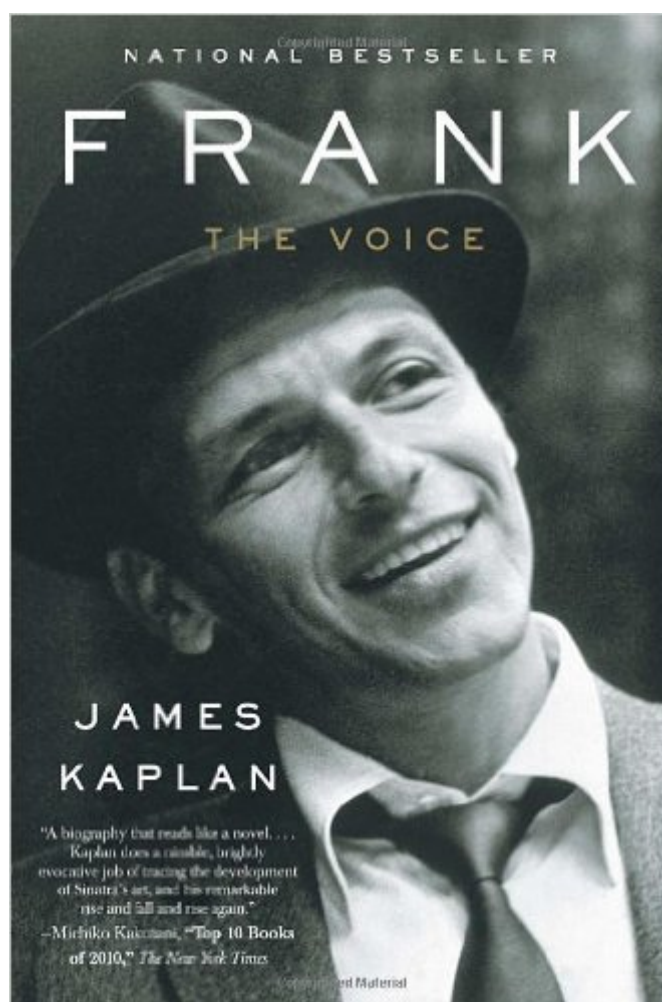


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Frank: The Voice



Synopsis

Frank Sinatra was the best-known entertainer of the twentieth centuryâ€”indefinitely charismatic, lionized and notorious in equal measure. But despite his mammoth fame, Sinatra the man has remained an enigma. Now James Kaplan brings deeper insight than ever before to the complex psyche and turbulent life behind that incomparable voice, from Sinatraâ€™s humble beginning in Hoboken to his fall from grace and Oscar-winning return in *From Here to Eternity*. Here at last is the biographer who makes the reader feel what it was really like to be Frank Sinatraâ€”as man, as musician, as tortured genius.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a unique study of Frank Sinatra. The author, James Kaplan, begins with Frank's upbringing in New Jersey and tells of the lifelong influence of his dominating mother, Dolly. Frank was loved and abused at the same time. Dolly would treat him as a little prince and because of her political connections and powerful personality would open doors for him. At the same time, she would physically and psychologically bully him and leave him vulnerable. The biography unfolds and talks about Frank's young years of becoming a singer. It is filled with figures of the era - musicians, talent agents, gang members, struggling singers, song writers, and other figures fill the pages. The book teems with these figures as the 1930's and 1940's national politics made them popular. Frank would gravitate towards one figure, for example, Harry James, and then after he felt that he had nothing more to learn, he would choose another person, such as Benny Goodman. All around the talented performers were the temptations of beautiful women, drugs, and alcohol. Frank vacillated between

