

JUST DINO

- **GREATEST HITS**
- **HALF NELSON AT 40**
- **DINO - THE EARLY YEARS**
- **MEMORIES OF SINATRA**

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It produces a quarterly, digital magazine, *Perfectly Frank*. Subs are £5 for the digital issue. Postal members' subs are £15 for UK, £19 for Europe and £23 for the rest of the world.

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"Just Dino is the exclusive and fully-authorized magazine published only by us in the UK, and distributed worldwide since November 1960. The Dean Martin Association is totally lionized to the man himself, his life and career. Wherever you live, whoever you are, I dedicate your Association to Dean Martin and to you - as you support us by being a valued member."




Bernard H Thorpe
Co-founder, President (1960-2015) and
Chief Executive (1960-2015)

EDITORIAL

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THE DEAN MARTIN ASSOCIATION

About THE DEAN MARTIN ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1960 and now in our seventh decade, we are proud to be the first and only officially authorized independent, flagship organization dedicated to Dean Martin in the world. We are non-profit: we receive no funding or donations.

Our Chairperson until his sad death in December 1995, Dean personally sanctioned our creation 65 years ago, enabling us to be ambassadors of his career and honor his talents as one of the world's greatest entertainers. Dean was the driving force behind the formation of what eventually became The Dean Martin Association and he maintained direct, close contact with us and co-founder Bernard H Thorpe over the decades, giving us a unique insight into this otherwise elusive figure.

We have worked with EMI/Capitol, Warner-Reprise and other labels from as early as 1964 as consultants or co-producers on a number of officially-licensed compilation albums and re-releases of Dean's studio recordings (one even gaining him a Gold award in 1976). Since 2024 we have been the leading organization for *The Dean Martin Hometown Festival* in Steubenville, Ohio.

The Dean Martin Association continuously strives to respect, promote and support the legacy of Dean Martin at all times with the patronage of members of his family, and the support of admirers and members all around the world.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

9 January 2024

Welcome to our fresh and exciting new look for 2025 and beyond.

Now celebrating our 65th anniversary, and with 430 issues under our belt, we felt it was time for a bit of a spruce. It's already been over a year since we relaunched JUSTDINO and every month the DMA team knock it out of the park with the articles they produce. It's phenomenal how they keep the quality up. I'm very grateful...for without them JD wouldn't be anywhere near as good.

I'd like to give a special mention to two very lovely ladies Norma and Gloria both from New Jersey. Norma, a young 96 years old, and her son Andrew are a regular presence at Karen's Sinatra events. The ladies are both pictured here (Norma is seated) with the late Christopher Riddle at Karen's May 2023 event. Their support is much appreciated and we hope they continue to enjoy Karen's marvellous presentations.

All of us here at the DMA send our deepest condolences and every good wish for a safe and calm return to normality to all our families, friends and, colleagues currently facing the terrible events in L.A.

And finally, very big congratulations to Thomas and his partner Karol, who last month celebrated the arrival of their first-born son. Welcome to the world, little Michael!

For the good times,

Elliot



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Get in touch.

We'd love to hear your views on our latest articles, as well as your own ideas for future stories you'd like us to cover, or even just your thoughts about Dean! Simply use the contact form on our website:
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or send an email to the editor: justdino2017@gmail.com



L.A.

YOU BELONG TO ME

2025 seems to be the year of anniversaries, and the Glen A Larson/Lou Shaw comedy-drama series *Half Nelson* joins in the celebrations. It's memorable for Dean Martin fans particularly because it was Dean's final acting role and his only foray into regular episodic television. It's been 40 years since the show debuted and, in the first of a series of features, **ELLIOT THORPE** takes a look back.

At first thought, Joe Pesci isn't the kind of actor to do comedy, or even be drawn to it, especially with movies such as *Raging Bull* (United Artists, 1980) and *Once Upon A Time In America* (Ladd Company, 1984), *Goodfellas* (Warner Bros., 1990) and *The Irishman* (Netflix, 2019) on his résumé. But look a little closer: by the time he was cast in 1985 for *Half Nelson*, he'd already starred in *Dear Mr Wonderful* (WDR, 1982) and *Everybody In Jail* (Variety, 1984). While little-known, these European comedies would give Joe the ability to wide his acting credence beyond playing a tough guy. 1983's *Easy Money* (Orion) with Rodney Dangerfield certainly showed his US audience what he could do. And of course, in future years, he would embody Ralph Macchio's cousin Vinny, he would

portray Leo, who gets things for lethal weapons Mel Gibson and Danny Glover, and would become the wonderfully nasty Harry Lyme antagonizing Macaulay Culkin's industrious alone-at-home Kevin McAllister.

Half Nelson itself was a short-lived series, running for a mere seven episodes (following the double-length pilot) before it was unceremoniously cancelled. One of those seven wasn't even broadcast and has never been seen publicly to this day.

As a mid-80s action-comedy-drama TV show it had so much to offer: the magnetic charisma of a leading actor, star cameos to make a telethon producer envious, fantastic cars and beautiful backdrops, and a mystery-of-the-week to lure in the armchair detectives.

So why it ultimately failed in the eyes of TV execs is a shame.

The TV schedules of early 1985 were packed with some hugely entertaining programming, some which survived beyond one series, some that were ongoing and virtually untouchable and some that couldn't beat the ratings: *Charlie's Angels*, *The A-Team*, *Airwolf*, *Street Hawk*, *The Equalizer*, *Moonlighting*, *Amazing Stories* and so on... *Half Nelson* had pretty formidable competition (some, like *The Fall Guy*, *Knight Rider* and *Magnum p.i.*, were already Glen A Larson's) so the odds of

Above: Joe Pesci and Dean Martin on set for *Half Nelson* [NBC, 1985]

Opposite: US press ad [NBC, 1985]

surviving against such established titles was always going to be slim.

And that is one of the reasons why *Half Nelson* has been held in low esteem, and incredibly unfairly, too.

Larson has had a handful of misfires throughout his career (*Galactica 1980* for one) and some for no discernible reason (by osmosis, *Caprica*) yet that former series is far beneath what *Half Nelson* had to offer. Where budgets were slashed and main characters cast as echoes of prior much-loved favorites, as well as lack-lustre script-writing, *Galactic 1980* really was on a backfooting even before it shot out of the starfighter launch tubes.

Half Nelson on the other hand was down-to-earth, funny, engaging and exactly the right mixture for a typical mid-80s show. In fact, it was probably more cemented in reality, albeit Hollywood's version of reality, than its competitors.

A brusque New York City cop relocated to Beverly Hills where he becomes a security guard for the rich and famous and solves some crimes on the way sounds ideal on paper. The cop's blunt-instrument approach clashes with the more conservative workings of the LA police, bringing some comedic relief amidst all the murders and thievery.

It is not unlike a TV version of *Beverly Hills Cop*, where Eddie Murphy's character relocated to the sun and glamor from his rough and ready life as a Chicago detective. Indeed, Larson had known of the movie (which had been released in December 1984) and found the basic concept reworkable as an ongoing series. *Half Nelson* is different enough from Murphy's movies to not be seen as a direct copycat and has more going for it as a character-driven series rather than as a vehicle for its main star's comic abilities.

Joe has always had a natural flair to be funny even in his most darkest roles (I managed to resist calling this article 'Funny How?!') and Rocky Nelson was the perfect foil for his brand of comedic drama.

Joe himself has always steered well clear of talking about his own career to anyone, so to get an insight into his feelings about his time as Nelson we can only glean by seeing what he brings to the screen. We will be running a piece next issue about Joe, so I won't delve too much into my thoughts here about his role.

With the pilot debuting on NBC on March 24, 1985 as a "Sunday Night Movie", it's a great way to spend 2 hours (or 95 minutes sans adverts).

Opening with a New York drugs bust so successful that Hollywood want to make a movie out of it, arresting officer Rocky Nelson decides that he wants to be in the starring role. He resigns from the NYPD and relocates to Beverly Hills but is considered too short by the director, but nevertheless is still intent on becoming an actor all the same! He joins the Beverly Hills Patrol, a private security firm owned by a number of high-profile celebrities,

One of the celebrity owners of the BHP is a certain "Mr Martin", played by, who else, but Dean. He's a fictional version of himself but one that means that Dean can play the kind of role he had already been playing for years: a laid-back, easy going and engaging personality, who wanders in every now and again to give some sage advice or dry quip here and there.

