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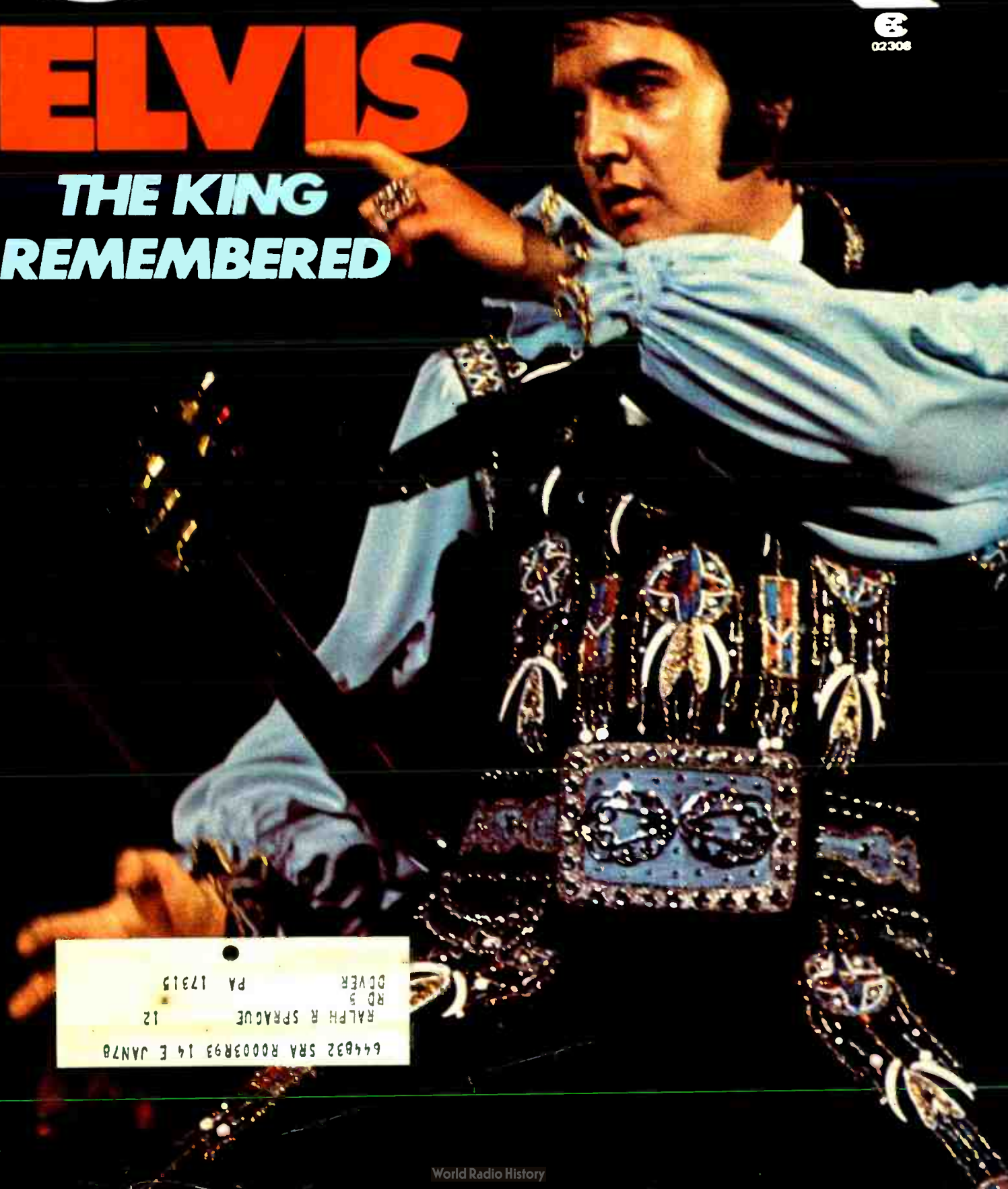
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COUNTRYMUSIC



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December, 1977

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John Killion

Associate Publisher &
Advertising Director:
Jim Chapman

Editor:
Michael Bane

Art Director &
Production Manager:
Cheh Nam Low

Assistant Editor:
Rochelle Friedman

Circulation Director:
John D. Hall

Director: Circulation Promotion:
Gloria Thomas

Circulation Fulfillment Manager:
Michael R. McConnell

Director: Direct Marketing:
Anthony Bunting

Direct Marketing Assistant:
Eileen Bell

Director of Administration:
Olos Pitts

Executive, Editorial and
Advertising Offices,
475 Park Avenue South, 16th
Floor, New York, New York 10016
(212) 685-8200
John H. Killion, President
S. Gross, Secretary

West Coast (Advertising)
The Leonard Company
6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., #307
Woodland Hills, California 91364
(213) 340-1270

Midwest (Advertising)
Ron Mitchell Associates
1360 Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Ill. 60610
(312) 944-0927

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Are you missing half the joy of your guitar?

IF YOU'RE LIKE a lot of people who've taken up the guitar, you went out and bought your guitar with high hopes. You probably bought a little instruction book to go with it, figuring all you had to do was to learn a few chords... and that with a bit of practice, you'd sound pretty good.

But maybe now you're finding that what you've learned isn't enough. Being able to strum some chords and sing a few songs is nice, of course—but you get tired of the same few songs after awhile. You'd like to be able to play other, harder songs... to play melody along with chords... to say things with your guitar that you feel inside, but haven't got the musical skills to express.

If this is the way you feel, we'd like to help you get the skills you need. We'd like to teach you to play the guitar the right way... by note as well as by chords, and by notes and chords in combination.

We'd like to teach you to read music, too—so you won't be limited to just a few simple songs that you've memorized. We'd like to help you get the freedom and fulfillment you *should* be getting from your guitar—instead of frustration from not being able to play the way you want to.

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Letters

Country Music Magazine has received letters and poems from Elvis fans across the nation. We felt, as part of the memorial edition, we would share these with our readers.

Thank you for a very good magazine. Could there be a chance of putting an article about Elvis Presley "The King" in a coming issue? He is the greatest, and he did bring country music into many homes. I would be pleased if you could write about him. Keep up the good work on your magazine you are doing a terrific job.

LYNN M. PAPCZYNSKI
SOUTH BEND, IND.

... Your Country Music book is one of the finest and I wouldn't want to miss an issue. I especially liked the article you had on Elvis about a year ago. I hope you have a memorial story on him in the near future. The world lost a fantastic singer. El-

vis was and always will be the finest country singer of all time. Keep up the good work in your book.

JENNIE MILLS
BRADNER, OHIO

Elvis Presley's death came as a shock to everybody around the world, just like the Kennedy assassination. Elvis will probably be the most famous legend of Country Music, Rock & Roll Music. Elvis will also probably be the most famous legend of Tennessee. With Elvis' records selling as fast they are, too bad he's not alive to enjoy the tremendous success.

Although Elvis is dead, his records may be on the radio charts for many years to

come. Undoubtedly, his albums may still keep coming out.

Elvis Presley was a great influence to many entertainers around the world. Elvis also was the one singer who put Country, Rock and Classical music together in one tradition. Elvis Presley may be dead, but his legend lives on.

BOB TIEMERSMA
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

Please forgive us, Elvis,
for making you a prisoner of life.
We loved you, and will always love you,
for what you were and will always be:

THE KING.

Please forgive us for taking more than you could give,

You brought happiness to our lives,
and you only had loneliness.

Please forgive us for being so selfish,
Our memories of you will always be
in our hearts.

Please forgive us, for loving you so much,
Please, God, take good care of Elvis,

For he was a good and kind man,
He just gave all his life to the fans that
loved him; and

Please help him to forgive us.

JANIS R. GONTERMAN
AUSTIN, TEXAS

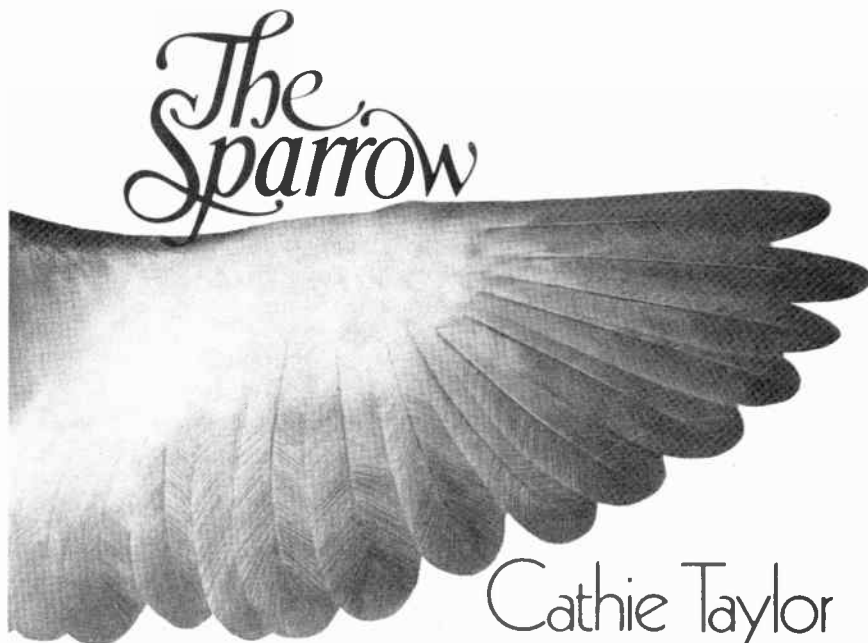
Now that Elvis is gone, maybe you can stop running him down. You have lost a lot of friends because of such articles as the one in your October Record rating.

We don't care if he loved banana splits or if he was fat. He was still number one and could sing any type song he wanted to. We still love him and may he rest in peace.

L.A.
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

You have a really fine magazine, but I do wish you would ask Bob Allen to take it easier on the stars' records he reviews. What does, did, or will he look like at 42 after years of one-night stands. Would you please tell Mr. Allen that Elvis' middle might have been quite round, but then so was his pocket-book, made that way by people who liked and loved him.