two types of women represented by his first wife, Nancy, and his second wife, Ava Gardner. While his first wife represented security and steadiness; Ava filled him with passion and obsession. These two women, along with his mother, allow the reader see why Frank was the sensitive, angry, rebellious, and haughty person that he came to be. The author is also very good at describing how the music was made and how Frank made his unique songs. He describes Frank's watching and imitating other musicians to make his music better. Many times, the author will select a certain song and show how Frank and his orchestra got to its heart and made the song unforgettable. Two examples that are riveting are his serenade to Ava Gardner of Noel Coward's "I Get a Kick Out of You," and his recording of "Young at Heart," with Nelson Riddle. For those of us who treasure his songs, these analyses are worth the entire book. The book ends with Frank's winning the Academy Award for his performance in the movie, "From Here to Eternity." It was a time that he also made a comeback with his music because of his performances with Nelson Riddle. But his unhappiness over his estrangement with Ava Gardner, led to suicidal and heart-breaking behavior. The biography is a powerful and stirring story of the complicated genius of Frank Sinatra.

This is a wonderfully written, marvelously entertaining full throated biography of Frank Sinatra. If for a moment you think reading 700 pages is more than you want to take on with such a flawed and hedonistic personality as Sinatra I can state categorically that you will turn the pages fast and find every one filled with entertaining insights. Kaplan's writing is conversationalist offering a style that is effortless, breezy, and always fun. (I had previously read Kaplan's fun book DEAN AND ME which he co-wrote with Jerry Lewis.) To my surprise this book only covers Sinatra through his wining of the Academy Award in 1954. There is no mention of a future volume 2 but it's hard to believe it's not in the works. Kaplan has a unique ability to explain both the business side and creative side of Sinatra's music (and of many other artist of the era). But its Sinatra's personal life, value judgments, relationships and self doubt and huge personal drive of ambition that takes center stage. He almost dies at birth and he is born to a strong willed Mother which are events that seem to overwhelm his self worth. Insecure, he trusts no one and maintains relationship so long as they enhance his ambition. The story of Sinatra's meeting and dysfunctional marriage to Ava Gardner is incredible. Gardner appears to have been a woman of extremely good looks, with insatiable sexual appetites, and like Sinatra himself so insecure that she could not control her self destructive impulses. Sinatra is her match in dysfunction as he pines and chases her across the globe. You begin to wonder how they had the energy to live such lives. Kaplan lays out the moves that Sinatra made that earned him is professional success, insights into his relationships with the mob, his huge career tailspin and

ultimate career turnaround. Sinatra's story is one of career redemption coupled with the high personal cost of pure ambition (not to mention unchecked hedonist empowerment). Kaplan's narrative lays it all out, the man's flaws, his personality, and his talent born of genius. At the end you may not like Sinatra but you will be pulled in by the charisma of his energy, his genius and how success is a brother of ambition. I think this is perhaps the best entertainment biography I have ever read although I really enjoyed DAVID LEAN, a biography by Kevin Brownlow and SHOWMAN, The life of David O. Selznick by David Thomson. If you have the slightest interest in Sinatra, Big Bands, the 1940 and 1950s, and/or dysfunctional hedonist behavior I'm sure you will enjoy Kaplan's splendid book.

Stayed up until 1 a.m. to finish "Frank: The Voice," James Kaplan's swinging, zinging new biography of Frank Sinatra. If you've read anything else on the Chairman of the Board -- and there's plenty out there -- forget it. This is it, king of the hill, A-No. 1, top of the heap. Kaplan writes in a fluid, fun style, irreverent, sweet, sometimes vulgar -- much like its subject. Yes, you get all those naughty details about dalliances and "dames" (as Sinatra would have called them), but Kaplan doesn't forget that Sinatra was a singer, an artist, and the music is why he matters. It stops in 1954, right after the "From Here to Eternity" triumph and Frankie's split with the stunning Ava Gardner. Here's hoping that means that part two isn't far behind. Peter Guralnick gave Elvis his due in "Last Train to Memphis" and "Careless Love." Kaplan has done so here for Ol' Blue Eyes. This is the biography he deserves, a ring-a-ding-ding kind of gasser, as alive and kickin' as one of Sinatra's best singles. If you love The Voice, don't miss this book.

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