

Victor Kalin

All American



Above: Victor Kalin in his Greenwich Village studio, New York, 1950. Unless otherwise noted, all photographs of the artist have been kindly provided by his daughter Rebecca – all rights reserved © 2025.

Even 34 years after his death, some of Victor Kalin's album covers remain readily familiar to music lovers and collectors, whether of LPs or CDs. Indeed, had he been afforded the option to earn royalties, versus the industry standard of a one-time fixed fee, he would have enjoyed a tidy sum throughout his life. Labels like RCA have continued to re-print his striking illustrations even as the music industry migrated from the LP to cassette to CD and now digital mediums. And yet his album cover work forms only a part of his rich artistic legacy. There are hundreds of paintings, illustrations for books and magazines, woodcuts and more. Only more impressive than his sheer prolificacy, is the unfailing quality he maintained across all mediums.

This article draws heavily on the superb online profile and gallery that Victor Kalin's daughter Rebecca has created in his memory – please visit it here: <https://www.victorkalin.com/>. The author is indebted to her help and cooperation. Thank you.

Beginnings

The oldest of three children, Victor was born in Belleville, Kansas, on 18 January 1919 to Eugene and Rebekah (née Benson) Kalin. Founded in 1869, mainly by Swedish immigrants (Kalin is likely an Americanization of Kjellin, a common Swedish name), the town is located in the Kaw Valley close to the Nebraska border. Victor's own parents were of an artistic bent. His father was a cornet player with the Barnum & Bailey Circus, leaving the band to become a dentist – a prerequisite for marriage to Rebekah ("Dot") Benson, a fine amateur painter and potter.

A Joyful Childhood

From a young age Victor showed a real aptitude for art, his early drawings and paintings showing a distinction beyond his years. Nor were his gifts limited to the visual arts. He excelled at both the piano and trumpet and as a member of the Delphian Study Club performed in song and dance recitals given in the local community. Not only was he an active member of the local St. James Episcopal congregation, participating in holiday pageants, but he was also a Boy Scout with Troop No. 7. A formative experience was the 1933 "Century of Progress Exhibition", also known as the Chicago World's Fair, which he and his brother Jay attended. Its many pavilions were largely in Art Deco style, with the Fair featuring major art installations and murals. His enthusiasms were unbounded – from the high school drama club to the debate club to the football team (he played tight end) to the Belleville Mixed Chorus and the high school band (he could double on cornet and trumpet) – Victor was fully engaged with all that life had to offer.

Victor's first artistic recognition came in high school when he won the national Hallmark Student Card Contest. Like much of small-town America, Belleville took tremendous pride in its young citizens. Such notable exploits were proudly reported in *The Belleville Telescope*, the town newspaper. The 30 August 1934 edition included this humorous snippet:

Young Victor Kalin, son of the Belleville dentist and Cuba band leader, recently bought a decrepit used car, which has been giving plenty of tire trouble. He came to the dinner table one day with the remark that it at least is a musical car. "How's that, Vic," his dad asked. "It always runs in the key of E," he replied, "four flats."

Right: A talented trumpet and coronet player, Victor played in the Second Annual Mid-Western Band Festival in 1936.



Above: At age 14, Victor travelled to Chicago to attend the World's Fair, also known as the "Century of Progress Exhibition". It made a tremendous impression on him. The striking poster was designed by Weimer Pursell (1906-1974).





BLUE RIBBON WINNER IN NATIONAL ZIEGFELD GIRL CONTEST

This streamlined 1941 Miss, drawn by Victor Kalin, of Lawrence, Kansas, won the unanimous approval of the judges and \$500 in cash, in the national Ziegfeld Girl Contest sponsored by the Art Students League of New York. More than 1,000 paintings by artists representing every sector of the U.S.A. were entered in this competition which was inspired by the M-G-M production "Ziegfeld Girl" which glorifies the American girl. James Montgomery Flagg, John LaGatta, Raeburn van Buren and Heyworth Campbell, among the nation's foremost illustrators, comprised the judging committee headed by Robert Hale of the Art Students League. All of the paintings in the contest were exhibited at the Hotel Pierre, in New York.

Above: Victor Kalin's prize-winning design for the 1941 National Ziegfeld Girl Contest and the award citation. He was only 22.

Serious Studies and a Prize

In May 1937 he graduated as co-salutatorian from Belleville High School and in the fall enrolled at the University of Kansas (K.U.) in Lawrence. In addition to his studies, Victor maintained a busy schedule of musical activities, whether playing cornet or trumpet in ad-hoc ensembles or joining the cast of a new musical or stage play. In his sophomore year he was awarded a scholarship in the School of Fine Arts. Further recognition came in September 1940 when he took home two First Prizes from the Topeka State Fair (in the oil painting and portrait-from-life categories). While still a college Junior he proceeded to take honors in a contest co-sponsored by the Art Students League of New York and MGM Studios "to depict the Ziegfeld Follies Girl". Besting more than 1,000 entries, Victor's winning design (an airbrush and pastel drawing) not only helped publicize the 1941 film of the same name starring Judy Garland, but also garnered him a \$500 prize, a considerable sum for the 22-year-old Kalin.

Serving his Country – the War Years

On 1 June 1941 he graduated from K.U. with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree and the following day began work at the Fairfax Bomber Plant in Kansas City. A major assembly facility for the North American B-25 Mitchell medium bomber, it would eventually employ thousands of men and women. Victor's initial assignment entailed painting war propaganda art. In November 1941, on the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, some of Victor's work was showcased at an exhibition held in Concordia, Kansas. Following America's entry into World War II, he enrolled in a 14-week course on airplane drafting in preparation for service with the War Department. Having first joined the Volunteer Ordinance Corps (V.O.C.), a civilian endeavor that assisted the war effort by promoting industrial production and weapons manufacture, Victor was then drafted into the US Army. Following a week's orientation at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, he reported to the Proving Grounds in Aberdeen, Maryland, for basic training. Upon completion, Pfc. Kalin was assigned to the Army's Visual Aid Department at Wright Field (now part of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base) in Dayton, Ohio. There he helped produce instructional charts, posters, and other visual materials used to educate soldiers, pilots, and technical personnel. This effort was crucial in standardizing military training across a rapidly expanding wartime force.

Love in the Azores

His talents soon won him an overseas posting to Lajes Field in the Azores as a field correspondent for both the US Army's weekly *Yank* and for the U.S. Army Air Forces' *Airmada*. The former was written



Left: 21 January 1944 edition of *Yank*. Victor worked as a field correspondent for this and the U.S. Army Air Corps' *Airmada*. **Above:** Corporal Victor Kalin (second from right) during his war-time Army service at Lajes Field in the Azores.

by enlisted soldiers for enlisted soldiers, providing news, humor, and entertainment for U.S. troops worldwide, attaining at its peak a circulation of 2.5 million copies per week. Among its more famous recurring features was the cartoon "Sad Sack" by Sgt. George Baker, who became a close friend of Victor. Now Sgt. Kalin, Victor also painted scenery and murals for officers' clubs. His tour of duty in the Azores would prove his most rewarding in another way – there he met his wife, an account best told by his daughter Rebecca in the website devoted to her father's artistry:

"It was while there in the Azores that Vic met Catherine (Kate) Bryan, a 6-foot, part-Cherokee Red Cross volunteer from Oklahoma. The Officers' Club show was far behind schedule when Vic was asked to lend a hand by painting a backdrop at the theater. He caught her attention when, rather than climbing up and down the 18' ladder as he worked, he stilt-walked it across the stage. Vic and Kate left the Azores together, married, and settled in New York City's Greenwich Village, where he began work as a magazine illustrator."