PAMELA PETERSEN
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



"The Sparrow," featuring the new House Top single Ode To Mary Jo And John, is a captivating blend of best-loved traditional songs and fresh, original scores of depth and beauty. A departure from her familiar folk-guitar style, Cathie's performance with full orchestra accompaniment is, as usual, warm and loving. It is an album that you will treasure through the years. HTR 704



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I've been a subscriber to Country Music ever since it's been published and enjoy reading it. But in response to Bob Allen's review of Elvis' *Moody Blue* album, I say this idiot doesn't know a good record or singer when he hears one.

JIMMY LABOR
ANDERSON, S.C.

In response to Bob Allen's record review of *Moody Blue* by Elvis Presley, just who does he think he is. He starts his review with "Old Elvis has seen better days." I've never considered 42 years of age old before. I guess Mr. Allen has a different view of being old.

I bought the album when it was first released and thought then that it was one of his better albums. I personally think that Elvis Presley could sing anything from country to rock to gospel and get a much higher rating than fair, as Mr. Allen rated the album.

I have bought your magazine for several years and although I've never totally agreed with all your record reviews, I had never considered writing to you till I read the review by Mr. Allen.

Even though Elvis has gone from this earth, his loyal fans will never let him die as long as we have such good albums as *Moody Blue* to remember him by.

G. BURTON
ANDERSON, S.C.

I just read the piece in your Oct. issue called (Ouch). I'm so proud to see some one speak up for Elvis and stand up for him. There will never be another artist who can take his place. We need more people like him in this world.

He was a great artist and a very fine person. His money never changed him. He was always grateful to his fans and was never afraid to show it. He spoke of how great his fans all were to him and how much they meant to him in so many ways. He felt the love we all had for him, and he returned that love through his beautiful voice. He will be truly missed, for he had a great gift in his voice, looks and personality. He gave up so much to see others happy. He could never walk down the road like you and I because of the danger to him. He missed so much in life, the freedom to do as he pleased. And he gave it up

for us, to see us happy and enjoying life through his records and shows.

To me Elvis is not dead, he is just away behind a cloud watching over all his fans.

B.J.
WACO, TEXAS

I just received my October issue of Country Music. After reading the entire book, I had to write and give you my opinion. I agree completely with D.A. from Missouri. I have quite a few of Elvis' albums and I love them all. Everytime your book mentions Elvis, they are cutting him down for one reason or another. Take this October issue, you publish this letter from D.A. in the front of the book, then in the back, Bob Allen gives Elvis a poor rating on his new recording *Moody Blue*.

I haven't heard the album yet, but I'm

N.C. He had the audience completely spellbound.

There has never been or will be again another entertainer like Elvis. He had everything—talent, looks, personality and most of all compassion. All his money didn't make him forget his roots. I'll be very disappointed if your magazine doesn't do a special edition on Elvis.

BRENDA MABE
PILOT MTN., N.C.

I'm writing this in utter disgust. Never seems to fail that whenever I read reviews of new record releases, whenever Elvis is mentioned, you so called critics put him down. I'm glad to say I took those reviews with a grain of salt.

AN ELVIS FAN
AND PROUD OF IT.

I just had to let you know I'm mad. Your magazine used to be my favorite. I'm listening to *Moody Blue* by Elvis. It is his best. Your Mr. Bob Allen rated it in the October issue. He gave the album a two star rating. Please tell Mr. Allen where he can put his two stars. I'm not sure he even listened to the album. He even had the nerve to say "Old Elvis has seen better days." Old Elvis is gone now, but he'll always be a number one star.

CAROL DAILY
SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

I just received my Oct. issue of Country Music magazine. I have always liked the magazine and carefully saved every one. But as of now, I could care less. The record review of Elvis' *Moody Blue* album should be called

'one man's opinion.' Let us fans be the judge about his singing. As for me, I love it and I had bought a copy of the album and a tape as soon as it came out, long before his death.

Just for the record, I'm a 53 year old Grandmother and I've followed his career since he began. I'm sorry it had to end in the prime of his life. I attended two concerts in 1975 and 1976 and was going again this month. I also know he will never be matched in any way by any one. I only wish I had every record and album.

GARNETT RUSSEL
RICHWOOD, W.VA.

(Continued on page 84)

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sure I'll love it as much as I do his other ones. Elvis is dead now and he will be missed by millions, and his music will live on forever. Why don't you put a special article in your next month's issue of Country Music, praising Elvis for a change? I'm sure his fans would all love it. I know I would.

P.S.
STREATOR, ILL.

I'd like to second the comments made by D.A. in your Oct. issue. Why were so called country people so quick to put down Elvis? They were either jealous or had never seen him perform. I saw him or three separate occasions in Greensboro,



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Editor's Note

With this issue we at *Country Music* salute Elvis Presley, the Hillbilly Cat, Swivel-Hips, the King of Rock and Roll, the King of Bebop, the King of Country Music, simply, the King. What we offer here is a portrait of Elvis as seen through the people closest to him, and, hopefully, a little insight into the music and times of one of the most important figures in our lifetime.

Former *Rolling Stone* and *Creem Magazine* editor John Morthland has performed the herculean task of assembling *An Oral History of Elvis* (page 46). Morthland contacted dozens upon dozens of people close to Elvis, from intimates to casual acquaintances, and from hours of tape produced a sensitive portrait of the man known to everyone but really *known* by only a very few. Morthland also talked at length with longtime Elvis producer Felton Jarvis, and that interview appears on page 31.

We excerpt a telling chapter on rockabilly from the soon-to-be available *Illustrated History of Country Music* on page 18, with rockabilly authority Nick Tosches examining the enigma of Elvis (written some time before Elvis' death). Tom Ayres, a contributing editor to the late *Country Rambler Magazine*, adds his unique view of life behind the walls of Graceland in *Elvis Off-Stage* (page 24).

There's also an interview with Sam Phillips of Sun Records fame (page 58), a detailed examination of Elvis' best recorded work (page 61) and a sad personal memoir from Peter Guralnick (page 36), whose last of many articles on Elvis was the rockabilly chapter of the *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll* last year.

Our color photographs for the centerfold, cover and inside were supplied by John Reggero, a bacteriologist and Elvis fan who claims to have in his collection every single Elvis record in existence. His substantial collection of previously unpublished photos was taken at various concerts over the last three years.

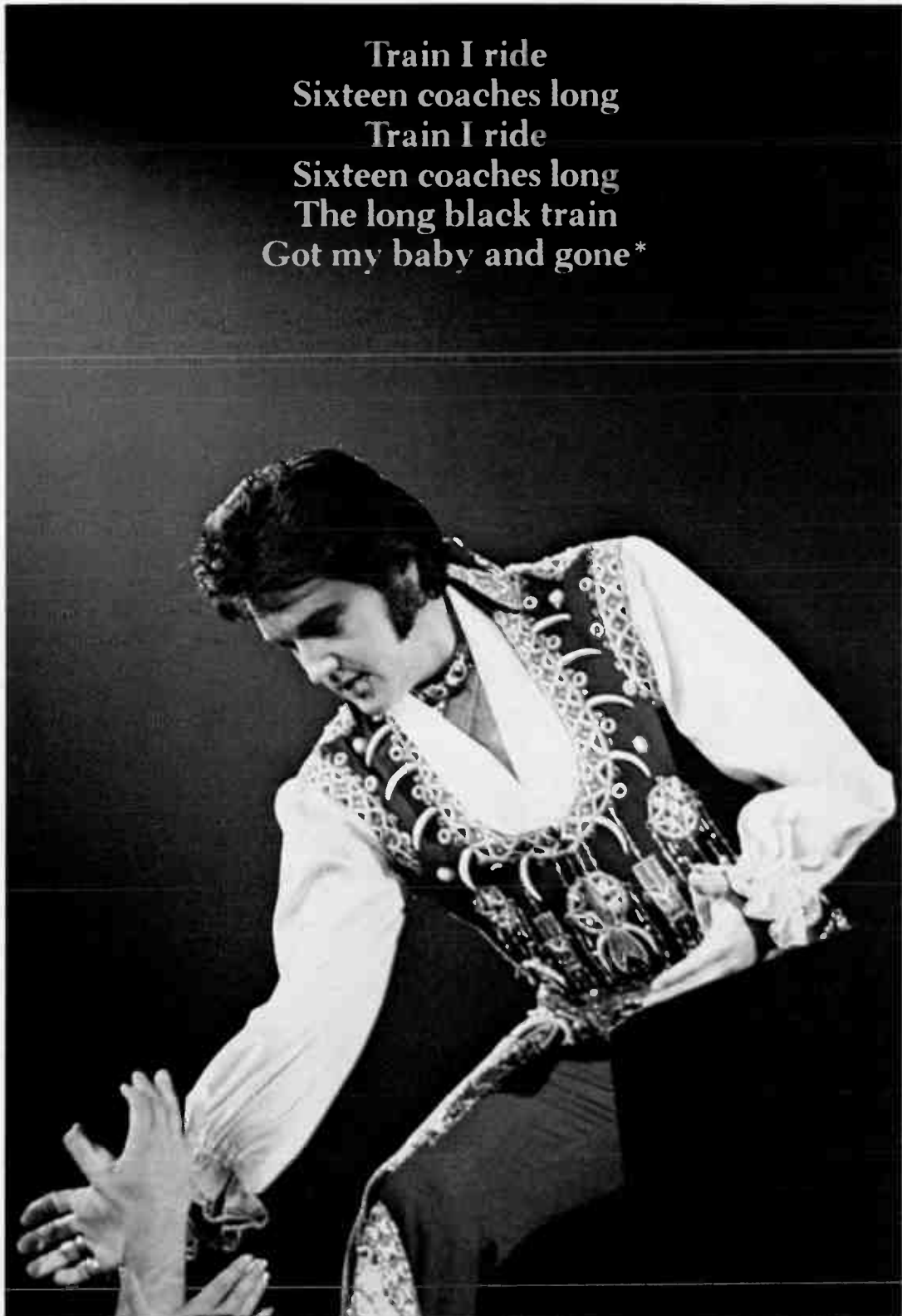
In short, we've assembled the best people for this edition, because nothing but the best would do.

