

GLENN MILLER

2026

“THE GLENN MILLER STORY”



Glenn Miller Birthplace Society
51st Anniversary Festival

June 2026
Prepared by
Dennis M. Spragg

The 2026 Celebration

During 2026, the Glenn Miller Birthplace Society honors the handsome motion picture milestone “The Glenn Miller Story” with its Glenn Miller Festival theme and special exhibit. Likewise, the motion picture is featured in the annual 2026 Glenn Miller audiovisual presentation. Also celebrated is the 1946-2026 eighty-year anniversary of the first postwar Miller band, Tex Beneke and the Glenn Miller Orchestra, which became Tex Beneke and his Orchestra. Furthermore, 2026 also marks the seventieth anniversary, 1956-2026, of the New Glenn Miller Orchestra directed by Ray McKinley. The trademark Miller band has been in continuous operation ever since.

The true Glenn Miller Story is not necessarily as portrayed in the 1954 Universal-International bio-musical, nor would it have been possible to have done so in an entertaining two-hour format. The producer and screenwriters introduced some exceptions and additions to real-life events. Their narrative, assisted by consultants Don Haynes, Ed Kirby, and Chummy MacGregor, came together in a highly entertaining and successful romantic musical achievement. For many years, “The Glenn Miller Story” was ranked among the top ten all-time highest-grossing movies. Restored and reissued in 1984, with digitization and home video, the Technicolor hit was clearly key to the cultural phenomenon known as the Glenn Miller legacy, which continues to this day.

Road to Production

Almost as soon as Major Glenn Miller’s Army Air Forces Orchestra returned from France in August 1945, the trade press was reporting that there were discussions in Hollywood about a Glenn Miller bio-musical. As early as 1946, Miller’s studio, Twentieth Century-Fox, where he had signed a new seven-year contract to take effect after he left the military, was in the planning stages of a project. The reports said that they planned to cast Betty Grable's popular musical co-star, Dan Dailey, as Miller. However, nothing came of the initiative. By December 1950, the popular postwar Miller-sponsored band led by Tex Beneke had moved on from Miller Estate ownership and license. Miller’s widow, Helen, and attorney/executor, David Mackay, were beginning attempts to monetize the Miller legacy through RCA Victor reissues of Miller records and previously unissued Miller broadcasts. At the time, numerous bands and bandleaders were still attempting to cash in on Miller’s popularity by performing imitations of the Miller music library and style. Sensing an opportunity to cash in on the continued interest in Miller’s music, Universal-International launched a Glenn Miller project that culminated in a film titled *Moonlight Serenade*.

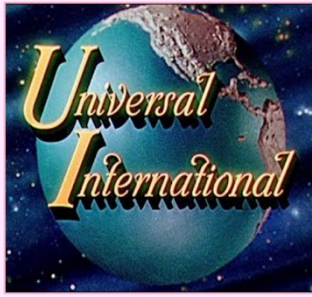
The Project Launches

As the concept materialized, Universal discovered that Helen Miller had definite ideas about how she wanted her life with Glenn portrayed, who she wanted involved with the project as advisors, and where she wanted certain aspects of their lives filmed. To win her support, Universal acceded to many of her requests. Foremost was the participation of Donald Haynes, Edward Kirby and John C. “Chummy” MacGregor as Technical Advisors. For better or worse, their interpretations became embedded in the screenplay. There was no way that a two-hour Technicolor feature focused on the compelling human interest story of Glenn-Helen relationship surrounded by the romance of Glenn’s music could be faithful to the myriad of detail surrounding the real Glenn and Helen Miller, so liberties would have to be taken to ensure a well-paced, handsome, compelling, emotional, and therefore, successful motion picture.

Like the *White Christmas* project being made simultaneously at Paramount, the idea was to appeal to World War II veterans and their families. Both Bing Crosby at Paramount and Air Force Reserve Col. James Stewart at Universal took this very seriously, given their wartime experiences. Although it may seem obvious today, there was actually little argument among executives at Universal as to who might portray Miller. James Stewart was the favorite all along. He’d been paired very successfully with June Allyson at MGM for the 1949 film *The Stratton Story*, so it was also evident that they would make the perfect pair for *The Glenn Miller Story*. As it happened, they went on to make the popular *Strategic Air Command* for Universal after doing *The Glenn Miller Story*. Stewart and Allison were box office gold.

