

# JUBILEE

## AN AMERICAN CULTURAL TREASURE



**AFRS/SSD SERIES H-11**

**Prepared by Dennis M. Spragg**

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## Introduction

“Jubilee” was the War Department Service Division (SSD) and Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) program cataloged as series H-11 by SSD to October 1943 and AFRS thereafter. This was an historic series and an important national treasure. “Jubilee” was conceived and programmed to present African American artists and their music to the armed forces personnel of the United States and allied nations around the world. During the history of the program, eventually other artists were invited to participate, but “Jubilee” is remembered as a showcase for African American talent. In addition to big bands, small jazz groups and singers, many talented dramatic and comedic performers appeared on “Jubilee.” Their performances are regularly featured on our weekly “Star Spangled Radio Hour” programs, broadcast and streamed online worldwide.

In 1985, Rainer E. Lotz of Bonn, Germany published the First Edition of “Jubilee” program catalog. In 2005, Carl A. Hällström and Bo F. Sherman published an on-line Second Edition Jubilee program catalog and added many additional programs and details. Dennis M. Spragg has hosted, produced and expanded the Third Edition of the definitive “Jubilee” program catalog since the late Carl A. Hällström entrusted the primary materials in 2013.

The history of “Jubilee” is arranged by Program Sequence, #1-433, in files linked to the Spragg Jubilee web page. Following is the history of “Jubilee” and an overview of the catalog. Updates are made to the resource and dates of publication are included as a reference.

### **"Plant You Now And Dig You Later"**

Broadway actor, producer and songwriter Maj. Mann Holiner (1897-1958) conceived “Jubilee” in 1942. He was commissioned in September 1942 and assigned to the Radio Section of the Special Services Division. Holiner had produced the “Blackbird” musical revues on Broadway and a radio series by African Americans entitled “Freedom’s People.” “Jubilee” was designed to showcase African American talent and to augment the popular variety programs “Command Performance” and “Mail Call.”

Cover Image:

Lena Horne and William “Count” Basie



Lena Horne, Frank Sinatra and Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman  
Jubilee 172 (1945)

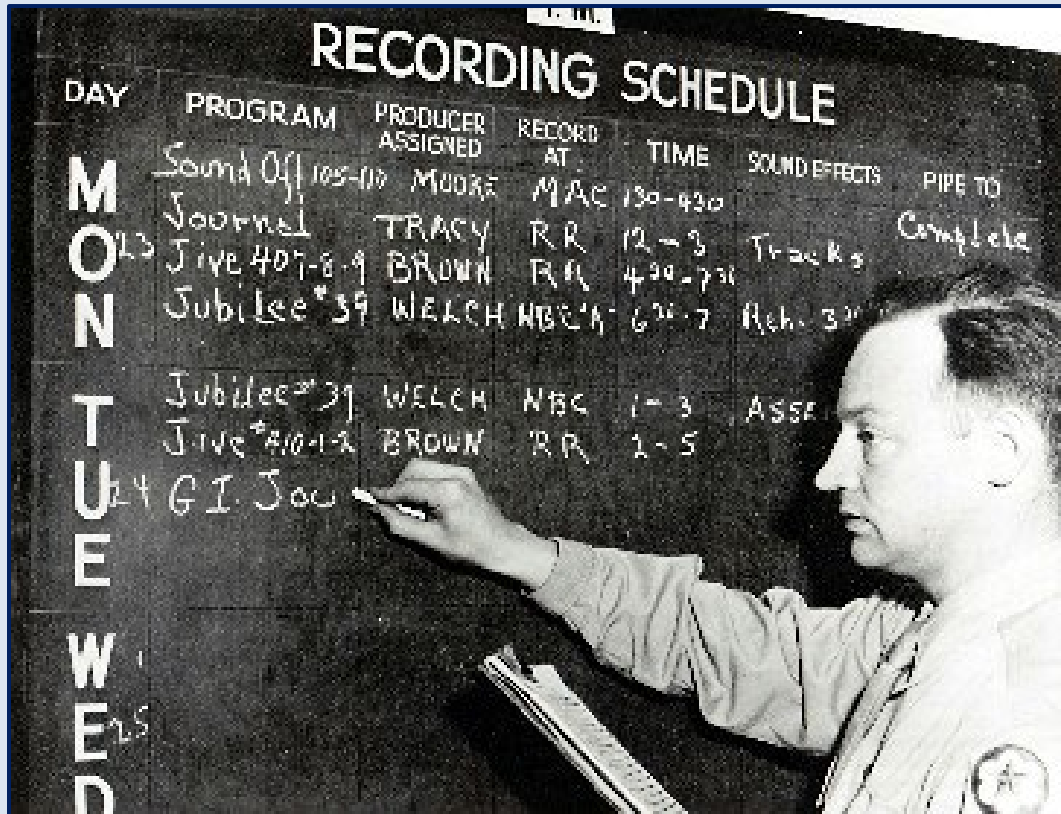
Ernest (or Ernie) "Bubbles" Whitman was an actor and entertainer who had appeared in many motion pictures. He portrayed the Pharaoh of Egypt in "Green Pastures" (1936) and Lt. Jim Europe of World War I fame in "Stormy Weather" (1943). Whitman cast a large shadow over "Jubilee," both physically and artistically. He had a great sense of self-deprecating humor and relished the role of master of ceremonies. Whitman understood the importance of "Jubilee" and made every effort to temper the comedy with the serious intent of promoting African American artists and serving the war effort. A physically large man, Whitman endured many jokes about his size and gave back better. He was "hep to the jive" as frequent "Jubilee" guest Cab Calloway might put it, and his announcements are peppered with jive talk. One of his most famous lines as "plant you now and dig you later" when closing the programs. Whitman's lines were both scripted by the SSD and AFRS staff but also widely ad-libbed, as were the other SSD and AFRS variety programs. Also, the host and entertainers could get away with a lot of dialogue which otherwise might not pass the censors at the domestic radio networks.

