



Why Sinatra Matters

Pete Hamill

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In this unique homage to an American icon, journalist and award-winning author Pete Hamill evokes the essence of Sinatra--examining his art and his legend from the inside, as only a friend of many years could do. Shaped by Prohibition, the Depression, and war, Francis Albert Sinatra became the troubadour of urban loneliness. With his songs, he enabled millions of others to tell their own stories, providing an entire generation with a sense of tradition and pride belonging distinctly to them.

Why Sinatra Matters Details

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From Reader Review Why Sinatra Matters for online ebook

Christopher Rodriguez says

Let me first say that I love Sinatra and I don't know much about history.

With that said, I loved reading about his life through the perspective of Pete Hamill. He writes in a way that focuses on the romance of FS's life. The challenge of an Italian singer coming out of the depression and as an American that was not able to serve but wished he could, even if only to prove to the other men in his generation that he was one of them. Or as FS might say, dem. The struggle of a man in love with the night life but seeing the drink and women making a muck of everything.

I learned about his use of proper English and his New York flare. About the way he lived with stride and acknowledged his stupidity yet would not be called a hypocrite. About his vulgarity, and yet his deep love of music and the dedication he had to make it.

FS's life according to Pete is one that was wonderful to behold and something like a midnight train/ you needed to go see it cross the dark land even if you couldn't ride along. FS grew. From a boy who could sing to a washout that played and danced for his dinner to finally the risen star that developed a history that was dark enough for intrigue but not dark enough to dull out the romance of the midnight hour.

I love FS. His swagger. He brash boldness to be him. To be a loser. To be a winner. To hope and continue to hope even as he walked in the rain.

His is a life I don't want, its too sad. To full of a regret and hurt I couldn't bear. But whenever his music is playing I can't help to wish I was there with him and the ratpack smoking at one in the morning. Walking out into the rain and heading over to start the show. How could you not? The music followed him. Pete says something along the lines/ there was the top ten, and then there was Sinatra.

If you like Sinatra, do your self a favor and read this. You'll like him even more. You'll be able to read something you've always felt while listening to him. Pete Hamill will give you words to better listen to and for the basic principle in all of Sinatra's music, loneliness. You'll read about how this one theme is everything and that Sinatra was always the man either coming out of love or falling into it.

Additionally, and I must admit that though it is a plus for the book I do not feel much about it, you'll learn a good deal about the impact FS had on his culture and the way his story and the stories of other Italians like DiMaggio worked together to create a hopeful story for immigrants.

With that said, I hope you read and enjoy.

Victor Caamaño says

Wow. Pete Hamill is an amazing writer. I felt like I was back in Brooklyn, drinking in "an old man's bar" with the stink of old scotch in the air. I had a marvelous though brief encounter with Sinatra. He was kind, generous and scary. And his eyes were so blue. Hamill took me on a brief journey through Jersey to Italy and back to Jersey, and Las Vegas. I learned quite a bit about the Italian American story, a topic I never appreciated before. I highly recommend this book. A fast and oh so pleasurable read.

Joshua Thompson says

This is a short book that you can probably put down in 2 hours, but even if you're not a Sinatra fan, it will be worth your time. I can't recommend this book enough.

Paul E. Morph says

From the outset, the author states that he knew Sinatra personally and that this relationship would colour the tone of this book. This jettisoning of any attempt at impartiality immediately makes a mockery of the book's title. The fact that Hamill is a huge fan of Sinatra's body of work doesn't help. The author believes his subject to be important for personal reasons, so any attempt to prove Sinatra's importance to anybody else is for all intents and purposes doomed to fail from the start.

This being said, to anybody with any kind of overarching knowledge of the evolution of twentieth century music, Sinatra's significance within that development is obvious anyway. In this light, putting the premise set forth in the title aside, how does this book read as an essay on Sinatra's life and times?

Well, let me say first that I have never been a fan of Sinatra's music. I don't *dislike* it; I'd happily listen to it but, in my rather expansive music collection, Sinatra is perhaps notable for his complete absence. I read this book on the strength of a friend and fellow musician's recommendation. (I figured that it's a slim tome; if it was awful I'd be wasting three hours of my life at most.)