Production launched in 1953. According to Helen Miller’s wishes, a second unit filmed on location in Denver and Boulder, Colorado, at several locations, including the University of Colorado campus, Lowry Air Force Base, and the Elitch Gardens Trocadero Ballroom. Universal was very pleased with the efficiencies and proximity of the locations. The Hollywood unit shot at the studio and several locations in Southern California. In all, the production of *The Glenn Miller Story* was on time, on budget, and essentially completed by December 1953, in time for the first publicity premiere in Hollywood. A second followed in Miller’s hometown of Clarinda, Iowa, on January 13, 1954, and then in Miami Beach, Florida. The United States theatrical release was in New York on February 4, 1954. The motion picture was actually released earlier overseas, for example, on January 4, 1954, in Japan.

The Glenn Miller Story was an immediate box-office smash hit. Universal had bet wisely.



The Glenn Miller Story

Universal-International Pictures No. 1741

Producer	Aaron Rosenberg
Director	Anthony Mann
Screenplay	Valentine Davies and Oscar Brodney
Cinematographer	William H. Daniels
Editor	Russell F. Schoengarth
Music Director	Joseph Gershenson
Musical Adaptation	Henry Mancini
Art Directors	Alexander Golitzen, Bernard Herzbrun
Set Directors	Russell A. Gausman, Julia Heron
Second Unit Director	John Sherwood
Sound Editors	Leslie I. Carey, Joe Lapis

Cast

James Stewart	Glenn Miller
June Allyson	Helen Burger Miller
Harry Morgan	Chummy MacGregor
Charles Drake	Don Haynes
George Tobias	Cy Shribman
Barton MacLane	Gen. H. H. Arnold
Sig Ruman	Mr. Kranz
Irving Bacon	Lewis Miller
James Bell	Fred Burger
Kathleen Lockart	Mattie Lou Miller
Katherine Warren	Anna Burger
Frances Langford	Herself
Louis Armstrong	Himself
Gene Krupa	Himself
Ben Pollack	Himself
The Modernaires	Themselves
Archie Savage Dancers	Themselves
The Airmen of Nore	Uncredited
Ray Conniff	Uncredited
Paul Tanner	Uncredited

Other

Technical Advisors	Don Haynes
	Edward Kirby
	Chummy MacGregor

Publicity Premieres

Hollywood
Clarinda, Iowa January 13, 1954
Miami Beach

Theatrical Premiere

New York February 10, 1954

Overseas Premieres

Austria August 13, 1954
Belgium January 4, 1954
France October 8, 1954
Germany September 3, 1954
Ireland March 12, 1954
Japan January 4, 1954
Portugal March 15, 1955
Sweden January 4, 1954

Awards

The Glenn Miller Story earned three Academy Award nominations: Best Screenplay (Valentine Davies and Oscar Brodney), Best Score (Henry Mancini and Joseph Gershenson) and Best Sound Recording (Leslie I. Carey). It won the Oscar for Best Sound Recording.

Income

Upon its 1954 release, The Glenn Miller Story was impressively successful at the box office and earned over \$7 million in theatrical rentals. It was Universal's highest-grossing film of 1953 and the third highest-grossing film of 1953 in the United States, behind *White Christmas* and *The Caine Mutiny*. However, it had legs, with strong results continuing into the following year. Overseas, it was also Universal's highest-grossing film overseas with \$5 million in additional theatrical rentals. The Glenn Miller Story went on to be ranked for many years as one of the ten-highest grossing releases of all time.

James Stewart Earnings

An Air Force Reserve officer and World War II combat veteran, James Stewart considered portraying Glenn Miller one of the most important responsibilities of his career. He chose to be compensated for his work with a percentage of the motion picture's profits. This paid off handsomely for Stewart, who earned millions in income from his percentage of Glenn Miller Story profits.