Left: Vic and Kate met in the Azores, married in 1946, and would raise three children together. Kate Bryan (1919-2004) was a graduate of Mills College in California. During their years together in Connecticut, she taught at the Norwalk Technical Institute and worked as an IBM Instructor and a programmer-analyst for various consulting firms. She was also a fine amateur pianist. When Victor died in November 1991, Kate was by his side, as she had always been.

Marriage and Magazine Illustrations

They married on 8 February 1946 at the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church of England in Hamilton, Bermuda, where they also honeymooned. Shortly thereafter, Victor was honorably discharged from the US Army and a new life began for the young couple in New York. By year's end the couple were welcoming their first child, a son named Richard. Adding to the celebrations was the publication of one of Victor's first major assignments as a commercial artist, a booklet for Trans World Airlines. By this time, his illustrations were already appearing regularly in such magazines as *Esquire*, *The American Weekly*, *Redbook*, *Liberty*, *Colliers*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Coronet*, in addition to billboard posters and other advertisements. These striking illustrations were generally sleek and vibrant, drawn or painted in realistic detail and evoking the comfort and prosperity of America's postwar economic boom.



Right: Just a few of the hundreds of magazine illustrations by Victor Kalin – some are available for purchase at VictorKalin.com.

On trips back to Belleville, Victor proved his hometown loyalty by playing alongside Belleville High students at the National Band Festival in Lawrence, Kansas. The following year Victor and Kate welcomed a baby girl, their daughter Rebecca (see below).

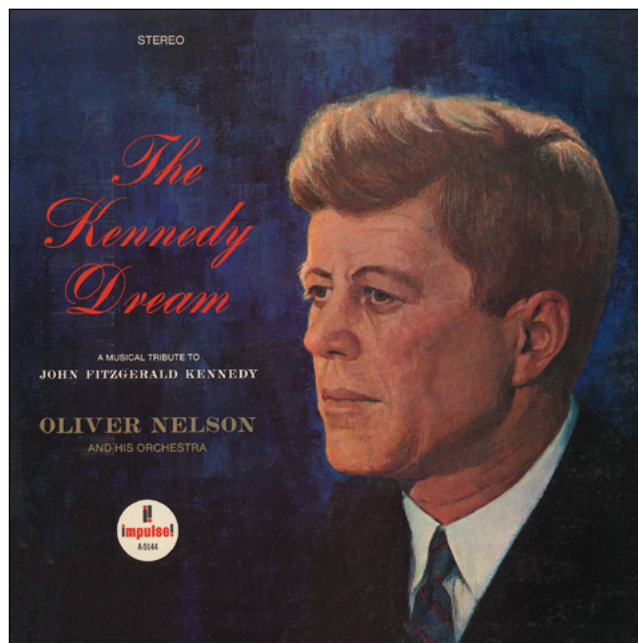


Rebecca Kalin

A lifelong storyteller, Rebecca Kalin has worked as an artist and animator, hitchhiked across South America dressed as a boy, made clothes for animals on SNL, taught scriptwriting in Africa, founded and ran a successful non-profit, written four original screenplays and an opera libretto. Now (what is commonly euphemized as) retired, she posts weekly 100-word stories on Substack and this past year wrote and illustrated *Your Life in 100 Words: How to Write a Memoir in Small Bites*. Visit her website at <https://www.rebecakalin.com> and her Substack page [here](#). At left she is seen with her father Vic in a 1975 photo.

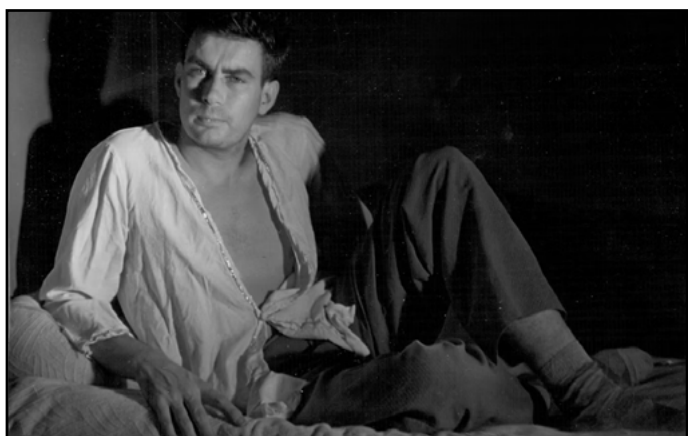
Radio and Album Covers

Victor's career continued apace. In July 1948, the CBS radio quiz show "Hit the Jackpot" offered one of his oil paintings as the grand prize, while commissions from many of the day's leading magazines and publishers continued to pour in. The couple soon re-located to Darien, Connecticut, welcoming their third child, a son they named Jeffrey, in March 1951. Music remained a central part of his life and during the 1948-149 season he played with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. (Many years later, he would serve on its Board of Governors.) Though now permanently settled on the East Coast, Victor remained a favorite son of Kansas, his oil paintings regularly exhibited at Kansas Artists' Shows in Concordia.



Above Left: ● RCA Victor SP-1071. "Saturday Night with Mr. C" – this Perry Como album cover was among the very first that Kalin did. **Above Right:** ● Impulse A-9144. "The Kennedy Dream" composer / arranger Oliver Nelson assembled a big band to pay homage to the slain President, the musical numbers preceded by excerpts from Kennedy speeches. Kalin's remarkable gift for portraiture is much in evidence here. Although his artwork appears on a number of different labels, the lion's share was done for RCA Victor. See the gallery of his classical music album cover art on page 189.

In January 1955 he was invited to appear on the Alistair Cooke-hosted CBS Television program "Omni-bus", during which he painted a portrait of his daughter Becky "live" on air. It was around this time that Victor began receiving regular commissions from RCA Victor, crooner Perry Como's "Saturday Night with Mr. C" among Victor's first album covers.



Right: Victor Kalin, early 1950s. Movie star looks with the talent and charisma to match.

Though he would work for other labels as well, including Jazztone, Impulse!, Brunswick, American Decca, MCA, Flying Dutchman, Contact, Celestial Harmonies, Philco and others, the lion's share of his LP cover art was made for RCA Victor. Victor's talents were equally prized by New York's publishing houses. Whether buying LPs, cheap paperbacks, or countless other products, the new era of mass consumption had begun. And for a brief window, perhaps ten years at most, the golden age of illustration reigned until it was irrevocably overtaken by photography.