Hamill writes with such enthusiasm and affection that it's hard not to be swept up in his endearing narrative. Even as a non-fan, remaining objective proved to be quite a challenge. There's no question that Hamill can write. He brings the world Sinatra existed in to life in glorious technicolor. The book is engaging and always interesting. After the slightly brown-nosing prologue, just when I was starting to think the book was going to be a somewhat vacuous puff piece, Hamill starts talking intelligently about the Italian immigration experience, and I was hooked from that point.

Where the author perhaps scores an own-goal is with the inevitable discussion of Sinatra's alleged Mafia connections. While Hamill states categorically that nothing was ever proven and that, as far as he is concerned, that means Sinatra was innocent, his 'debunking' of all the evidence of Frank's mob connections reeks to high Heaven of 'methinks thou dost protest too much'. I've come away from this book more convinced of ol' blue eyes' involvement with the mob than I ever was before. I'd always more or less dismissed it as tabloid tattle before now; after reading this book, I'm not so sure. Fortunately for Frank's

defenders, I don't really care one way or the other.

To sum up, this is an interesting and entertaining read. I've given it three stars but, for a Sinatra fan, it would probably be a five star read.

Carla JFCL says

This was a wonderful book, for a die-hard Sinatra fan like me. Anyone who has an interest in either music or history of the Prohibition/Depression/Jazz eras, or insight into immigration to the United States from Europe in the late 1800s/early 1900s would also enjoy it. It's not a "biography" in the classic sense, but rather the personal recollections of someone who knew and liked him. I especially enjoyed the section toward the end of the book where the author analyzes Sinatra's music; as a singer myself I found that fascinating ... and instructive. I didn't want this book to end and, in fact, the only negative thing I have to say about it is that it's too short.

Louise says

This works as a eulogy or paean, but you get very little of the title's promise.

It has a strong beginning. You see how the immigrant experience, being an only child with two busy parents in a neighborhood of big families and the influence of the World War II shaped him, but none of this shows why he matters.

There is one paragraph on how his songs of "tender and tough" defined a "new model for American masculinity (p. 97), but this is not developed.

There is some biographical info here, the only new items being some quotes from conversations with the author. The Dorsey contract and the dubious "mob connections" are neatly outlined.

I got this at the public library. I would be very disappointed if I had paid the \$26 list price.

Elsabe says

History, the story of an era and that of a very interesting man told by a brilliant writer- just the thing for the making of another reading experience to make my life happy!

No doubt about it, I love the writing of Pete Hamill and I can't believe the joy of getting to know what Sinatra and life was like in the 1900's.

Of course our author is the expert on NYC, and here he colours the picture of the apple with the hues of music and the celebrities of the day.

Lucero Arebalos says

I'll first write out what I liked about the book. I liked the history. It was a bit of a more in-depth history lesson told by people who were there. Mr. Hamill tries to explain through historical reasons why Frank Sinatra was the way he was. Why he was angry, why he was connected to the mob at one point, and so on and so on.

Now, what I did not like about the book (and what ruined it for me really) was that Mr. Hamill placed Frank Sinatra on such a high pedestal. He wrote about him in such a way that made him seem super human. I love Frank Sinatra. I think he is one of the greatest singers to have lived, but I also know nobody is perfect. Mr. Hamill spoke about Frank Sinatra in a way that that didn't allow him to be human and make mistakes.

While I am a huge Frank Sinatra fan, I also know that sometimes people do things that have no excuse to back it up. Frank Sinatra made mistakes, and Mr. Hamill tried to justify them.

Royal Dun says

This was the second time i read Pete Hamill's tribute to Sinatra. In the decade since my first reading, age has enhanced my appreciation for the people and events of my life. I grew up in the 50's and 60's and Sinatra was in his comeback. I fondly remember the Sinatra's music, acting, and comedy buts with Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., and Joey Bishop during the Rat-Pack era. Hamill's book gave me a great insight into the early life and career of Old Blue Eyes.