Audio Releases

Decca Records originally released the Original Soundtrack of The Glenn Miller Story on a 10" 33rpm record, which was number one for ten weeks on the 1954 *Billboard* album charts. Not to be outdone, RCA Victor issued its own 10" 33rpm album featuring performances by Glenn Miller and his Orchestra titled *Glenn Miller Plays Selections From the Glenn Miller Story*, which was number one for eleven weeks on the 1954 *Billboard* album charts. The 12" 33 rpm second edition version of the release, including additional music, earned an RIAA-certified Gold Record designation in 1961.

A Major Universal Investment

Class A Production, Cast & Crew

Producer - Aaron Rosenberg

Director - Anthony Mann



James Stewart and June Allyson

Universal's Perfect Couple Cast as Glenn and Helen Miller
Publicity Photos with Helen Miller



Major Musical Talent

Henry Mancini – Adaptation & Score
Jazz Giants Louis Armstrong, Gene Krupa, Ben Pollack, and Barney Bigard
USAF Airmen of Note Portray AAF Band



On Location in Denver and Boulder

A Helen Miller Requirement
Universal Thrilled with CU Campus, Lowry Air Force Base, the Elitch Gardens Trocadero
Ballroom, and Other Sites



AMONG THE HITS AND MISSES



Courtship and Romance

Glenn and Helen Miller did meet at the University of Colorado Boulder. However, he went on to play for bands in the Southwest and California. Working with Ben Pollack, he eventually ended up in Chicago and New York. When he asked for her, Helen traveled to New York and married him in 1928.



The Struggles of 1937

The Glenn Miller Story accurately describes the difficulties faced by Glenn and Helen Miller during 1937, including the challenge of organizing his own band and her serious illness



Finding "The Sound" - Moonlight Serenade

"The Sound" and "Moonlight Serenade" evolved over a four-year period in which Glenn worked for famed British bandleader Ray Noble and studied with Dr. Joseph Schillinger. It was not, as portrayed, an overnight discovery.



Pennsylvania 6-5000

The scene portrays the staircase lobby of the home of Glenn and Helen Miller at Cotswold Apartments in Tenafly, New Jersey



A String of Pearls

Elitch Gardens' Trocadero Ballroom in Denver simulates the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, N. Y., where Glenn and the band had their breakthrough summer of 1939. However, "A String of Pearls" did not appear until 1941.



Tuxedo Junction

Portrays Glenn Miller's work in Hollywood, with the Archie Savage Dancers recreating the Nicholas Brothers Dance Scenes with the Miller Band at Twentieth Century Fox during 1941 and 1942



Left Out – However ... It Worked

Key Glenn Miller Personnel are not present in the production and this shades the context of what the real (and highly successful) 1938-1942 Band actually sounded like and why it was so popular with both fans of “sweet” and “swing.” In fairness, it was impossible for the screenwriters to tell the whole story in two hours – the Oscar-nominated script was well made.



Modernizing Military Music

Capt. Glenn Miller had the complete support of the Army Air Forces as Director of Bands for the AAF Training Command. He actually did challenge a traditional officer who scoffed at “jazz” marches. Miller said, “Tell me, Major, are we still flying the same airplanes that we did in World War I?”



The Goodbye Scene - Departure For The United Kingdom

Steve was only 16 months old in June 1944, and Jonnie Dee was not yet born.

General Hap Arnold did not see Capt. Miller off.

Glenn did actually fly aboard a big Air Transport Command C-54 airplane.