Michael Bane

THE KING REMEMBERED **ELVIS**

Inconceivable though it is, Elvis is gone. He changed our music and our world by first making us believe that music *was* our world. Elvis and those who followed convinced us that our generation could do anything; that we were rebels who no longer *needed* a cause. Yet, amazingly, he retained a unique ability to touch people of all ages. Elvis is gone, and with him goes an era.

Train I ride
Sixteen coaches long
Train I ride
Sixteen coaches long
The long black train
Got my baby and gone*



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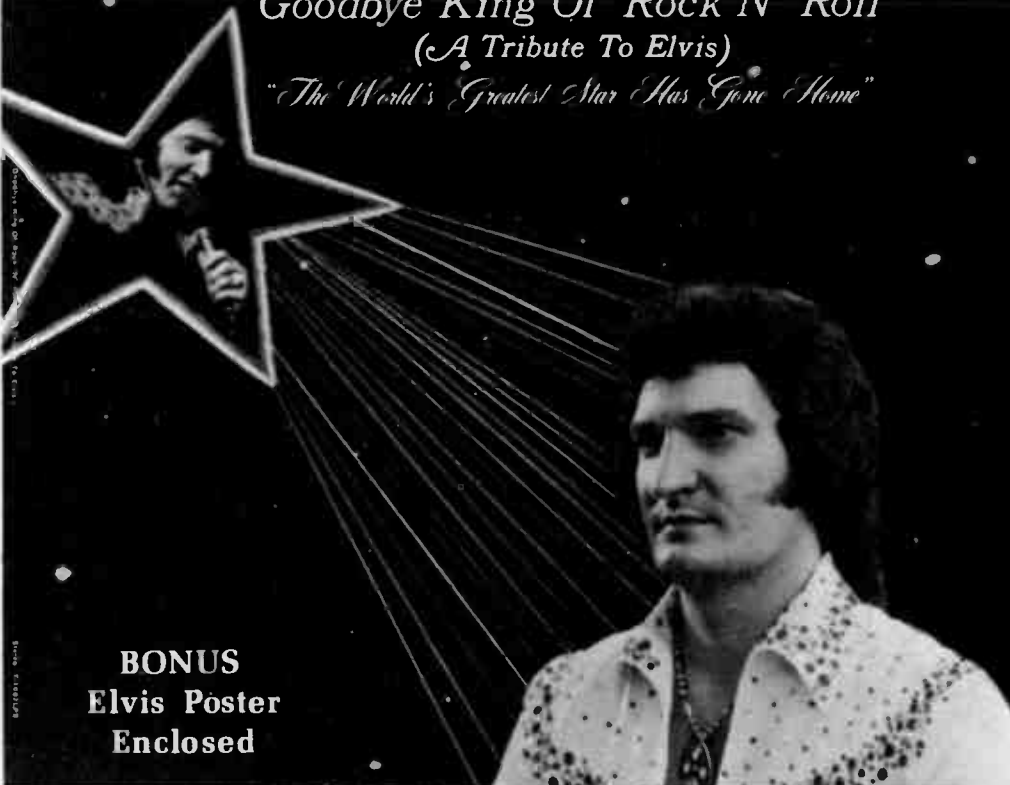
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I'm Tired Of Honky Tonk Heroes

Side Two:

The World's Greatest Star Has
Gone Home

I Heard You Calling His Name

Just To Know She'd Let Me Leave
Her (Is Enough To Make Me Stay)

In The Midnight Hour

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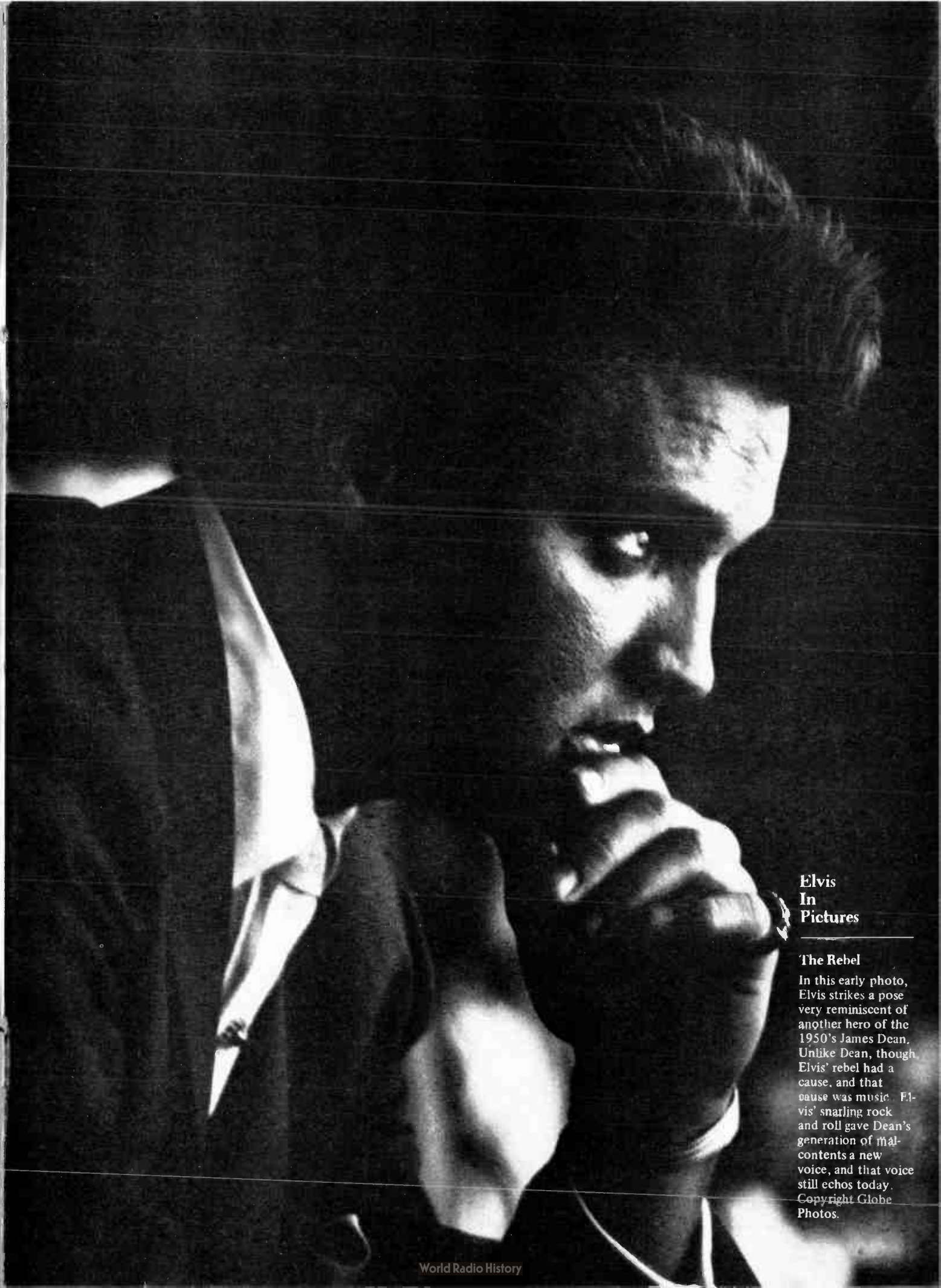
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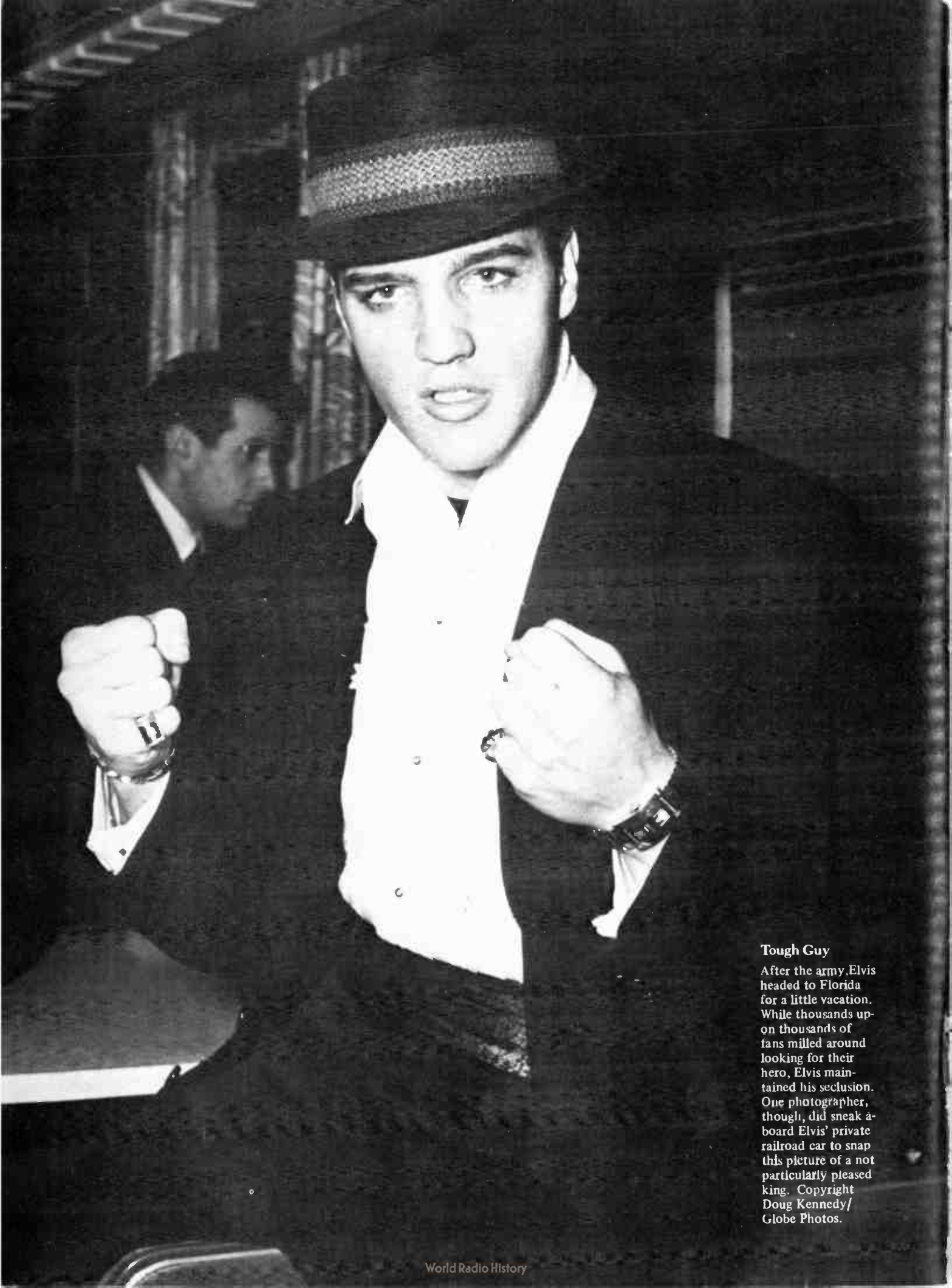
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World Radio History