“Jubilee” was originally produced as a one-hour program recorded before a live audience. Usually two complete programs were culled from the sessions. As did other SSD-AFRS radio studio productions, programs were free-form and then recorded, so the raw material may have been ten or more minutes longer than one hour, allowing for more relaxed and spontaneous performances. The programs also came to be assembled from studio recording sessions conducted without audiences with applause dubbed in. Comedy skits and musical content were frequently duplicated from other SSD/AFRS programs. Occasionally white artists were included in the programs and by the middle of 1945 they became regular guests. Starting in 1944 the AFRS Orchestra of Maj. Meredith Willson (1902-1984) conducted by M/Sgt. Michel Perriere became regularly present for the proceedings.

SSD-AFRS produced the live audience portions of the programs at mostly NBC but also at the Blue Network (formerly NBC Blue, which became ABC in 1945) and CBS. Other mainly musical segments were made at the transcription studios of C. P. MacGregor, Radio Recorders and Universal Recorders. NBC provided the technical facilities for the Blue Network so both NBC and Blue (ABC) produced programs were transmitted directly to the NBC recording studio for recording and, later, dubbing, insuring maximum possible recording fidelity. NBC recorded the programs through 1947 when Radio Recorders took over responsibility supplemented by the Don Lee Mutual Studio (KHJ), C. P. MacGregor and Universal Recorders. Backup protection copies of the recordings were made for safety purposes. This provided protection against technical problems but also a catalog of material to use for assembling future programs. The producer auditioned the direct line recordings to decide what edits were necessary to assemble a 30-minute “Jubilee” transcription. The engineers assembled and re-recorded the transcriptions by the use of multiple playback machines electronically linked to a master disc recorder (the Scully lathe). The staff made additions by switching from one playback machine to another and they made deletions by stopping the master recorder. The dates assigned by SSD-AFRS to “Jubilee” programs in their records appear to line up with the assembly and re-recording work. The dates may align with the actual recording dates of the program materials or be one to several days later.

