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Monday, 12 December 2005

The Frank Sinatra Show: High Hopes

Contributed by Brent Simon

Monday, 12 December 2005



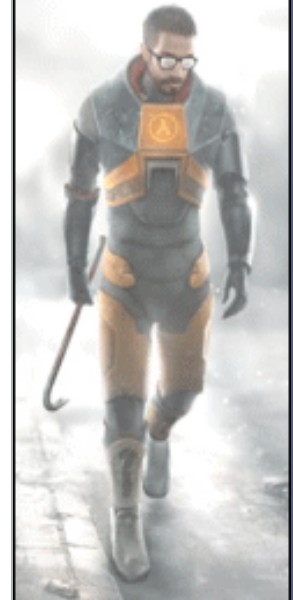
I've had this argument with several folks. How could I so love Frank Sinatra, crooner but avowed non-instrument player, and still so decry many of the modern day "entertainers" who follow in his considerable footsteps — singers who belt out tunes they don't write under instrumentation they don't arrange? I hate to feel like an old fuddy duddy, especially at what I consider still a fairly young age, but every time I have this merry-go-round conversation I'm reminded of Winona Ryder's about irony in *Reality Bites*: "Well, I don't

know what it is, but I know it when I see it." The same holds true here, except instead of seeing it, you *hear* it. Just listen, and you'll understand the difference.

Or, if the moving image is so completely your thing, do yourself a favor and give *The Frank Sinatra Show: High Hopes* a spin. In the late 1950s, corporate underwriter Timex sponsored a series of variety show specials starring Sinatra and his coterie of high-flyin' pals. This particular special, originally broadcast October 19, 1958, features Dean Martin, Bing Crosby and Mitzi Gaynor, with a special cameo by Jimmy Durante. The track list includes an opening group performance of "High Hopes," "Day In and Day Out," "Together," "Hurricane," "Talk to Me," "Dancing Cheek to Cheek," "Wrap Up Your Troubles in Dreams," "Give Us the Old Songs" (a group medley), "Old Man River," Sinatra's solo rendition of "High Hopes" (hence the disc title), "It Was Just One of Those Things," "Angel Eyes," "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Please Come Home," which guests Durante.

The highlights are probably the humorous trifecta jungle-gym routine built around "Together" and "The Lady Is a Tramp," which a finger-snapping, pantomiming Sinatra dials up the song's devil-may-care rakishness to such levels that passive response is not an option. Re-mastered from the archive tape of the black-and-white broadcast, *The Frank Sinatra Show: High Hopes* is deeply sub-par as far as image, with loads of grain, streaking and scratches omnipresent

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throughout. Additionally, the contrast on something like "Day In and Day Out" — a number involving switches from dark to light — is quite screwy. Still, there's a charm to the slightly tinny but otherwise clear and consistent audio — the pure joy of performance comes through and the rapport between the stars (Crosby at one point refers to Sinatra as "a colorful gypsy") is obvious.

Apart from the original promotional segments left intact in the program (an unintentionally hilarious waterproofing test), bonus features here include various star biographies, filmographies and discographies, and a clutch of other, non-related trailers. B (Show) B (Disc)

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