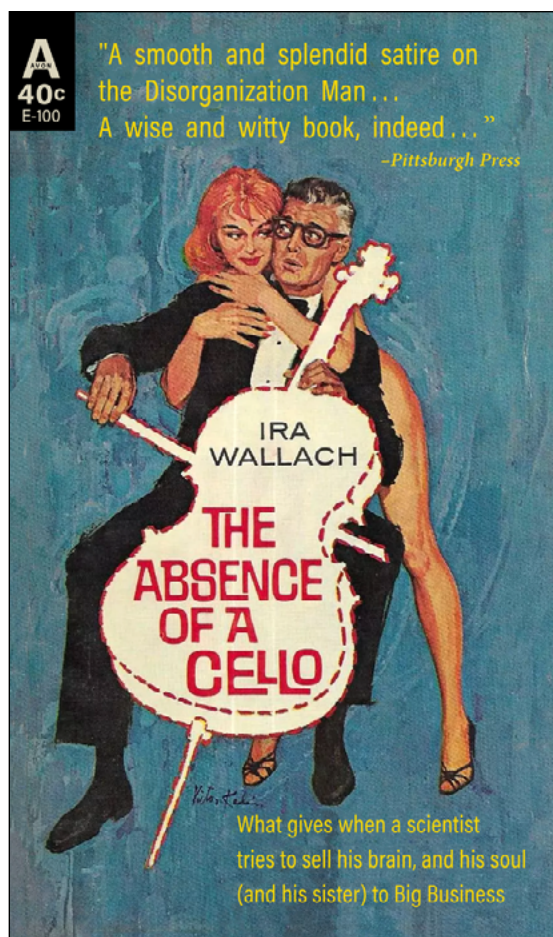
Putting the Thrills into Mass-Market Paperbacks

Victor provided the cover art for more than 200 paperback books published by the likes of Avon, Dell, Signet, Berkley, Ace and Pocket Books. In addition to these mystery, gothic and early pot-boiler pulp and noir books, he also illustrated Merrill and Co. paper doll books (e.g., Betty Grable and Ballerinas), playing cards, symphony concert programs, as well as hard-cover adult and children's books. Victor's paperback book covers are imbued with a richly evocative immediacy and he could easily conjure those elements of allure, passion, intrigue, and danger that were staples of pulp fiction and noir.

Festivals & Photography

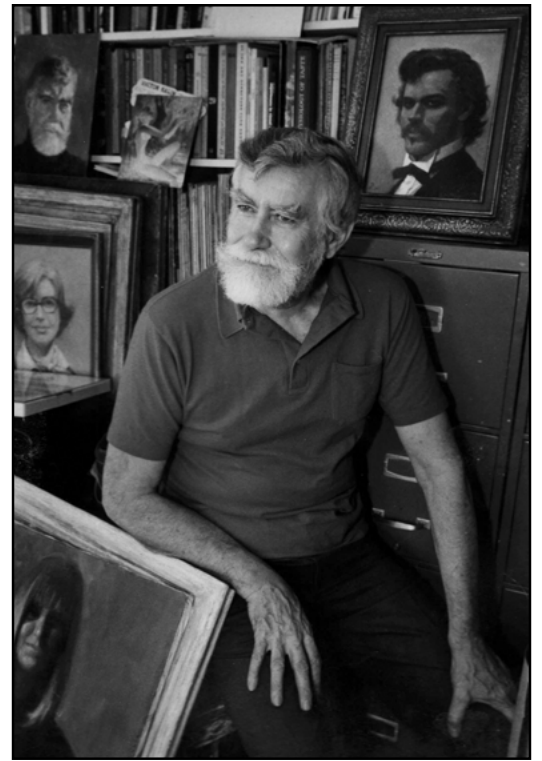
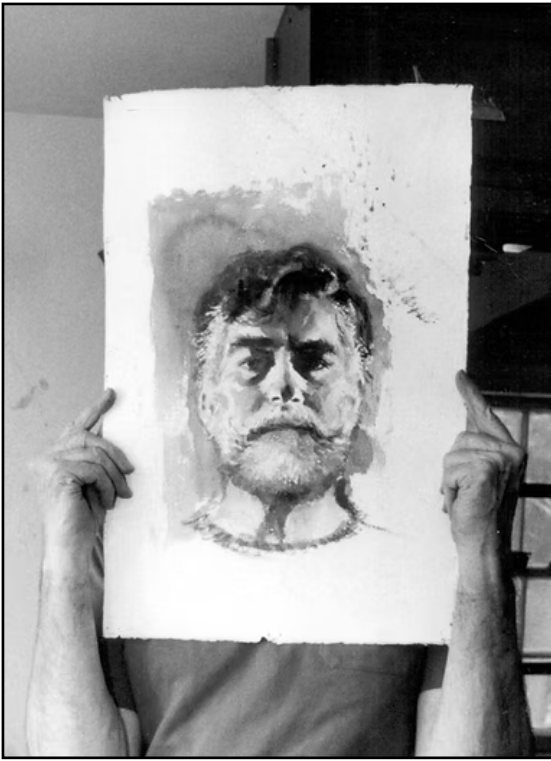
Although the popularity of the mass-market paperback began to wane during the 1960s, the LP market remained relatively robust by comparison. Music had been a central part of Victor's life since childhood. In fact, during college he had suspended his studies at K.U. for nearly a year to tour with the Jimmy Caton Jazz Band, so accomplished was Kalin on the trumpet and cornet. From the late 1950s into the early 1970s Victor produced over 100 album covers, inspired by the concerts and music festivals he attended, usually with press pass and camera in hand. His dark room techniques were advanced, anticipating the software tools now part and parcel of Photoshop. He processed all of his own black-and-white film, experimenting with double-exposures, distortion and re-composition in inventive new ways. Among the most admired examples of his jazz art is the gatefold illustration in saxophonist and composer John Coltrane's legendary album *A Love Supreme*, released by Impulse! Records in 1965. Coltrane, Louis Armstrong and Ruby Braff were among the jazz greats he loved most. When listening to classical music, he gravitated towards Brahms and Chopin. In the 1970s Kalin rebuilt a Knabe Grand Reproducing Piano, doing all the restoration work and allowing him to enjoy rolls by such keyboard giants as Josef Lhévinne, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Leopold Godowsky and Artur Schnabel.

Right: This striking portrait of John Coltrane featured in the legendary jazz saxophonist, bandleader and composer's celebrated 1965 album *A Love Supreme*, issued on Impulse! ● A-77. With his "Victory at Sea" albums, this pen and ink drawing of Coltrane is among the most widely admired, and circulated, of Kalin's artwork. Prints of this and other portraits can be ordered from <https://www.victorkalin.com>.



Above: Ira Wallach's *The Absence of a Cello*, published by Avon Books, New York, 1960. Today Kalin-illustrated books are sought after by pulp fiction collectors.





Above Left: Victor Kalin, Self-Portrait (ink and watercolor). **Above Right:** Kalin at home in Connecticut, 1985.

Later Years

In 1973, Victor went to bed thinking that he'd come down with the flu. In fact, he was suffering from acute leukemia. As his daughter Rebecca has memorably recalled of him: "There was one other art in which Victor excelled, and that was the art of life. Every day was special." And thus, he soldiered on, never complaining and maintaining the same zest for living he always had. He now devoted more time to his own artwork, often involving large abstract paintings, and left the hustle of commercial art to others. He greatly admired the artwork of Cy Twombly and Chuta Kimura.