At this time in his career, Dean was stepping away from doing much work, finding the main comfort to be his Vegas set, so it was a surprise that he signed on for the series.

"When they asked me to be a part of the show, I thought 'why not?'," Dean would tell Bernard a few years after. 'Joe Pesci was a good kid and he was always there knowing his lines and his marks. I said a few lines, then went off to play golf.'

Bernard asked him if he would have committed to an entire series had *Half Nelson* gone beyond the nine initial episodes.

'I'd signed, but they paid me anyway,' was Dean's elusive reply.

One has to wonder though if he would have stayed the course. Admittedly, he ensured that he had very little to do and it was a great shame he didn't feel it necessary to become more involved with proceedings. It suited his outlook

and kept his face on TV screens and his name in the TV guides. He was also the only recurring guest star to have his name in the opening credits, as well as singing the end titles.

And just look at that calibre of guest stars!

In the pilot alone, we're inundated: as well as Dean, there's Rory Calhoun, Tony Curtis, George Kennedy, Gary Lockwood, Rod Taylor (who appeared as a favor to Larson, having been part of the creator/producer's ill-fated *Masquerade* series in 1983), Mills Watson and Robert Webber, as well as sports stars Larry Holmes, John Matuszak, Jerry Reuss and Tim Rossovich.

It's not only famous faces we get to see, for *Magnum, p.i.*'s iconic red Ferrari 308 GTS makes an appearance, complete with Mike Post and Peter Carpenter's equally legendary theme, as does KITT from *Knight Rider* (serenaded by the theme composed by Larson and Stu Phillips) and *The Fall Guy*'s GMC K-2500 Wideside pick-up, accompanied by an instrumental version of Gail Jensen's fantastic theme.



With Rocky now living in Dean Martin's guest house, over the course of six months he becomes a trusted and valued member of the BHP. His English bull terrier, Hunk, keeps any marauders at bay by living with him. There's a lovely friendship between Dean and Rocky and it's clear by their interaction on screen that Joe enjoyed working with the legendary entertainer.

Dean only has 3 scenes throughout, but he's marvellous, as casual as ever. Larson even convinced him to do the voice-over for the series trailer!

BHP boss Chester (Fred Williamson) is no-nonsense and tries his best to ensure Rocky sticks to the rules, while office manager Annie O'Hara (Victoria Jackson) is more ditzy. Rocky also befriends LAPD chief Parsons, played by the ever reliable George Kennedy, who seems intent on getting the diminutive ex-cop on his payroll. But Rocky turns down the offer, instead wanting to focus on becoming a movie star...with a bit of time on the side to solve the occasional →

→ crime here and there!

Rocky becomes embroiled in the investigation of the murder of one of his BHP colleagues, soon uncovering the mystery of some stolen CCTV tapes. Part of his search means he has to make best use of the studio he has access to, assuming a number of disguises by adorning some of the studio wardrobe. Joe's stature and unmistakable voice means his ability to go unnoticed is as surprisingly effective as Superman putting on a pair of eyeglasses and no one realising he's the same guy as Clark Kent!

These are the moments too where we get the vehicle cameos.

All these in-jokes and nods to other Glen A Larson shows mean that *Half Nelson* is very much tongue in cheek and fully self-aware of how daft the set-ups are. It's entertainment all round and simply makes you smile.

My first exposure to Joe's work was through this show.

I was a little too young to have seen any of his prior films at this point but soon found much to admire and respect in his performances in the *Lethal Weapon* sequels (Warner Bros., 1989/1992/1998), the first two *Home Alones* (20th Century Fox, 1990/1992), *Goodfellas*, *JFK* (Warner Bros., 1991) and so on.

As a teenager, *Half Nelson* tapped into all that I loved about American 80s action shows. I was a huge fan of all of them (I still am for the most part!) and this one was no different.

Joe's ability to make light of a tense situation or make tense a light situation is engaging. Certainly, I always enjoy comedy where there is a sense of pathos and sentimentality. Characters, in any fictional situation, have to behave and move naturally, as you and I would if presented with a scenario. It makes the viewer empathic to the plight of the character, no matter how comedic or otherwise the portrayal is required to be.

Rocky Nelson isn't an out and out joker, nor is he a buffoon. He is a hero with a heart, one who seeks revenge for those

less fortunate than himself and one who will stand by his comrades and friends until justice is served. When, in the pilot, he discovers the identity of the killer, he is saddened, even slightly betrayed by the revelation. For all the silly costumes, cameos and star cars, when it comes down to the wire, Rocky Nelson is the man.

From the pilot alone (we'll be covering the entire series in upcoming issues of JUST DINO) it's a series worth commissioning. Its set up is near perfect and all the characters are in their required places throughout, and for the coda, when we know that there are more stories coming up, they have their roles fully fleshed out. We'll welcome more supporting actors as the series does progress but it's Joe Pesci as Rocky Nelson who we all want to come back to see.

Much of Rocky's characterization could easily be transposed to another actor...Dean Martin. Now by that, I don't mean that *anyone* could have played him. Rocky

is warm, affable and likeable, but has little patience for fools and time-wasters just as I suspect Joe himself is and certainly the kind of man Dean was.

I wonder then if this was the reason Dean and Joe got on so well together? They are cut from the same cloth, in many ways: both Italian-American, both can sing, both can act, both can play outside of their expected fields of characterization., both can command their own privacy to be secure.

I always wished that Dean had pushed himself more in dramatic roles later in his career. Can you imagine what he would have done with material from Scorsese? Maybe not the full-on violence and expletives that sometimes go hand in hand (Dean was quite conservative in his acting choices), but just picture him in a nuanced, subtle supporting role in something like *Casino* (Universal, 1995) had it been made 5 years earlier.

But we have Joe to do all that for us. I'm glad he came out of retirement, because we don't need to remember how damn good he was...we can see how damn good he *is*.

In *Half Nelson*, Dean was the veteran, the legend who had so much still to offer and could light up the scene just by standing in it.

That is exactly what Joe has always done, too. But now, this time 40 years on, *he's* the veteran. JD



Right: Joe Pesci and Dean Martin on set for *Half Nelson* (NBC, 1985)

LISTENING BOOTH

A E ABBOTTSON is listening to "L.A. IS MY HOME"

What's this? A new series on national television starring Dean Martin? And a new single from the man himself?

In 1985 weren't we lucky!

While said single "L.A. Is My Home" wasn't a precursor to a new album from Dean, it was the end theme to the same TV series he had surprisingly signed up for. It was also surprising that he went back into the recording studio...but not a surprise it was for just one track.

There had been a noticeable absence of anything new from Dean, music-wise, for most of the 1970s, with a return to form in 1983 for Warner Bros.' THE NASHVILLE SESSIONS.

With talk of a follow-up album (that never happened) that, it seemed, was that for any further, new additions to the catalog.

Dean was content to do the occasional *Dean Martin Celebrity Roast* (the series came to an

end in 1984, with Michael Landon in the final frame), some TV guest-spots here and there, his Vegas cabaret set and not much else.

So new music for a new TV series was something special indeed.

Dean went into the MCA recording studios on 22 July 1985 to lay down "L.A. Is My Home" (Altier/Latimer). Accompanied by Stu Phillips and his Orchestra, Dean did the complete song in 5 takes.

THE NASHVILLE SESSIONS was a true country album, but "L.A. Is My Home" took Dean back to his swinging roots.

Phillips was a regular composer for producer Glen A Larson, so it made sense he would be involved (for once not composing it!). It was very much in a big-band style, one that complemented Dean's voice perfectly.

With a smaller orchestra than a big-band swing set-up, Phillips was still able to bring some remarkable how Phillips was

able to produce solid music from a relatively small orchestra (listen to his score for the original *Battlestar Galactica* and you'll marvel at the dynamism of the soundtrack). Produced by Jimmy Bowen, Dean was perfectly represented.

Dean had turned 68 the month before when he recorded the end theme for *Half Nelson*. (The opening theme was "L.A. You Belong To Me", performed by Robert Jason.)

There was a weakness to his voice, one that was sadly affected by the beginnings of emphysema, but nevertheless was able to hit those notes.

It's lyrically complex, with vocal twists and turns, and is much more vibrant than his somewhat reflective sessions in Nashville. It's a happy, tongue-in-cheek song about a man declaring his love for Los Angeles, with all the benefits thereof, of everything that attracts and delights in between.

