Timeline of Jo Stafford’s Career

Stafford joined The Pied Pipers in the late 30s. After a brief stint in New York, the group returned to Los Angeles where they were hired by Tommy Dorsey’s big band.

In 1943, the Pied Pipers signed a contract with Capitol Records. In 1944, Stafford left the Pied Pipers to pursue a solo career.

In the 1950s, she and her husband created a humorous version of a bad lounge act, which they recorded under the personas of Darlene and Jonathan Edwards.

Her greatest commercial success was in the early 1950s with hit singles “Jambalaya”, “Shrimp Boats”, “Make Love to Me”, and “You Belong to Me”.

In 1961, she won a Grammy for Best Comedy Album for the album Jonathan and Darlene Edwards in Paris.

Shortly after her success as Darlene Edwards, Stafford chose to curtail her career in order to focus on her family. In 2008, at the age of 90, Stafford died of congestive heart failure.

Research Objective

• Build an accurate and detailed discography of Stafford’s recordings for Capitol Records.

This project serves to affirm Stafford’s significant, but underappreciated, contribution to American jazz. This research will eventually serve as a component of a larger monograph documenting and contextualizing Stafford’s life and art in American popular music.

Research Process

• Stafford’s career remains fairly undocumented in scholarly sources.
• Because few secondary sources exist, I originally searched for primary sources.

I contacted Capitol Records hoping they would be willing to grant me access to their discographical archives. I was unable to find someone who knew what the archive was or how to access it. Due to budget concerns, it is possible that no archivist or librarians are on staff to deal with this sort of request.

Results

Because of the difficulties in accessing primary sources, I instead used Michel Ruppli’s The Capitol Label Discography. This discography details all the recordings made for Capitol and subsidiary labels between 1942 and 1986. My job was to extract all the material relating to Stafford and organize it in a separate discography.

In my research, I also found V-Discs: A History and Discography by Richard Sears. V-Disc was a record label that sent music to troops stationed abroad during WWII. From this source, I was able to compile another discography about Stafford’s recordings for the war effort.