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STEREO 37513

Frank Sinatra

with the Red Norvo Quintet Live in Australia, 1959

1. Perdido
(instrumental)
2. Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea
(instrumental)
3. I Could Have Danced All Night
4. Just One Of Those Things
5. I Get A Kick Out Of You
6. At Long Last Love
7. Willow Weep For Me
8. I've Got You Under My Skin
9. Moonlight In Vermont
10. The Lady Is A Tramp
11. Sinatra Speaks
12. Angel Eyes
13. Come Fly With Me
14. All The Way
15. Dancing In The Dark
16. One For My Baby
17. All Of Me *
18. On The Road To Mandalay *
19. Night And Day *

Red Norvo vibraphone
 Jerry Dodgion flute, alto saxophone
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 Jimmy Wyble guitar
 Red Wooten bass
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 Frank Sinatra vocals

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Recorded on April 1, 1959 at the West Melbourne Stadium, Australia, except #1, 2 16 & 19 which were recorded on March 31, 1959.

Produced for release by Will Friedwald

Project consultant: Charles L. Granata

Cover by Patrick Roques

Photographs courtesy of Brad Benedict/Capitol Photo Archive

Remastered by Mark Levinson with Cello equipment.



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FRANK SINATRA WITH THE RED NORVO QUINTET
LIVE IN AUSTRALIA, 1959

BLUE NOTE®



Frank Sinatra

with the Red Norvo Quintet Live in Australia, 1959



To put it in the man's own lingo, Sinatra swings like a mother on this remarkable concert. The 1950s had already been Sinatra's first great era as a swinger, and in a series of classic uptempo albums with Nelson Riddle and Billy May, Frank Sinatra proved that jazz was the single most essential ingredient required to keep the Great American Songbook alive and vital. Still, as loose and unfettered as he was throughout the Capitol era, Sinatra gives out with an even more aggressive brand of jazz singing here (one that we previously thought we had to wait until his Basie albums of the '60s to experience). Sinatra has never sounded more inspired and animated, generating so much explosive excitement it's a wonder that the continent - let alone the concert hall - could contain him.

"The smaller group did give Frank more freedom," explains multi-reed player Jerry Dodgion, elaborating that the informal format also encouraged Sinatra to vary both the program and the arrangements themselves whenever he toured with a small band. "He could be different every night, which is more in keeping with a jazz group."

"The higher up you get in this business," Sinatra said at the first concert (a week or so before Australia) in which he shared the stage with the Red Norvo Quintet, "the more opportunity you have to work with the people you want. This is a man I have tremendous respect for, musically and personally. I've always wanted to work with his band."

He meant it. Actually, the first time Norvo offered Sinatra the opportunity to work with him, the singer was obliged to turn it down. That was in 1939, when Norvo was co-leading his highly-regarded "Mr. & Mrs. Swing" Orchestra with his wife, Mildred Bailey, who had been so impressed by this young singer (whom they heard in New Jersey's Rustic Cabin) that she offered him a spot as a boy singer. Ordinarily, Sinatra would have jumped at the chance, but he had just signed his famous contract with Harry James. Still, Sinatra and the Norvos remained close and long

after Red and Mildred were divorced, Young Blue Eyes was one of a consortium of old friends who picked up the tab for her final hospitalization.

That great Norvo band resounds as one of the key influences on Sinatra's music, particularly in the swinging '50s. At least three musicians in the group became members of Sinatra's regular band, including the short-lived tenor star Herbie Haymer and two lifetime stalwarts of the Chairman's rhythm section, pianist Bill Miller and drummer Irv Cottler. Sinatra first full-length collaboration with Nelson Riddle, *Swing Easy* used the ensemble sound developed by Norvo and arranger Eddie Sauter (partner of Riddle's original mentor, Bill Finegan) as its template, most notably in the way the ensemble is built around Frank Flynn's vibes.