For what became Dean's very

For what became Dean's very last recording, it's fitting: a man from Steubenville wanting to make it big, singing about wanting his "all" taken in his first ever single (recorded for Diamond on 15 July 1946), to then bring his recording career to a close 39 years later (almost to the day) by declaring his love for the place he finally ended up in, Los Angeles.

Whether you like the song or not, and even if you like the TV show it accompanied or not, you can't argue "L.A. Is My Home" is about as fitting for Dean Martin's recording career epilog as you could ever get - especially when it was released by MCA, who were managers of Dean's early career!

A working life that indeed had come full circle. JD

Below: 7" 45rpm single, promotional pressing, "L.A. Is My Home" [MCA, 1985]





BERNARD H THORPE'S

Letter from Dino

Letter From Dino was the original title of our monthly publication in 1960, before we settled on **JUST DINO** (from 1987 onwards). Here we present a selection of editorials and news items from over the years...

Please note that any items mentioned as being enclosed or available for sale within this article are not for sale nor are available, nor enclosed. As products are no longer held by The Dean Martin Association either now or in the future, we must respectfully ask that you do not contact the publisher or The Dean Martin Association or any associated individual or organization/s asking to purchase any products that this or similar archival editorials make reference to.

FRANK SINATRA WEEK, JANUARY 17-23, 1966

(JD54, January 1966)

...Pye Records are launching their biggest ever promotion campaign for Frank Sinatra. Remember, all Reprise Sinatra records are obtainable from us, including the fabulous 2-LP set **A MAN AND HIS MUSIC**, which has a portion of that long-awaited Sands Hotel show with Dean and Sammy. Order from us now! Cost 62/=

A SMASH HIT REPRISE SINGLE!!

(JD65, December 1966)

We're sure it's a hit! A rocking, joyous new Dean Martin single with a wild, live party sound going for it. Not many words needed here...just get it going. This one's a big, big smash!! Issued November 29, 1966 (US) and scheduled for February 10, 1967 (UK) (to coincide with Dean Martin Week) the title are as follows: "(Open Up The Door) Let The Good Times In" as the a-side, with the song "I'm Not The Marrying Kind" (from the Columbia picture *Murderer's Row*) as the b-side. Both sides are arranged and conducted by Bill Justis, Jimmy Bowen producing.

NEW DEAN MARTIN LP FROM REPRISE

(JD85, August 1968)

Here it comes - volume 2! **DEAN MARTIN'S GREATEST HITS VOLUME 2** (RS6320) Stereo only (US), Mono or Stereo (UK). Another big smash-hit collection of fabulous song hits for the really ardent Dean Martin fan who collects all his records. This is a big LP, a happy sound and a big sales item. It will most certainly chart Volume 1 up to the top of the US charts. Releases August 13 (US).



TIME TO SIT BACK AND RELAX

(JD185, January 1977)

With all the work involved with 20 ORIGINAL DEAN MARTIN HITS (K54066) throughout 1976, Bernard became much in demand. His time and leisure became non-existent right up until Christmas. Unfortunately his success and achievements were marred by the sad death of his father (aged 70 years) on October 26, 1976.

Commitments had to be maintained however and Bernard carried on with visits around the UK with his secretary to promote the hit album.

This was a hectic schedule as it was a day or night in each town of city visited, except for Manchester where they managed to stay put for 3 days - and even bumping into Rod Stewart and Britt Ekland and being offered a job as a DJ for local BBC Radio (which he politely turned down!)

All in all the promotional work went very well for the album sold far more than WEA thought it ever would and has proved to be a resounding success.

Dean is very pleased with the results and both he and Bernard thank everyone connected with the LP - after all, it did get yet another GOLD award!

A final thank you to all our members who bought a copy of the album. It's still selling remarkably well and we have signed copies obtainable direct from us...



THE BEST OF THE CAPITOL YEARS

(JD287, January/February 1989)

With the new Capitol release on January 9, 1989 of the first ever digital album produced by the DMA, we seem to be starting off the new year the best way we can!

THE BEST OF THE CAPITOL YEARS (CDP7907182, tape cassette TCMS1297/LP EMS1297) contains sixteen of just some of the best songs that our Dino recorded during his tenure for Capitol. All digitally remastered at EMI's Abbey Road Studios in 1988 by Alan Dell, with presentation, research and compilation by Bernard, this is pure audio enjoyment; how beautiful Dino's voice and the music sound.

It was a delight for us to be at Abbey Road to hear the magic of these classic tunes given a new lease of life for the modern digital age.

EMI will decide on any future releases on CD of Dino's catalog depending on the sales success of this compilation. We implore you to buy

The album today to help convince EMI that there is still a place for Dino amongst contemporary music releases.

We do appreciate that most of you may already have the songs elsewhere, but we can assure you that you have not heard them with such clarity before! So please support the released at the DMA's efforts in getting this material out by buying your copies now!



THE CAPITOL COLLECTORS SERIES

(JD292, November/December 1989)

The really lovely aspect of this CD release is the fact that Dean visited the Capitol studios in Hollywood to witness for himself and supervise the digital transfers. He took a great delight in choosing the songs to be included on the album.

He has only ever been directly involved in selecting tracks for a compilation just once before [20 ORIGINAL DEAN MARTIN HITS], so it was a rare gift indeed.

"Previously, I've always left it to the technical guys once I've done my small bit," he told Bernard last month, "but it was easier this time because I didn't have to sing 'em from the start all over again, so I thought why not stick around and see what they do."

The 20 songs sound absolutely superb, with extensive sleeve notes, giving a really marvelous insight into Dean's time as a Capitol recording

artist - and a note from the man himself. Even the CD is the gorgeous original magenta of the Capitol vinyls.

It really is a superb release and we highly recommend it to add to your growing Dean Martin CD library!

AN ETERNAL HERO

(JD414, April/May/June 2011)

The likes of such talented personalities as our Dean are sadly part of our history.

He left us with a tremendous legacy with his varied career, but now in this new century we at the DMA can't really see anyone to match his potential staying power, certainly not after his passing.

How many musical legends truly attract new audiences long after they've gone? Hardly any, we'll wager.

He was of a generation that worked hard to succeed but now, with little of his material seeing the light of day as reissues, perhaps his time has finally come? No, absolutely not!

Dean Martin will still have relevance, will still draw in new listeners, young and old. He enjoyed life and would want us to enjoy ours.

We all know he loved his Westerns, and would regularly put his feet up at home and watch reruns of shows or repeat showing of classic movies - but did you know he was a huge fan of UK comedian Benny Hill?!

We remember way back when Dean would ask Bernard to ship to him off-air video recordings of *The Benny Hill Show*, or scour bookshops for anything Benny-related. We can only imagine Dean settling down in his den, feet up, house shoes on, remote control in hand as he watched Bernard's recordings of Benny's daft and very British humor.

Well, our Bernard has always marked Dean as one of the funniest fellas for comedy ever (many have disagreed!) but just look his TV shows and comedy films - he was a master at his art, to make people laugh, and laugh with him, endeavoring to make his TV show guests laugh and smile; and that's why he was so loved by his peers. JD



GREATER
versus **GREATER**

During the many years Dean spent in the recording studio, primarily with Capitol Records and Reprise Records, he recorded many fantastic songs and had several great hits.

Simply, a greatest hit indicates chart success and commercial familiarity while a greatest song would represent a track that his considered his better work.

IN
CTIN
L2

DEAN MARTIN
The Very Best of
40 Original Classics
On 2 CDs
That's Amore • Let Me Take You Home
Memories Are Made of This
Mambo Italiano • No One Can Love You
Noone • On An Evening In Monte Carlo
and Many More

DEAN MARTIN
Chevrolet

THAT'S AMORE • KISS • MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS
DEAN MARTIN

That's Amore • Let Me Take You Home
Memories Are Made of This
Mambo Italiano • No One Can Love You
Noone • On An Evening In Monte Carlo
and Many More

DEAN MARTIN
GREATEST HITS

The Best of Dean Martin

DEAN MARTIN'S GREATEST HITS VOL. 1
ANYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY
YOU'RE NOBODY TIL
SOMEBODY LOVES YOU
IN THE CHAIR
IN THE MOONLIGHT
HOUSTON
REMEMBER ME I'M THE ONE
WHO LOVES YOU
I'LL HELP REMEMBERING YOU
NOBODY'S BABY AGAIN
MY SHIRT, EVERY HOUR
RUNNING AROUND
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE THE
ONE I LOVE
COME RUNNING BACK
THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

First, a greatest hits compilation is based on chart performances, commercial success and how these songs were received by those who listened to and/or purchased his music. The songs you might find would usually include "That's Amore", "Volare", "Everybody Loves Somebody" "Sway", "Houston" and "Memories Are Made of This" and so on.