“Jubilee” transcription discs were thus mastered and then dubbed for distribution to Office of War Information (OWI) and military radio stations around the world by priority air shipment. The War Department Special Services Division Radio Branch became Armed Forces Radio Service in November 1943. Musical recordings made for “Jubilee” were also distributed on SSD-AFRS disc jockey programs including “Downbeat” and “Sound Off.” Musical recordings made for “Jubilee” were also circulated among the AFRS Basic Music Library of transcription discs designed by Maj. Meredith Willson to stock military radio stations with current records (there was a musicians’ strike underway).

“Jubilee” was continuously produced until hostilities ended and beyond. Ernie Whitman eventually left the program and the format changed. African American artists were present but did not predominate. AFPS faced major budget cuts with demobilization and the unification of the armed forces in 1948. The V-Disc program ended in May 1949 and the premiere “Command Performance” program ceased original productions. There was a brief resurgence of activity during the Korean conflict but from then forward and with the addition of television, military broadcasting took a different direction. “Jubilee” was one of the finest productions of the World War II and immediate postwar era.





## **Documenting Jubilee**

Rainer E. Lotz began work on his "Jubilee" documentation during the early 1960s in Germany. After a hiatus due to overseas postings in Bolivia, Thailand and Uganda, Lotz resumed his work. He sought to collect as much information as possible concerning "Jubilee" from the American Forces Network in Germany and the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. Subsequently his successors and recently the GMA have continued to add information to the "Jubilee" knowledge base, including AFRS documents, scripts and a fairly complete set of the audio program recordings.

During World War II, the Armed Forces Radio Service developed into the largest disc-producing enterprise in the history of recorded sound. From Los Angeles, thousands of AFRS discs were shipped to radio stations and military bases all over the globe. The discs have an important because they were not affected by the recording bans imposed by the musicians' union during 1942-44 and again in 1948. Most of the "Jubilee" programs were devoted to jazz and many were recorded live, for enthusiastic audiences of servicemen. The largest single body of evidence of the change from Swing to Bop is found among the AFRS "Jubilee" recordings.

In 1951 Theodore Stuart DeLay, Jr., "An Historical Study of the Armed Forces Radio Service to 1946" as an unpublished dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Department of Speech, University of Southern California. This document and the book by Richard Sherwood Sears, "V-Discs, A History and Discography," published in 1982, the works of Rainer Lotz and several AFRS guides published by Harry Mackenzie of Scotland, remain the sole public sources of information about AFRS. In recent years, the contributors to the Second Edition and now Third Edition of "Jubilee," Carl A. Hällström and Bo F. Sherman, have sought to supplement the established guides with additional information. During preparation for his 2017 book "Glenn Miller Declassified," Dennis M. Spragg uncovered additional detail about AFRS programs and procedures.

The War Department tasked SSD and later AFRS with the production of entertainment and information. One of the first goals was to provide musical and variety entertainment for service men and women. To produce variety programs radio studios had to be developed or rented. To save time and expense, the studios were rented. The service needed to be located where talent and facilities were most plentiful, and this meant Southern California. Not only original programming but network programming was needed to serve the needs of the armed forces worldwide, so agreements were reached with the commercial radio networks.

Musicians were exempt from the recording strike provisions if the recordings were for the entertainment of the armed forces, so bandleaders and bands could appear on SSD-AFRS programs and V-Discs. The live productions needed an orchestra and musical director, so Maj. Meredith Willson came on board. He selected musicians from Army and Army Air Force bands for his AFRS orchestra. Artists donated their time for SSD-AFRS programs under the auspices of the Hollywood Victory Committee. What this meant was programs including "Jubilee" could be produced that would otherwise be too expensive to otherwise put together. The collective cultural heritage of the SSD-AFRS series is thus profound.

"Jubilee" was produced from 1942 to 1949 and revived during the Korean conflict in 1952-1953. The series had important socio-cultural implications. In 1942 the military radio program planners strongly felt the large pool of African American entertainers ought to be given the opportunity to contribute to the war effort. Producers conceived the concept "Freedom's People," a program intended specifically for African American troop morale using as a basis old WPA (Work Progress Administration) recordings. "Freedom's People" was an NBC Red Network series that was broadcast between September and December of 1941. Maj. Holiner was presented with this idea and replied he felt an African American entertainment program ought not to be directed toward a specific audience. Holiner believed the entertainment quality of a good program would be of benefit to everyone. As the production idea evolved, it became evident focusing the program might inadvertently shed light on racial tensions within the segregated armed forces. The name of a Holiner commercial program "Jubilee" was selected.

