Tonight Will Not Swing: Frank Sinatra through the Liner Notes of Stan Cornyn

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Abstract

Frank Sinatra was a towering figure in popular music of the twenty-first century. He designed the basic approach to album making called the "Concept Album." Part of that album-making process was devised outside of the studio, in the form of liner notes. Few critics have approached the albums of Frank Sinatra through the lens of Stan Cornyn’s award-winning liner notes during Sinatra’s tenure with Reprise Records, particularly the words of Softly, As I Leave You (1964) through My Way (1968). Cornyn’s notes’ use of poetic mechanisms and their conversational structure allow him to assess Sinatra’s work to the most minute detail. Through object association or dialogue between characters, Cornyn colorizes Sinatra’s songs as if the liner notes were a part of the music itself. In my essay, I look into several Cornyn notes to unify themes and discuss Cornyn’s analysis of Sinatra’s character in his music, ultimately bridging Sinatra’s concepts into other aspects of the album form, particularly liner notes.

Keywords

Frank Sinatra; Stan Cornyn; liner notes; music; traditional pop; album; September

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