For the most part, the content would more than likely feature crowd-pleasing tracks that achieved mainstream popularity, with a focus on radio-friendly singles. It would appeal to casual listeners, fans of classic hits and possibly those who were seeking an introduction to Dean's work. It is the type of album that you might consider gifting to someone who is gaining interest in his music and would more than likely now include songs from both his Capitol Records and Reprise Records catalogs, a catalyst to discover the many different dimensions of his recording career.

The marketing strategy behind a greatest hits album is typically commercial.

It is a way of celebrating peak moments in an artist's career which is another way of reinforcing their legacy and position in the industry.. Dean's hits often reflected and defined a generation's musical taste.

Marketing techniques for one of Dean's greatest hits albums would include leveraging on factors such as his legacy and fan base. All aspects of marketing must balance to attract new listeners.

When we stop and examine his greatest *songs*, we discover that these were more a reflection of Dean's unique style in song interpretation and his enduring appeal to his fans. With Dean's career spanning several decades, he gave the world timeless classics which continue to captivate audiences to-day, many being staples in the American Songbook.

Dean's greatest songs however reflect his versatility, romanticism, and ability to connect with audiences of all ages. Perhaps inclusive of lesser-known gems he sang over the years, these may not necessarily indicate a commercial success, but rather focus on elements such as Dean's unique ability to showcase his vocal excellence, critical acclaim and even cultural significance. Many of these songs transport his fans back to a day which possibly represents a milestone in their lives.

Songs which might be included on a greatest songs album could be "Return to Me", "In the Chapel in The Moonlight", "I Will" and "Arrivederci Roma" to name a few. These provide insight into Dean as a performer, going beyond the surface to explore other facets of his delivery of song.

When considering the audience of a greatest songs collection, it typically includes core fans, those who grew up listening to Dean's music and are deeply invested in his works.

These songs might also have an audience which includes more dedicated fans or those with a deeper appreciation for Dean's style. Yet another significant group who might be included are the new generation, the younger listeners discovering Dean's music for the first time.

It is worth mentioning that Dean had 53 singles which debuted on the *Billboard* Hot 100s Single Chart and 31 albums chart on the *Billboard* 200s Chart. Over the course of his career, he had 8 singles with 18 of his albums which received RIAA Certification.

Capitol's "That's Amore" (1953) appears both as a hit *and* a greatest song in the No. 1 position. The song became synonymous with Dean's ability to blend humor, romance and charm together in a song. It charted on the *Billboard* Hot 100 Singles chart for 22 weeks. In closing one of his performances in Oakland, California in 1988, Dean says of the song which started him...'I hope it doesn't finish me.'

Other songs which overlapped are classics like "Volare" (1958), "Memories Are Made of This" (1955), "Ain't That a Kick in The Head" (1960), "Sway" (1954), "Everybody Loves Somebody" (1964), "Return to Me" (1958), "You're Nobody 'til Somebody Loves You" (1960), and "Houston" (1965). All of these songs charted on the *Billboard* Hot 100 Singles Chart with the exception of "Ain't That a Kick in The Head."

In 2004, *DINO: THE ESSENTIAL DEAN MARTIN* was released and included some of his biggest hits from both Capitol and Re-

prise. The key tracks on this album include "Ain't That A Kick in The Head", "That's Amore", "Volare", "Memories Are Made of This" and "Everybody Loves Somebody". They showcased his ability to be playful, embrace his Italian culture, and to be romantic.

The album in its entirety covers Dean's most popular songs while highlighting his versatility as a vocalist.

THE VERY BEST OF DEAN MARTIN (Capitol, 1998) as part of EMI's *The Very Best of...* series, offers an excellent introduction to his early years.

Songs like "Sway", "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You", "Return to Me" and "Mambo Italiano" allow the listener to embrace his different musical styles as he pays tribute to his Italian / Latin culture.

In 2000, *GREATEST HITS: KING OF COOL* included tracks which focused on Dean's unique style and charm. The collection included many of his chart-topping songs as well as even deeper cuts that showcase his vocal range. Important inclusions on this collection are "Houston", "Gentle on My Mind", "I Will" and "Little Ole Wine Drinker Me".

An album which was released during Dean's peak years with Reprise is *DEAN MARTIN'S GREATEST HITS! VOL. 1* (1968). The songs selected for this album included "Everybody Loves Somebody", "The Door Is Still Open To My Heart", "Somewhere There's A Someone" and "Born to Lose".

Numerous record labels around the world have compiled their versions/collections of his hits with some mirroring the US release while others have different selections.

The DMA has worked on fourteen separate officially licensed Dean Martin compilations over the years (more than any other independent authoritative entity), starting in 1964 with *LET'S BE FRIENDLY*.

It had always been important to DMA co-founder Bernard that Dean's music was represented by more than just the hits everybody knew (a mantra we still maintain), but it was felt by both Capitol and Reprise execs that familiarity was the best bet for best sales. As a result, when Bernard was appointed to produce a compilation, there was an understandable obligation to include all the better-known hits. Yet Bernard was able to slip in a couple of less familiar tracks under the radar. Reprise's *20 ORIGINAL HITS* (1976) is a great example of this with additions like "Amor Mio" and "The Green, Green Grass of Home".

Of them all, however, only one truly was a greatest *songs* collection (as oppose to repeating the same hits albeit in a different order with a different cover!).

This of course was *THE CLASSIC DINO*. Produced in response to the huge success of the 1976 release, Capitol asked Bernard to choose his favorites, a tough task but one he was more than willing to take on. It was indeed made up of (in Bernard's humble opinion) 16 of Dean's greatest Capitol recordings, not necessarily ones that had prior major sales.

As a result, 1979's *THE CLASSIC DINO* is still considered by many Dean Martin fans to be one of the more superior compilations some 46 years later.

Dean's music transcends generations, continuing to inspire listeners worldwide.

These compilations, whether they be of his greatest hits or greatest songs, not only preserve his legacy, but also ensure that new audiences can appreciate the artistry and charm that made Dean Martin a legend.

Dean's music and entertainment is immeasurable. His recordings have sold millions of copies worldwide, and his songs continue to be celebrated by fans old and new.

His ability to connect with audiences through his music, combined with his charismatic persona, ensured his place in the elite group of some of the most respected music legends of all time. From romantic ballads to upbeat swing numbers, his music captures the essence of joy, love, and timeless charm. Whether crooning heartfelt lyrics or delivering playful melodies, Dean's charismatic persona ensured that his songs continue to resonate with audiences around the world. JD



THE LOUNGE

with Ed Krzan

The years leading up to success, the journey, can be just as exciting and interesting as the destination. Pre-M&L, before Martin and Lewis, Dean Martin had a journey of his own. The dirt, the hardships and struggles. The growing pains of the phases of growing. These were the ingredients of the provenance of Dean Martin. These growing conditions made possible the dynamic talent that was, it seems, hand picked by hands of destiny at the ideal time, the perfect moment.

Vino. Vino rosso to be specific. The deep burgundy red that flows from a handsome dark magnum into a perfect goblet glass with stem. The globe of glass perfectly smooth. The sexy slender upright stem. There are many very important, serious even, responsibilities and expectations for stems. Flora and other vegetation come to mind. And perhaps the most hedonist should we speak? The stems of a lovely dame? But a special responsibility falls on the shoulders of this goblet stem. An epicurean of such grape gasoline puts as much concern and intention towards the vino holder as the vino itself.

For the aficionado of these finer things appreciates the subtleties and nuances, the unseen hardships, the beautiful metamorphosis from earth's dirt to this liquefied heavenly juice, and the prerequisites required for such a final *palet sapor*. There are many detectors of vinos provenance. Soil, rain, environmental hardships all factor into the vino grape. Complex, dense, elegant, are common descriptions of its tastes. The final product many, many years in the making.

The terrain, Steubenville Ohio. The climate, an iron and coal producing melting pot little Chicago spurred by prohibition and the driven early 20th century Americana desire to prosper. Sprinkled with the old country song and food, new cultures mixing with the old. Things get done a certain way, new things getting done old school. These ways, these things, the road map, the growing conditions for Dino Crocetti to go from the soil, to the vine, to the grape, the fermenting, to the vino. To the smooth blood red vino in the marvelous bulbous gracefully suspended goblet of life.

