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Rat Pack Confidential



Synopsis

For the first time, the full story of what happened when Frank Sinatra brought his best pals to party in a land called Vegas. January 1960. Las Vegas is at its smooth, cool peak. The Strip is a jet-age theme park, and the greatest singer in the history of American popular music summons a group of friends there to make a movie. One is an insouciant singer of Italian songs, ex-partner to the most popular film comedian of the day. One is a short, black, Jewish, one-eyed, singing, dancing wonder. One is an upper-crust British pretty boy turned degenerate B-movie actor, brother-in-law to an ascendant politician. And one is a stiff-shouldered comic with the quintessential Borscht Belt emcee's knack for needling one-liners. The architectonically sleek marquee of the Sands Hotel announces their presence simply by listing their names: FRANK SINATRA. DEAN MARTIN. SAMMY DAVIS, JR. PETER LAWFORD. JOEY BISHOP. Around them an entire cast gathers: actors, comics, singers, songwriters, gangsters, politicians, and women, as well as thousands of starstruck everyday folks who fork over pocketfuls of money for the privilege of basking in their presence. They call themselves The Clan. But to an awed world, they are known as The Rat Pack. They had it all. Fame. Gorgeous women. A fabulous playground of a city and all the money in the world. The backing of fearsome crime lords and the blessing of the President of the United States. But the dark side--over the thin line between pleasure and debauchery, between swinging self-confidence and brutal arrogance--took its toll. In four years, their great ride was over, and showbiz was never the same. Acclaimed Jerry Lewis biographer Shawn Levy has written a dazzling portrait of a time when neon brightness cast sordid shadows. It was Frank's World, and we just lived in it.

Book Information

Hardcover: 352 pages

Publisher: Doubleday (April 13, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385487517

ISBN-13: 978-0385487511

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.8 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 178 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #186,731 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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Customer Reviews

If you're not inclined to read individual biographies of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis Jr., Shawn Levy's *Rat Pack Confidential* is a perfect one-stop resource. Less a group biography than a series of impressionistic snapshots, the book is loaded with can't-miss material--the dirt on the making of *Ocean's Eleven*, information about Sinatra's wild stint as a casino owner, deep background on Peter Lawford's habit of introducing Jack Kennedy to glamorous starlets, wiretap transcripts of mobsters Sam Giancana and Johnny Formosa discussing Dean Martin's lack of respect. Levy, whose previous book, *King of Comedy*, is a serious consideration of Jerry Lewis's life and career, offers similarly well considered insights into the members of the Rat Pack. He covers Davis's lifelong struggle against racism and the complicated intertwinings of the Kennedy political machine and "the Clan," as the performers preferred to be called (they often denied anything like the Rat Pack even existed and resisted collective references). The book's debts to its predecessors are often apparent; much of the material on Sinatra's friendship with Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, for example, appears to have been gleaned from recent Bogart biographies. The writing style, which tries to capture the ring-a-ding-ding feel of the era, also owes serious debts to Nick Tosches by way of James Ellroy, while only intermittently reaching their level of mastery. But these are minor quibbles. As a synthesis of thirty years worth of journalism and celebrity biography, *Rat Pack Confidential* succeeds in portraying the supernova blowout of old-school showbiz in all its dazzling glory.

It used to be Frank Sinatra's world: Women were broads, the whole world was a smoking section, and booze flowed freely. And at no time was it more Frank's world than when the Rat Pack was in session. Sinatra was the center of the group, with Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. completing the nucleus. Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop, and Shirley MacLaine, the only female admitted, comprised the periphery. Since Sinatra's 80th birthday in 1995 was commemorated by at least a half-dozen books, one might think that all that could possibly be written about Sinatra already has. Indeed, most of the material in these books has been seen before in the biographies and autobiographies of the various Rat Pack players, but each book finds its own angle. Quirk (author of a string of movie-star biographies) and Schoell (a novelist and author of books on film) concentrate a bit more on the various Rat Pack films. Levy (author of a Jerry Lewis biography and former editor at *American Film*) digs somewhat deeper into Sinatra's connections with politics and organized crime.

In light of Sinatra's recent death, there will likely be demand for more material on him, and these books will be welcome additions to circulating popular culture collections. A Michael Colby, Univ. of California at Davis Lib. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Relatively light reading written in a friendly style which gave the reader the 'rat pack' on the whole, as well as individuals. I must say I truly enjoyed the book as well as the author's presentation of it. Would certainly recommend.

I enjoyed this book. I remember bits and pieces of this time in history. This book helped fill in the blanks. I remember how Los Vegas was way back when. Glorious! But to get the background on what happened was wonderful.

Very interesting book. Different perspective of the various celebrities personalities. Good insight into that era and the decadence in which the Rat Pack lived. Brought back memories of the times.

I bought the Rat Pack Confidential book as a kindle book and I loved reading about the escapades of the Rat Pack. This book also has dialog that I've never read before. It does go into the mob quite a bit and the rivalries. Frank had a lot to deal with. The book is well written and an easy read. It is jam-packed with information.

It's a fun read about the rat pack way back when. You have to have a fascination with these celebrities, Frank. I've read two books about him. This one rounds out his life and times.

A good look at not only the Rat Pack and its flawed characters, but a researched look at the building of Vegas and its eventual transformation from the era when Frank reigned supreme there.

Good read if you are interested in the people involved. Frankie turns out to be a total jerk, and it's somewhat surprising that the Kennedy's allowed themselves be so exposed.

It was a very interesting read, however, I felt dirty after reading it. They were a group of filthy men and all who hung around them were no better.

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Rat Pack Confidential: Frank, Dean, Sammy, Peter, Joey and the Last Great Show Biz Party Rat

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