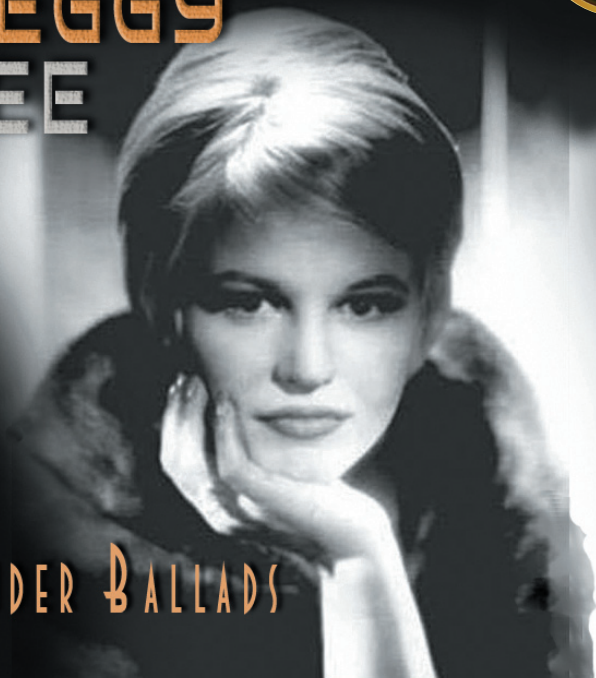


FROM ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPTION MASTER

2<sup>x</sup>HD  
HISTORIC

PEGGY  
LEE

TENDER BALLADS



# PEGGY LEE

As a singer she specialized in cool restraint, but that quality was otherwise scarce in the life of Peggy Lee, especially in 1955. That year Lee filmed a dramatic role in a Roaring Twenties crime drama with music, *Pete Kelly's Blues*; it was set for release in July, the month after the premiere of Walt Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, for which Lee had provided four voices and co-written a half-dozen songs. Her record label, Decca, required a constant flow of new material, which she worked on amid nightclub tours. Typically she sat up in bed until dawn, doodling and writing lyrics and poems. It's no wonder that Lee had once collapsed onstage from exhaustion.

In February and August, she and her band gathered at a studio in Hollywood for four jam-packed afternoon recording sessions. The company wasn't Decca but World Program Service, which produced original musical content for syndication to radio stations. Lee loved painstaking rehearsals, but the objectives here were speed and bulk. In a total of fourteen hours, she made forty-nine tracks. Most are short, and were done in one or two takes. To meet their quota, she and the group used their nightclub material; they pulled out standards everyone knew and whipped up head arrangements. And still, the results approach perfection.

Since the 1980s, Lee's World transcriptions have been released, scattershot, on all sorts of collections. This album contains rare, intimate renditions giving the listener a chance to hear those small-group club charts, some of which are pared-down

versions of her lavishly arranged Decca recordings. Freed of their sometimes fussy orchestrations, Lee stretches out as a jazz singer. "She was a natural musician with perfect ears." Says Gene DiNovi, her pianist at the time. "She never sang a note out of tune or time."

Lee's laser-beam focus and ability to cast a spell are famously mesmerizing, even when she has only a couple of minutes to make her statement. Her husky-sweet, infinitely expressive voice was an instrument of seduction; from it she mined a wealth of texture and nuance. "People say my voice is thin or small, but I have a lot more voice than I ever use," she explained. "I start with a small amount of volume and sometimes I'll sing softer and softer, and that gives me a long way to go."

The formerly hayseed North Dakota girl had given 1950s pop and infusion of sex – but not the wilting, submissive kind. In 1952, Lee had taken the demure Rodgers & Hart waltz "Lover" and given it a furious Latin arrangement, with a rush of sexual aggression to match. Her allure seemed tough around the edges, wounded at the core, and full of dark shadows. "Peggy is not the girl you'd run into at a high school prom" observed the deejay and columnist Eddie Gallaher. "Her voice is more that of the girl in the smoke-filled room at a truck line café or at a juke joint along a Texas highway". In one magazine ad, Lee held aloft a Chesterfield cigarette; another contained the quote: "My beer is Rheingold – the dry beer".

In 1955 she was in the middle of four marriages, and playing the field. According to her harpist, Stella Castellucci, Lee was "one of those people who are in love with love and always searching for that. A lot of her songs came out of unhappiness and melancholy."



As ever, her salvation was work – the more of it, the better. On February 7, Lee completed two separate sessions for her Decca album *Sea Shells*. The next day she was in the studio yet again to record her first twelve World transcriptions. Joining her in the course of the dates were her two *Sea Shells* musicians. In 1953, Lee had audaciously chosen to augment her jazz group with harp, due to her obsession with Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro for Harp and Orchestra*. Through her trumpeter, Pete Candoli, she found the 22 year old Castellucci, whose arpeggios and glissandos added a celestial sweetness to the band.