The fragrance, the subtleties, the hints and notes, for all of us to partake.

Let's not underestimate the star bound trajectory Dean Martin was destined for prior to August 1944, where Dean Martin is introduced for the first time to Jerry Lewis.

Already, Dean had his own

national radio show, recorded an album, been considered for multiple motion pictures, and had caught the attention of some Hollywood elite.

He had numerous engagements in lounges and clubs with positive Sinatra-like reviews.

What may have or not have transpired without the happenstance lightning in the bottle teaming of Jerry Lewis is anyone's guess. One can venture to argue that the talented Dean Martin would have eventually emerged from the dirt of tribulations high onto the trellises of the bountiful vineyard of success.

Talent, like nature, always finds a way.

One has to believe the Dean Martin we know today would have existed just the same sans Jerry Lewis. Perhaps with different tones, different blends with different aromas.

There isn't an abundance of documented materials to fully appreciate the early years. To understand Dean Martin's trajectory prior to Jerry Lewis will require a bit of imagination and dot connecting. I'm sure there are more lost stories of Dean Martin prior to 1944 than penned.

The proprietary character heuristics of the secret Dino Vino would follow him past his time. He didn't prefer attention, he preferred solitude and peace. So we must move on with what little we know. A brief recollection of the beginnings. Cliff Notes, if you will, of the beginning years of Dean Martin.

The Spot Bar, a Steubenville staple, a young Dino would sing and croupier out back. A great beginning to anyone getting their beak wet in the business.

Prior to the Spot, 1934 he was in a band with friend Helen Bonitatibus. The band played mostly Italian numbers, Dino playing the drums. In 1943 at the age of 17 he was urged to take the stage with the George Williams Orchestra to croon a tune he was intimately aware of, "Oh Marie". By 1936 he was croonin' and dealin' at the Rex Cigar. Also in 1936, in plain view of some of the members of the Glenn Miller Orchestra, Dino sang with the Steubenville Al Arters Orchestra in the Capitol Theater.

Other less documented performances occurred at The Half Moon and Reeds Mill. In 1939 Dean was in Cleveland working at the Mounds Club when he met Ernie McKay, who promised him things, like a new name, and Youngstown, and Cleveland, and eventually the Jungle Inn where he would be discovered once again in 1940 by Sammy Watkins.

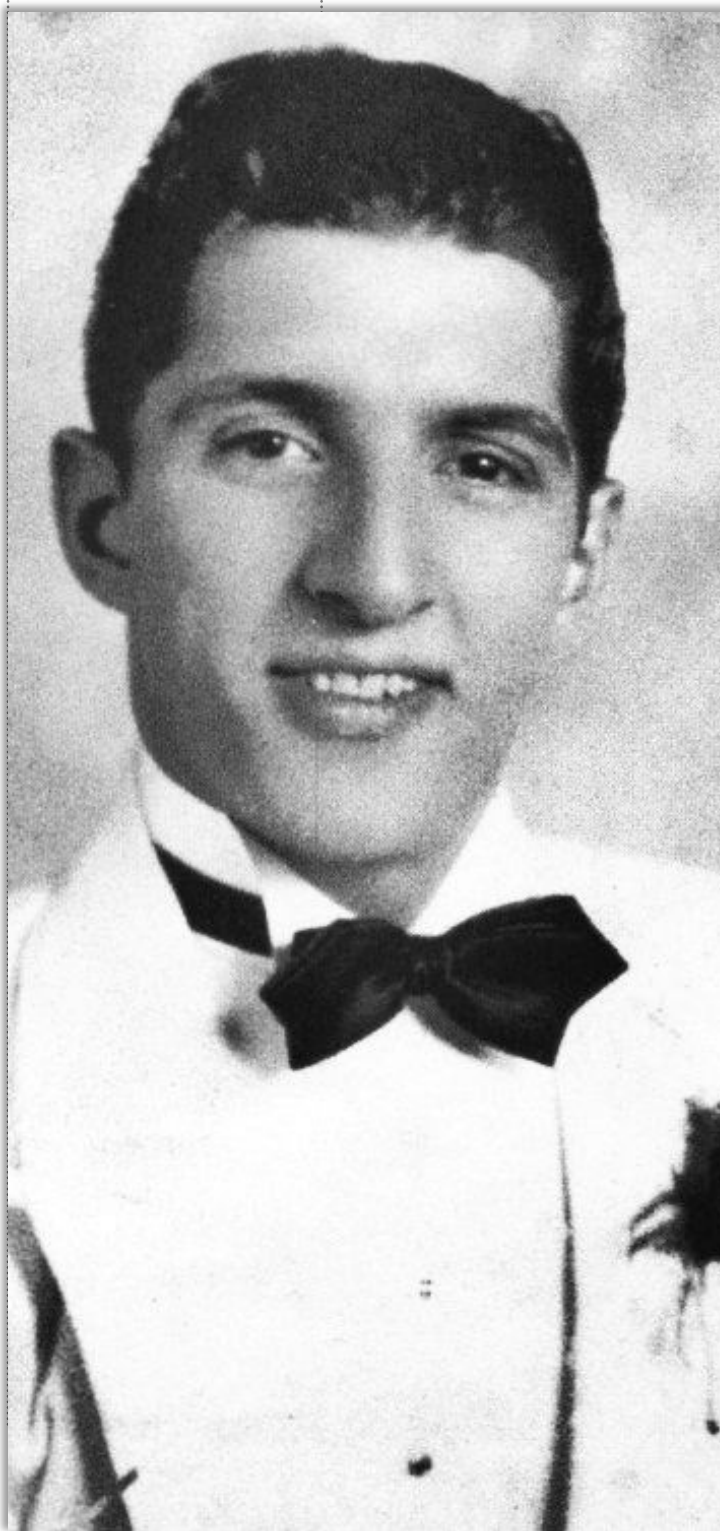
Plenty of personal events occur within his professional timeline which further developed on the slippery slope to entertainment bliss.

Fast forward to July 5 1942 Dean has his first national broadcast from WTAM Studios in Cleveland. In 1943 he was once again on the radio for WABC radio, the "Autumn Radio Shows". In 1943 Dean was with MCA, and by 1944 he was on the cover of Billboard magazine. In 1944 Dean and Lou Costello teamed up with plans for a nose job and some promising work on the silver screen. In August of 1944 on WMCA Dean had his own 15 minute radio show, *Songs Sung By Dean*

Martin and the Sears Orchestra, and soon after was introduced in passing to Jerry Lewis.

One more quick swing back to Stuville's Half Moon lounge to croon a bit in the spring of 1945. In July of 1946 Dean cuts his first record, at the age of 29, he's an official recording artist. And then to the Glass Hat where his chariot of stardom was awaiting, the rest is history.

And as they say, now you know, the rest of the story. The time came for Dean to enjoy the fruits of his labor, the wine of his grapes. From "Oh Marie", to "That's Amore". When the world seems to shine like you've had too much... JD



Right: "Dino Martini", c1943



Side By Side

with CINDY WILLIFORD

One thing that I have had to learn to do over the past couple of years is to "learn to breathe". And not necessarily from a health perspective, but just from all of the amazing and wonderful things which are happening in and with The Dean Martin Association. After all, in 2025 the DMA will celebrate 65 years of promoting Dean's life, career and legacy.

As you may remember, I traveled to Steubenville in December to participate in a handful of activities. I explored the world of the Steubenville Nutcracker Village which celebrated 10 years of bringing, and had the opportunity to adopt the Dean Martin Nutcracker for 2024; hopefully this will become a tradition.

You may also remember that the Nutcracker Village was a dream that became a reality to revitalize the downtown area. There are no words to adequately describe the beauty of the Downtown District of Steubenville adorned with beautiful life-size Nutcrackers, giving you every reason to embrace the Christmas season and to get into the spirit of Christmas. Special thanks to Mark & Gretchen Nelson, Mayor Jerry Barrila, and so many other folks who work behind the scenes to make this event a reality for the City of Steubenville each year.

While I only saw a small portion of the Nutcracker Village, the weekends during the event which ran from November 26, 2024 to January 10, 2025, were packed with many different activities which included things like parades, nativity scenes, children's activities, and concerts.

The Nutcracker Village attracts approximately 50,000 visitors annually and is a popular tourist destination that features over 200 life-size nutcrackers scattered throughout downtown. In addition to visiting the Nutcracker Village, we participated in the Steubenville Christmas Parade which was a blast.