In addition to serving on the Board of the Norwalk Symphony, he was an active member of the Watercolor Group and the Silvermine Guild. Perhaps closest to his heart was the "Back Porch Brown Bag Dirty Talk Society", a group of artist friends, colleagues and enthusiasts who met regularly to share stories, music and much laughter.

Among the "Brown Baggers" was his close friend and fellow artist Jim Flora, who said of Victor:

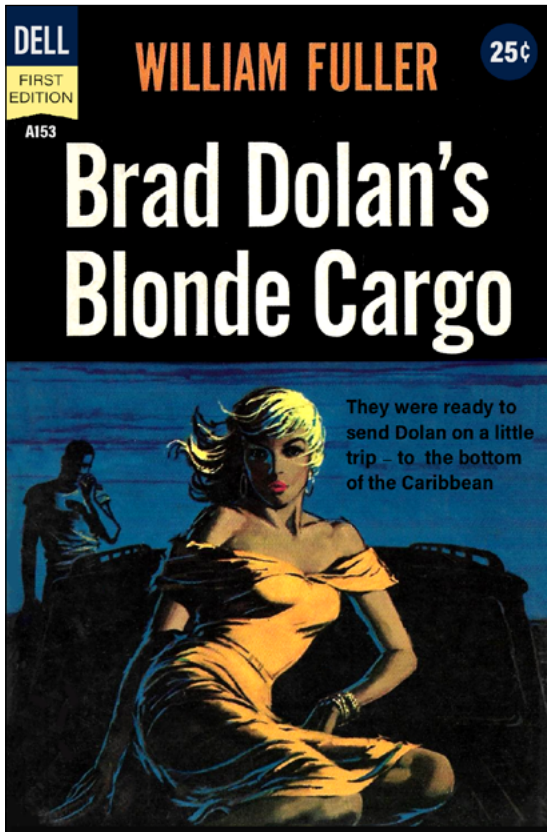
"[Vic] harbored a remarkable ability to excel in an astounding number of pursuits and was magnanimous with his time and skills in the various needs of his friends and his community. A bon vivant, as well as a faithful friend, he captured the loyalty and affection of all who knew him."

Said his daughter Rebecca: "Everyone loved Vic. Always sweet, cheerful, life-positive, and funny, he died in November 1991, with Kate at his side – 18 and a half years beyond the grim prognosis of experts. A life well lived."

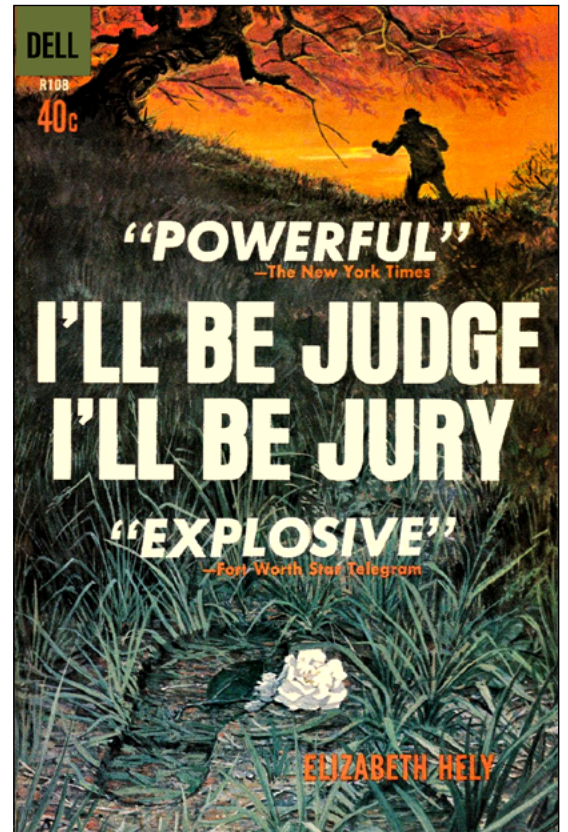
Victor Kalin was only 72 years old at the time. He remains greatly missed.

— Joe Moore

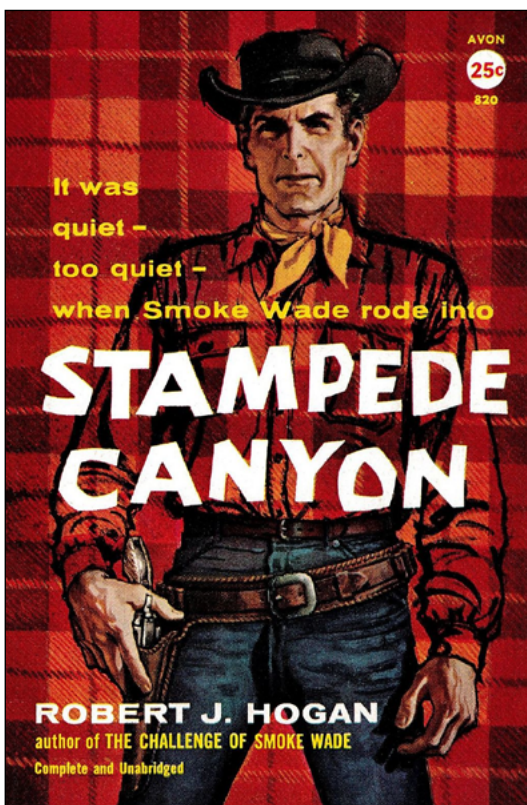
Victor Kalin – Select Book Cover Art



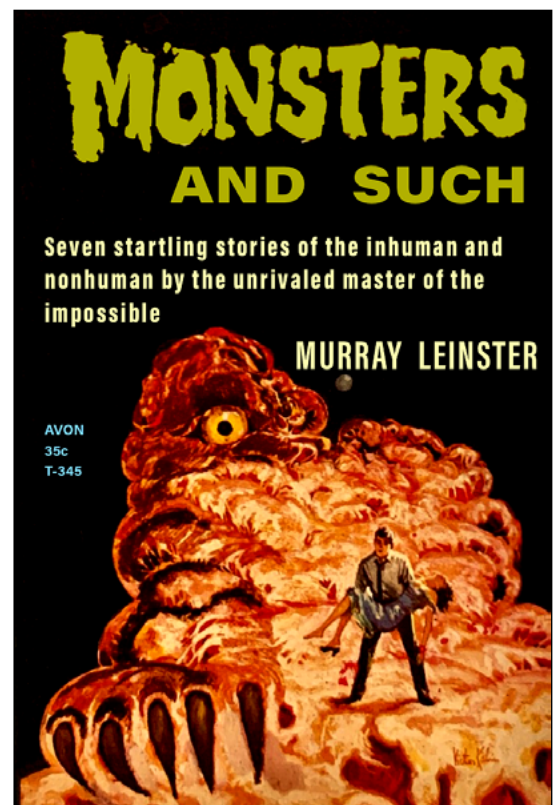
Brad Dolan's Blond Cargo by William Fuller. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1957.



