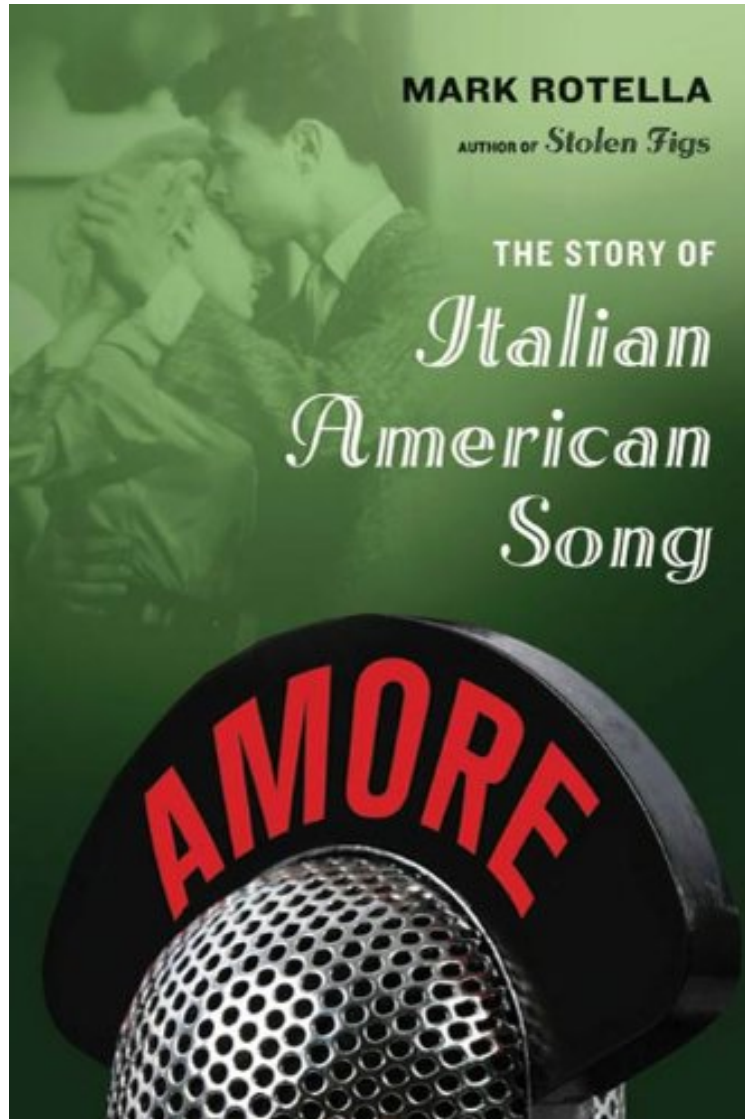


Amore: The Story of Italian American Song

Mark Rotella

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Mark Rotella : Amore: The Story of Italian American Song before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Amore: The Story of Italian American Song:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A joyful ariaBy Ken KardashLike so many others, I've always found the classic songs of the likes of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Perry Como comforting. But for the author, they and their stories are not only comforting but also a touchstone to his heritage. Which is what makes this book so different and touching to read - it's more than either a collective biography or memoir. Each short chapter covers the heyday of a particular singer, some well known, others less so, but always connected to the larger theme of the influence of Italian culture on American popular music. Rotella's sheer joy in the music and enthusiasm for his theme can be almost