I also attended the *Joe Scallissi Sings Dean Martin Christmas* show which was held at Froelich's Classic Corner Restaurant. As always, Joe did a phenomenal job in his performance. At the end of the show, Greg Froelich shared with the audience that he would like to see this become a tradition for the City of Steubenville. Success!

People from different regions of the US coming together to celebrate their town and for a very brief moment, celebrate their hometown guy, side by side.

Upon my arrival in Steubenville, I literally hit the pavement run-

ning. I met with several individuals regarding the Dean Martin Hometown Festival and solidified many of the events we have planned. Those I met with are more than excited for the DMA to be leading out in this event. We have had so many individuals and companies step up and offer their services. Some of which we invited and some who literally just showed up. As Elliot and I say quite frequently, it is purely mind boggling.

We are very grateful for all who have chosen to walk side by side with us.

Also, while in Steubenville, I was introduced to a group of folks who are more than willing to help us with the promotion of the Dean Martin Bronze Statue.

While we are still working out the details and such of this partnership, we can say that it was truly another one of those "mind boggling" moments.

I returned to my hotel room one evening and asking, 'What just happened?'

We would really love to have this statue unveiled at the Festival in June of 2025. But in order for that to happen, it is going to take each and every one of us doing our part by contributing to the Dean Martin Statue Fund. You may make a contribution by clicking on the link.

Thank you for your kind consideration. We *can* make it happen.

We've been asked by the Muscular Dystrophy Association to be a VIP Partner in 2025 during their 75th Anniversary and of course our own 65th.

As you may know of course, in 1950 Dean and Jerry were invited to bring awareness to their audiences by closing their shows with a request to donate to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

It is a tremendous honor and privilege to not only partner with this organization, but to know that *some things that happened for the first time, seem to be happening again.*

It was beyond touching to visit with organizations like the Firefighters and Letter Carriers of America at the *Show of Strength Telethon* who had so many beautiful things to say about Dean.

We are also working on having the MDA Clinic in Youngstown Ohio named the Dean Martin Neuromuscular Clinic once again. During relocations and COVID, somehow the plaque and naming of the clinic got lost along the way. Another situation of side by side.

As I watch 2024 slowly fade away, I want to personally take this moment to thank each one of you, our DMA members., of which there are so many many

thousands, whether that's via our mailing list, website subscription, YouTube channel, Facebook or all.

To our Facebook members, I would like to say this: you've liked / loved our posts, commented and got the conversation going, invited others to be part of our page or simply messaged, thank you.

I do my very best to acknowledge these special moments. I taken not one of them for granted.

A friend of mine shared this recently and it goes perfectly with what I am talking about. 'A writer isn't a writer unless their words are read, and a speaker isn't a speaker unless they have an audience who listens.'

For the many ways you have contributed to the DMA, Elliot, myself and the entire DMA team are forever grateful. For the many kind words about our posts and articles, thank you. What a blessing it is to literally have friends all around the world.

While the DMA is a truly global organization, we are naturally predominant in the US (where I am based).

How wonderful though would it be to meet each of you face to face and we could share conversation and a cup of coffee or glass of wine together. Who knows? It could happen one day! Maybe at the festival! I would love that!

It was a part of this job that our much-missed co-founder and first president use to enjoy when he used to host DMA gatherings up until the 1980s: meeting members and fans from all walks of life, from anywhere across the globe.

Bernard would be speechless that the gatherings he used to put together in London, UK have undergone an spectacular resurrection, making the incredible leap to Steubenville itself, as the Dean Martin Hometown Festival.

And to think that a humble guy from Steubenville, Ohio is the eternal driving force behind these friendships, opportunities and connections.

As we enter 2025, there are so many opportunities before us.

Let's embrace them and be a part of a beautiful new chapter of Celebrating Dean Martin! JD





GREATEST HITS

(UMC/CAPITOL, 2024)

WITH RON IVESON

I have spent the weeks leading up to Christmas watching Dino ascend the heights of Spotify, ending at 34th in the world with 59 million monthly listeners! It was not a bad placement at all, although he was chasing Frank all the way and Frank ended up only one place above him, and thus it always was! Considering Spotify is the medium of choice for the younger generation, and Dino is now Mr. Christmas, except for Mr. Bublé, this was a joy to watch. Indeed he was on high on Billboard with "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" once again and THE DEAN MARTIN CHRISTMAS ALBUM was on also charting moderately. Over the summer Dean achieved platinum status for "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" and "Baby It's Cold Outside" and, notwithstanding the fairly recent reaction to that song, shows just how much staying power Dean has.

We can rejoice that Dean is no figure from the past but a cultural icon of the present and now everybody sings "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" and at Christmas the airways are full of him. I can just imagine his wry smile and gentle joy in that fact that along with Bing he *is* Mr Christmas.

It's fitting then that Universal (using the Capitol label) sought fit to bring to our shelves more of what makes Dean so impressionable to today's music-buying public.

A new official Dean Martin release is always a welcome event, particularly for aficionados of the vinyl format.

Here is a classic Dino Long Player, in the old style, complete with Capitol insignia on the label, albeit as now a subsidiary of Universal.

To say that vinyl is making a comeback is now passé and an understatement. Once upon a time Dean's LPs had to be sourced on the second-hand market and many of us are perennially grateful for Bernard Thorpe's sterling efforts, that enabled us to purchase so many LPs in the dry days of the 1980s.

But now it is a very different scene. Retailers are awash with vinyl, and Dean has goodly number on roster once more.

Why am I labouring this point? Because quite simply, there no compact disc version of this release (hint, hold onto your CDs for the future) it's only on vinyl and download, thus the market moves onward whilst renewing the past!

Initially, here is the problem, for me at least, this is an official release (and I'm glad about that) but yet again it's a repackaged greatest hits with six offerings on side 1 and seven on side 2.

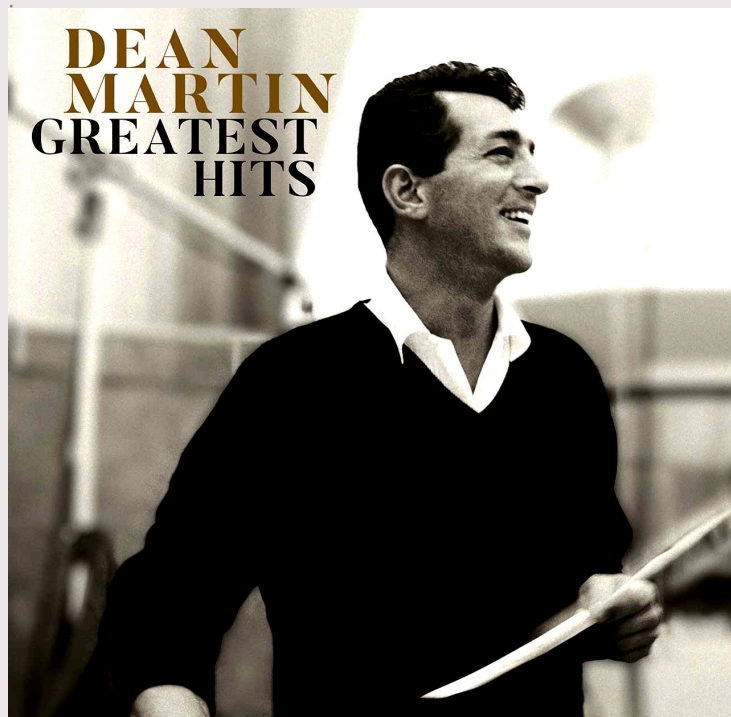
For any long standing Dino fan there is nothing new here except the old classic Dino Hits of the Capitol Years are coupled with his newer hit "Ain't That A Kick in the Head" only recently receiving Gold Status, which in its self is cause for rejoicing considering it was originally banned!

But this is testimony to the present: Dean still has enough cultural capital to make an old song a new classic and boy, isn't it just that.

I think that is the genesis of this album, appealing to a new generation that wants the hits of yesteryear.

Songs that many of us have seen in many a re-release, and indeed those compilations made Gold in and of themselves in their time. These are the hits that made big on *Billboard*, although there are those perennial cuckoos that always makes the greatest hits lists, "Cha Cha Cha D'Amour" and "Just in Time". They are on nearly every such package but never actually were hits, so why are they included? Simply, because they are *brilliant*, and is the point Cindy makes in her own article this issue [see pg. 10].