**Elvis
In
Pictures**

The Rebel

In this early photo, Elvis strikes a pose very reminiscent of another hero of the 1950's James Dean. Unlike Dean, though, Elvis' rebel had a cause, and that cause was music. Elvis' snarling rock and roll gave Dean's generation of malcontents a new voice, and that voice still echos today. Copyright Globe Photos.



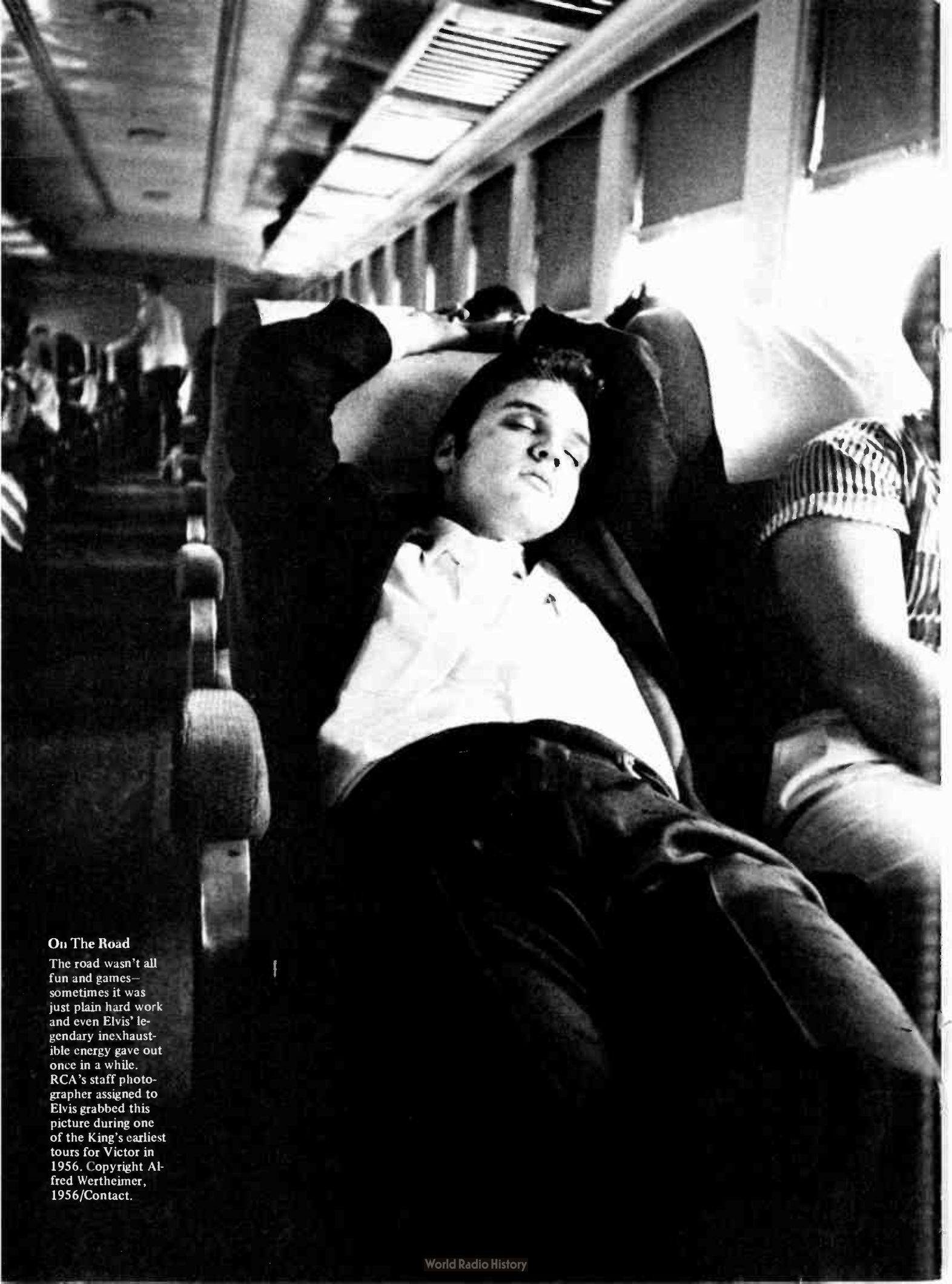
Tough Guy

After the army, Elvis headed to Florida for a little vacation. While thousands upon thousands of fans milled around looking for their hero, Elvis maintained his seclusion. One photographer, though, did sneak aboard Elvis' private railroad car to snap this picture of a not particularly pleased king. Copyright Doug Kennedy/Globe Photos.



Soldier Boy

Even Elvis couldn't beat the draft, and at the seeming top of his career, he entered the U.S. Army for service as a tank crewman. Rather than kill his career as many predicted, Elvis came out of the army stronger than ever. After this 1958 photo, the army did find him a better fitting helmet. Copyright Wide World Photos.



On The Road

The road wasn't all fun and games—sometimes it was just plain hard work and even Elvis' legendary inexhaustible energy gave out once in a while. RCA's staff photographer assigned to Elvis grabbed this picture during one of the King's earliest tours for Victor in 1956. Copyright Alfred Wertheimer, 1956/Contact.

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KENWOOD



The Rise Of Rockabilly

by NICK TOSCHES



Elvis—1956 (left); Elvis—1973.

Monday, July 5th, 1954. The most popular albums in America are Jackie Gleason's *Tawny* on Capitol, Frank Sinatra's *Songs for Young Lovers*, also on Capitol, the film soundtrack of *The Glenn Miller Story*, and the television soundtrack of *Victory at Sea*, both on RCA/Victor. The number one song in the Hit Parade is *Three Coins in the Fountain*. The biggest selling rhythm-and-blues artists are The Midnighters, and the biggest selling country artist is Webb Pierce. Although rock-and-roll is a widespread phenomenon, only one white rock singer has yet achieved any success: Bill Haley. On this summer day, something is happening down in Memphis that will eventually overwhelm the whole of American Music. Within the Sun Record Company at 706 Union Avenue, Sam Phillips is cutting a first session on a local punk named Elvis Presley.

Sam Phillips got into the record business by way of the radio business. Born in Florence, Alabama, in 1925, he began working as a radio announcer after dropping out of high school in 1941. At night he studied engineering, podiatry, and embalming.

In 1952, Sam Phillips decided to start his own record company. He took his brother Judd on as partner and paid a commercial artist on Beale Street to design a label for his company, which he called Sun.

Monday, July 5th, 1954. Sam Phillips, Elvis Presley, Scotty Moore, and Bill Black are in Sun's poky, thirty-by-twenty-foot studio messing with *Blue Moon of Kentucky*, a song Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys had recorded for Columbia in 1945. It isn't a country song they're trying to set down on tape, nor a rhythm-and-blues song in the Haley mode, but a weird bastard sound that Phillips has been carrying in the dampness of his brain. Finally the sound is in the air, its configurations caught on magnetic tape. Sam Phillips grins. "Hell, that's different," he says. "That's a pop song now, Little Vi. That's good." These are perhaps the most apocalyptic words in the history of American music.

Born in Tupelo, Mississippi, on January 8th, 1935, Elvis Aron Presley was nineteen that July day in Memphis. Six years earlier, in 1948, his family had moved to that western Tennessee city, and in the spring of 1953 Elvis was graduated from Humes High School there. His photograph in *The Herald*, the Humes High School yearbook, shows a boy with sideburns, Corinthian pompadour, and a hint of acne. He had participated, his yearbook caption says, in R.O.T.C., Biology Club, English Club, History Club, and Speech Club. The summer after graduation, Presley went to work for the Precision Tool Company. He left that job after a short while and began work at the Crown Electric Company, where he was paid \$42 a week to drive a truck.

On a Saturday afternoon in late 1953, Elvis made his first visit to the Sun studio. As a side-line operation to Sun, Phillips still maintained his Memphis Recording Service, administered by Marion Keisker, the former Miss Radio of Memphis. It was to the Memphis Recording Service, not Sun Records, that Elvis came that afternoon. He paid Keisker the four-dollar charge, entered the studio with his acoustic guitar, and recorded two songs directly onto a double-sided ten-inch acetate disk. On the one side Elvis cut *My Happiness*, with which the Ink Spots had hit on Decca in 1948. On the other side he did *That's When Your Heartaches Begin*, a mawkish ballad written by Zeb Turner.

Struck by Presley's voice and raw acoustic guitar work, Marion Keisker recorded the end of *My Happiness* and the whole of *That's When Your Heartaches Begin* on a length of used tape. Seventeen years later, she told Elvis biographer Jerry Hopkins,

'If I could find a white man who had the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars.'