On piano was Lee's steady accompanist at the time, the Brooklyn-born Gene DiNovi. He had played with Artie Shaw, Lester Young, and Lee's former employer, Benny Goodman; but Lee was the first singer he'd ever worked with, and instinctively he knew what she needed. During their first rehearsal, she had turned to him after a song and said, "Gee, you did some nice things with that." That blessing gave him "confidence for life," he recalled.



Guitarist Bill Pitman would later make history as a member of the Wrecking Crew, the legendary company of A-list Los Angeles studio musicians who played on some of the hottest records of the day. But Lee had launched him; and in 1955, toward the end of his three years in her band, he showed off his jazz chops in these sessions for World. Throughout the year, Lee also employed the Chicago-born, American bongo player Jack Costanzo, who had spent the last few years with Stan Kenton and Nat King Cole. He Latinizes several of her World performances.

The rest of the personnel is less certain. DiNovi's best guesses include drummer Larry Bunker and bassist Bob Whitlock, both of whom played with him in Lee's mid-fifties groups.

There's no doubting the quality of the repertoire, which is full of treats. Lee previews several of the 1920s jazz standards - *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Somebody Loves Me*, *I Never Knew*. *My Ideal*, *Come Rain or Come Shine*, and *What's New?* Have the post-midnight, bluesy saloon feel that was second nature to Lee. In contrast, she sings *My Romance* and *Try a Little Tenderness* as intimately as lullabies. *Let's Call It a Day* held special meaning for her. It was written by Lew Brown and Ray Henderson for *Strike Me Pink*, a short-lived Broadway revue of 1933. Lee had recorded it in February 1952, after her marriage to Barbour had crumbled. Three years later, as she sings about soldiering on bravely ("Let's have no regrets, or a word of blame"), a tear remains in her voice.

The World transcriptions circulated on the airwaves only briefly then languished on their original sixteen-inch radio discs, forgotten for decades. Now they're back, properly remastered in 2xHD Fusion and more than worthy of a fresh hearing.

James Gavin, New York City, 2017

# PEGGY LEE TENDER BALLADS

- 1 Fools Rush In Where Angels Fear to Tread 2:20
- 2 I Never Knew 3:03
- 3 Bye Bye Blackbird 3:02
- 4 Somebody Loves Me 3:18
- 5 Let's Call It a Day 2:34
- 6 Try a Little Tenderness 2:24
- 7 Come Rain or Come Shine 2:26
- 8 Speak Low (When You Speak Love) 3:24
- 9 What's New 2:09
- 10 My Romance 2:26
- 11 Autumn in New York 2:28
- 12 Got It Bad 2:54
- 13 My Ideal 2:21
- 14 Don't Worry 'Bout Me 2:15
- 15 You're Mine, You 2:33

## PERSONNEL

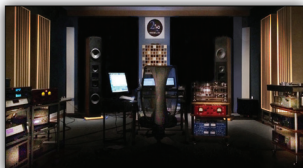
Peggy Lee - Voice  
Gene DiNovi - Piano  
Stella Castellucci - Harp  
Larry Bunker - Drums  
Bob Whitlock - Bass

2xHD Mastering: René Laflamme • 2xHD Executive Producer: André Perry  
Album cover, insert concept & artwork: André Perry  
Liner Notes: James Gavin • Graphics: Sylvie Labelle





## THE 2xHD MASTERING SYSTEM



2xHD is a record label which uses its proprietary system to process music masters originally recorded in analog or DSD or other format, to DSD in order to produce a unique listening experience. In this particular case, a transcription from the original 78 rpm acetate.

The process uses a selection from a pool of high-end audiophile components and connectors. In some cases even using battery power, so as to benefit from the cleanest power source possible. This variable equipment combination custom tailored to each project, creates the most accurate reproduction of the original recording, unveiling information previously masked by the use of EQ, transformers, patch bays, extended cable length etc. The selection of components is critical, as many A/D and D/A converters are unable to pierce through these filters that create a ceiling effect to the sound. The 2xHD system preserves the dynamics of the original master and provides an open feeling to the sound.

2xHD was created by producer/studio owner André Perry and audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme, two dedicated music lovers determined to experience only the warmth and depth of the music without hearing the equipment.

2xHD Mastering by: René Laflamme

2xHD Executive Producer: André Perry

**[www.2xhd.com](http://www.2xhd.com)**  
**Pure Emotion**