The first "Jubilee" program produced October 9, 1942, would not bear much resemblance to the format that quickly became apparent after Whitman became host. The first several programs were not as fast-paced and contained serious messages that made the program flow awkward. The first cast included Rex Ingram, Ethel Waters, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra, and the Hall Johnson Choir. SSD assigned Capt. Charles Vanda, former CBS west coast programming director, to write the program. Dore Shary, who went on to become production manager and president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, assisted Vanda. Sgt. James "Jimmy" Lyons, a former popular San Francisco disc jockey, produced the program in 1944 and 1945. Bill Scott produced the 1952-1953 revival.

At first, it was thought white entertainers would appear exclusively on "Command Performance," et. al., and black entertainers would appear exclusively on "Jubilee." This first changed after Command Performance moved from New York to Hollywood. Producer S/Sgt. Robert L. Welch started using black entertainers on "Command Performance" regularly. Soon thereafter he opened "Jubilee" up for white entertainers. Welch felt mixing it up would benefit the showmanship of both programs and offer better overall quality. SSD-AFRS were able to do this without undermining the essential African American nature of "Jubilee." The early programs in the series were the only exclusively African American programs broadcast to a wide audience and was contrary to the otherwise limited and stereotyped access offered to black entertainers by commercial radio in the United States. The war effort was mirroring society. The United Service organizations (USO) offered limited opportunities for black entertainers to help. Dick Campbell, Coordinator for Colored Talent for USO Camp Shows, Inc., worked tirelessly to improve the situation for African American troops and entertainers alike. A December 1944 report noted, "Of the 173 USO units now overseas, only 3 are colored. Of the 837 entertainers, only 29 are colored and of the 383 overall USO units since 1941, five colored; of the 2,066 performers to date, 39 colored".

Many of the "Jubilee" programs offer an exclusive opportunity to hear an important period of jazz history otherwise lost because of the recording strikes and when jazz was changing in style. "Jubilee" transcriptions are among the only recorded examples of the period for many bands and soloists. This was an exciting period and "Jubilee" documents it. Programs 1-45 (Decca and Capitol settled with the American Federation of Musicians in October-November 1943), 46-107 (RCA Victor and Columbia settled in November 1944) and 270-327 roughly correspond to the period of the strikes.



ARMED FORCES RADIO SERVICE

PRESENTS

"JUBILEE" #171 & 172

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ANNCR: Here's your ration of hot-horn glee --

Pop it up -- IT'S JUBILEE!

(APPLAUSE)

MUSIC: ("ONE O'CLOCK JUMP")

ANNCR: Yessirree, men....Jubilee's been dig-dig-diggin' in the ole hot chichornia field and we've rooted up a crop of temptin' tempo that will snap your garters eight to the bar!.....And here to tab the talent as it trots by is your monstrous of ceremonies -- pound for pound the biggest thing in radio -- ERNIE "BUBBLES" WHITMAN!

(APPLAUSE)



Nat "King" Cole, Jimmie Lunceford and Lena Horne

## About The Catalog

### DISCOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Number listing -

All the programs listed in numerical order. The special Christmas programs, which were not given individual numbers, are listed in chronological order following "Jubilee" No. 433, the last numbered release.

Couplings -

During the early months of production, AFRS transcriptions were pressed so that the first half of one program would be on the first record and the second half of one program would be on the second record. A second show in the same series was pressed on the flip sides (the first "Jubilee" program was pressed "back-to-back.").

Although this procedure allowed the broadcasting engineer to change from one record to the other without listener detection when using two turntables and two pick-ups, it caused trouble when one record of the pair was lost or damaged. In such cases neither program could be played. After May 1943 AFRS ordered all shows pressed “back-to-back” on a single record. This simplified many problems of distribution and production. No major change in this standard pressing process was made during the war years.