Around the time of *Swing Easy*, Sinatra and Norvo renewed their friendship when the singer began frequenting the appearances by the vibraphonist's trio at the Desert Inn in Palm Springs. In the Fall of 1957, when Sinatra needed musicians for a sequence in his war movie *Kings Go Forth*, he hired Norvo, along with the trio's current guitarist and bassist Jimmy Wyble and Red Wooten (they also hired as trumpeter Pete Candoli to ghost for Tony Curtis, playing a trumpet-toting seargent, and also to show him how to hold the horn).

In 1958, Sinatra, then officially a Vice President of The Sands in Las Vegas, hired Norvo to play that casino's lounge, for which Norvo expanded from trio to quintet. In addition to Wyble and Wooten, Norvo brought in drummer Karl Kiffe (replaced within a few months by Johnny Markham), along with another San Franciscan, saxophonist Jerry Dodgion, whose playing had impressed Shorty Rogers, Norvo's brother-in-law, at a record session. Norvo's initial gig at The Sands was scheduled to last for six weeks, but the Quintet wound up staying for six months. "Frank liked the band - he listened to jazz all the time," Norvo reports. "And that's the kind of music he wanted in the lounge."

While listening to Norvo's group in Las Vegas, Sinatra hatched the idea of using the fivesome, with the addition of pianist Bill Miller (his regular accompanist since 1951) as both his permanent rhythm section and his opening act. In some cases the group would work with the "house" orchestras but for benefits, when there was no budget for a full orchestra, the quintet would be the whole show behind Sinatra. By the time of the Australian concerts, Sinatra was so comfortable with the Norvo-Miller combination that he generally refrained from using the local big bands altogether.

Around February of 1959, Norvo's group spent a week learning the singer's "book" and working out head arrangements for a program based on Sinatra's Capitol repertory (as charted by Riddle and Billy May). Although these rehearsals took place at Sinatra's house, the star only occasionally joined them - after all, he already knew the charts. The seven men performed together for the first time at a benefit for cancer research in late February at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium, and then did their first "paying" engagement at the Fountainbleau in Miami. "From now on," Sinatra announced to the capacity crowd at the Shrine, "in our personal appearances we're going to work together."

After the Shrine (and after Sinatra taped the *No One Cares* album that same month) the Sinatra-Norvo combination flew to Australia for two concerts in Sydney and Melbourne. The singer had first appeared on that continent in January, 1955, and had been scheduled to return two years later. That 1957 never happened, because, as Sinatra says here, of an incident in a Honolulu bar, so this 1959 mini-tour served as his return engagement. This 1959 trip also had its hassles. As Jerry Dodgion remembers, two kangarazis (that's Aussie for photographer, mate) trailed the entourage for practically the entire trip. One continually provoked Sinatra to take a swing at him, as the other readied his camera. After one particularly enervating evening, in which Sinatra vainly tried to escape by hopping from one restaurant to another, he finally instructed manager and companion Hank Sanicola to slash their tires. There were compensating pleasures, however, in that the bandsmen spent most of the trip hanging out with Sinatra, who was famous for his royal treatment of his fellow musicians, and the former Mrs. Chairman, Ava Gardner (down under filming *On The Beach*).

"I don't think he ever sang any better in his life than on that tape," says Norvo, "I loved the way he sang with the small band. It was very free, and he was right on top of everything we were doing. He just melted into it I thought. He took responsibility, (like a conductor) he beat off the group and everything, he did his own thing. And the band played great for him, they loved working with him." Norvo feels that Sinatra came off so well because, he never presented himself as a star in front of a backup band, but one of the musicians, down in the trenches and in the groove with the rest of the unit. Norvo adds, "He gave us the feeling he was part of the group."

That cohesiveness gives the Melbourne concert its magic. Sinatra exclusivists might balk at the inclusion of the Red Norvo instrumental, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," which opened the evening, however, this number is absolutely crucial to the show's development. Sinatra in concert is never a mere reiteration of record hits - even when he's doing a very familiar number, the interpretation is always fresh and spontaneous, dictated as much by the circumstances of the moment as any pre-set arrangement. Here, Norvo and his Quintet give Sinatra his impetus.

