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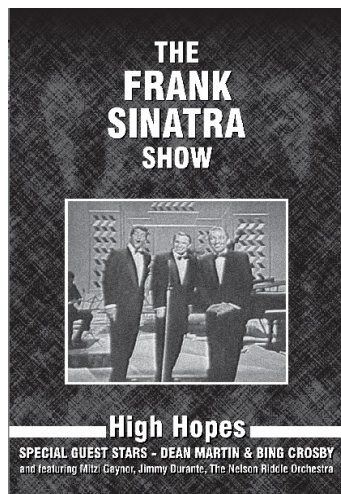
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## The Frank Sinatra Show

*High  
Hopes  
(MVD-  
2005)*

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The old and true adage that “it’s Frank Sinatra’s world – we just live in it” is best illustrated during his Rat Pack years, from the very late fifties until the early sixties. Here you see the Chairman of the Board in his glorious, power-pipe action, during one in a series of “spectaculars” for the struggling ABC network from 1957-1960 (culminating with his famous welcome-home-from-the-army for Elvis).

Sinatra kilowatts up the screen with his celebrated pals, making for wonderous television that mesmerizes adoring audiences. Those who were lucky enough to watch it when it first aired aren’t just glad to receive a clear picture – any picture -- on their twelve-inch screens, so try to get past the bad picture quality. Here, bleached out in glorious black and white, is Frank, in his elegant tuxedo and his reason for being. He’s on top, baby, and he shows us how it’s done.

This broadcast, sparse with sets, easy on the writing and blessedly absent of cutesy, tiresome sketches, details what can happen when the talent is virtually unplugged. At the very time that the battle first raged for control of the popular culture, the adults still have the last word, but the times they are a-changin’. See it here.

It’s 1958, and Frank is riding the suddenly changing pop charts with the cheerful ditty, “High Hopes.” High hopes indeed, especially since The Man is now surrounded in the record bins by pimply teen idols who have less talent in their entire adolescent bodies than Frank has in his little pinkie finger. Still, over the course of



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three short years, the rock-and-rollers have become a force to be reckoned with, and Sinatra and his cronies mention them grudgingly, with nervous laughter.

Of the "summit" of Bing Crosby, Dean Martin and Sinatra on the same stage, Bing comments, "I don't think there will be anything this big until Elvis gets back [from the army] and runs into Ricky [Nelson] and Fabian."

For the time being, anyway, these men have nothing to worry about. Yet the bell tolls; while they will be welcomed on television until the day they die, they will soon no longer be embraced on the pop music charts (with a few exceptions here and there). They will not take it well, and this DVD chronicles their anxiety about it. Not that we need to shed any tears – they will last longer than most of their young challengers – but the crack in the ceiling of that perfect suite starts to snow plaster now.

Nothing is spared for The Frank Sinatra Show, from its high-falutin' sponsor, Timex, to its not-too-shabby guest stars (Along with Martin and Crosby, we're also offered the strange and overly polished Mitzi Gaynor, and a surprise cameo by the watchable, lovable Jimmy Durante). The orchestra is conducted by Frank's main man and class act, Nelson Riddle, who worked with him on some of his most memorable and silky recordings in history.

Gaynor, who made numerous failed attempts to become a movie star, found her niche doing this very thing: musical TV specials and guest appearances. Dean Martin will

**COURTNEY JAYE**

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**PETER KRAUSE (2004)**

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**LIFEHOUSE**

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**LOGGINS AND  
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**CHARLOTTE MARTIN**

**MINT CONDITION**

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**ANDREW NICCOL**

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**N.Y.M.V.A.E.**

**GREGG OPPENHEIMER**

eventually and reluctantly host one of the most successful variety shows in the history of television doing his I'm drunk and I don't give a shit act. Crosby, with his stand-offish manner, will not be as successful on television but will continue to be a TV dependable when it comes to special guests. And Sinatra – well, you know the rest. These were easily the brightest stars around, and they all made frequent appearances on the young medium. Yet as often as they appeared on TV (and it was often), it was always signified as an "event."