Over the years Bernard and others have had the same gripe



about these re-releases that they are virtually all the same and with little or no thought going into them.

Perhaps that's the case here or maybe it is because these *have* proven to sell well in the past, or maybe, and for those in the know, this is the reason for the release, and one we can all celebrate: in the late Summer 2024, Dean had eight singles achieve Gold and Platinum Award Status and five of them are included here...

So this is no old reprised (pun intended) package, but a Capitol celebration of the old having received a new status, indeed a new Dino LP, with crystal clear audio, ATMOS mixes, a fantastic cover and the celebration of songs that stand the test of time, by being winners one and all.

As much as we long-time admirers and advocates of Dean's work already own these songs, how splendid its it that we can walk into our local music store in the 21st century and see him on the racks, as a new album, front and center...where he always deserves to be. **JD**

UNIVERSAL 602465791860 VINYL NOVEMBER 1, 2024 WORLDWIDE

"That's Amore" / "Ain't That A Kick In The Head" / "Memories Are Made Of This" / "Volare (Nel Blu Di Pinto Di Blu)" / "Sway (Quien Sera)" / "Just In Time" / "On An Evening In Roma (Sott'er Celo De Roma)" / "Powder Your Face With Sunshine (Smile! Smile! Smile!)" / "You Belong To Me" / "Innamorata (Sweetheart)" / "Cha Cha Cha D'Amour (Melodie D'amour)" / "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You" / "Return To Me (Ritorna-me)"

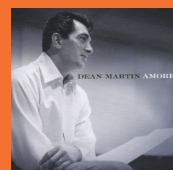
Recommended further listening:



THE CLASSIC DINO
Capitol, 1979
(094631179822)



COLLECTION
hmv/EMI, 2003
(HMY5949872)



AMORE
Capitol, 2009
(5099926769622)

Old HOLLYWOOD REWIND



with Marisa Lavins

As we ring in the New Year, and the holiday season is coming to a close, I always like to squeeze in one more holiday classic before the season ends. There has always been a special feeling for most people surrounding ringing in the New Year. It may be the idea of what the new year has to bring, new opportunities or new purpose. It would be an exciting event, or even just a fresh start. I have never been one to have a set of resolutions, but I have always held an excitement for the new year, and looking forward to the experiences this new chapter may bring. Since this particular film ends on New Year's Eve, I feel it's the perfect film to close out the holiday season, and remind us of the possibilities that come with every new year.

Billy Wilder's 1960 classic *The Apartment* is a dark comedy starring Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine, that explores themes of loneliness, manipulation, and the need for human connection.

It has been regarded as one of the greatest films ever made, and was one of 25 films selected for inclusion in the Library of Congress National Film Registry in 1994. The film was the 8th highest-grossing film of 1960, and was nominated for ten Academy Awards, going home with five including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. Lemmon and MacLaine were nominated for Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Supporting Actor, and both won Golden Globe Awards for their performances.

The initial concept of the film was inspired by the 1945 British classic film *Brief Encounter* starring Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard.

However, due to the topics of adultery and limitations of the Hays Code during this time, Wilder could not go forward with this plot line. Therefore, Wilder and his co-creator I. A. L. Diamond decided to base their story on Hollywood rumors and lore to create a story that was similar to what they wanted, but would still follow protocols established by the code. The film was also greatly influential since it was one of the first films to use forced perspective to create the illusion of the large insurance building and office, as well as the small apartment Baxter lived in. The insurance office room appeared to be very long and full of desks, however, successively smaller people and desks were placed in the back of the room, ending with children in small desks at the end of the room.

The story follows the story of C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon), a

meek insurance broker who allows his boss to use his apartment to carry out his extramarital affairs in exchange for career advancement.

Baxter's life takes an unexpected turn when he meets and falls in love with Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine), an elevator operator at the same company who is having an affair with Baxter's boss.

On New Year's Eve, both Baxter and Fran find a chance for happiness and transformation leading to a hopeful resolution to their somewhat tumultuous story.

The last day of any year is often a time when people set new goals for themselves, or look for new beginnings.

In the context of this film, both Baxter and Kubelik are looking to make drastic changes to their current lives.

On December 31, Baxter spends the night alone, desper-

ately attempting to arrange his life to please his bosses and make his way up the corporate ladder.

Simultaneously, Kubelik is attempting to make the relationship with Baxter's married boss work, hoping that she can have a fulfilling and permanent relationship with him.

The final moments of the film take place minutes after midnight, and it's in this brief moment at the end of the film that solidifies the future of both of the characters.

Realizing that Baxter is in love with Kubelik, he finally stands up for himself to his manipulative boss, no longer allowing him to use his apartment for his affairs, and quits his job with his firm.

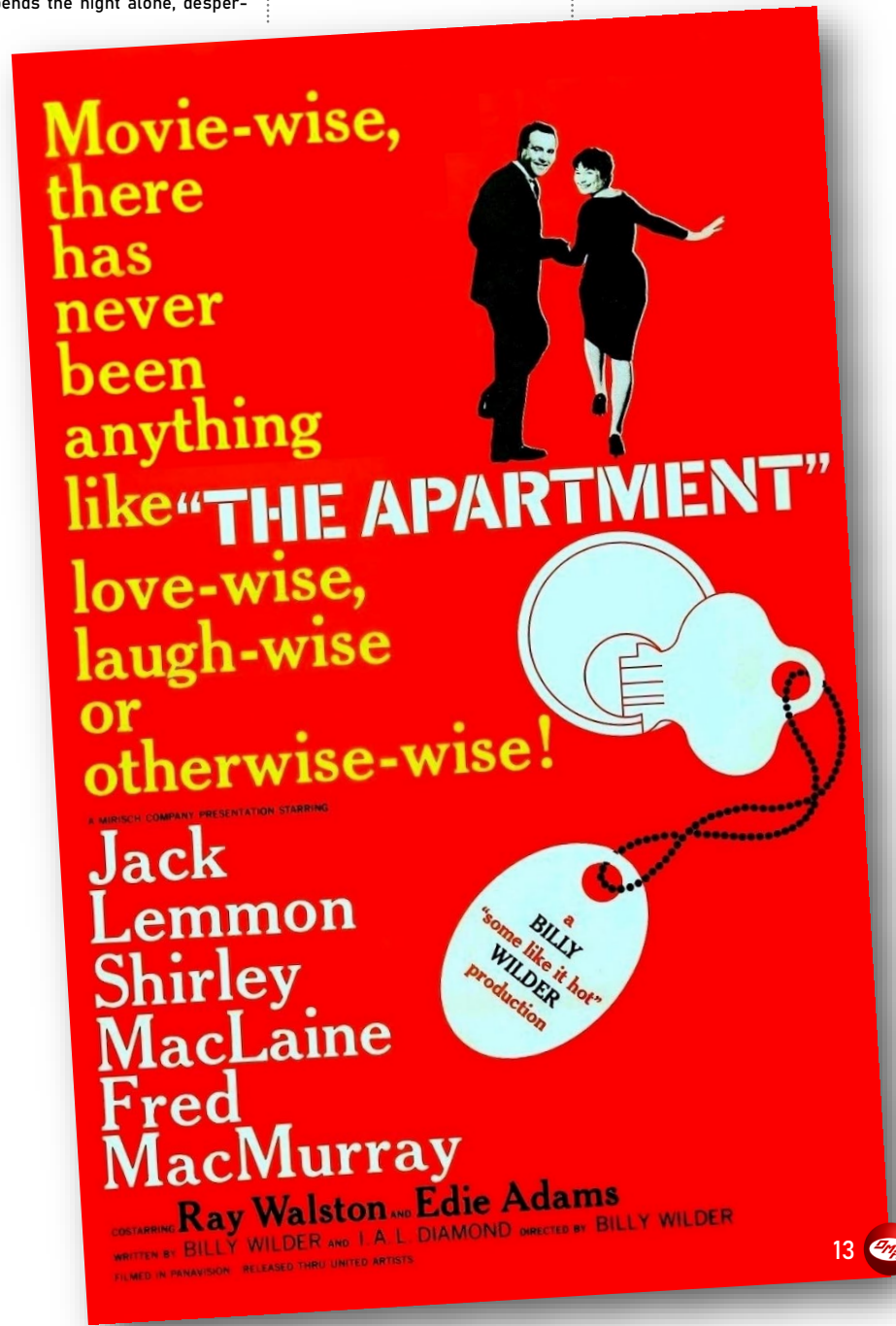
Hearing this news from his boss, Kubelik runs to Baxter's apartment, where they are reunited.



