

Free essay on judy canova

[War, World War 2](#)



Judy Canova was a singer/songwriter and radio host who helped to define what a woman could do in the realms of comedy and radio. In the emerging country culture of California, not many female country stars were filmed or recorded; Judy Canova was one of the first (Bufwack & Oermann, p. 111). As a comedienne and country singer/Broadway actress, Judy ran the gamut of the entertainment industry, her songwriting and singing being only one component of her vast talent. The songs and radio/film of Judy Canova very much reflect the ideas of what women could do in the 1940s and 1950s, exemplifying the World War II culture which stressed both female submission and the first stirrings of feminism. By becoming one of the most prominent comediennes and country music songwriters in the 1940s and 1950s, Judy Canova broke many expectations and paved the way for popular female artists in popular music.

In the 1940s, patriotism was a very big component of the cultural milieu - World War II ignited a great surge of nationalism in the American people. However, for women, this type of attitude was exemplified in an increasing perception that "strong and smart women werescary," and that women needed to just hope that the men would come home and fuel their codependency (Marcie, p. 43). Despite this overarching attitude, there was a subtle wave of feminism that arose in the 40s, beginning with Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*. Judy Canova helped to further these ideas of feminism and female confidence by paving the way for women to chart songs in the music industry.

Judy Canova was, first and foremost, a big presence on the radio. With her radio show, *The Judy Canova Show*, she combined country song with comedy

skits and gags which helped to lighten the hearts of both women living domestically and the men overseas during World War II. With this in mind, she helped to set many of the trends in female attitudes, and her songs reflected the sunny, wacky world that her listeners wanted to live in. The inherent silliness of her brand of country music, plus Judy's yodeling, energetic style of singing, helped to ease the sorrows of many who listened to her show.

" Good Night, Soldier"

Not only was patriotism a big part of early 1940s music, but loneliness was as well. Simply put, women missed their soldiers, and wanted them home. Romanticism led to a lot of sad, mournful songs about women missing the one they love, and life simply being incomplete without them (Marcie, p. 45). Despite the objective efforts of Judy Canova to pave her own way in the entertainment industry, she did not fight the codependent attitudes of women in the 1940s, especially during World War II. On her radio show The Judy Canova Show, she closed her act with the ballad " Good Night, Soldier," a call to the men of America to come back home and be safe while they are gone:

Good night soldier, wherever you may be

My heart's lonely without you

Good night soldier; taps to reveille

Finds me dreaming about you

Someday skies will change to blue

Smiles will lighten sorrow

Good night soldier, angels walk with you

Keep you through each tomorrow

The song itself depicts Canova as yet another of the heartbroken, lonely American wives who are waiting out the war for their beau to return. " My heart's lonely without you" indicates the codependency that these women feel, and how their lives are simply on hold while the men are away. This falls deeply into 1940s traditional, patriarchal gender roles, where the women are expected to wait patiently and pine after their men.

" Go to Sleepy Little Baby"

After World War II, when the soldiers came back, The Judy Canova Show's ending theme number changed to this small ditty, " Go to Sleepy Little Baby," which Judy claimed was a song her mother taught her growing up:

Go to sleep-y, little baby.

Go to sleep-y, little baby.

When you wake

You'll patty-patty cake

And ride a shiny little pony.

Once World War II ended, the Baby Boom began - millions of returning soldiers immediately started families with their wives. The women, as a consequence, removed from doing the jobs of men because the men were back, fell into the nurturing housewife role that they had perfected in their lives to date. This is reflected in Judy's choice of closing song as well: by

changing the tune from a mournful wife asking for her husband back, she turns the role of a woman back into nurturer. The song itself is a lullaby, urging her children (the husband and kids, all under her care) to sleep.

" After You've Gone"

Canova's later songs managed to reflect the increasing presence of feminism in the American consciousness. The song " After You've Gone" demonstrates the power of a woman scorned - the lyrics simultaneously beg the singer's beau to not leave her and to note that he will regret it. The first verse addresses the woman's pleading and begging to stay:

Now won't you listen honey, while I say,

How could you tell me that you're going aaway?

Don't say that we must part,

Don't break your baby's heart.

Over the course of this song, Judy sings about how her beau will regret leaving her. The tone is much different than the blind subordination of previous attitudes regarding men; this time, while Judy is sad about it, she is not going to take this betrayal lying down. Normally, in previous eras women considered themselves subordinate to men, but Judy's song demonstrates a confidence that she remains a real threat to the man. By the last verse, Judy is stating that the man will be the one missing her, and not the other way around:

There'll come a time, now don't forget it

There'll come a time when you'll regret it
But baby, think what you're doin'
I'm gonna haunt you so, I'm gonna taunt you so
It's gonna drive you to ruin
After you've gone, after you've gone away

This song demonstrates a defiance that was very rare before this point in American history; women were starting to stick up for themselves, and Judy Canova's songs exhibited that same self-confidence and unwillingness to remain the 'gentler sex.'

This strange dichotomy between " the sweet and lovely, dependent and needy female and the aggressive, murderous female" started to rear its head in the mid 40s, as evidenced in this song. While some women did indeed miss their husbands, others found solace in the power that they were given while the men were away. Songs of the era reflected that tiptoeing between anger and sweetness - " After You've Gone" is yet another of those examples. The women in the song, first and foremost, wants her man to stay. Once he is resolve to leave, however, she turns into a vindictive, threatening, powerful woman, attempting to appropriate the breakup for herself. Showing the nasty side of women was relatively new in songwriting (and in society) at that time, and it was immensely profitable (Marcie, p. 48).

In conclusion, Judy Canova's country music career managed to portray the gender ideas of women during the 1940s and 1950s. When she started the peak of her career as host of The Judy Canova Show, she would sing songs that reflected both the romanticism and loneliness of the women who pined

after their men in World War II. Once the soldiers returned, and American women settled into their roles as nurturers and housewives, Judy's songs became cheerier, friendlier and catered more toward the family atmosphere. However, she did not shy away from the nastier side of womanhood that came from women exercising their rights to equal respect and consideration, with songs that warned against spurning women.

Works Cited

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