I'll be the Judge I'll be the Jury by Elizabeth Hely. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1962.

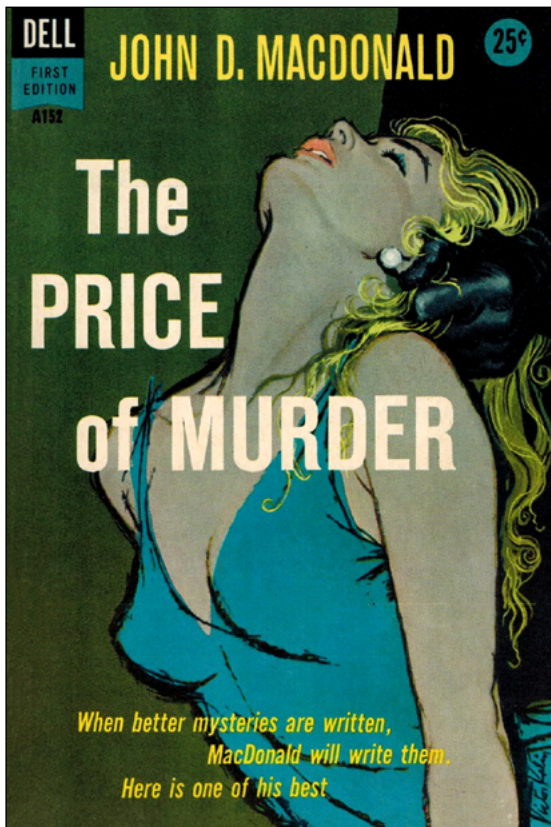


Stampede Canyon by Robert J. Hogan. Published by Avon Books, New York, 1958.

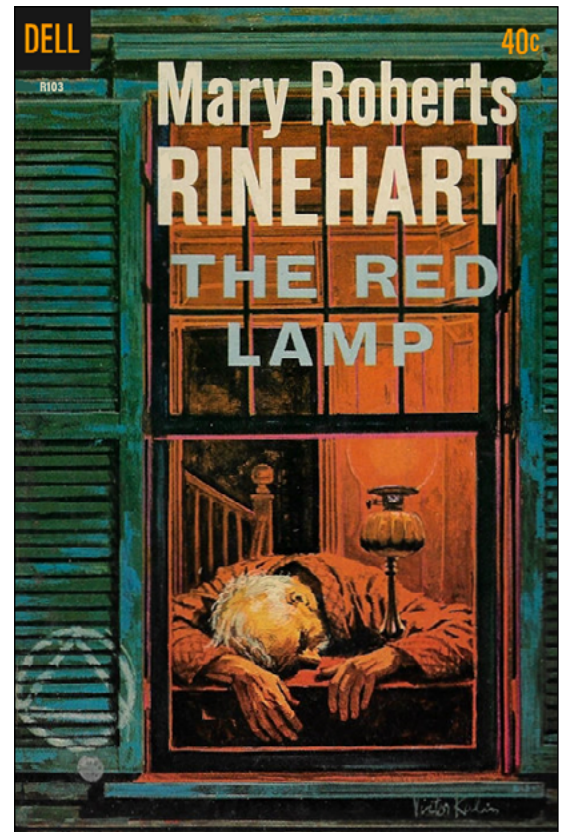


Monsters and Such by Murray Leinster. Published by Avon Books, New York, 1959.

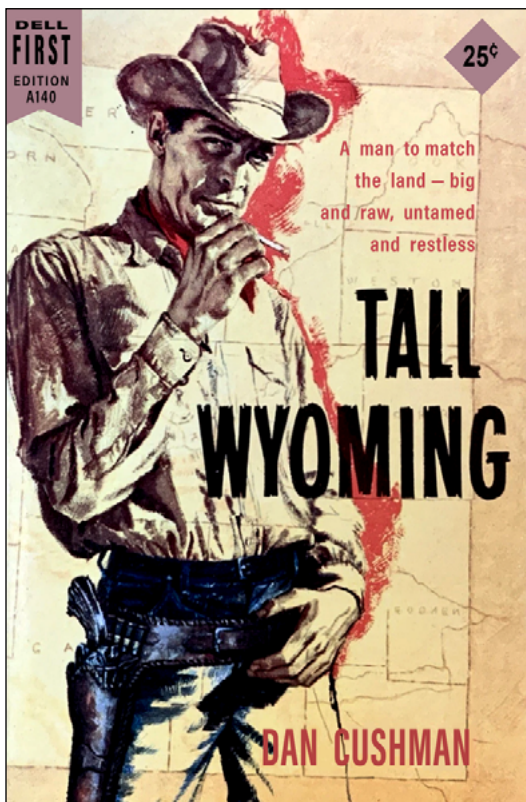
Victor Kalin – Select Book Cover Art



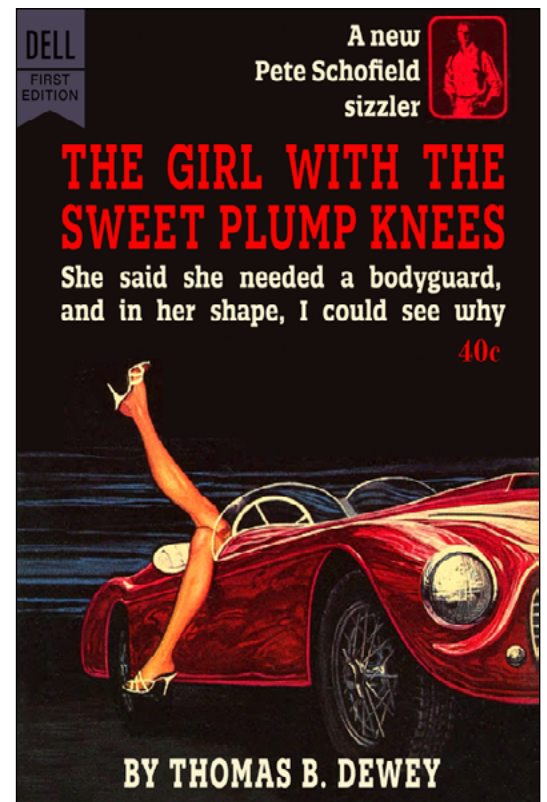
The Price of Murder by John D. MacDonald. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1957.



The Red Lamp by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1961.



Tall Wyoming by Dan Cushman. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1957.

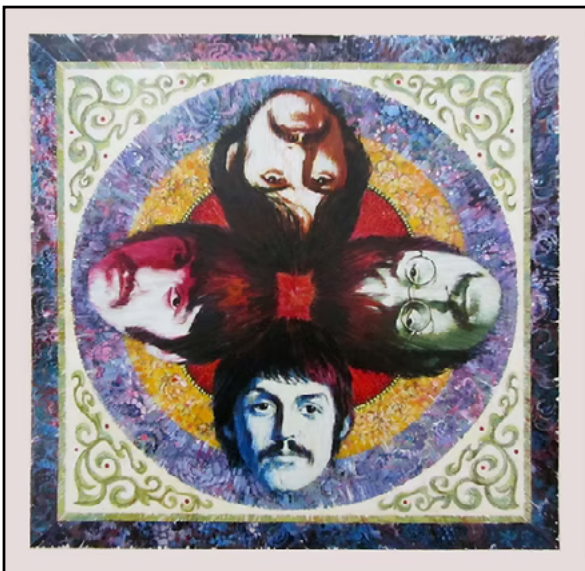


The Girl with the Sweet Plump Knees by Thomas B. Dewey. Published by Dell Books, New York, 1963.