By using this particular night as a catalyst for their resolutions, the film emphasizes that while the passing year may have brought its challenges, the promise of a better future is always within reach, especially when we allow ourselves the chance to change for the better.

So, as we are saying goodbye to 2024 and taking in the new year coming, *The Apartment* remains an excellent exploration of human relationships.

It offers a poignant reminder that even at the most unlikely times, new beginnings and opportunities can emerge. **JD**



Above right: Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine in *The Apartment* [United Artists, 1960]

Right: US poster [United Artists, 1960]

THE Sinatra ANGLE

with KAREN MORRIS



As we begin the new year and reflect, it seems fitting to shine a light on Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin's closest friend, particularly since his December 12 birthday had passed.

Poignant memories of Frank and his eclectic career abound: he was recently honored and remembered at a special event on December 7, 2024 in New Jersey.

Distinguished guest speakers, and Sinatra authorities, producer/historian Charles L. (Chuck) Granata and Dana Polan, the Martin Scorsese Professor of Cinema Studies at New York University were in attendance.

The December 7 program kicked off the holiday season on a sentimental note. Christmas was approaching, as well as thoughts of Dean Martin's passing (December 25, 1995), while Mr. Sinatra's heavenly 109th birthday was upcoming, resulting in unforgettable recollections lingering.

It is always meaningful to meet and gather with those who appreciate Frank Sinatra's artistry, recognizing the man and 'The Voice' who left an indelible musical mark in the 20th century and beyond. His relevance and influence remain unmistakable.

Chuck expresses this in his book *Sessions with Sinatra: Frank Sinatra and the Art of Recording*: 'Although his singing voice is probably the most recognizable in the world, and dozens of books and articles have been written about the sensational aspects of his life, few seek to analyze and explain the virtues of Frank Sinatra as a musician or recording artist. He was an actor, producer, and concert artist, but it is his recordings that express the essence of his genius, guaranteeing his place among the most influential musical figures of the twentieth century. From his very first session with Harry James in 1939 to the highly successful Duets albums of the 1990s, Frank Sinatra presided over more than 400 recording sessions, resulting in well over a thousand recordings, most of which were released to the public.'

In 1965, Sinatra explained his interest in recording to CBS News correspondent Walter Cronkite: "I think making records is the great fun of a lifetime because it's current - it's right there. When you finish a recording, you blink your eye (or your ear, as it may be), and boom, the playback's on, and you're listening to what you've done."

Whether recording or performing with his Rat Pack entourage, fun was Frank's way. It's easy to imagine him, Dean, and Sammy living it up, and cavorting onstage, much to the delight of the audience watching them entertain for hours.

Fun describes it well, but how about modesty? Is that a characteristic that one might recall when describing Frank? Chuck treats us to this epiphany: The most surprising revelation to come from my research was that, despite his fame, Frank Sinatra was a truly modest man when it came to his talent: he was a celebrity who preferred to deflect the credit for his work to others. When speaking of his work, he unfailingly referred to it as a collaborative effort, using the word *we* and *we're* instead of *I* and *I'm*. In doing this he acknowledged the importance of his musical team and their contributions to the success of the overall performance. Nowhere was his admiration for their talent more apparent than in the recording studio.'

Modesty aside, it surely is impossible to mention all of Frank Sinatra's achievements, considering that his career spanned decades of accomplishments. His record sales were estimated at 150 million globally, and he was honored with 11 Grammy Awards as well as a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, 2 Academy Awards including an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor, *From Here to Eternity* (1953) and an Honorary Oscar for *The House I Live In* (1946), a Golden Globe Award, Best Actor, *Pal Joey* (1958), the Jean Hershel Humanitarian Award (1971), a Kennedy Center Honor (1983), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1985) and so many more.

Rolling Stone magazine ranked Frank Sinatra at Number 19, on their list of the 200 Greatest Singers of All Time, as recent as 2023. Well-deserved accolades.

But what other memories of Frank Sinatra might be revisited?

His goodwill and sense of charity lead us to consider the softer side of 'The Chairman of the Board'. Throughout his lifetime, Frank Sinatra reached out benevolently to help many people quietly and without fanfare.

You may recall from my interview with comedian Tom Dreesen (JD424, July 2024) that he told me of the time when Frank gave a pair of his own cufflinks to a fan whose husband had been seriously ill. Frank said to Tom, 'Tommy, if you possess something that you can't give away, then you don't possess it. It possesses you. Aristotle Onassis had millions of dollars. He had mansions, he had yachts, private jets...and the second he died, all that transferred, nothing we have is ours. And he said, that shirt on your back, Tommy, if you die tomorrow, someone else will own it.' It changed Tom's life, a lot of his thinking on life.

Lasting impressions are recreated when talented folks combine forces, and honor those who sadly left us too early.

Our December event team respected and commemorated the lasting impression and untimely passing (August 2024) of our friend, Christopher Riddle, son of legendary arranger Nelson Riddle.

Nelson Riddle was deemed one of Sinatra's supreme collaborators, with sources saying he was responsible for Frank Sinatra's stunning comeback, being credited for reviving Sinatra's career with the Capitol recording of "I've Got the World on a String".

Christopher Riddle, who took the reigns after his father passed in 1985, was remembered with a heartwarming homage to his artistic performances and engaging personal storytelling.

Attendees who had met Christopher at our May 2023 event recalled bittersweetly how he charmed everyone with his stories, whether about his dad or his own personal and professional adventures.

A note of thanks to Rosemary Riddle-Acerro, sister of Christopher, and trusted keeper of the Riddle family legacy, who shared that Christopher had two favorite songs of his dad's he loved to conduct with The Nelson Riddle Orchestra: "I've Got You Under My Skin" and "I've Got The World On A String".

It was a pleasure to ask Jazz vocalist and velvet-voiced crooner Zack Alexander to add those songs as an opening performance, which he charmingly sang.

Immediately following the musical interlude, Dana Polan asked Chuck Granata, a leading authority on Frank Sinatra and dear friend of the Riddle family, to reminisce about Christopher and his father, Nelson, highlighting their contri-



Right: bass trombonist George Robert with Nelson Riddle and Christopher Riddle [Riddle Family archives]

butions to the music industry.

Chuck recollected, "They (Sinatra/Nelson Riddle) did that first session together, and "I've Got the World on a String" was the perfect song to start with and the perfect arrangement because it set the tone for the rest of Nelson's life in terms of what he did with Frank, but also with other artists. Christopher studied his dad's instrument, which was trombone, and he played on several Sinatra dates. He was part of the Nelson Riddle Orchestra that accompanied Frank at Capitol and Reprise Records. Christopher was an amazing musician and a fine student of this music and of his dad's work. And that's the beautiful thing, when someone like a Nelson Riddle, who is so well known and has created such a distinctive style, can pass that along to their own child.'

Frank, Dean, Nelson and Christopher have created lasting impressions for us all, and we thank them.

In closing, Nancy Sinatra writes warmly and uniquely about her dad, in the afterword for *Sessions with Sinatra: Frank Sinatra and the Art of Recording*: 'Dad's gifts as a performer were such that scholars will continue to study his work in perpetuity. They will be forced to ask what it was about him that separated him from the others who, although they may have had technically equal or even superior voices, just couldn't meet the challenge set by the greatest entertainer of nearly six decades - "the voice of the century." And what indeed was it? I think that if I had to use one word to describe him it would be honest. A painfully honest man who recognizes the sadness and joy of others has to feel the pain and joy himself. These feelings fuelled the interpretations of the songs he made his. It's this honesty, and his passion for his craft that propelled his recording sessions, which we are now able to study and understand, thanks to the memories of some very special people who worked closely with Dad to help him realize his vision.'

Nancy said it well.

Without enduring memories, our lives would feel much less comforting.

So, let us all raise a glass and toast those we miss, cherish, and think of often.

As we begin the new year, with bright hopes and wishes, take a moment to listen to the timeless, sweet Dean Martin song, *Memories Are Made of This*.

And thank you all for the memories! JD



Left: Danish 10" 78rpm single release of "I've Got The World On A String" by Frank Sinatra [Capitol, 1953]

Below: Karen with (L-R) Chuck Granata, Dana Polan and Zack Alexander (we don't know who the three other guys at the back are), Avon-by-the-Sea, NJ, December 2024

Bottom: Frank Sinatra and Christopher Riddle [Riddle Family]



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