammy," he said, "How can I get a smile into my voice on this singing song title? How can I smile on low G?"

"Low G?" Sammy snapped back, "Oh, no I mean B flat." Cornell corrected himself. "The way you sing it," said Kaye acidly, "it's B natural."

This sort of thing is usual at a Sammy Kaye rehearsal. Everybody, from the maestro on down takes everything seriously. A tiny phrase, the one on the singing title of "Powder Your Face" for example, is repeated hundreds of times till the right feeling is imparted to it.

It has been rumored that each member of Kaye's aggregation, after making a record, buys a commercial copy of same and breaks that record across his knee. That rumor may be a bit extreme, but after a performer has sung a certain set of two or three notes a hundred times it might be supposed he is no longer in love with them.

If all this gives you the impression that Sammy Kaye and his band are a hard-working outfit, then it's been successful. Few musicians are as impeccable, as hard-driving, as earnest as Sammy Kaye.

It probably is this very hard work that gives his music, once it is on records, that lacy-light, effortless feeling. Few people realize how much real effort it takes to sound effortless musically. In the pictures at the left we see Sammy and various members of his band taken at his first recording session in a year. The group of singers are the Kaydets. Don Cornell wears the dark glasses.



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## Experts Fight Against Time and Transit

While RCA Victor artists performed before the bright lights of crowded recording studios, a brisk game was being played behind the scenes—a game with time and transportation.

You see the record business is full of spirit and life. It's a game you play to win, and like every good game it has to be a good show too.

All through the early, tense hours at 24th street, teletype and telephone lines were open between New York and the RCA record factory in Camden. Complete crews of record press operators and lacquer processors were ready and waiting. From 1.30 P.M. on Tuesday, December 14, 20 musicians were standing by—ready to cut records—along with numerous big musical names (see story page two)

One hour grew into two and then into five. At 5.02 the record ban broke officially.

Perry Como, the first on a disc, completed his last side at 10.30 that night. At 2.05 A.M. the rough, or lacquer version of the record was at the Camden factory by special messenger. The commercial record itself went on sale at Newman's music store in Philadelphia at 10.30 that same morning. That, brother, is putting on a show.

Just 12 hours elapsed from the final cutting till

the record was ready for sale. Meanwhile the wheels of promotion turned. Perry Como himself was at radio station WNEW at 3.00 A.M. with a copy of his first record. He broke in on Martin Bloch, who was broadcasting his "Make-Believe Ball-room." Bloch didn't believe it. He thought it was a gag. But he was convinced, played the record and is still trying to find out how it was done.

Fran Warren's first effort, *Joe and Why Is It* was cut finally at 2 A.M. She followed immediately in Como's footsteps, or grooves if you will. At 5 A.M. it was in the factory and on sale early Thursday.

Tommy Dorsey finished cutting his first record at 5.27 A.M. Wednesday. Five hours later it was being manufactured. Several hours later it was on sale.

Simultaneously with this activity, masters of the new records were being rushed to RCA Victor's Hollywood plant for production. Here fate stepped in. The plane was grounded in Chicago and could not go on. Similarly a plane heading for the Indianapolis plant was forced down in Pittsburgh.

So it went. An exciting tale of success, peppered with the inevitabilities of fate. A fascinating backstage drama.

### R HOUR PLUS SIX



*It is rumored that the American Federation of Musicians is forming a sub-committee for the suppression of the piccolo.*

### R HOUR PLUS NINE



*The producer acted exactly like a producer and later on apologized to everybody.*

# Fran Warren and Vaughn Monroe Cut New Hits to Hypo 1949 Record Biz.

## R HOUR PLUS 14



*The Survivors*



**F**RAN Warren, a brand new RCA Victor artist, sandwiched her first recordings after the ban in between the Perry Como Session, which ended at 10.30 P.M., December 14, and Tommy Dorsey's early morning stint.

And the next day at around noon, the ever-popular Vaughn Monroe rushed into studio two and put on discs what look like two of his greatest hits—*Melancholy Minstrel* and *Red Roses for Blue Ladies*.

Joe Kramer's cartoon above pretty well demonstrates how Fran and the other lady vocalists who participated in the first, early morning sessions took it all. They remained fresh, crisp, pretty and unperturbed while strong men fainted and stronger ones turned pale. The musicians and leaders too grew more raunchy, nondescript and irritable by the hour and the sight of the supposed weaker sex existing in such composure infuriated those who had sufficient energy remaining.

*Above: Vaughn and the Moon Maids run through a tough chorus. Below, Fran Warren buys a copy of the first post-ban record, Perry Como's "Faraway Places."*

Meanwhile, in far-away Hollywood the effervescent Rose Murphy went on record. And so did Freddy Martin, Ike Carpenter and Hawthorne. (See next page for partial list of new records.)

So the story is told. One of the most exciting stories the music business has witnessed in a decade. A great industry steps forward once again with new revolutionary developments in record making.