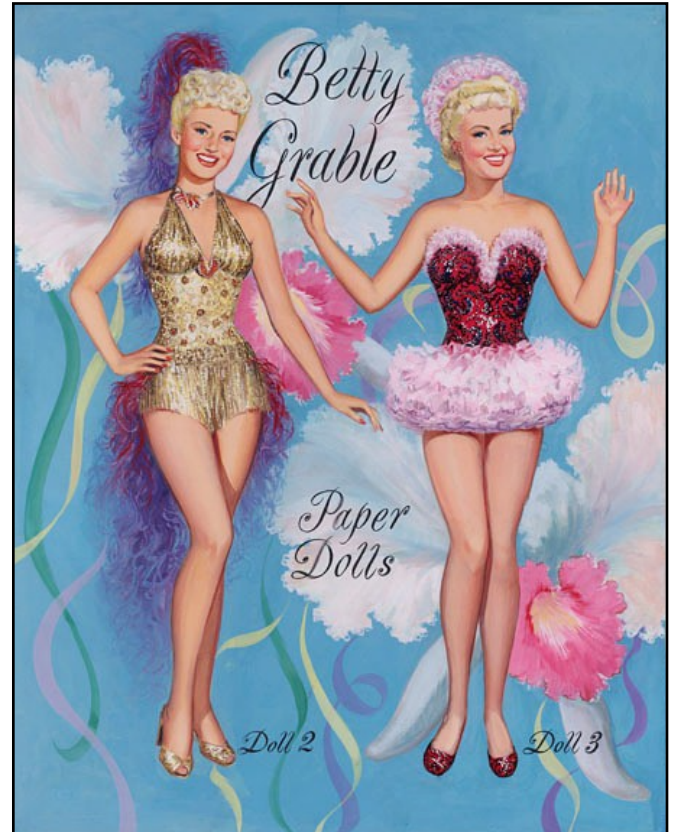
Victor Kalin – Select Artwork



1950s advertisement for Canada Dry Spur



The Beatles – prints available from VictorKalin.com

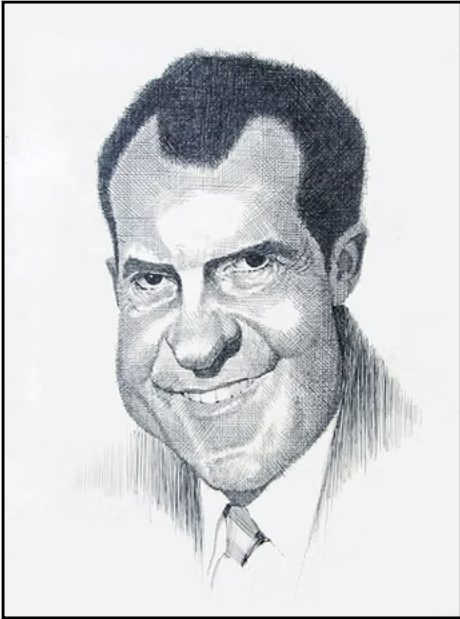


In the 1940s, actress Betty Grable (1916-1973) was the most photographed woman in the world, especially popular among U.S. servicemen. Her iconic 1943 swimsuit photo became a morale-boosting image for troops during WWII and was perennially pinned in barracks. Her widespread celebrity made Grable a natural choice for merchandising, including paper dolls.

Silkscreen panels, 1991



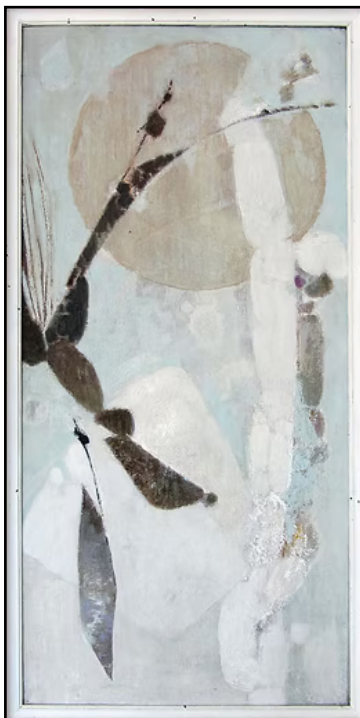
Victor Kalin – Select Artwork



Crosshatch caricature of Richard Nixon



Portrait of jazz trumpeter and violinist Ray Nance
prints available from VictorKalin.com



Kyoto



1950s magazine illustration

Some of these prints, as well as a number of others, are available for purchase from the artist's website.

<https://www.victorkalin.com>



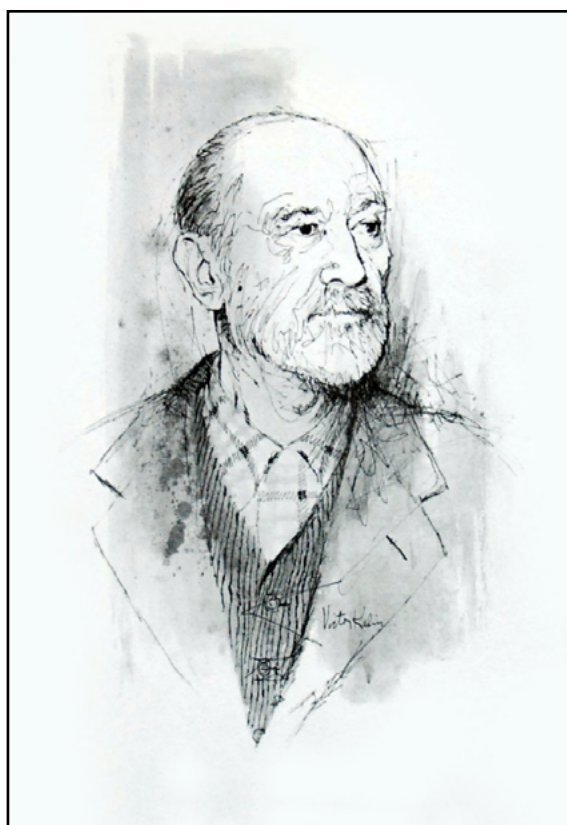
Jazz trombonist Dicky Wells

Victor Kalin – Select Artwork



Above Left: "His Master's Voice" in the 1900 revision Francis Barraud (1856-1924) made at the request of the Gramophone Company. The latter stipulated that the original cylinder-based Edison-like phonograph depicted in Barraud's 1898 original painting be replaced with their disc-based gramophone model. This 1900 version is the one most familiar to record lovers and was much admired by Victor Kalin. **Above Right:** As a tribute to the English painter, Kalin painted his own rendition of Nipper (1884-1895).

