



The name says it all...

Just Jazz

March 2017

Hi Friends —

You know, people ask me all the time, **“Is Frank Sinatra a jazz singer?”** (Recently some snarkmeister posted on my Facebook page, *“Since when is Frank Sinatra a ‘jazz singer?’*” My equally snarky reply: *“Since I play him on my jazz show.”*) Anyway, the short answer is, *“Yes — and no,”* and the longer answer is, *“He’s a jazz singer when he’s singing jazz, and he’s not a jazz singer when he isn’t.”* Not very satisfying, huh?

See, it’s like this: **Frank, to my knowledge, never claimed to be a jazz singer** — wisely, so as not to limit his broad appeal — and maybe that’s why *when* he did it, he did it so well, so naturally. (During the ‘70s he fancied himself a “saloon singer,” but by that point in his career he hadn’t sung in a real saloon for years.) **Clearly, not everything he recorded — maybe not even most of it — could be called “jazz.”** Of course, you could say the same for Nat Cole and Billy Eckstine, whose jazz pedigrees are more widely acknowledged and accepted than Sinatra’s.

But no so-called “popular singer” ever had more love for jazz, learned more from jazz, and incorporated more jazz elements into his or her work, not even Tony Bennett or Rosemary Clooney, both of whom, late in their careers, purposely crossed over from pop to jazz. **And no so-called “popular singer” ever was held in higher regard by esteemed jazz artists** like Billie Holiday, Lester Young, and Miles Davis, to name just three.

Just for example, listen to Frank’s relentlessly swingin’ “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” his astute melodic variation in the second chorus of the 1957 “Night and Day,” his soulful, blues-infused “Angel Eyes,” his sextet-backed, posthumously released live dates in Melbourne (1959) and Paris (1962), and, most of all, his three albums with Count Basie. No singer, with the lone exception of Joe Williams, was as well suited to Basie’s music.

I feel about the elusive art of jazz singing much like Justice Lewis Powell, considering a landmark Supreme Court obscenity case, felt about pornography. Unable to define it, he said, “I know it when I see it.” Well, I know jazz singing when I *hear* it. And **I hear it, very often, in the work of Frank Sinatra.**

Stay cool, and keep list’nin’,
Bob



Special Shows and Segments
3/19: Songs of Spring

2017 marks the **100th birthday anniversary of the great Ella Fitzgerald.** I am celebrating Ella and her music all year long on *Just Jazz featuring The Sinatra Hour.*



Dig this: My friend, **jazz author Debbie Burke,** has published **an interview with me — of all people!**— on her cool new website, and you can read it **here.** While you’re there, go ahead and check out — *and order* — Debbie’s excellent first book, ***The Poconos in B Flat,*** and look ahead to her next book, ***Glissando: A Story of Love, Lust and Jazz,*** to be released in February. 2018. (**Thank you, Debbie!**)

Just Jazz featuring The Sinatra Hour is heard every Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. Eastern Time (US) over WRNJ 104.7 & 92.7 FM and 1510 AM and streaming worldwide at **tunein.com/radio/WRNJ**

Quotes of the Month

I told him certain notes at the end he could bend ... Bending those notes — that’s all I helped Frankie with.

— **Billie Holiday**

If I could put together exactly the kind of band I wanted, Frank Sinatra would be the singer. Really, my main man is Frank Sinatra.

— **Lester Young**

I learned a lot about phrasing back then listening to the way Frank, Nat King Cole, and even Orson Welles phrased. I mean all those people are motherfuckers in the way they shape a musical line or phrase or sentence with their voice.

— **Miles Davis**

RECOMMENDED INTERNET JAZZ RADIO

wemu.org: Linda Yohn starts your day right with three and a half hours of jazz and blues. Mon.-Fri. 9:00-12:30 ET.

Late Night Jazz with Rusty Hassan: a Hall of Fame jazz broadcaster. Thurs. 10:00-midnight ET wpfwfm.org.

Café Latino: Singer-songwriter **Laura Fernandez** features two hours of Latin music. Sat. 4:00-6:00 p.m. ET on Toronto’s Jazz FM91.

The Jazz Club: Hosted by bassist-bandleader **Dave Post.** Wed. 1:00-3:00 p.m. ET wfdu-hd2.

Good Vibes: Gloria Krolak hosts the world’s only radio show dedicated to the vibraphone. First Sun. of every month 8:00-10:00 p.m. ET.

Jazz Spotlight on Sinatra: Nancy Barell presents Frank Sinatra’s music through the decades, along with jazz instrumentalists and singers performing songs he recorded plus other beloved standards on PureJazzRadio.org (Sun. 8:00-10:00 p.m. and Mon. 9:00-11:00 a.m.).

And **every Sunday after Just Jazz** stay tuned to WRNJ and wrnjradio.com for ***Value This with Brian and Leon*** at 1:00, followed by ***The Tail-Finned Turntable*** from 2:00 to 3:00 and ***Still Rockin’*** from 3:00 to 4:00, both hosted by “the Golden Gup,” Gup Gascoigne.

NEW & RECOMMENDED CDS

Claire Daly: 2648 West Grand Boulevard (Glass Beach Jazz): Now here’s an idea: jazz interpretations of classic Motown 45s. And in the hands of baritone saxophonist Claire Daly, it’s a winner. Daly’s deep, soulful timbre is perfectly suited to this material, and along with her longtime collaborators — pianist Steve Hudson, bassist Mary Ann McSweeney, drummer Peter Grant, guitarist Jerome Harris — she clearly *gets* what this music is all about, creating a solid groove and telling an engaging musical story.

Duchess: Laughing at Life (Anzic): Close harmony, an offbeat repertoire, and a whole lot of fun is what you get from the talented and clever vocal trio, Duchess (Amy Cervini, Hilary Gardner, Melissa Stylianou). Backed by a solid rhythm section, the full-throated tenor saxophone of Jeff Lederer, plus guests trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and clarinetist Anat Cohen, Duchess packs every track with a delightful blend of uninhibited joy and inspired artistry.

Eugene Marlow’s Heritage Ensemble: Obrigado Brasil! (MEI! Enterprises): How refreshing is it to find a presentation of Brazilian jazz not loaded with the wonderful, yet well-worn, tunes of Jobim and Bonfá? Pianist-composer Eugene Marlow’s inventive pieces capture the verve of the samba and the romance of the bossa nova with originality and interest, blended with occasional Afro-Cuban and classical tinges. A standout is “Carnaval a Sanabria,” a tour de force for master drummer-percussionist Bobby Sanabria.

UPCOMING AREA JAZZ EVENTS

Sun., March 26, 3:00: Chico Mendoza Latin Jazz Sextet
\$25 advance / \$30 at the door; Rutherford Hall, 1686 Rt.517, Allamuchy, NJ
908-852-1894, ext. 138 or 908-637-6455

The **New Brunswick Jazz Project** — *“bringing great Jazz to Central Jersey”* — regularly offers jazz events at numerous venues throughout New Brunswick, NJ. Click **[HERE](#)** to see their monthly schedule.

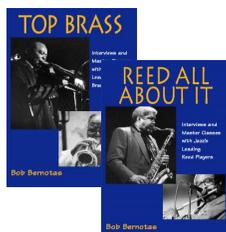
Acclaimed Jazz Books by Bob

Top Brass: Interviews and Master Classes with Jazz’s Leading Brass Players

[temporarily out of print]

Reed All About It: Interviews and Master Classes with Jazz’s Leading Reed Players

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Bob Bernotas • host of *Just Jazz featuring The Sinatra Hour*
Sundays, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

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