

What and Why Is Sinatra?



IF you have been overseas long enough to have forgotten thoroughly the taste of fresh milk and the look of civilian clothes, you are probably baffled by the U. S. song-and-sex phenomenon known as Frank Sinatra.

All I knew about Sinatra was that he had been a better-than-average vocalist with Tommy Dorsey's band when I last heard him and that he had climbed, by the time I got back to the States, into a position as "King of the Baritones" and "Idol of the Bobby Soxers." Lord help me, I didn't even know what Bobby Soxers were! I learned by going to a theater where Sinatra headed the stage show. It was a school holiday and the shrill little girls, packed into the theater and overflowing into a major traffic problem on the streets outside, were the Bobby Soxers.

When Sinatra—whom they call "The Voice" when they aren't calling him "Oh, Frankie"—came on the stage, they whistled and stamped and uttered odd cooing sounds and jumped up and down in their seats. Whenever he moved the sounds got louder and the jumping more unrestrained. You couldn't hear his voice for the bleating of the Soxers, so I can't judge whether he's better or worse than he used to be. I did get to meet him between shows and found, to my surprise because I was braced to dislike him, that he was just a guy, nicer than not nice.

For your information, here are a few facts on "The Voice." He is draft age but is not draft material because of a punctured eardrum. He was born in Hoboken, N. J., and went to high school there, swimming on the school team and playing a little tennis. He kidded around some with boxing, but his old man, who had done some pro boxing himself, talked him out of going into the racket seriously. Instead he had a fling at sports reporting on the *Jersey Observer*. Then he started singing and from there on in his voice was his meal ticket.

The Bobby Sox business—possibly begun as a press-agent stunt, but now out of anyone's control, including Frankie's—got him his first big-time publicity. Today he has two radio programs, draws top money for personal appearances and can write his own ticket in Hollywood. He has kept up his interest in boxing to a certain extent, the extent depending on what you think of Tami Mauriello, a boxer whom he is rumored to own. He married a home-town girl, and they have two kids—a girl going on 5 and a baby boy.

Sinatra makes violent love to the mike when he sings. His fans love it and the anti-Sinatra crowd hates it. A teen-age boy threw an egg smack in his face during his last New York stage engagement, and Sinatra took it with as good grace as anyone can take an egg in the face. He and the egg-thrower made up after the show. On his stage dates Sinatra has to come into the theater early and hide there all day. If he goes out he is mobbed by the Bobby Soxers. Between shows, he usually eats backstage and listens to a victrola, frequently playing Sinatra records.

Nobody has been able to figure out to anyone's satisfaction why Sinatra has the effect he has on his Bobby Sox fans. One of his secretaries, a cute dish whose husband is serving overseas, said: "The doctors say it's just because he's got a very sexy voice, but I've been with him a year now and his voice doesn't do a thing to me."

Maybe it's the war.

—YANK Staff Writer

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