



Sinatra:: The Artist and the Man

John Lahr

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"I am a symmetrical man, almost to a fault," Frank Sinatra once said. It is a peculiar statement, because Sinatra is precisely asymmetrical. How to reconcile the enchanting crooner and the explosive bully? What to make of the smooth tones of his voice and the rough edges of his persona? To find the true correspondence between the public and the private Sinatra, the artist and the man, is no easy task. John Lahr, drama critic for **The New Yorker** and one of the finest writers on the performing arts working today, has done just this in **Sinatra: The Artist and the Man**

Lahr traces the trajectory of the "solitary latchkey kid" from Hoboken, New Jersey, into the stratosphere of fame. Sinatra kept company with presidents and mobsters; he kept up the front of a happy family life for as long as he could and then took up with the most desired women in the world--Ava Gardner, Lauren Bacall, Anita Ekberg, Marilyn Monroe, and many, many more. He led a life of manic gregariousness, yet spoke to the romance and loneliness of the "wee small hours of the morning." He desperately needed to exist within the gaze of the audience but at the same time would express aloofness toward his fans, saying he was happiest "when I'm onstage all by myself with an orchestra and nobody to bug me."

Sinatra: The Artist and the Man also examines the miracle of Sinatra's return--much of what is marvelous about Sinatra today is that we know who he is at all, so far did he fall in the late forties. Sinatra came back with a vengeance as Angelo Maggio in **From Here to Eternity**, a heartfelt and brilliantly comic performance that won him an Academy Award. At the same time, he reclaimed control of the recording studio and, with the help of an ingenious arranger named Nelson Riddle, perfected the swinging sound of his mature years. Sinatra then proceeded to build a media empire that has been the standard by which all other stars have measured their success. The artist and the man: Sinatra epitomized control and he raged uncontrollably, destroying friendships, love affairs, and a plate-glass window or two; he won fans around the world across three generations, created an unparalleled body of recorded work, and almost single-handedly invented the postwar American swagger and "the image," Lahr writes, "of perfect individualism."

Sinatra's life and art happen to be extremely well documented in photographs--from Weegee's hilarious pictures of bobby-soxer hysteria at New York's Paramount Theatre to William Read Woodfield's definitive and rare "Chairman of the Board" images. **Sinatra: The Artist and the Man** collects one hundred of the best photographs ever taken of Sinatra (some never before published)--representing his film work, the special intensity of his recording sessions, and the many swinging nights of this complex and fascinating man.

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