Following the instrumental, the leader himself pauses the proceedings to announce Sinatra (taking the same tack a million opening-act comics would employ from the '70s onward in intro'ing the star as a mere "boy singer"). However the vibe - in both senses of the word - doesn't stop. When Sinatra launches into the fray with "I Could Have Danced All Night," he so adroitly picks up on the Norvo group's dynamic that you almost don't even notice the transition. The My Fair Lady hit, which Sinatra ends much more quietly than the Come Dance With Me reading, initiates one of the most successful segments in the program, a mini-suite of three hard-swinging Cole Porter songs, all performed marvelously "open," employing the Riddle arrangements as rough outlines rather than strict blueprints. On "Just One of Those Things" (overall much faster than on *Swing Easy*) for instance, Norvo pays little heed to the fills written by Riddle, preferring to extemporanealize his own; "At Long Last Love" has Sinatra all but shouting his ecstatic climax.

While not everything works as well with the small band, the very heavy ballads especially, most tracks do better than one might anticipate. "I've Got You Under My Skin" (we'll never know what in-audience-event inspired Sinatra to yell "Get your hand off that broad!") in particular needs the full orchestra to give it full force. However, where so many of these versions are jazzier and punchier than their studio counterparts, this "Skin" is actually lighter, and most enjoyably so. The ensemble does have to jettison the Swingin' Lovers instrumental mid-section (with the famous Milt Bernhart trombone solo), instead the song simply concludes after one chorus, after which Sinatra performs the famous outchorus as an encore.

Contrastingly, the Capitol version of "The Lady is a Tramp" had opened with just rhythm section, and this rapturous live treatment doesn't miss the big band at all. Sinatra is in marvelous form, offering two unique variations on the famous "she's broke - it's oke" interjection: "ha! Ha!" and "what the hell!" He emits the second in an unexpected encore which he closes with a scat equivalent of the kick he traditionally gives in this chart's coda.

Sinatra is in such ebullient spirits, buoyed immeasurably by the company he keeps, that he finds it difficult to summon up the despair necessary for the expected "saloon songs." On the first night's show (March 31) he had performed "One For My Baby" in its now-customary treatment, with just himself and Bill Miller. On the second concert, Miller is about to go into "Baby" when Sinatra re-directs him into "Angel Eyes." Both performances (included here), may be merely perfunctory by Sinatra standards (particularly compared to the definitive Only the Lonely readings) but they show that Sinatra at his least involved is better than most singers at their best. The somberly serious "All The Way," also done in duo with Miller, comes alive most dramatically in a gag false start wherein Sinatra screeches an out of tune yowl to ensure that "nobody sleeps in this act!"

Blessedly, the same fate doesn't befall all of the slow numbers - "Moonlight in Vermont" isn't a suicide song at all but a wistfully romantic tone poem. Its optimistic attitude - sunniness even in the midst of moonlight - and its open, rhymeless form suit the small group setting (enhanced not only by Norvo's vibes but by Dodgion's astute flutistry, also heard to amazing effect on "Willow, Weep for Me") remarkably well. Sinatra has never performed the blending of the word "lovely" into the first note of the next line "evening" - coming out of the bridge - so convincingly, and a few lines earlier, the way he elongates and plays with the word "sing" ("down the highway") makes it, indeed, very sing-y. The informality of the context allows him to take the word "bend" a whole step higher than usual (he does the same on "spite" in the encore to "I've Got You Under My Skin," both alterations moving the notes to the sixth rather than the fifth of the scale).

While "Dancing in the Dark" has its moments, particularly in an unforeseen scat interjection, the pace really picks up with the final three tracks wherein a local Aussie orchestra augments the quintet. Like "Just One of Those Things," "All of Me" works particularly well in this format, and Sinatra must have been particularly pleased to sing these two *Swing Easy* pieces in the company of the man who inspired that album. The Sinatra-Billy May "Mandalay" is even more audacious here, thanks in part to the singer's extended explanation as to the track's fate in

the British Empire. (Fortuitously some yahoo in the crowd cries out for "Chicago," inducing Sinatra to explain why that song and not "Mandalay" made it on to the UK edition of *Come Fly with Me*.) Then, "Night and Day" (the last of five Porter songs in the set) brings it all home with a thunderous climax.