"The Hillbilly Cat" in one of his first appearances on the Louisiana Hayride after recording at Sun.

"The reason I taped Elvis was this: Over and over I remember Sam saying, 'If I could find a white man who had the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars.' This is what I heard in Elvis, this . . . what I guess they now call 'soul,' this Negro sound. So I taped it. I wanted Sam to know."

In the early summer of 1954, about eight months after Elvis had first visited the Sun studio, Sam's mail yielded a demonstration record of a composition called *Without You*, recorded in Nashville by an unknown black singer. Sam was so impressed by the demo that he wanted to release it on Sun. He called Nashville in search of the singer, so that he might obtain permission to issue the record. He was told that nobody knew who the kid was, that he had just happened to be hanging around the studio when the song arrived. Phillips decided he must find someone else to cut the song in a hurry. "What about the kid with the sideburns?" suggested Marion Keisker.

Elvis was contacted that same Saturday afternoon, and he rushed to the studio. Phillips played the demo for him. Elvis

sang it. By all accounts, it was horrible. He tried again, then again, and still it was bad. Phillips forsook *Without You*, suggesting that Elvis try *Rag Mop*, a song written by Johnnie Lee Wills and Deacon Anderson. It seemed a fairly easy song, but again Elvis failed.

During a break, Sam, a bit disturbed, asked Elvis just what it was he could sing. Oh, anything, Elvis replied. Do it, Sam said. And then it poured forth, a crazy rush of disparate sounds: gospel (earlier in 1954, Elvis had almost joined the Blackwood Brothers, a gospel quartet), hard-core country, rhythm-and-blues, middle-of-the-road pop. For hours it went on, no cool Apollonian eclecticism, but fevered glossolalia. In the end, Elvis remarked he was looking for a band.

Sam contacted Winfield Scott Moore, better known as Scotty. That Sunday, Independence Day, Elvis and Scotty got together at Scotty's home, where they fooled with several recent country hits, such as Eddy Arnold's *I Really Don't Want To Know* and Hank Snow's *I Don't Hurt Anymore*. After a few hours, bass player Bill Black, Scotty's neighbor,

dropped by for a few minutes. He was not impressed with the goings on. Nonetheless, the next evening, July 5th, Black found himself in the Sun studio with Phillips, Presley, and Moore. It was Sam's idea for Scotty and Bill not to bring the rest of their band, the Starlite Wranglers, with them. No fiddle, no steel guitar. It was obvious that Sam had a different kind of country session in mind.

That first recording of *Blue Moon of Kentucky* was never released legally. (In 1975, Bobcat Records, a Dutch label, bootlegged the tape and included it in the album *Good Rockin' Tonight*.) The version that was released was recorded either the same night or the next night. Although this piece of history is clouded, it seems likely that the released version of *Blue Moon of Kentucky* was cut the same night as the version that caused Sam Phillips to utter, "Hell, that's different. That's a pop song now, Little Vi. That's good." (Those words can be heard in *Good Rockin' Tonight*.) They were in the groove then, touching tongues to the philosopher's stone Sam was seeking, and it's absurd to imagine them calling it a night at that

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“What made rockabilly such a drastically new music was its spirit . . .”



Elvis in one of his earliest films, “Loving You,” where he really gets a chance to demonstrate some of that famous Presley hip.

moment of celebration.

In any case, *Blue Moon of Kentucky* as released on Elvis's first record, Sun 209, is surer, tougher than the earlier take. Like a young boxer after his first professional knock-out, Presley is dizzy with the confirmation of his prowess. *Blue Moon of Kentucky* is daring to the point of insanity. It is Elvis walking on iron blades, through fire, invincible with the knowledge he sees in Sam's eyes, hears in his

own voice, and feels in his own flushed meat; the knowledge that right now, this instant, he, Elvis Aron Presley, is the greatest singer in Memphis and the universe.

* * *

What made rockabilly such a drastically new music was its spirit, a thing that bordered on mania. Elvis's version of *Good Rockin' Tonight* was not a party song, but an invitation to a holocaust.

Junior Parker's *Mystery Train* was an eerie shuffle; Elvis's *Mystery Train* was a demonic incantation. Country music had never known such vehement emotion, and neither had black music. It was the face of Dionysos, full of febrile sexuality and senselessness; it flushed the skin of new housewives, and made teenage boys re-invent themselves as flaming creatures.

I think the enigma of Elvis Presley will never be solved. It is strange enough that at the time of his first recordings, Elvis declared his idol to be Dean Martin, the thirty-seven-year-old Italian pop singer from Steubenville, Ohio, but to hear him at an August 22, 1957, press conference proclaim Pat Boone to be “undoubtedly the finest voice out now . . .”

No one has truly interviewed Elvis, and I doubt anyone ever will. What would Elvis say? Judging from his words and deeds, he is awhelmingly bland person. Through the years, his press-conference persona has been full of a myriad cloying dullnesses. Yessum, nossir, thank-you. One of the few artists able to operate in a commercial construct of total artistic freedom, Elvis has chosen to record stuff such as *Danny Boy*, and fill his music with trite show-biz anachronisms.

But that is the wonder of it. Surely there is more mystery, more power, in Elvis, singer of *Danny Boy*, than in Bob Dylan, utter of hermetic ironies. It is the sheer, superhuman tastelessness of Elvis that jars the mind. In 1965, as western civilization lay on its tummy pecking over the brink at such things as dope and *I Can't Get No Satisfaction*, Elvis, for all the world to see, was hopping about singing *Do the Clam*. And the same week *Do the Clam* was released, Dean Martin came out with *Send Me the Pillow You Dream On*, a Hank Locklin country hit from 1958. A few years later, people began talking of the revolutionary pop-country fusion wrought by the Byrds and Bob Dylan. Could Bob Dylan do the Clam? I bet Dino could. ■

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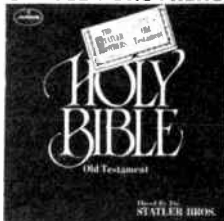
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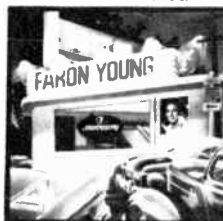
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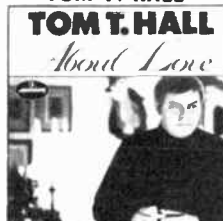
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ELVIS

Off-Stage

Elvis was a good boy. He was as generous as he could be. He loved people and he liked to have a good time, just like anybody else. But the fans wouldn't leave him alone, so he built his own world and retreated into it. I guess that's the saddest part of all.

—Vester Presley

On the occasion of the death of his nephew

by Tom Ayres

It was 2 a.m. and the lights along Elvis Presley Boulevard cast an eerie blue light against the walls of Graceland Estate. Behind the walls, the silence of the night was broken by the sound of a motorcycle engine roaring to life. For the better part of an hour, the popping and purring of the engine could be heard as the rider raced around the grounds inside the walls. Those living nearby who happened to hear the distant hum of the motorcycle thought little of the incident. They knew Elvis was amusing himself again in the confines of his private world.

The private world of Elvis Presley was a place out of tilt with reality. There, the day might begin at midnight and end at daybreak. There, the gardener's potato crop might be discussed with as much concern as the purchase of a new jetliner. And there, Elvis Presley, adored by millions, died alone in his Camelot-prison.

Never before has the public heaped so much adulation on an entertainer and therein lies the paradox. Never has an entertainer been more protective of his right to privacy. Presley *never* granted interviews of any consequence, and he considered it a breach of trust should any member of his inner circle talk to the press. But there was a reason for his seeming obsession with privacy. John Wayne doesn't awake each Saturday morning to find 300 or 400 fans milling around the entrance to his home—nor Frank Sinatra, Robert Redford or individual members of the Beatles. Rick Landers, a Presley family friend who spent some time at the home of Elvis' father, adjacent to the Graceland Estate, recalls with some disgust, how a particular fan persisted in offering him \$1,000 to steal one of Presley's old socks. Marlon Brando never had that kind of problem.

Although this frenzied worship sustained Elvis' popularity through 22 years of musical change, it also drove him to a bizarre lifestyle that was, at the same time, sad and fascinating. As the Elvis mystique grew, so grew the legend. There was however, a flesh-and-blood man behind the legend—a man with a humble heritage and a lot of ordinary qualities who never fully understood why it all happened to him.

To understand the famous Elvis, one must examine, at least briefly, the obscure Elvis. As a child, he lugged around an old guitar given to him by his mother. "Sometimes it didn't have but three strings but he could still beat the fire out of it," a relative recalled in Presley's biography.

When he was 13, his father, Vernon Presley, moved to Memphis. There, at Humes High School, Elvis was just a shy country boy at the bottom rung of the school caste system. He was never voted most popular, most talented, most outstanding or most likely to succeed. The only reference to his personality in the yearbook described him as a "teacher's pet." But even that reference stemmed from a student editor's imagination rather than reality.

He sought acceptance by going out for the football team and made the varsity squad as a junior. But, when teammates razzed him about his sideburns and duck-tail haircut, he quit the team.

Almost everyone is aware of the story of Presley's phenomenal rise to fame—how he walked in off the street to cut the record at Sam Phillips little recording studio in Memphis and how it became a hit. But, there were a lot of thorns in that bed of roses.

The record got him a spot on the Grand Ole Opry when he was only 19. But fol-

lowing his set, talent coordinator Jim Denny suggested that he should go back to his truck driving job.

