

# Guide to the Jan August Collection (Mss 023)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Title: Jan August Papers  
Accession No: A2011-006  
Dates: 1920-1985  
Quantity: 1.5 cft (1 manuscript box, 1 white LP box)  
Language: This collection is in English.  
Processing information: Processed by Lisa Lobdell. Completed January 20, 2012.

## COLLECTION OVERVIEW

The collection consists of menus, press clippings, photos and recordings from the career of arranger and composer Jan August.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jan August (Jan Augustoff, September 24, 1904 – January 9, 1976) was born in New York City, the youngest of five children. Jan's parents, having paid for music lessons for the four older siblings who lacked any musical aptitude, chose not to repeat the mistake with their youngest. Jan learned to play the piano by ear as a child; as an adult he learned to read and arrange music. He mastered the xylophone, vibraphone and Solovox as well as the piano. In 1946, his instrumental recording of "Misirlou," a Greek folk song, sold more than 1,000,000 records.

As a young man, August performed as a pianist with the Paul Specht Band in Greenwich Village nightclubs. In the 1930's, Paul Whiteman invited him to play in his orchestra; August also performed with Ferde Grofé. With the musical shift from jazz to swing in the 1940's, August returned to performing solo in clubs. His style attracted the attention of Irving Gwartz of Diamond Records, who signed him to a recording contract. He received union scale wages of approximately \$35 for his recording of "Bob-a-Loo" and "Misirlou;" the recording reached the Top Ten on the charts and launched his career.

August hosted and /or performed on radio, notably a 15-minute weekly broadcast on the Mutual Radio Network from 1947-1948. In 1948 and 1950, he appeared on *The Toast of the Town* and from 1949-1951 he accompanied singer Roberta Quinlan on her NBC variety show. Later he hosted *Jan August's Revere Camera Show*. In 1949, he served as the subject of a 9-minute film short entitled *Audition for August* with Kitty Kallen. In the 1950's, August signed a recording contract with the Mercury label recording instrumental versions of popular hits laced with Latin rhythms. He also toured with his own orchestra in the United States and Canada. After arranging and recording more than 140 songs, August retired in 1967.

In 1974, a musician performing under the name Jan August was discovered in St. Petersburg, Florida. The fraud was revealed by a reporter; August did not press charges.

## Sources

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_August](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_August)

"Jan August, pianist, dies in New York". *Bangor Daily News*. January 19, 1976.

[https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=VAE1AAAAIBAJ&sjid=I08KAAAAIBAJ&pg=1023\\_971669&dq=jan+august&hl=en](https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=VAE1AAAAIBAJ&sjid=I08KAAAAIBAJ&pg=1023_971669&dq=jan+august&hl=en)

"Pianist Jan August Dies". *Star-News*. January 17, 1976.

[https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LrosAAAAIBAJ&sjid=GhMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=471\\_9,2904768&dq=jan+august&hl=en](https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LrosAAAAIBAJ&sjid=GhMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=471_9,2904768&dq=jan+august&hl=en)

Shenk, Mary Nic. "Was Jan August Playing in Town? Well, Not Exactly". *St. Petersburg Times*. September 7, 1974.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LjExAAAAIBAJ&sjid=S3kDAAAAIBAJ&pg=3046,707920&dq=jan+august&hl=en>

## ACQUISITION

Presented by June Appell (granddaughter) to the Great American Songbook Foundation on April 13, 2011.

## RESTRICTIONS

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## PREFERRED CITATION

Cite as: Jan August Collection, Great American Songbook Foundation.

## COLLECTION INVENTORY

Contents	Box	File
<b>Menus</b>		
The Emerald Room, The Shamrock Hotel, Houston, TX, 9/30/1950.	1	1
The Swan Room, New Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, LA, ca. 1950s.	1	2
Peacock Court, Hotel Mark Hopkins, 4/16/1949.	1	3
National Press Club Annual Members' Dinner honoring President Harry S. Truman, Statler Hotel, 1/11/1947. [includes seating list]	1	4
<b>Biographical/Press</b>		
Press manual, MCA Publicity Department, ca. 1950s.	1	5
News clippings, 1947.	1	6
Jan August impersonator correspondence, 1974-1985.	1	7
Advertisement leaflets, 1950s – 1960s.	1	8
"Memories . . . Growing up 'August,'" n.d. [recollections of August's daughters]	1	9
<b>Photos</b>		