"Night and Day" may well be the most-performed song in Sinatra's career (it's certainly the one with the greatest amount of completely different arrangements) and this rendition is unquestionably one of the most spectacular in the singer's entire oeuvre. It gets underway in the same spirit as the opener, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," with an instrumental chorus by Norvo (and rhythm trio only). Without even announcing the tune, the vibraphonist adroitly improvises over the chords yet doesn't drop so much as a hint as to the melody.

Therefore, when Sinatra unexpectedly enters singing "Night and Day" it exponentially amplifies the drama of his entrance. Sinatra sings two full and fast choruses of this extra-long, 48-bar tune, starting quietly though hardly timidly, almost as if he's singing a vocal accompaniment to Norvo's solo, initially broad spaces open for the vibist to play around in. As Sinatra sings, the leader continues to wield his full-fisted, four-mallet technique, playing so strongly the second chorus amounts to a duet between vibes and voice. In his most pronounced use of jazz-style "breaks," Sinatra shoots notes back and forth with Norvo - even forgoing his rule about breaking up a sentence or thought so that the mallet-man can zing a few hot licks his way during the fills.

Gradually taking charge, Sinatra's is at his most dynamic here, gradually building to an uncharacteristically loud climax. The singer continually accentuates unexpected notes and speeds up and slows down in unpredictable places, stretching "why" for multiple measures and then delivers "is - it - so" in short, hyphenated stabs placed solidly on the beat. Each time he reaches the three words "night," "and," "day," he phrases them differently. At times he chomps down hard on "night" and then pauses before the "and day," elsewhere he accentuates the "and" for absolutely no reason, other than that it swings and refuses to repeat the pattern he had employed only a few measures before. He throws in classics Frank-isms, like substituting "baby" for Porter's "darling" and he uses the "roaring traffic's boom" as a clever excuse for drummer John Markham to "drop" an unforeseen bebop "bomb."

The third chorus in particular, wherein the full orchestra dramatically jumps in (at which Norvo drops out, right before the bridge) and goes into Riddle's *Swingin' Affair* arrangement, is nothing short of euphoric, and contagiously so. It would be hard to say that anyone has sung better or more genuine jazz - even Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, or Ella Fitzgerald - than Sinatra does on "Night and Day" on these Australian concerts.

Sinatra remained, as Norvo put it, "part of the group" for some months to come. He and Norvo spent the last two weeks of April treating the high-rollers at The Sands to the same program of hard-driving jazz that they'd done down under. In July, Sinatra and Norvo did an eight-day, 18-show stand at the 500 Club in Atlantic City. This time the singer broke the house attendance record that he'd set three years previously, bringing in an estimated 10,000 people into that nightclub and \$150,000 into the happy hands of owner Skinny D'Amato. The Norvo unit also played for

1. *Perdido* (instrumental)
(Tizol-Lengsfelder-Drake)
2. *Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea* (instrumental)
(H. Arlen & T. Koehler)
3. *I Could Have Danced All Night*
(A. Lerner & F. Loewe)
4. *Just One Of Those Things*
(Cole Porter)
5. *I Get A Kick Out Of You*
(Cole Porter)
6. *At Long Last Love*
(Cole Porter)
7. *Willow Weep For Me*
(Ann Ronell)
8. *I've Got You Under My Skin*
(Cole Porter)
9. *Moonlight In Vermont*
(K. Suessdorf & J. Blackburn)
10. *The Lady Is A Tramp*
(R. Rodgers & L. Hart)
11. *Sinatra Speaks*
12. *Angel Eyes*
(M. Dennis & E. Brent)
13. *Come Fly With Me*
(J. Van Heusen & S. Cahn)
14. *All The Way*
(J. Van Heusen & S. Cahn)
15. *Dancing In The Dark*
(A. Schwartz & H. Dietz)
16. *One For My Baby*
(H. Arlen & J. Mercer)
17. *All Of Me* *
(S. Simons & G. Marks)
18. *On The Road To Mandalay* *
(O. Speaks & R. Kipling)
19. *Night And Day* *
(Cole Porter)