#### AFRS Program Announcer -

This term is used to describe the announcer responsible for the opening and closing program identification. In most cases the introduction and the signoff, both the spoken announcements and the musical themes, were added in the studio and not recorded during the live performances. The term “Special Service Division” is used through October 1943 and “Armed Forces Radio Service” thereafter.

#### Master Of Ceremonies -

This term is used throughout even if there were more than one emcee, and even when the “master” was actually a “mistress.” The emcees were mostly film and radio personalities. The most famous, and for years almost synonymous with “Jubilee” was Ernie “Bubbles” Whitman.

#### Date Of Dubbing -

In some cases these dates may be identical with the recording dates. As a rule the AFRS shows were assembled at a later date, often even using “wild tracks” from a great number of different recording dates and locations. The sources of the dates of dubbing are the AFRS “Jubilee” Program Lists, which were available only for the years 1942-1945. The term “dubbing,” although technically not quite correct, is used throughout to describe the process of “assembling” or “rerecording” the final 30-minute “Jubilee” shows on 16” electrical transcriptions (ET).

#### Date Of Broadcast -

SSD - AFRS Los Angeles guidance as for local stations to broadcast "Jubilee" at a pre-set hour on Friday nights, once a week, 53 weeks a year. Station libraries used to pencil the day of broadcast on the actual record label or protective paper sleeve, and those notes provide a source for information contained in the Third Edition. In some cases the dates may be the dates on which the records were removed from the station library; in other cases the programs were used out of sequence; or repeated at the individual station's discretion, particularly when a batch of records did not arrive in time. Program listings for AFN in Europe show different times for "Jubilee" broadcasts so the Los Angeles guidance was not necessarily followed in the field.

#### Label Information -

Early "Jubilee" transcriptions had the names of the performers printed on the actual labels. The practice of printing the names of the performers on the labels was discontinued with the exception of the special Christmas releases. Therefore the "Jubilee" catalog is based on aural verification. Inevitably this is the source of many potential misinterpretations and phonetic misspellings. In some cases the program number and playing time were printed, but as a rule they were added by rubber stamps on the labels of standard design, at a space left blank for this purpose. The running number of the show was normally stamped in the "lower segment" of the label, but sometimes in the "middle band" next to the spindle hole. The playing time was supposed to be 30 minutes (15 minutes per side), but could differ slightly, e.g., "29:23." Later transcriptions bear the standard information "29.15" "45", indicating an exact playing time, inclusive of "fill ins", of 30 minutes.

#### Label designs -

Although there were several variations, the basic design of the AFRS "Jubilee" series labels remained basically the same: A "middle band" across the spindle hole separating the "upper segment" from a "lower segment." The colors used were those of the American flag - white, red, and blue - with printing in blue and red. All labels are 114mm in diameter (except those printed in New York, which were only 105mm in diameter).



#### LABEL TYPE 1:

Releases 1-58 (1942-1943) Legend in the upper segment: "War Department. Special Service Division present." Legend in the lower segment: "Jubilee. This transcription is the property of the War Department of the United States Government and use for commercial purposes is prohibited." On earlier shows a listing of featured artists is also shown in the lower segment, sometimes in phonetic misspelling. Some transcriptions have the additional information of pressing plant and master number. From about "Jubilee" No. 49 onwards this practice was discontinued.

#### LABEL TYPE 2:

Releases 59-113 (1944) Legend in upper segment: "War Department. The Armed Forces Radio Service present." Legend in lower segment: "Jubilee. This transcription is the property of the United States Government and must be returned to the Armed Forces Radio Service upon completion of use. Its use or reproduction, in whole or in part, for commercial or other purposes, is strictly prohibited without the consent of the Armed Forces Radio Service." For "Jubilee" numbers 100-103 the smaller (105 mm) diameter label was used.

#### LABEL TYPE 3:

Releases 114-224 (1945-1947) Legend in upper segment: "War And Navy Departments. Armed Forces Radio Service presents."