8 family photos, 1920s-1970s. [includes 3x5 and 4x6]	1	10
31 publicity photos, some from "Audition for August" short, 1930s-1960s. [includes 3x5, 4x6, and 8x10]	1	11
<b>7" Commercial discs, 45rpm Extended Play</b>		
Piano Poetry by Jan August: <i>Czardas, Ma Belle, Wunderbar, Down by the Old Mill Stream</i> ; Mercury EP-1-3005.	2	1
Piano Rhythm: <i>Malaguena, Jalousie, Oye Negra, Misirlou</i> ; Mercury EP-1-3017. [4 copies]	2	2-5
<b>10" Commercial discs, 78rpm</b>		
Piano Magic: 2009-A <i>Misirlou</i> , 2009-B <i>Babalu</i> ; Diamond Record Corp.	2	6
Piano Magic: 2029-A <i>Bésame Mucho</i> , 2029-X <i>Dark Eyes</i> ; Diamond Record Corp. [2 copies]	2	7
Piano Magic: 2030-A <i>Make Believe</i> ; 2030-X <i>My Melancholy Baby</i> ; Diamond Record Corp.	2	8
Piano Magic: 2070-A <i>Oye Negra</i> ; 2070-X <i>Jan's Cucaracha</i> ; Diamond Record Corp.	2	9
Piano Magic: 2031-A <i>Ol' Man River</i> ; 2031-X <i>Some of These Days</i> ; Diamond Record Corp. [2 copies]	2	10-11
Piano Magic: 2032-A <i>My Shawl</i> ; 2032-X <i>Without You</i> ; Diamond Record Corp.	2	12
Vocal and Instrumental with Vera Massey: 2039-A <i>It's All Over Now</i> ; 2039-X <i>A Lady with a Parasol</i> ; Blue Diamond Corp.	2	13
Piano Magic: 2069-A <i>Malaguena</i> ; 2069-X <i>Ay Ay Ay</i> ; Blue Diamond Corp.	2	14
Piano Magic: 2078-A <i>Jan's Boogie</i> ; 2078-X <i>Tango of the Roses</i> ; Blue Diamond Corp.	2	15
Piano Solo: A-31(1398) <i>Oye Negra</i> ; A-31(1400) <i>Dancing in the Dark</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable blue label.	2	16
Piano Solo: A-31(1397) <i>Intermezzo</i> ; A-31 (1404) <i>Old Man River</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable blue label.	2	17
Piano Solo: YB1397 <i>Intermezzo</i> ; YB1398 <i>Oye Negra</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	18
Piano Solo: YB1396 <i>Zigeuner</i> ; YB1399 <i>Misirlou</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	19
Instrumental: YB3116 <i>Clair de Lune</i> ; YB3385 <i>Scherezade</i> ; Mercury black label. [2 copies]	2	20-21
Piano Rhythm Accomp: 2559 <i>Nola</i> ; 2560 <i>Cumbanchero</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label.	2	22
3212 <i>Bewitched</i> ; 3213 <i>Blue Prelude</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label.	2	23
Piano Solo: 1401 <i>Yours is My Heart Alone</i> ; 1405 <i>Dark Eyes</i> ; Mercury Popular Series black label. [2 copies]	2	24-25
3112 <i>Jan's Jam</i> ; 3113 <i>Besamé Mucho</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label. [2 copies]	2	26-27
Vocal and Instrumental: 3381 <i>Buffalo Billy</i> ; 3382 <i>I Never Had a Worry in the World</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label.	2	28
Vocal and Instrumental: 3370 <i>Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland</i> ; 3782 <i>Down by the Old Mill Stream</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label.	2	29
Piano Solo: 4003 <i>Jan's Cucaracha</i> ; 4009 <i>Perfidia</i> ; Mercury Non-Breakable black label.	2	30
Instrumental: YB3114 <i>Just One of Those Things</i> ; YB9139 <i>Delicado</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	31
Instrumental: YB9083 <i>Finesse</i> ; YB9086 <i>Ti-Pi-Tin</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	32
Instrumental: YB9415 <i>Habanera</i> ; YB9417 <i>Song of Lola</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	33
Instrumental: YB9721 <i>My Song</i> ; YB9722 <i>Petite Ballerina</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	34
Instrumental: YB9416 <i>Rhumba Bells</i> ; YB9418 <i>Jamboree</i> ; Mercury black label.	2	35

<b>10" Commercial discs, Long Playing 33 1/3, Mercury Records</b>		
Jan August: MG25137.	2	36
Piano Rhythm: MG25003.	2	37
Piano Variations: MG25139.	2	38
<b>12" Vinyl LP</b>		
"Piano Roll Blues: Here's to the good old days," Mercury MG20147. [2 copies]	2	40-41
"Jan August Plays Great Piano Hits," Mercury MG20513.	2	42
"The Piano Wizardry of Jan August," Mercury MGW 12254.	2	43
"Jan August Styles the Great Pop Piano Classics," Mercury MG20659. [2 copies]	2	44-45
"Cocktails and Conversation," Mercury MG20272. [stamped "Promotional Copy Not for Sale"]	2	46
"Cha-Cha Charm," Mercury MG20408.	2	47
"Music for the Quiet Hour," Mercury MG20078.	2	48
"Jan August Styles Great International Hits," Mercury MG20667.	2	49
"Jan August Plays Songs to Remember," Mercury MG 20072.	2	50
"As You Remember Them: Great Instrumentals & Other Favorites," Vol. 3, Time-Life Records 3-Record Set. [unopened]	2	51
<b>12" Transcription</b>		
Jan August on "The Spike Jones Show," 10/31/1947, 78rpm, Empire Broadcasting Corp. [stamped "copy," aluminum base with acetate]	2	39