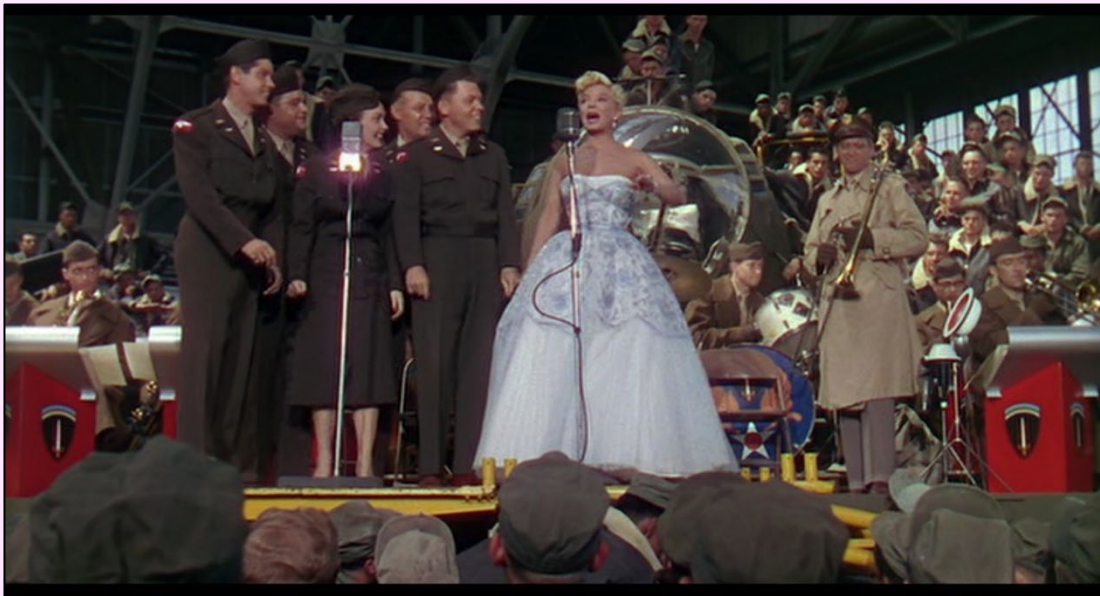
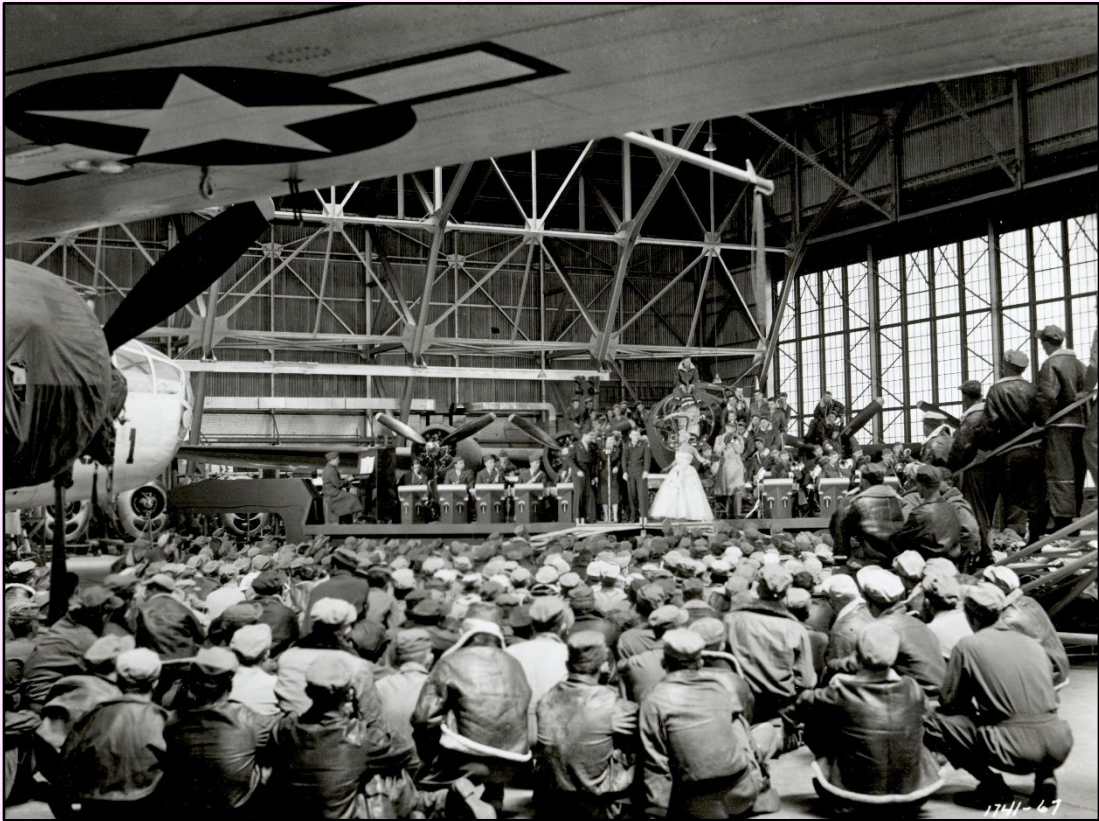
A Hunk O' Home