# And here They are

**RCA Victor's new, post-ban recordings**

**PERRY COMO**

**Faraway Places And Missouri Waltz—20-3316**  
Two wonderfully sentimental sides, the first a new one and the latter a well-known three quarter time favorite. Perry sings with Henri Rene's Orchestra.

**TOMMY DORSEY**

**Down By the Station And How Many Tears Must Fall—20-3317**

"Station" is a novelty par excellence with lyrics by Denny Dennis, Lucy Ann Polk and the Sentimentalists. "Tears" will live romantically in your hearts.

**VAUGHN MONROE**

**Red Roses for a Blue Lady And Melancholy Minstrel—20-3319**

"Roses" features Vaughn's lush strings and the new vocal group The Moon Men. The Monroe Choir balanced by Vaughn's rich baritone make "Minstrel" a winner.

**FRAN WARREN**

**Joe And Why Is It?—20-3318**

Fran, who stars on "Sing It Again" over CBS, has the style and oomph to make these new ballads your favorites.

**ROSE MURPHY**

**A Little Bird Told Me And Baby—20-3320**

You'll find a new Rose Murphy on this record. Listen to "Baby" for a real breathless vocal and incredible piano ramblings.

**SAMMY KAYE**

**Powder Your Face With Sunshine And Careless Hands—20-3321**

"Powder" has a "Happy Days Are Here Again" flavor to it in the Kaye style you know so well. "Hands" is strictly western in flavor. Both sides feature the Kaydets and Don Cornell.

**TONY MARTIN**

**Tenement Symphony, Parts 1 and 2—20-3274**

This incredible piece of work was formerly featured in the Marx Brothers' Picture "Big Store". It was recorded in England with the able help of the Skyrockets' Orchestra.

**THE THREE SUNS**

**A Bluebird Singing in My Heart And You, You Are the One—20-3322**

"Bluebird" is a gay, catchy tune perhaps better known as the "La, La, La, La Song". It is backed by "You" with a swell vocal by Artie Dunn.

**DENNIS DAY**

**Tarra Ta-Larra Ta-Lar And Streets of Laredo—20-3323**

You know "Tarra" by heart. Now hear the master of this type of ballad. "Streets" is in the nostalgic, latin vein. Charles Dant's Orchestra assists on both sides.

**FREDDY MARTIN**

**Once in Love with Amy And You Was—20-3324**

A girl song you'll love and another fast-rising ballad to make this record a romantic package indeed. Marv Griffin sings both and is assisted by the Martin Men on "Amy".

**IKE CARPENTER**

**Brush Those Tears From Your Eyes And The Man on the Carrousel—20-3325**

Here's a man and his band from the west, newly signed by RCA Victor, from whom you'll be hearing plenty in the next few weeks. "Eyes" is a really romantic ballad sung by Johnny April and Chorus. In "Carrousel" it's April again with a unique treatment by Ike Carpenter himself on, of all things, the Calliope.

**ERSKINE HAWKINS**

**Bewildered And Corn Bread—20-3326**

Hawkins and his Trumpet have never been better or more danceable than on these two solid beat sides. Jimmy Michelle sings "Bewildered."

# In The Groove Bows Out This Month to Re-Appear in March As Part of a Big, New Book

IT'S been a real pleasure to play through a chorus or two with you music fans for the past few months, but though the chorus is now through we've only reached what musicians call the "second ending."

You see, the second ending is actually the beginning. In a musical arrangement it is a kind of modulation to what is known as the "sock chorus" where the rhythm gets better, the tempo faster, the notes harder to play; the sock chorus is fancier and better than all the rest of the number.

Our sock chorus is a magazine—a big handsome production-full of color, names and the real excitement of the music business. This publication—The "RCA Victor Record Review"—will include "In The Groove" and its companion maga-

zine on the long hair side, the present "Review."

In it you'll read articles by Earl Wilson, Leonard Lyons, Look Magazine's Michael Levin and many other writers with a flare.

And the names? Well, Vaughn Monroe, Perry Como, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey—there isn't space to list them all. Just watch for the "RCA Victor Record Review" next month at your record dealer.

## Supper Club Album

This is real news for radio as well as record fans. RCA Victor has issued an Album, recorded by Perry Como, which contains all your favorite numbers from the Chesterfield Supper Club radio show for 1948.

These are all request numbers,

decided on from the results of a poll conducted among listeners by Chesterfield Cigarettes. Numbers like these: *When You Were Sweet Sixteen, Prisoner of Love, Because, Till the End of Time, Temptation, Song of Songs.*

Drop in at your dealer and give this Album a spin. It's No. P-237.

## Let's Write Thirty

So we fix the traditional newspaper figure meaning the end-30 to this, the final issue of "In The Groove." After an eight bar rest, take it on the up beat in March with the new "RCA Victor Record Review."

*Charlie*

FROM:

Sec. 562, P. L. & R.

TO:

"RCA monogram in a circle, 'RCA Victor,' the representation of a dog listening to a phonograph, the phrase 'His Master's Voice,' the words 'Red Seal,' and the word 'Bluebird,' are registered in The United States Patent Office as Trade-marks of The Radio Corporation of America."

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