#### LABEL TYPE 4:

Releases 225-355 (1947-1949) Legend in upper segment: War And Navy Departments. Armed Forces Radio Service. "The Voice of Information and Education." Legend in lower segment: "Jubilee. Property of United States Government. This transcription will be used only as authorized by the Commandant – Armed Forces Radio Service. Its use or reproduction, for private or commercial purposes, in whole or in part, is prohibited by existing directives and regulations."

#### LABEL TYPE 5:

Releases 356-365 (1949-1950) Legend in upper segment: Army \* Navy \* Air Force. Armed Forces Radio Service. "The Voice of Information and Education." The series number, shown in the middle band, was changed from H-11 to EN-11.

## LABEL TYPE 6:

Special Christmas issues of 1945, 1947 and 1948. The design incorporates a "Christmas iconography" of bells and holly (upper segment) and Christmas trees with lighted candles (lower segment) in red and green print. Legend in upper segment: "Armed Forces Radio Service." Legend in lower segment: "Jubilee (Christmas Show)." This is followed by a listing of featured artists and the standard copyright warning.

## Wax Information -

Our GMC history gives the wax information exactly as shown in the original ETs, which are available for visual inspection. AFRS transcriptions were manufactured by various companies, including the Allied Record Manufacturing Company, the Columbia Record Corporation, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), Radio Recorders, the C. P. McGregor Studios, and eventually by a completely new recording, processing and pressing plant - Universal Recorders (from about 1945 onwards). "Jubilee" transcriptions were probably manufactured by those enterprises, as evidenced by the various master and control numbers in the wax. During the 1942-1945 period most of the "Jubilee" transcriptions were pressed by Columbia and RCA. "Jubilee" No. 1 states on the label: "Mfg. by Columbia Record Corp." and it bears a 4-digit control number prefaced with "RR"; "RR" is thought to denote Radio Recorders. Later Columbia used the prefix "D," which is the symbol for 16", 33rpm custom transcriptions. Most of the early "Jubilee" discs have no control numbers; a typical record looks something like: H-11-21-2 PT. 2, meaning "Jubilee" (i.e. series H-11), show number 21, part 2 of 2. Later RCA introduced regular master numbers in the 072000 series (1942-1943), or a combination of numbers and letters. A typical example would look something like this: ND4-MM-6912-1B ("Jubilee" No. 100). The code means: N = New York (most transcriptions show H = Hollywood); D = the fourth decade; 4 = the fourth year of the decade (i.e. D4 = 1944). After the dash two letters denote the type of material and size of record. For "Jubilee" only the combination MM was used, the first M = electrical transcription, the second M = 16" or 40 cm diameter, 33rpm, normal groove. The four-digit figure is the equivalent of a master number. The final figure and letter are not taken numbers but normally indicate stampers. It has been suggested that RL indicates that records have been made by the Recording Laboratories of the Allied Record Manufacturing Company; while UR is supposed to be the code for the Universal Recorders of Hollywood.



## Music Credits -

There are no music credits on disc labels or most extant documents, so these had to be ascertained with aural evidence.

## Recording and Broadcast Dates -

The relevant AFRS recording books were lost or destroyed and only partial information resides at the National Archives and Library of Congress. Parts of the database found their way to private collections and some of these have been gathered for the Third Edition. Press reports, trade journals and other AFRS documentation is of assistance. As with most AFRS transcriptions there appears to be generally as much as 12-week (three month) time lags between recording and broadcast.

## Personnel -

The personnel listings are based upon the announcements and dates of the programs and other reliable sources and discographies, and primary sources including the National Archives and Library of Congress.

## **There are four Jubilee Catalog Documents online:**

Part I:	Programs 1-100
Part II:	Programs 101-200
Part III:	Programs 201-300
Part IV:	Programs 301-433

D M S

## **And Jubilee Transcription Disc Galleries**

Episodes of Jubilee are proudly featured regularly on “The Star-Spangled Radio Hour” broadcasts and podcasts, available at:

<https://www.dennismspragg.com/star-spangled-radio-hour>

For further information, please contact:

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