



Frank Sinatra: A Biography

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In a crisp, pristine suit, with alcohol on his breath, Frank Sinatra managed to rise from the tough streets of an immigrant neighborhood to become the greatest singer and most captivating personality of the 20th century. He was a rock star before the advent of rock and roll and a fashion icon whose style has endured into the 21st century. He cavorted with beautiful and renowned starlets like Lauren Bacall, Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland and Angie Dickinson. He had several engagements and four wives, including Mia Farrow and Ava Gardner. He was friends with the likes of Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, Shirley Maclaine, Spencer Tracy, Cary Grant, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Peter Lawford. He was connected to mafiosos Lucky Luciano, Sam Giancana and Willie Moretti, while at the same time close to presidents John F. Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan.

He was famous, sexy, and beloved, as well as lonely, manic and harsh. He abused drugs and alcohol and was a notorious gambler and philanderer. His relationships were as damned as they were beautiful, and his desire to avoid boredom and loneliness nearly destroyed him and his career. Perhaps it was Sinatra's innate loneliness that drove him to captivate millions and millions of people, yet it was his charisma, attitude and talent that gave him the ability to do so. It is because of both his charms and his faults that years after his death the legend and popularity of Old Blue Eyes is unwavering. The son of Italian immigrants, he would rise to epitomize fame, fortune and the American dream while revolutionizing popular music and setting the stage for Elvis Presley's and The Beatles' rock stardom. From his birth (Dec. 12, 1915) to his death (May 14, 1998) Sinatra fought, sometimes violently, to ensure his success and his place in history.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

In 1939, while waiting tables and singing at the Rustic Cabin roadhouse in Alpine, New Jersey, trumpet player Harry James discovered Sinatra and signed him to a \$75-a-week contract. The James band recorded 10 songs featuring Sinatra including "All or Nothing at All." The song was poorly received in 1939, but would become a major hit when it was re-released in 1943. In 1940, six months after his first appearance with the group, he left James's band to join a very popular big band led by Tommy Dorsey.

It was a big year for Sinatra, who had married longtime girlfriend Barbato in early 1939. They had their first of three children, Nancy, who would go on to lead a successful singing career of her own. The Sinatras would go on to have two more children, musician Frank Jr. in 1944 and TV producer Tina in 1948. But that time period was not without its early controversy. Shortly before his marriage to Barbato, Sinatra was arrested for violating arcane morals laws by having an affair with a married woman. The case was dismissed and was marked by Sinatra's now infamous mug shot. Barbato forgave his indiscretions, as she would do many times, and they married shortly thereafter.

Signing with Dorsey was a major moment in Sinatra's career. Besides propelling Sinatra into the spotlight as the voice of one of the country's premier bands, Dorsey taught the young singer a great deal about honing his musical and performance techniques. Dorsey was one of the toughest, sharpest, and most successful bandleaders and trombone players of his time.

Playing with Dorsey, who ran a tight ship, taught Sinatra how to pace and present a show. He learned to watch the audience for cues and make sure never to let them get bored. He developed an ability to create a level of intimacy with the audience and connect with one audience member after another. He learned to master the microphone, control his pitch, and maintain a level of casual perfection. These techniques would prove to be the foundation of Sinatra's masterful showmanship.

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