giddy at times, and I found myself laughing out loud upon seeing chapters on Elvis and Sammy Davis Jr. But somehow he makes it work. It was a discovery to see how the singers traced their musical heritage through one another to Italian opera, and how interconnected they were to the paths of their contemporaries, often coming from the same neighborhoods. The author's trips to these neighborhoods, and identification with the culture, add personal warmth to the telling. The sentiments can be bittersweet, though. The genesis of the book was an exploration of the music that gave courage to the author and his wife as they battled cancer. I was also shocked to read that Italian-American immigrants had been subjected to lynching and wartime civil internment camps. Rather than derailing the otherwise joyful tone of his story, this highlights the depth of the passion from which all the music and memories arise. It's a story told with amore.¹¹ of 11 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read By Michael J. Fiorito I just finished reading *Amore*. I have to say that it's both an important and informative work - not to mention incredibly readable. While I was able to reminisce on the music my mother and father loved, I also learned a lot about the cultural conditions and influences that has continued to make Italian-American's great singers, musicians, and instrument makers. More than a book of nostalgia, it's a cultural study in the tradition of Greil Marcus and Peter Guralnick. Anyone interested in music is going to value this book. I hope that *Amore* continues to stimulate further writing on an important subject that has certainly not received enough attention. Russ Columbo has become a new favorite of mine! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating By Harry As a long-time Tony Bennett fan, I was fascinated by the historical and critical analysis that this book, clearly a labor of love, provides. *Amore* will appeal, certainly, to Italian-Americans, for whom this is probably a celebration of cultural identity. For the rest of us, it's a finely written cultural study that places Tony, Frankie, and so many others in context. It's a wonderful contribution to our understanding of American popular culture.

Amore is Mark Rotella's celebration of the "Italian decade"—the years after the war and before the Beatles when Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Dean Martin, and Tony Bennett, among others, won the hearts of the American public with a smooth, stylish, classy brand of pop. In Rotella's vivid telling, the stories behind forty Italian American classics (from "O Sole Mio," "Night and Day," and "Mack the Knife" to "Volare" and "I Wonder Why") show how a glorious musical tradition became the sound track of postwar America and the expression of a sense of style that we still cherish. Rotella follows the music from the opera houses and piazzas of southern Italy, to the barrooms of the Bronx and Hoboken, to the Copacabana, the Paramount Theatre, and the Vegas Strip. He shows us the hardworking musicians whose voices were to become ubiquitous on jukeboxes and the radio and whose names—some anglicized, some not—have become bywords for Italian American success, even as they were dogged by stereotypes and prejudice. *Amore* is the personal Top 40 of one proud son of Italy; it is also a love song to Italian American culture and an evocation of an age that belongs to us all.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Rotella's revelatory follow-up to *Stolen Figs* is much more than the story of the years after the war and before the Beatles, when Italian-Americans ruled popular music—it's an astute examination of how the Italians integrated into America. With thorough research combined with a lyrical writing style ("voice glides like a bow over the strings"), Rotella transports readers into a vibrant, colorful world with tours of a museum devoted to the megaselling Enrico Caruso, complete with cans of Caruso Olive Oil ("100 percent olive oil for Italians; a blend of 75 percent peanut and 25 percent olive oils yum!; for 'mericans'") and of onetime superstar Nick Lucas's old neighborhood in Belleville, N.J. Folk and popular songs from Italy are deftly woven into the larger story of how a once unwelcome ethnic group became a vital part of American culture. In documenting the progress of Italian integration into mainstream America, classic songs such as Frank Sinatra's "I've Got the World on a String," Frankie Lane's "That Lucky Old Sun," and Dean Martin's "That's Amore" create opportunities to expand on the story of the singer, the song, and the state of the union, resulting in a rich and reverential tapestry. Rotella's keen eye and enthusiast's ear make for sumptuous reading and will garner a renewed appreciation for these performers while those readers unfamiliar with the major works of Tony Bennett or Perry Como, let alone Russ Columbo and Julius La Rosa, will be inspired to load up their iPod. Copyright © 2005; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Like the singers and songs it celebrates, *Amore* gets a lot done in a tight, memorable, heartfelt way. This isn't just a book about Italian-American crooners—it's an intimate account of immigrant life, a history of an enduring art form, a tribute to family, an evocation of the power of song, and a deeply personal reckoning with the music itself. It's a love song in its own right, and it's beautifully sung." —Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*