A Victor Kalin album gallery follows on the next pages ➡



Above: Composer Charles Ives by Victor Kalin.



● RCA Victor LOP-1005. Glenn Miller by Victor Kalin.

Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers



● RCA Victor LM-2210

Recorded at RCA Victor Studios, Hollywood, in October 1952.

In conversation with Samuel and Sada Applebaum, Heifetz had this to say regarding Bach's masterpieces for solo violin:

"As for the six Bach sonatas unaccompanied, I love them all. Their value even as technical studies is unlimited, and they should be used more often by the advanced violinist. The world will never tire of them."

Quoted from *With the Artists · World Famed String Players Discuss their Art*. Published by John Market & Co., New York, 1955. Fuchs, Morini, Ricci, Szigeti, Primrose, Piatigorsky, Rose, and many others are all featured in interviews and profiles. This outstanding volume can be read online at the Internet Archive click [here](#).

● RCA Victor LM-2180

Recorded at Radio Recorders, Hollywood in March 1957.

For 4 years, from 1961 to 1965, Primrose, Heifetz and Piatigorsky all taught at the University of Southern California. Heifetz was particularly close to Piatigorsky and the latter's death was an irreplaceable loss to the great violinist.

Heifetz and Primrose's relationship was more collegial and soured when the latter left USC to teach at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Heifetz resented his departure, the relationship deteriorating more from slights more perceived than real.

Primrose greatly regretted the estrangement, never repaired. He also admitted that his own hearing problems prevented any further collaboration on record.



Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers



● RCA Victor LM-1903

Taped at Orchestra Hall, Chicago, in February 1955.

Wrote Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod and Todd M. Axelrod in their indispensable *Heifetz*: "The Brahms Violin Concerto of Heifetz is a glamorous affair, enhanced by his own hair-raising cadenza, one of the most technically demanding ever penned. For sustained tension, sheer virtuoso excitement and smoothness of delivery, it is unequalled, and wholly in affinity with his temperament." In his earlier 1939 recording with Koussevitzky and the BSO, Heifetz had played Auer's cadenza.

With two perfectionists at work, the 1955 Brahms sessions at Orchestra Hall proved long and exhausting, though conductor and soloist remained in accord throughout. Ray Still's oboe solo in the slow movement was roundly admired by all, Reiner included.

● RCA Victor LSC-2443

Recorded at Webster Hall, New York, in May and June 1959 and April 1960.

In his delightful memoir, *I Really Should Be Practicing*, Gary Graffman described Webster Hall as "an old bam of a place conveniently adjacent to Lüchow's restaurant." Webster Hall remains very much with us, and is located at 125 East 11th Street (spanning 119–125), between Third and Fourth Avenues in Manhattan's East Village. Today it is a multi-purpose venue, hosting host club nights, concerts, and other cultural events.

Lüchow's, however, is gone. A famed culinary destination, it was once among New York City's most iconic restaurants during its nearly 100-year run (1882–1982). Incidentally, Graffman's very first recording, also made at Webster Hall, was of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy D. 760.



Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers



● RCA Victor LM-2370

Recorded at New York's Manhattan Center in April 1959; the producer was John Pfeiffer and the sound engineer John Crawford.

In his 1995 biography *Rubinstein - A Life*, Harvey Sachs had this to say: "In his 1959 recordings of the four scherzos and four ballades, for instance, structural clarity is the determining characteristic. He was very much attuned to the works' narrative quality, and in these performances he appears to allow the wordless stories to unfold by themselves. Not only does he take great pains to hold some of his energy in reserve until the coda of each piece: he also draws the listener's attention – conscious or unconscious – to the fact that each section of each piece has a beginning, a climax, and an ending (although the climax and the ending sometimes coincide)." Listen to them on YouTube by clicking [here](#).

● RCA Victor LM-2176

Recorded at RCA Victor Studios, Hollywood, during the years 1949-1950.

In the June 1955 issue of *High Fidelity*, *New York Times* Music Critic Harold Schonberg authored an extensive survey of Chopin works on record, writing "In these nocturnes [Rubinstein] brings an equivalent degree of strength, poetry, and technical finesse. He achieves the sentiment of the music without ever becoming sentimental, and the way he sings out the melodic content is an object lesson for all pianists. Rubinstein remains the romantic pianist par excellence. Superb recorded sound."

Though other full cycles would follow during the 1950s by Nadia Reisenberg (Westminster), Eugene Istomin (Columbia Masterworks), and Guiomar Novaes (Vox), Rubinstein's reigned supreme.



Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers



● RCA Victor LM-2243

Recorded by Decca at the Teatro della Pergola, Florence, in August and September 1957.

In Volume V of their *Stereo Record Guide* (published in 1968), critics Edward Greenfield, Robert Layton, Ivan March, and Denis Stevens gave this recording a somewhat qualified recommendation, but praised the soloists overall: "The early RCA set offers a forthright, lusty account of Mascagni's piece of blood and thunder and has the distinction of three excellent soloists. Tebaldi is most moving in 'Voi lo sapete' and the firm richness of Bastianini's baritone is beautifully caught. As always Bjoerling shows himself the most intelligent of tenors and it is only the chorus that gives serious room for disappointment."

Listen to Tebaldi in the above-mentioned aria on YouTube by clicking [here](#).

● RCA Victor LM-2250

Recorded in the Cass Gilbert Auditorium at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, in February 1958, with Andrei Mitnik at the piano. See the image below. Fairly rare, the Kogan LP can fetch high prices on the second-hand market. Listen to his bewitching recital [here](#) on YouTube.



Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers



● RCA Victor LM-1774

Recorded at Manhattan Center, New York, in April 1953.

Stokowski conducts the score Diaghileff used in his celebrated one-act version containing the introduction, music for the seven sprites and the Lilac Fairy from the prologue, the duchesses and marchionesses dances, the farandole from the Act II hunting scene, and the final scene.

Wrote critic C.J. Luten in his review for the January 1954 issue of *The American Record Guide*: "The superb RCA Victor recording presents a gorgeous performance by Stokowski and his orchestra of Tchaikovsky's wonderfully appropriate and fanciful music that you will never come across anywhere else." MGM released a competing version with Warwick Braithwaite that was also quite well received: ● MGM E3052.

● RCA Gold Seal AGL1-1529

Recorded at Symphony Hall, Boston, in December 1966 with Erich Leinsdorf conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

This was 21-year-old Itzhak Perlman's recording debut and it certainly lived up to the hype. These are phenomenal performances by any measure, with superlative sound to match. His contract with RCA was signed in the wake of his triumphal win at the 1964 Leventritt Competition. While being congratulated backstage, the \$15,000 Guarnerius that the Juilliard School had loaned him was stolen. Happily, police recovered it the next day at a pawn shop; the broker had paid \$15.00 for it, later saying "It had two bows, so there was no question it was worth \$15, which is all he asked".

Listen to the Prokofiev on YouTube by clicking [here](#).

Listen to the Sibelius on YouTube by clicking [here](#).