We get our money's worth, though. Nothing – nothing – beats Sinatra singing "The Lady Is a Tramp," which he does here with his usual one-two punch. During a performance of "High Hopes," he incorporates a huge crowd of adorable children (all Caucasian, except for one little Asian girl who is apparently brought in as a light-hearted joke). The kids seem less-than-thrilled to be there (obviously, this is not their career choice), but the song is catchy and acceptable for the entire fifties nuclear family.

"I'm the kinda fella who likes to keep busy," Frank says (he was notorious for being reluctant to be alone). Illustrating this, he proceeds to lament an institution that he says is "rapidly becoming extinct -- nightclubs." With that, he gives us what we're missing, and we realize that he's absolutely right. Of course, it's too late.

Right on time, however, is Timex and its bang-you-over the head style of sponsorship, which was an ordinary annoyance on fifties television. The commercials are live and ballsy.

**OUR LADY PEACE**

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**CATALINA SANDINO  
MORENO**

**SAVE THE SITCOM**

**LIEV SCHREIBER**

**SHAKIRA**

**SIXPENCE NONE THE  
RICHER (1999)**

**SIXPENCE NONE THE  
RICHER (2002)**

**JILL SOBULE**

We're sold before we even begin, not just because of the dependability of a Timex, but because of the assured voice of solid-citizen and Timex whore John Cameron Swayze.

We marvel sadistically at the endless line of torture tests – for instance, a Timex is fastened to the blade of a motorboat engine and spun mercilessly. It survives, of course. An unseen chorus of singers remind us, that, “more people than ever before are wearing a Timex today.”

Swayze tells us that Timex has the ultimate quality in any materialistic fifties aspiration: modern looks. And what's there to argue about: a self-winding watch winds itself with the simple, normal movements of your wrist. And, so to appeal to the women, a pleased housewife instructs her audience, “We ladies realize that timing is the most important factor in baking,” so she proceeds to plop a Timex ladies' waterproof into a mixing bowl and then beats the shit out of it. Does it survive? What do you think? Swayze is on the up-and-up when he assures us that Timex can take a licking and keep on ticking.

At least it's not as shameless as Dean Martin's endorsement of his new restaurant: while crooning a song about love, he shows off the bottom of his shoe, which has painted on it, “Eat at Dino's.”

Not included here is the most famous Frank Sinatra show of all, when he welcomes back Elvis from the army. And Mitzi Gaynor, for all her va-va-voom and her determination to entertain us, is not quite the same as



JAKE STEINFELD

JOSS STONE

DAVID STRATHAIRN

HILARY SWANK

SWITCHFOOT

AUDREY TAUTOU

ROB THOMAS

BILLY BOB THORNTON

THREE DOG NIGHT

UNITED STAGES

USHER

Us3

BROOKE VALENTINE

BOBBY VEE

JACI VELASQUEZ

TOM VERICA

MARK WAHLBERG

CHRISTOPHER  
WALKEN

EMMA WATSON

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SIGOURNEY WEAVER

JIMMY WEBB

CHUCK E. WEISS

BRUCE WILLIS

RAINN WILSON

ELIJAH WOOD

EVAN RACHEL WOOD

TOM WOPAT

ZIYI ZHANG

watching The King and The Chairman of the Board mix it up. Still, class is class, and we get more than we deserve when the big finale features a tribute/send-up of Jimmy Durante, with the man himself dropping in on the shenanigans.

It's a world when adults ruled the airwaves, and even when they get silly, it's hard to think of them as juvenile when they look so debonair in their tuxes.

A final note: according to the announcer, the usual show in the timeslot, Adventures in Paradise, will be seen next week over most of these ABC stations, but don't hold your breath.

**Ronald Sklar**

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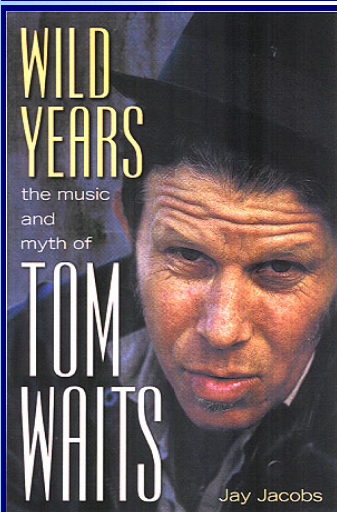
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