



Excerpt from
Mark Rotella, *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song* (2010)

It was during this time [the late 1940s and the 1950s] that Italian Americans entered mainstream American life and culture....

The 1940s and 1950s were decades when Italian Americans were breaking out of their working-class neighborhoods of Brooklyn, the Bronx, South Philly. For the first time, sons of Italian immigrants – like my father – tore loose from their own fathers’ masonry businesses, from their grandfathers’ barbershops, from their bars. In Frank Sinatra’s voice you can almost hear the suppression of decades of immigrant frustration and anger.

This was the time when Italian Americans entered the mainstream of empowerment, and when they broke into popular culture....

The Italian American singers had a kind of charisma not seen before. They sang with a passion that nevertheless appeared casual and easy. Their seeming effortlessness reminds me of an old Italian saying – “never let them see you sweat.” They embodied the Italian idea of *la sprezzatura* – making hard work appear easy.... Originally meaning to exude nonchalance, the term came to mean to remain cool....

Italian Americans must have felt a sense of pride at their success – not just a sense of belonging, but proof that they could hold their own in this country.