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[Review of] Frank Sinatra and Popular Culture: Essays on an American Icon

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Mustazza (English and American studies, Penn State Univ., and author of Ol’ Blue Eyes, CH, Oct’98) brings together 19 fan-oriented essays by historians, critics, popular personalities, and even Frank himself, a few reprinted from journals and CD liner notes. The three main sections treat fame, image formation, and Sinatra’s influence on pop culture; the music; and personal reminiscences. Contributors include Will Friedwald (author of Sinatra! The Song Is You, 1995), Philip Furia (author of Tin Pan Alley, CH Feb’91), New Media’s Dan Okrent, Legacy Records’ Chuck Granata, and former Warner Brothers v.p. Stan Cornyn. The volume concludes with career highlights and a substantial selected bibliography. Though many of the essays smack of tribute more than scholarly analysis (Mustazza is primarily “concerned with . . . surface myths and image . . . with factors that led to the sculpting of the iconic Sinatra”), this title provides a more substantial analysis than Mustazza and Steven Petkov’s The Frank Sinatra Reader (1995) or anecdotal works like Bill Zehme’s The Way You Wear Your Hat (1997). A useful addition to popular music and culture collections at academic and public libraries.

--R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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