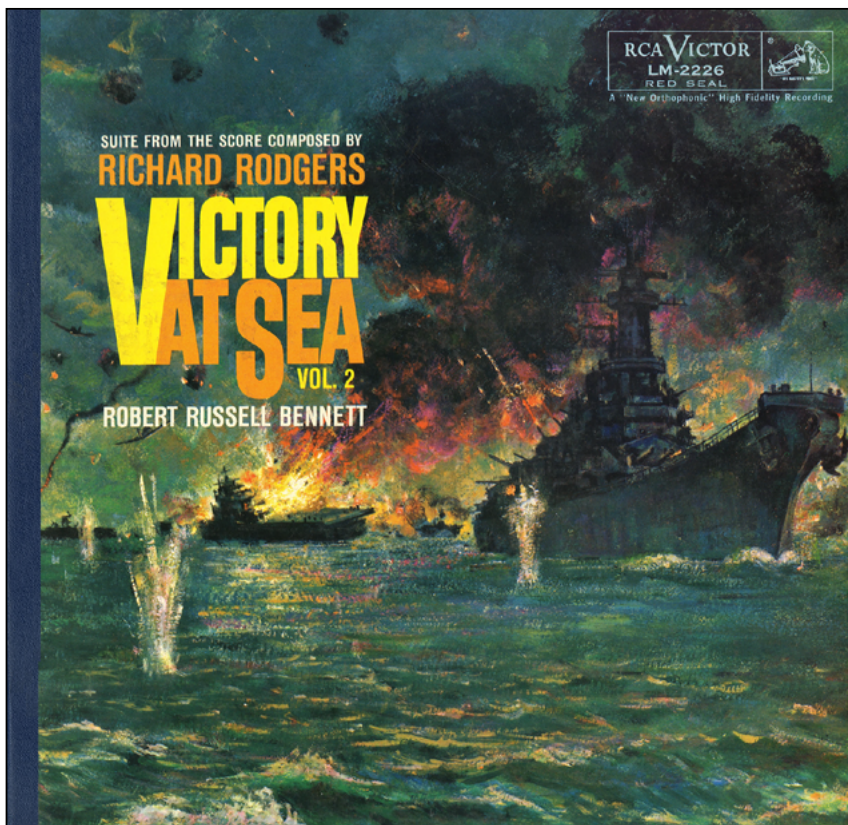
Victor Kalin – A Selection of Album Covers

● RCA Victor LM-2335

Recorded at Manhattan Center, New York, in December in February 1959 with Robert Russell Bennett conducting the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra. Listen to the opening number, "The Song of the High Seas", on YouTube [here](#).

Among the movements in Volume 1 is "Beneath the Southern Cross", which Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein re-worked into a song titled "No Other Love". This they used in their 1953 Broadway musical "Me and Juliet". Crooner Perry Como's subsequent recording of it became a "Number One" hit single on the pop charts later that year. Listen to the original orchestra version [here](#). Listen to Como's rendition [here](#).

There can be little doubt that Kalin's thrilling artwork added to the series' success.



● RCA Victor LM-2226

Recorded at Manhattan Center, New York, in December 1957 with Robert Russell Bennett conducting the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra – in fact, the players came almost wholly from the Symphony of the Air.

Though Richard Rodgers had composed the original score that accompanied the television and subsequent movie soundtracks, RCA brought in Bennett to re-orchestrate it, the composer and arranger actually adding much new material himself, though he was rarely credited with this aspect of his contributions.

The albums sold tremendously well. The score was a favorite of President Richard Nixon, himself a Navy veteran, and part of it was played at his funeral.

Listen to "Fire on the Waters" on YouTube [here](#).

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● RCA Victor LOP-1000

Recorded in New York in 1958, this nearly complete version was led by Lehman Engel, with stars Giorgio Tozzi and Kathy Barr.

The Desert Song is an operetta composed by Sigmund Romberg, with a book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, Otto Harbach, and Frank Mandel. The work was inspired by the 1925 uprising of the Riffs, a Berber resistance group, against French colonial rule in Morocco. It also drew upon tales of Lawrence of Arabia's support for local guerrilla fighters. At the time, romanticized stories set in Saharan North Africa were popular, such as *Beau Geste* and *The Son of the Sheik*.

Though Nelson Eddy's 1953 Columbia Records account sold better during the LP era, RCA's stereo version has had greater staying power.

Listen to it [here](#) on YouTube.

● RCA Victor LPM-1857

Recorded in Webster Hall, New York, in April 1958, "I Do Believe" showcases the wonderful 60-member Back Home Choir, founded by the Reverend Charles Banks and his brother Jeff. Most of its members were parishioners of the Greater Harvest Baptist Church and the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey. Among the featured soloists heard on this album are Robert Ross and Carrie Smith.

The group was discovered by organist Dickie Mitchell and when RCA Executive Herman Diaz, Jr. first heard them, he signed the Back Home Choir on the spot.

Listen to Robert Ross and the Back Home Choir sing "I'll Fly Away" on YouTube [here](#). And to Carrie Smith sing "Walk In The Sunlight of His Love" [here](#). Either could not fail to brighten your day.





Ed Hulse – *The Art of Pulp Fiction*



Published by IDW Publishing, San Diego, CA, 2021

240 pages, lavishly illustrated and with an Introduction by Richard A. Lupoff

From the publisher: "The Art of Pulp Fiction: An Illustrated History of Vintage Paperbacks chronicles the history of pocket-sized paperbound books designed for mass-market consumption, specifically concentrating on the period from 1940 to 1970. These three decades saw paperbacks eclipse cheap pulp magazines and expensive clothbound books as the most popular delivery vehicle for escapist fiction. To catch the eyes of potential buyers they were adorned with covers that were invariably vibrant, frequently garish, and occasionally lurid. Today the early paperbacks – like the earlier pulps, inexpensively produced and considered disposable by casual readers – are treasured collector's items."

Victor Kalin lights up a 1981 GE commercial – as told by Rebecca Kalin, © 2025

The Art Director on the phone needed something quickly. He needed a portrait for a TV commercial, and having seen Victor Kalin's album covers of Coltrane, Ellington and others, he asked if he could see some samples right away. Right away?

Since moving to Connecticut from New York City, Vic had settled into a slower life, painting in a studio that looked out over woods and stream, tinkering in a workshop with a dog by his side. He said that he would do his best.

When he appeared a few days later with a portfolio under one arm, the art director's face dropped. "Sorry," he said, "I should have called. We already hired someone . . . but," the A.D. softened, "since you're here, show me what you've got."

Vic was still pulling out samples when the art director got up from his chair and walked out of the room. It seemed a bad sign. A few minutes later the A.D. returned with a colleague. They looked and walked out. More minutes passed and when they returned there was yet one more colleague. Vic wondered, was there a problem?

Yes, there was a problem. The ad agency felt it had hired the wrong artist to paint the portrait. And not only that, they felt they had hired the wrong actor to play the artist. After all, didn't he look just like an artist? "But I am an artist!" Vic said. (And was he ever!) He both painted the portrait and performed as the actor. The 1981 GE Soft White Light Bulbs commercial went on to be a Super Bowl favorite and win a Clio.