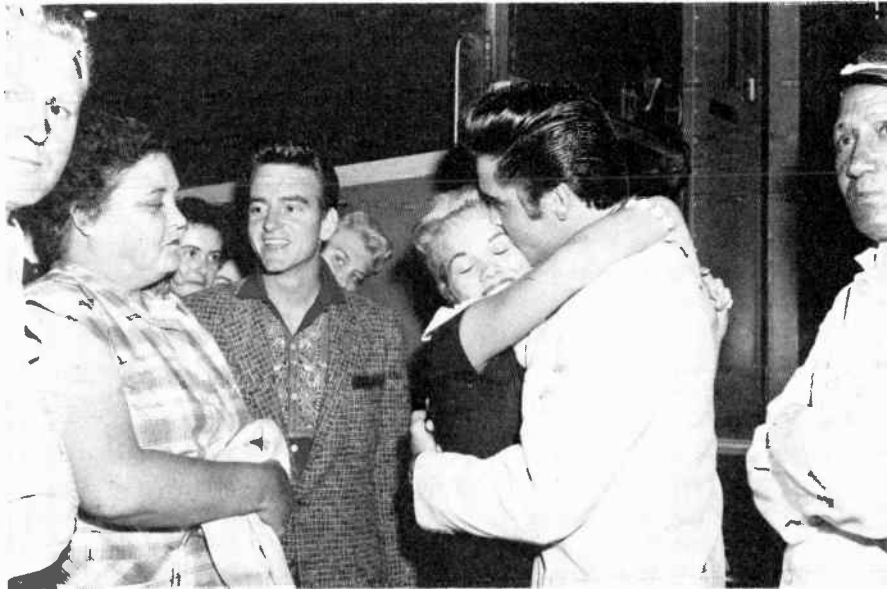
"Elvis cried all the way home that night," recalls Gordon Stoker of the *Jordanaires*. "It took him weeks to get over it." In the early stages of his success, the music critics were unmerciful in their condemnation of his style, voice and music. Typical was this appraisal by Jack Gould of the *New York Times*: "Mr. Presley has no discernible singing ability... he is an unutterable bore."

While the critics were panning him, in San Jose, California, thousands of screaming girls were overrunning 100 policemen (putting 11 of them in the hospital) trying to get to him. In Syracuse, mothers were circulating petitions trying to prevent his concert while their daughters were going giddy over Elvis Presley bobbysocks, shoes, sweaters, bracelets, purses and handkerchiefs. (Thanks to the marketing genius of Elvis' manager, Col. Tom Parker, there was even an Elvis Presley Bubble Gum).

The paradoxical madness of it all was too much for a basically shy country boy who had risen overnight from obscurity to virtual deity. He did not understand the public reaction to him so he reacted in a most basic way: he simply severed direct contact with the public. He drew an inner circle of trusted friends around him and shut out the rest of the world.

In the early years of his career, Elvis frequently would lean out the window of his hotel room and tease a crowd of girls gathered below. "Come on up!" he would urge them. But, his bodyguards would not let them get near him.

"Elvis usually avoided female fans," said Diana Goodman, former Miss Georgia who dated him. "He told me he didn't



Elvis and "number one" girlfriend Anita Wood in 1957. Mom and Pop Presley watch on left.

want to get involved with somebody he didn't know. He usually dated girls who were introduced to him by close friends."

Perhaps the happiest years of his life were those spent in Germany when he was in the Army. There he lived at least the semblance of an ordinary life. He dated a young girl named Priscilla Beaulieu and surrounded himself with a group of fun-loving Army buddies.

Upon his return to the U.S., he hired a number of those buddies (along with several old pals from Memphis). He paid them \$200 to \$250 a week although some of them had no visible job to perform.

He plunged into movie-making and accumulated a fleet of vehicles ranging from Cadillacs to pickups to Land Rovers. When Elvis wasn't working, he and his entourage of good ole boys would hit the road in a caravan composed of the assorted vehicles and wander cross country, stopping at small motels, camping out and generally having a good time. On occasion, Elvis and his friends could become rowdy. They once bought up all the flash bulbs in Beverly Hills and used them for target practice in a swimming pool. And there were frequent parties, usually with a bevy of attractive girls in attendance.

In 1966, Elvis' days of carefree bachelorhood ended. He married Priscilla Beaulieu and, almost immediately, was faced with a crisis. His bride rebelled against Elvis' continuing close association with his pals and insisted that her husband send them packing. Presley complied, but reportedly brooded over the issue for years afterward.

Two events had a profound impact on Elvis' life. One was the breakup of his marriage and the other, the death of his mother.

An only child, Elvis was extremely close to his mother. When he became successful, Mrs. Presley felt that her overweight condition presented a poor image for the mother of a superstar. She went on a series of crash diets and her health deteriorated.

She died of heart failure. However, until his own death, Elvis was convinced she died of cancer and he became obsessed with the thought that he too would become a victim of the disease. As a result, even a minor discomfort would cause him to check into a hospital for tests.

He went on strange diets of his own concoction. For weeks at a time, he might consume only spinach and small boiled potatoes. He employed a gardener at \$300 a week to grow organic vegetables for him. His friends believed Elvis' weird diets probably contributed to his health problems in recent years.

He changed doctors frequently. Those who pleased him were given expensive gifts—a Los Angeles physician received a Rolls Royce.

Presley became fascinated with the subject of death. He once took a group of friends to a mortuary in the middle of the night to examine the corpses and discuss embalming.

If some of Elvis' physical ailments were imagined (as his friends claim they were) his weight problem was real. He sometimes ballooned to 230 pounds, although reports that he exceeded 250 pounds are probably exaggerated. The weight problem was one of the factors that made him decide to stop making movies.

"Elvis did not like the discipline involved in making movies," said a family friend. "He would get uptight, and when Elvis got tense he always gained weight. Don't get me wrong. When he was on the set, he was a pro—always on time, always knew his lines. But, he was a freelancer at heart. That's how he recorded his songs—just walked into the studio and let it happen. Making movies was too rigid for his style."

When Elvis broke up with his wife, he moved from California back to his walled, 11-acre Graceland estate in Memphis. He usually scheduled only two show tours a year and, occasionally he would travel to Nashville for a recording session. Other-

wise, he hid behind the walls of Graceland.

Linda Thompson, the Tennessee beauty queen who was his companion for five years, described it this way:

"Elvis' life was turned around. Day was night and night was day. And it was that way for everybody around him. He was just sitting there day after day, letting the world go past him."

There were three other permanent residents on the estate with him—his uncle, aunt and paternal grandmother. However, other house guests were almost always present—his musicians, bodyguards, old friends. Miss Thompson resided there for extended periods, as did other female guests. His father lived in a two-story brick home adjacent to the estate where he handled Elvis' business affairs and screened his calls.

When he was in a good mood, Elvis sometimes played touch football or softball with his guests. On very rare occasions, he would go to the gate and sign autographs for fans, but he hadn't done this for several months preceding his death.

He enjoyed riding his motorcycle inside the compound—almost always at night. (In the early years, he occasionally would take it outside the gate in the early morning hours). He also sometimes rode his horse inside the estate walls. He almost never left the estate during daylight hours.



Elvis, Priscilla and four-day old Lisa Marie.

When he gave parties, the guest list was small and the atmosphere subdued. A guest at one such party recalls that those in attendance included country singers Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis, pop singer Al Green, actress Gail Fisher and members of the Presley inner circle of friends.

"Elvis was a gracious host," said the guest. "He seemed to prefer to stand over in the corner and talk to one or two guests rather than try to be the life of the party. He was drinking rum and coke, and I think it was mostly coke."

Sometimes, Elvis would rent a Mem-

(Continued on page 74)

"We've gone through a lot of other amps."

Shining a little light on one of country's hottest stars.
A Nashville chat with Ronnie Milsap.

With your extensive training and background in a variety of musical fields, how did you settle on country music?

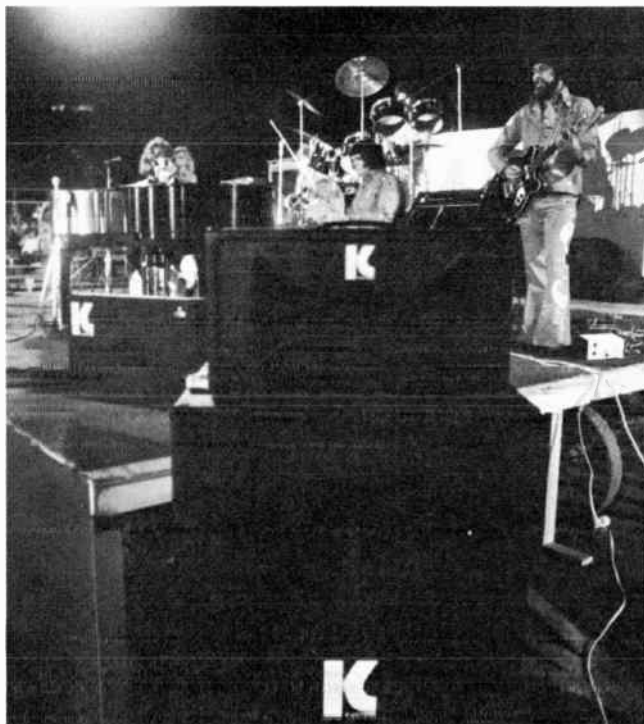
I've been singing as long as I can remember, but I guess my career really didn't start until I moved to Nashville about four years ago. A bunch of new people came into country music around the time I came to town, and folks who didn't usually like country music started liking some of these newer artists. I'm very excited because country is the brand of music I grew up on... my "roots", in a way.

But some of your material has crossed over from "country" to the Top 40 charts.

Yes, my latest record is a Top 40 hit... so not only folks who love "country" listen to my music. It almost seems like country is coming to a point like it is in England, where the lines aren't distinct.

While you're talking about the "country" sound, what about the "Ronnie Milsap" sound?

I love all kinds of music... classical, jazz, blues and rock 'n roll, and the newer country artists are using a lot more of these types of sound in their material. Combined with the electronic technology, this broader-based sound in country music also adds to its



popularity and allows country musicians to reach for a new audience.

As far as my sound goes, I'm basically a keyboard artist... mostly grand piano, electric piano and synthesizer. On the album we just finished, and in our concert program material, there are a lot of new sounds we get when we play them up through the amplifiers.

What amplifiers are you using?

With my keyboards, I'm using the new Kustom III Lead "S" with SRO speakers.

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gets the sound we want. It's clean... really clean.

Anything in particular that impresses you?

