

# Tracing the Footsteps of Swing Legends:

## Tommy Dorsey & Jo Stafford, 1939-1941

Tyler Anderson ❖ Music & Theatre Arts ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



### Jo Stafford

Born November 12, 1917, Stafford first rose to notoriety during the Swing era after three years on the road with Tommy Dorsey (1939–1941)—during which swing bands regularly crisscrossed the nation, moving from venue-to-venue in automobile caravans to feed the swing dance craze. Among her many career achievements, Stafford was the first female vocalist to sell 25 million albums.



### Project Overview

This project researched the itinerant touring schedule of the Tommy Dorsey Big Band from 1939-1941, the years Stafford toured with the group. This information will inform Dr. Ryan Jones in his ongoing monograph project about Jo Stafford herself, specifically concerning this first high-profile stage of her career in which she sang as a member of the Pied Pipers vocal group within Dorsey's band. The goal of this project is the creation of a detailed timeline that documents the whereabouts of Stafford vis-à-vis Dorsey—where, when, what, and with whom they performed—throughout this formative three-year period in Stafford's development.



### Tommy Dorsey

Born November 19, 1905, Dorsey was one of the most iconic band leaders of the swing era. Known as “The Sentimental Gentleman of Swing” because of his highly lyrical and smooth trombone playing, Dorsey led a band that was wildly successful from the 1930s into the 1950s. His band would not only kick start the career of Stafford, but also singing legend Frank Sinatra.



#### April 1939

Dorsey band opens at Paramount Theater in NYC.



#### February 2, 1940

Beginning of three week stay at the Lyric Theater, Indianapolis



#### May 21, 1940

Band begins fourteen week sojourn at the Astor Roof, NYC.



#### April 10, 1941

Band begins to tour the Midwest and East Coast throughout the Spring and Summer.



#### November 11, 1942

“Ship Ahoy,” featuring the Dorsey Band, begins principal shooting in Hollywood.

1939 1940 1941 1942



#### December 1938

Jo Stafford and the Pied Pipers join the Tommy Dorsey band.



#### Fall 1939

Dorsey and his band at the Palmer House, Chicago



#### February 20, 1940

Band concludes a Midwest tour at Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook in New Jersey.



#### October 31, 1940

Dorsey opens at the Palladium Ballroom in Hollywood



#### August 24, 1941

Band plays at Lake Compounce in Bristol, Connecticut.