Hamill writes from his personal association with Sinatra as well as interviews with the entertainer's friends and colleagues. Sometimes I felt like I was at the table with Hamill and Sinatra, listening to their late night banter. That look at the off-stage Frank Sinatra made my memories of his work even more treasured, now that I understand more about his background, hard-won success, and failures. In the end, Sinatra's contribution to the arts and his story of adversity and perseverance are what matter.

Daniel Kukwa says

It's a very quick and easy read, but also a bit of an oddity. It's a hybrid of psychological study & biographical vignette (but primarily focused on the early 20th century). It's not a book that will give you in any way a complete understanding of Frank Sinatra, but it certainly provides some unique insights. Its best feature is an examination of the fight by indomitable immigrants against bigotry & prejudice...something that seems to be coming full circle in the Donald Trump era.

Rich says

Not only a history of one of the great singers of our time, but also some fascinating heritage information about Italian immigrants in NYC and NJ. All around fascinating...

Elizabeth Strauch says

If you really want the reason why Sinatra matters, you won't really find it in this book, until the author's last memory of Sinatra on the final page - and it was pretty underwhelming. I appreciated that it wasn't an accounting of Sinatra's wives or celebrity gossip, but a good general framing of the world Sinatra entered before he forever altered his piece of it. Unless you already know why Sinatra matters, or have a favorite album or song, you probably won't enjoy this book. For unabashed superfans like me, it's an enjoyable, quick reminder Sinatra's rise, fall, comeback and lasting impact.

Richard Stueber says

A slender volume telling the story of Frank Sinatra and why he was important not only to music but also to the flow of American culture and life. There are lots of other books about Frank, but this would be a good place to start. The songs from "In the Wee Small Hours" said that in spite of loss, abandonment, defeat - you could get through the night. And Saturday night is the loneliest night of the week.

LeAnn Swieczkowski says

I don't recall anything I read about this book the first time so I had to reread it. With a title like, "Why Sinatra Matters" I had to recall what Pete Hamill had to say. So I took the book off the shelf and read it again. I'm so glad I did. Especially during the 100th anniversary of his birth. Its amazing that Hamill could fit so much history into this little book (only 180 pages in a small format). Hamill discusses Sinatra's grandparents and parents during their immigrant years and the discriminatory treatment Italian immigrants were afforded during the late 1880s into the 1930s. Frank Sinatra, an only child was lonely growing up and his music reflects this. The birth of The Mob, better know as the mafia (pg 79), initially called The Combination, whose formation and network was a direct result of prohibition (a failed Congressional experiment). Hamill delves into Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire and the early days when Frank looked up to these singers and wanted to follow in their footsteps. The music of Tin Pan Alley is discussed and that Sinatra matters because, "He created a new model for American Masculinity 'The Tender Tough Guy.'" The American depression is covered, the Sinatra's did not suffer (the 1930's), the Big Bands of Harry James and Tommy Dorsey, which were Frank's big break avenues and how Sinatra's use of what he called his instrument (the microphone), practice and his appeal to women and men took him to great success. Frank's depression and falling voice led to his disfavor with the American public in the early 1950s. His four marriages (Nancy Barbato, Ava Gardner, Mia Farrow and Barbara Bock) are mentioned and how some great music arrangers (including Nelson Riddle, Billy May and Don Costa)helped Frank be the success he was.

Michael Barcas says

This book should be in the library of any Sinatraphile. Not gossipy; in the sense, not a white coat's assessment of Sinatra's psyche. A portrait of a man alone-had it all, lose it, and gaining it with massive success + revenge. Pure class. Good with Tennessee Whiskey and LPs (Columbia, Capitol, Reprise, or

bootlegs.)

I read this when I was college ('08) FEB. 14, 2014. [There's a heartbreak) Instead of shotgun (kill) or jumping off Sta. Cruz Bridge (Manila), I chose insomniac reading and listened to a cassette tape (Frank Sinatra) on a beat-up Panasonic Walkman. Of losing my father too soon and being wishful. Sinatra (his music) is the paean for any man's triumph(s) and private (painful) tragedies.