Well, a steel guitar is probably the most difficult instrument to get an amplifier to match because there's so much output from the instrument that you get distortion. For years people have been using very small amps and miking them at very low levels. But now, with these new Kustom amplifiers, our steel player doesn't have to play tremendously loud, and if he needs more level, he has it.

What about the other Kustom PA, sound reinforcement and monitor equipment you're using?

Well... performing is such a high energy experience but we've found this equipment works. We've seen sound companies on the road with

all kinds of boards and equipment, and these * outshine anything we've seen. The sound is really good.



* Ronnie's band uses two additional Kustom III Lead S amps with SRO speakers; a Kustom III bass head with the Kustom IV B 2-15 SRO cabinet; and a complete Kustom sound reinforcement system which includes an XX SRM 24-channel stereo mixer, four VIII Slaves, two MF-1212 bass cabinets, two MF-1010 high frequency horns, and two complete Kustom III monitor systems.

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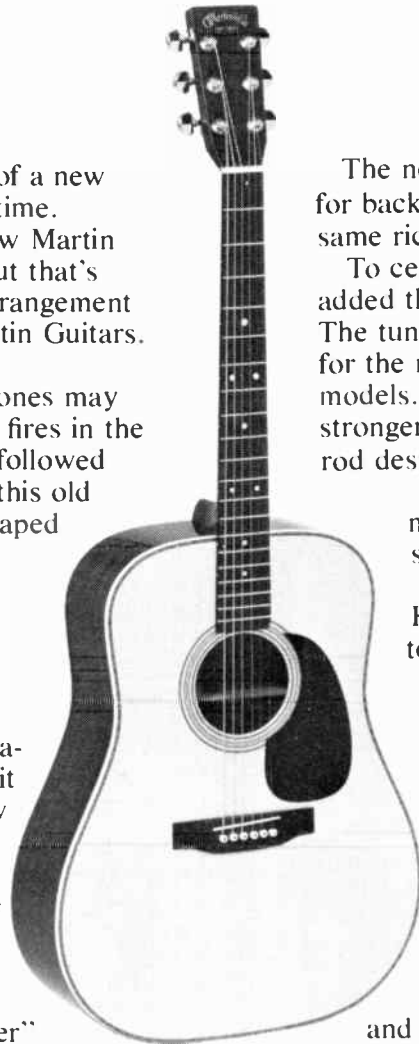
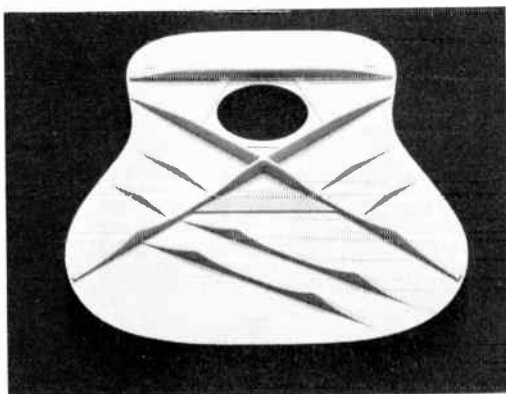
You haven't heard the picking of a new Martin Herringbone for a long time. Because there hasn't been a new Martin Herringbone for a long time. But that's changed for 1977 with a new arrangement of this old favorite style of Martin Guitars. It's called the HD-28.

The earliest Martin Herringbones may have been played around camp fires in the Civil War. Over the years that followed there were a lot of versions of this old favorite. Some had diamond-shaped pearl inlays in the fingerboard; others had the dots we use today. Some had 12-fret necks; in 1934 the much-prized model with the 14-fret neck was first made.

The new HD-28 draws inspiration from the early models but it has an assortment of brand new features that make it preferable for today's player.

The new HD-28 still uses the scalloped bracing system that Martin introduced around 1850. The small maple bridge plate is similar, as is the zig-zag "zipper" back strip.

You'd say the appearance is identical with older models. Almost but not quite.



The new Indian rosewood, now used for backs and sides, has the same richness but is more durable.

To century-old craftsmanship, we've added the values of modern technology. The tuning machine with enclosed gears for the new HD-28 is superior to earlier models. So are the new necks which are stronger and stiffer than the original "T" rod design.

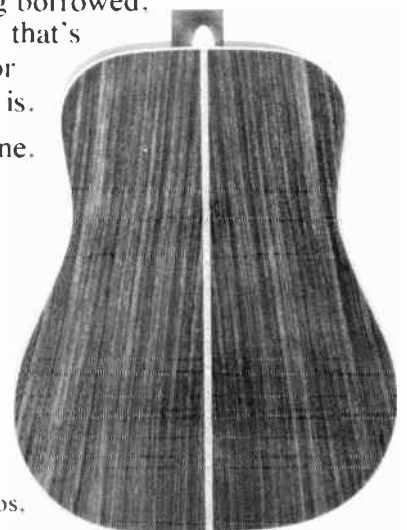
More benefits: the new pickguard material will not shrink as it sometimes did in the original models. The sides of the new HD-28 are more durable, thanks to the use of new taping material.

When you play the new HD-28 Martin Herringbone, we think you'll find it's an appealing arrangement of the old traditions of the original Herringbone and the values of some new technology and materials.

About time for you to visit your local Martin dealer and see something old, something new, something borrowed, and something that's

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Producing The King

by JOHN MORTHLAND

Felton Jarvis had been Elvis Presley's producer since 1965; the first record they cut together was *How Great Thou Art*, and they quickly became friends both in and out of the studio.

When Elvis died, Felton was at the Nashville airport to hop a plane for Maine, where Elvis was due to open his new tour. At first, when reporters called Jarvis for statements, he talked. Then the deluge of calls became too much for him, and he made himself more difficult to reach. But about 10 days after Elvis' death, the first wave of articles had subsided, and Felton was upset with the picture they presented. So he decided to talk again, explaining, "I just feel that somebody who was around him at the end needs to say something. I've heard so many lies from people that don't know."

The picture Felton paints is of a man who had become devoted to his audience, an imperfect man who made his mistakes and sometimes paid for them, a man who had to carry a greater load than most of us and did his best to pull it off. But not a lonely and miserable man. Not a man dependent on drugs, and certainly not a man who had premonitions of his own death, as so many have implied. These assertions Felton denied categorically.

Jarvis had been an RCA staff producer only about six weeks when Chet Atkins first tried him out with Elvis. By then, Elvis was cutting all night: Atkins, a family man, wanted out of that schedule. He figured Elvis and Felton would get along well, because they were of about the same age and background. Jarvis had even begun in the music biz as what he calls "a bad Elvis imitator."

As many others have noted, Elvis ran his own sessions. "All I ever did was carry out his wishes," Felton says, and the combination clicked. Felton was most dazzled by Elvis' recording procedure. If, say, RCA wanted a gospel album, Elvis would book a week of studio time and sing whatever came into his mind at any given moment—blues, rock, pop, gospel. By the end of the week there would be enough gospel songs for the album. Some nights, nothing would get put on tape at all, because Elvis was having too much fun just horsing around with the musicians.

"But he had to record according to how he felt at the moment; he wanted to feel that particular song at that particular time," Felton emphasizes. "Once he'd worked Las Vegas and gotten used to horns, strings, whole orchestras, that's what he liked best. He enjoyed singing songs like *My Way* or *Impossible Dream*, where he could really stand out and show off his singing. Don't get me wrong, he still liked doing those old three chord rock 'n' roll songs, but he wanted to do the bigger songs and be more than just the King of rock 'n' roll.

"Towards the end, the big thing that Elvis enjoyed more than anything was playing in front of a live audience. He was touring two weeks out of the month, and it was *only*



because he wanted to. He never really got out of television or movies what he got out of performing, and eventually he realized it. The audience just gave him so much back. He was nervous, sure, but he had told me that if he ever *wasn't* afraid to go onstage, he wouldn't go onstage—because that would mean he'd lost it. He didn't never remember going onstage that he didn't have butterflies in his stomach."

As Felton sees it, Elvis was not pleased with his weight towards the end ("Who would be?"), but he wasn't unusually depressed about it. Other stories disturbed him just as much. The January 1977 Nashville sessions he cancelled, causing a big wave of rumors? He had a very