In Britain, Maj. Glenn Miller and the AAF Band (Special) made a tremendous impact on Allied Service Personnel and the British people. Gen. James Doolittle paid the highest compliment by saying to Glenn, "Next to a letter from home, your band is the biggest morale booster in the European Theater of War."



Chattanooga Choo Choo

Accurate Portrayal of a Hangar Concert at an Air Base ... except:
Frances Langford says, "thank you, James," instead of Glenn ...
Frances Langford never actually appeared with the Miller AAF Band – anywhere ...
The Modernaires never appeared with the AAF Band in the UK – anywhere ...
However, the SHAEF Bandstands and AAF drum set are accurately depicted



The Tragic Events of December 15, 1944

Incorrect and Misleading Details Were Memorialized



Little Brown Jug – Not the “Final” Arrangement

Glenn Miller recorded it for RCA Bluebird in 1939 and broadcast it often between 1939 and 1942. The AAF Band also performed it between 1943 and 1945



**A HANDSOME & CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BIO-MUSICAL
BLOCKBUSTER RELEASE THAT SOLIDIFIED THE GLENN MILLER LEGACY
DIGITALLY REMASTERED AND RE-RELEASED IN 1984**



Clarinda Premiere

Guest: James Stewart
January 13, 1954



*James Stewart and Mattie Lou Miller, Glenn's mother
"He's nice but not as handsome as my son"*



**THE 2026 GLENN MILLER PRESENTATION
GMBS “GLENN MILLER STORY” VIDEO
Saturday, June 13, 2026**

Audio Program

The Audio selected for the 2026 GMBS Video includes previously unissued performances by Glenn Miller, as otherwise featured on the current and highly acclaimed Glenn Miller Limited Edition CD series.

**Glenn Miller and his Orchestra
CBS Chesterfield Moonlight Serenade**

<i>Band 01</i>	<i>Dvořák’s Largo (Goin’ Home)</i>	<i>March 5, 1942</i>
<i>Band 02</i>	<i>Dear Arabella</i>	<i>December 10, 1941</i>
<i>Band 06</i>	<i>A String of Pearls</i>	<i>June 9, 1942</i>
<i>Band 07</i>	<i>My Blue Heaven</i>	<i>November 13, 1941</i>
<i>Band 10</i>	<i>Tuxedo Junction</i>	<i>March 5, 1942</i>
<i>Band 11</i>	<i>Little Brown Jug</i>	<i>June 2, 1942</i>
<i>Band 12</i>	<i>Let’s Have Another Cup O’ Coffee</i>	<i>March 5, 1942</i>
<i>Band 13</i>	<i>Oh! So Good</i>	<i>November 13, 1941</i>

Glenn Miller AAF Band and Others

<i>Band 03</i>	<i>Music Makers (AAF Band)</i>	<i>April 29, 1944</i>
<i>Band 04</i>	<i>Farewell Blues (AAF Band)</i>	<i>April 29, 1944</i>
<i>Band 05</i>	<i>Moonlight Serenade (AAF Band and Tex Beneke)</i>	<i>(Composite)</i>
<i>Band 08</i>	<i>Too Little Time (Henry Mancini)</i>	
<i>Band 09</i>	<i>Basin Street Blues (Louis Armstrong)</i>	

Vocalists and Soloists Include

*Louis Armstrong, Tex Beneke, Ernie Caceres, Bobby Hackett, Marion Hutton, Billy May,
the Modernaires, Maurice Purtill, and Babe Rusin*