All charts are based on arrangements by Nelson Riddle, with the exception of #3, 9, 13, 15 and 19 which were originally written by B. Illy May, and #5, which was orchestrated by George Siravo.

Mr. Sinatra gave two performances on this particular trip, March 31st and April 1st, 1959. Because the second night turned out to be a much superior performance, this disc is taken from the concert of April 1. However, there are several exceptions: "One For My Baby" which was performed only on the first night, and "Mandalay." This latter tune was done on both nights, but, the rendition of the second night was rendered unusable due to a mishap which occurred during the actual recording (someone apparently bumped into one of the reels on the tape deck, causing an unremovable "wow"). Lastly, the two Norvo instrumentals also only survive from the first night.

Personnel:

Red Norvo vibraphone
Jerry Dodgion flute, alto saxophone
Bill Miller piano
Jimmy Wyble guitar
Red Wooten bass
John Markham drums

Frank Sinatra vocals

* A local orchestra is added on the last three songs.

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Remastered by Mark Levinson with Cello equipment.

Sinatra at the opening of his own little place in the sun, the Cal-Neva Lodge, at about this time. Jerry Dodgion remembers a further benefit, which transpired at the home of Tony Curtis for a group called "Women For Kennedy," at which Sinatra experienced a further altercation with a bothersome reporter. Then, in October and November of 1959, Norvo renewed his off-again, on-again relationship with Benny Goodman. Following Sinatra's example, Goodman hired the whole Norvo Quintet en masse as the rhythmic core of his ten piece orchestra for a European tour.

Sinatra and Norvo appear to have worked together for the last time that December, when the quintet backed him for two numbers, "Too Marvelous for Words" and "Here's that Rainy Day" on his ABC TV special, An Afternoon With Frank Sinatra. The singer had announced that he wanted to cut an entire album with Norvo, but was feuding with Capitol at the time and avoiding recording in general. As it worked out, singer Dinah Shore, who had also had Norvo on her TV show, recorded the Capitol album that Sinatra should have done, Dinah Sings some Blues with Red.

Sinatra tried to work with Norvo again at least twice after December, 1959, but the arrangement snafu'd each time. In summer 1960, Sinatra approached Norvo but the latter was already committed again to Benny Goodman, and in Spring 1962, the singer offered Norvo, by himself, a spot in his touring unit, but the vibist didn't want to break up his own band. In both cases, Sinatra and Bill Miller recreated what the singer called "The Norvo Idea" without Norvo, meaning a sextet of vibes, alto sax doubling flute, piano, guitar, bass and drums. Emil Richards, who filled Norvo's shoes on vibes in these Norvo-inspired units, recalls, "We used to get into these harmony things and we got them played behind Frank, and he really dug it. Aside from the band cooking and swinging, we had some nice things happening harmonically behind him, and I think he kind of got used to that sound."

It's unfortunate that Sinatra never cut a studio album with Norvo, and that this amazing document of their collaboration has never been issued by Capitol until now. Though not everything on it is as good as "Night and Day," on the strength of that tune alone (and the four other Porter tunes in particular, not to mention "Vermont" and "Tramp") the Melbourne performances constitutes some of the most remarkable concerts of in his entire career. Which means, by default, that it's one of the greatest nights of music ever.

Will Friedwald

Will Friedwald is the author of *Sinatra! The Song is You* (1995, Scribner) and *Jazz Singing* (1992, Collier Books). Mr. Friedwald acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Zak Mitchell in the preparation of these notes. Special thanks also to Red Norvo and Jerry Dodgion.



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Live in Australia, 1959

