



Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin is a division of Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

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Lili Marleen

already has been a topic of Newsletter 23 and 24. But questions on the song constantly keep on coming in although we hoped to have answered all of these with the two Newsletters. Bear records now published a new box of seven CDs with a booklet – oh no, it's a book – presenting nearly 200 different recordings of the song. We listened to 100 of them and we can assure you: this is the best collection on "Lili Marleen" ever.

The box was conceived by Rainer Loft, Horst Bergemeier and Volker Kühn. The book – written and compiled by these gentlemen – is a real treasure. It answers each and every question you could think of, reprints the different lyrics, has a lot of rare photos and beautiful illustrations. The editors did not contact MDCB - God knows why they didn't. So we add a few more answers and illustrations which nobody asked for.



Lili Marleen an allen Fronten

Das Lied, seine Zeit, seine Interpreten, seine Botschaften

7 CD-Box (LP-Format) + Buch (180 pp.), BCD 16022 GL, Bear Family Records, 2005

Sometimes we couldn't tell what language we are listening to but every recording surely had a different style. Let's answer the inevitable question: What is our favourite recording? Ha! The instrumentals – they clearly are a relief.



Label excerpt from the 1945 "Report to the Nation" copy



Copy of the Decca master



Copy of an unknown studio recording



One of the many 78 records in the collection with nothing but a little paper glued on it – a 78er which could well be the original OSS recording



Copy of AFN master

Seeing all these labels and records you'll all have the same question: When will these people from the archive transfer the old recordings to digitally restored Compact Discs? Well, we'll do it but as we are an archive we have all the time in the world to wait for the best process which does not harm the originals.

Lili Marleen was published on Decca for the first time in the US in September 1945 with the back side "Symphony". Here is a story from "Time" Magazine, October first 1945 on the

Symphony

"C'est fini"

In a down-at-heel bistro on the French Riviera one night in August 1944, a pianist lazily fingered a nostalgic ballad from a crudely cleffed manuscript. Some G.I.s at the bar asked to hear it again. The musician played it once more, and then told its history. A Jewish friend of his in Nice, hunted by the Gestapo, had written it three years before, had left it with a publisher, then fled to the Alpes-Maritimes to join a band of the Maquis. Its title reflected its composer's despair: *C'est Fini* (It Is Finished).

To the Americans, *C'est Fini* sounded like a combination of *Lili Marlene* and *I'll Never Smile Again*. When they began to ask for it in every bar in southern France, the words were translated to English, the title was changed to *Symphonie*. By last week it was the No. 1 song hit of France. At Maxim's in Cannes, Yolande, the French Hildegard, sang it. So did lesser entertainers from Monte Carlo to Marseilles.

Last week the song's author was happily aware that everything was not fini. Sallow-faced, balding composer Alstone (né Siegfried Alfred Stein), singing his hit, was the star of his own troupe at the Riviera G.I. rest center.

In Manhattan, Chappell Music Co. got set to publish *C'est Fini* as *Symphony*; song pluggers tried it out for name-band leaders. Husky-throated Marlene Dietrich recorded the French Version for Decca. In translation, the French lyrics she sang were:

*Symphony of a day that will always
sing in my heavy heart,
Symphony of an evening in spring
... it's you that I hear,
I see again the withered window blinds
which to love one another you closed in the
night ...
The sound of your voice I now find again inside
me.
It's finished, it's finished!
My symphony!*



And these are the original French lyrics by
André Tabet et Roger Bernstein

*Symphonie, Symphonie d'un jour,
Qui chante toujours
Dans mon coeur lourd*

*Symphonie, Symphonie
D'un soir de printemps
C'est toi que j'entends
Depuis longtemps
Tes accords ont gardé leur parfum
Je revois des souvenirs défunts*

Symphonie, Symphonie

But U.S. listeners will get none of this pathos in the American Version which Bing Crosby recorded last week. Chappell got Tin Pan Alley's Jack (That's Why Darkies Were Born, Sleepy Lagoon) Lawrence to write these syrupy syllables:

*Symphony of love,
Music from above,
How does it Start?
You walk in and the song begins ...
Then we kiss, and it's clear to me,
When you're near to me, . . . ,
You are my symphony. . .
My symphony*

To round things up there is a manuscript in the collection for the 1953/54 radio show series "Time for Love" called "Lili Marlene". Here is an excerpt:

"[Diane La Volta] is received with tremendous applause which even grows when she announces the title of her first song - - 'Lili Marlene'. It was here in North Africa, she adds, where she sang the song for the first time when she entertains the Allied troops."

End of Newsletter 78 Part Two



Sheet music from Marlene's personal collection