



Is That All There Is?: The Strange Life of Peggy Lee

James Gavin

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From the author of the “definitive” (*Vanity Fair*) biography of Lena Horne, *Stormy Weather*, comes a brilliantly written portrait of recording artist and musical legend Peggy Lee.

“She made you think that she knew who you were, that she was singing only to you...”

Miss Peggy Lee cast a spell when she sang. She purred so intimately in nightclubs that couples clasped hands and huddled closer. She hypnotized, even on television. Lee epitomized cool, but her trademark song, “Fever”—covered by Beyoncé and Madonna—is the essence of sizzling sexual heat. Her jazz sense dazzled Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong. She was the voice of swing, the voice of blues, and she provided four of the voices for Walt Disney’s *Lady and the Tramp*, whose score she co-wrote. But who was the woman behind the Mona Lisa smile?

With elegant writing and impeccable research, including interviews with hundreds who knew Lee, acclaimed music journalist James Gavin offers the most revealing look yet at an artist of infinite contradictions and layers. Lee was a North Dakota prairie girl who became a temptress of enduring mystique. She was a singer-songwriter before the term existed. Lee “had incredible confidence onstage,” observed the Godfather of Punk, Iggy Pop; yet inner turmoil wracked her. She spun a romantic nirvana in her songs, but couldn’t sustain one in reality. As she passed middle age, Lee dwelled increasingly in a bizarre dreamland. She died in 2002 at the age of eighty-one, but Lee’s fascination has only grown since.

This masterful account of Peggy Lee’s strange and enchanting life is a long overdue portrait of an artist who redefined popular singing.

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