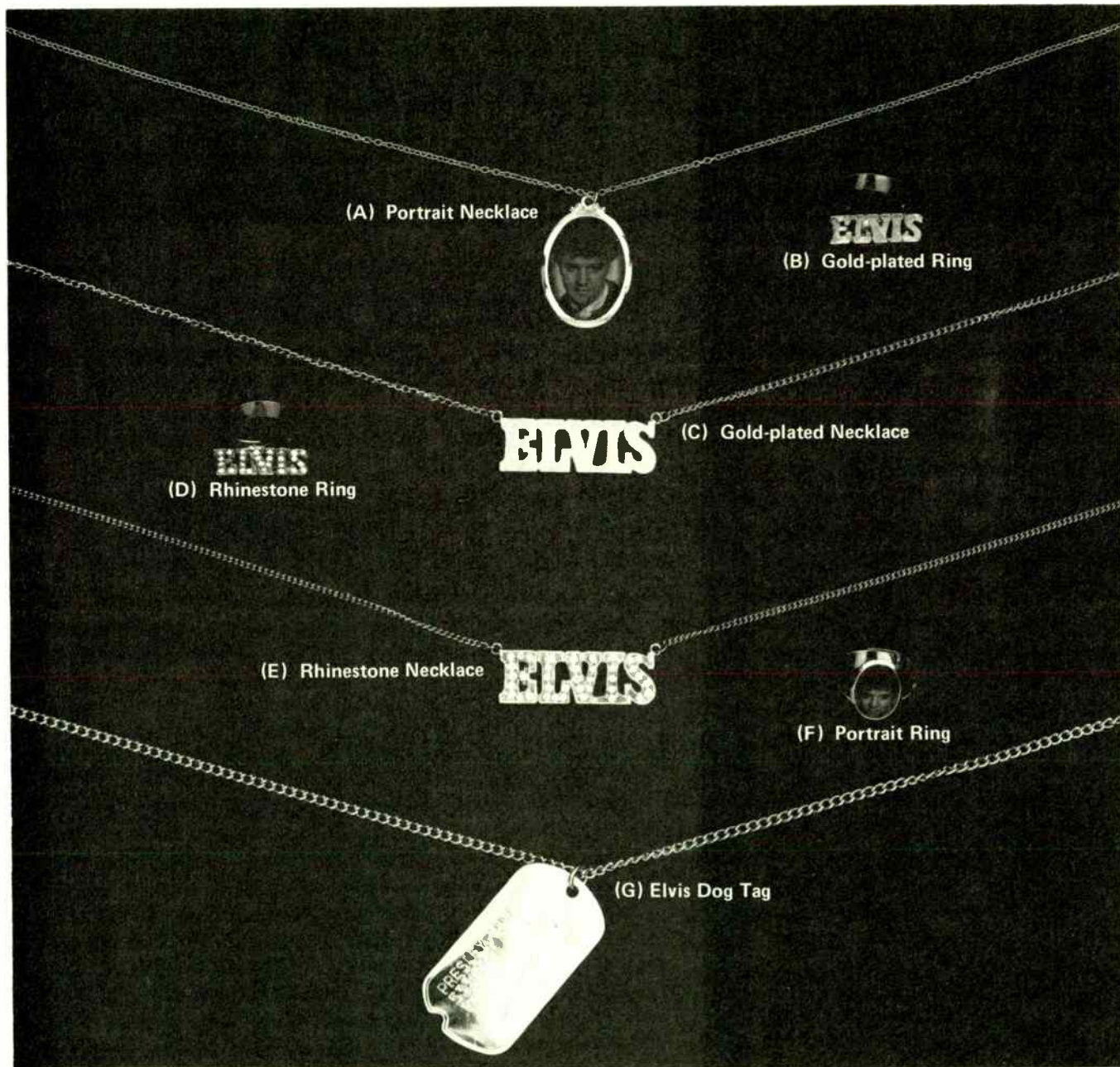
sore throat, Felton insists, and took every step he could to make the sessions anyhow, but it was in vain. The more recent Baltimore show, where he supposedly sang three songs and left the stage? He had to go to the bathroom, and in a 50-pound jumpsuit, that took 20 minutes. He returned to the stage and the audience got a full show.

There are two other stories Felton prefers to remember that for him, exemplify the real Elvis. When RCA wanted to record Elvis' Madison Square Garden concert for a live album, Jarvis was on a kidney machine, having just been near death himself. Elvis and the Col-

(Continued on page 79)

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Faded Love

It's like someone just came up and told me there aren't going to be any more cheeseburgers in the world. —Felton Jarvis, Elvis' producer, commenting on Elvis' death

I used to imagine that Elvis would call me up one time in the middle of the night. I would stumble to the phone, pick up the receiver, listen blearily to the silence at the other end, and then hear that familiar voice say, "I been reading some of the stuff you been writing about me, and it's all right, man. It's good." Of course it never happened, but whenever I wrote something about Elvis—and this dates back more than ten years now—I would always send a copy to 3764 Elvis Presley Boulevard, in the old days merely Highway 51 South. Once I got a Christmas card, a record company hand-out like the yearly calendar, with printed season's greetings "From Elvis and the Colonel".

More than anyone else Elvis made us into fans. Maybe it was the barriers the Colonel erected around him. Maybe it was the legend to which his own improbable to removal from roots gave rise. When I first started writing about him, it was not fashionable to admit that you were an Elvis fan. "For a long time," I wrote in the middle of a Beatles era which seems curiously more distant in time and point of view, "to suggest that you liked Elvis Presley only invited ridicule." Elvis himself seemed to share in this sentiment, at least from the evidence of his records and movies, which by this time were so perfunctory an echo of the feeling which had animated his early work as to make the King of Western Bop seem like just another corporate success. And yet when he emerged from his Hollywood exile in 1968 for the TV special, the Memphis sessions and one final burst of glory, there we all were, still his loyal fans, eager to welcome him home, no questions asked.

It was almost too easy for him. After that first spectacular surge he didn't have to do anything, he just had to be—himself,

Elvis, no last name necessary. In a way it was the classic American success story. Elvis, a desperately lonely, desperately ambitious child of the Depression, rising from that two-room Tupelo shack to a marble-pillared mansion on the hill. There was irony, there was pathos, there was fierce determination. More than anything else there was passion. You have only to listen to those first Sun recordings, as alive today as when they were first issued almost twenty-five years ago, to hear the vibrancy, the purity of feeling, the sense of sheer exhilarating release. There was as well a kind of unselfconscious innocence which could never enter his music again—and for good reason. Elvis Presley was a year out of high school, and on the Sun sides he would throw in everything that had made up his life to date—all the yearning, all the unfocused resentment, all that sense of being, as he would later sing, "a stranger in my own hometown". And on top of it all he was imposing not so much a surly sneer as an almost contemptuous certainty that what he was doing was right, that all the rest were wrong, that it was his cat clothes and be-bop language that would eventually prevail.

Well, he was right. Elvis was, everyone has finally conceded, no overnight sensation. He was, in fact, one of the most phenomenal successes of our time. And he maintained the sneer; in some ways he maintained the music (to the end there were flashes of the old spirit, glimpses of gold amidst the dross); most of all, though, he retained that callow adolescence of the spirit, that sense of impatient expectation which could only be staved off, never satisfied, with cheeseburgers and ice cream and peanut butter and banana sandwiches. It was adolescence with a gloss on—no more pimples, no more grease, the teeth are

capped, imperfect reality is replaced by the perfect dream. Because, of course, Elvis never grew up. Elvis never could grow up. For Elvis everything stopped when he was 19 years-old and knocking them dead in Kilgore, Texas or Bethel Springs, Tennessee. After that, nothing changed. He never knew anything else. And though the arenas and the money got bigger and bigger, it was inevitable that Elvis should become less important than the product he was selling. Not music certainly, not even personality; perhaps it was merely economic growth and the GNP.

Everywhere you go you can see Elvis Presley as he might have been. At the ballpark eating a hotdog. Sitting at the bar with a flowered shirt hanging over his belt. Cruising along the interstate hauling a load of frozen vegetables. A heavy-set worn-looking man with a graying duck-tail and wide muttonchop sideburns. These are commonplaces, they don't mean anything one way or another, except that the commonplace is the one thing that escaped Elvis Presley in his numbingly long stay at the top. For Elvis there was no escape in art, since his original triumph was his very artlessness. He didn't write songs, nor did he aspire to anything more than success. Even his films were no more than a magnification of his image, a further reinforcement of the impossible perfection which transformed him, like all our public figures, from a living presence into an all-purpose, economy-rate icon.

Elvis, it could be said until just a year or two before his death, never made a foolish move. But then Elvis, once the Colonel got a hold of him, never made a public move at all. He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, the only time that passion ever entered his voice towards the end was in praise of the Lord, he was truly

A personal memoir by Peter Guralnick



transformed from rebel into the idealized boy next door. And that was what he was doomed forever to be, trapped forever in a web of packaging which he himself came to believe. And that was why neither he nor his followers (and I include myself) could bear to hear the faint laughter and jeers, could come to terms with the inevitable attrition of time.

I only saw him once, in Boston in 1971. I could have sat up front with the critics, but somehow it seemed more appropriate just to go, not to judge. We saw Elvis, then, through binoculars, surrounded by people who had grown up like us on his music, the stage lit up not by strobes but the spastic action of 1000s of flashbulbs. At the end of the concert he sang *Funny How*

Time Slips Away, and when he reached the line "Gotta go now", a universal groan went up, mollified only in part when he followed with "Don't know when, but I'll be back in your town." I don't know if it was a great performance for anything more than the ease with which he tossed it off. In many ways it seemed like a self-parody, with its karate poses and vocal posturing, but it was for me and everyone else who was there, I think, an event which would be forever memorable, and a memory which I, at any rate, never sought to violate by repetition.

In recent years, whenever I've been in Memphis, I've driven by the mansion, just one of the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims looking for a substantiation of their experience. I never saw Elvis, but Memphis friends of mine would tell stories of seeing him out on the highway late at night, just driving up and down the strip in a sleek new car, still impatient, still restless, still lonely. In the last few years the tabloids have abounded with stories to flesh out this image. Elvis the nightstalker. Elvis hearing his mother's voice in the corridors of Graceland. Elvis, troubled and overweight, giving gifts, seeking love, remaining in bed on his 40th birthday. They were unnecessary reminders of what we already knew.

His death represented the final violation of a jealously guarded privacy, as we learned of last words, last acts, past sins, both real and imagined. Even in death the waxy image was maintained, with pious tributes and a blurred open-coffin picture, showing Elvis at peace, on the front page of the *National Enquirer*. It doesn't matter, none of it matters, all that we are left with is a shared memory and a musical passion which could still catch fire at the most improbable moments. The last time I heard it was on *Shake a Hand*, like so many of Elvis' best recent songs one with which he was comfortable from the past and one with strong religious overtones. As he sings "Shake a hand, shake a hand, shake a hand if you can," there is nothing but the pure familiar melody and the impassioned engagement of the voice. It was this engagement most of all which Elvis missed at the end, but when it came—in the music anyway—it seemed to overtake him all in a rush, his voice would soar, just as it always had, and he would seize on a lyric, chew on it, in the manner of the great gospel singers worry it to death, and not let go until he had wrung every last ounce of emotion from it. That was Elvis' mark; it was his only expiation. It was what rock 'n roll first came from, and it was what doomed rock 'n roll in the end. Because you can't manufacture that feeling any more than you can manufacture the religious belief from which it originally stemmed. As Little Richard, another evangelical soul turned once again to the ministry, summed it up, "He was a rocker. I was a rocker. I'm not rockin' any more and he's not rockin' any more." ■



Elvis made fans of us all—some more than others, as this 1957 photo of two fans' room shows.



Even the army couldn't dim Elvis' fame—here he smiles for photographers before his discharge.



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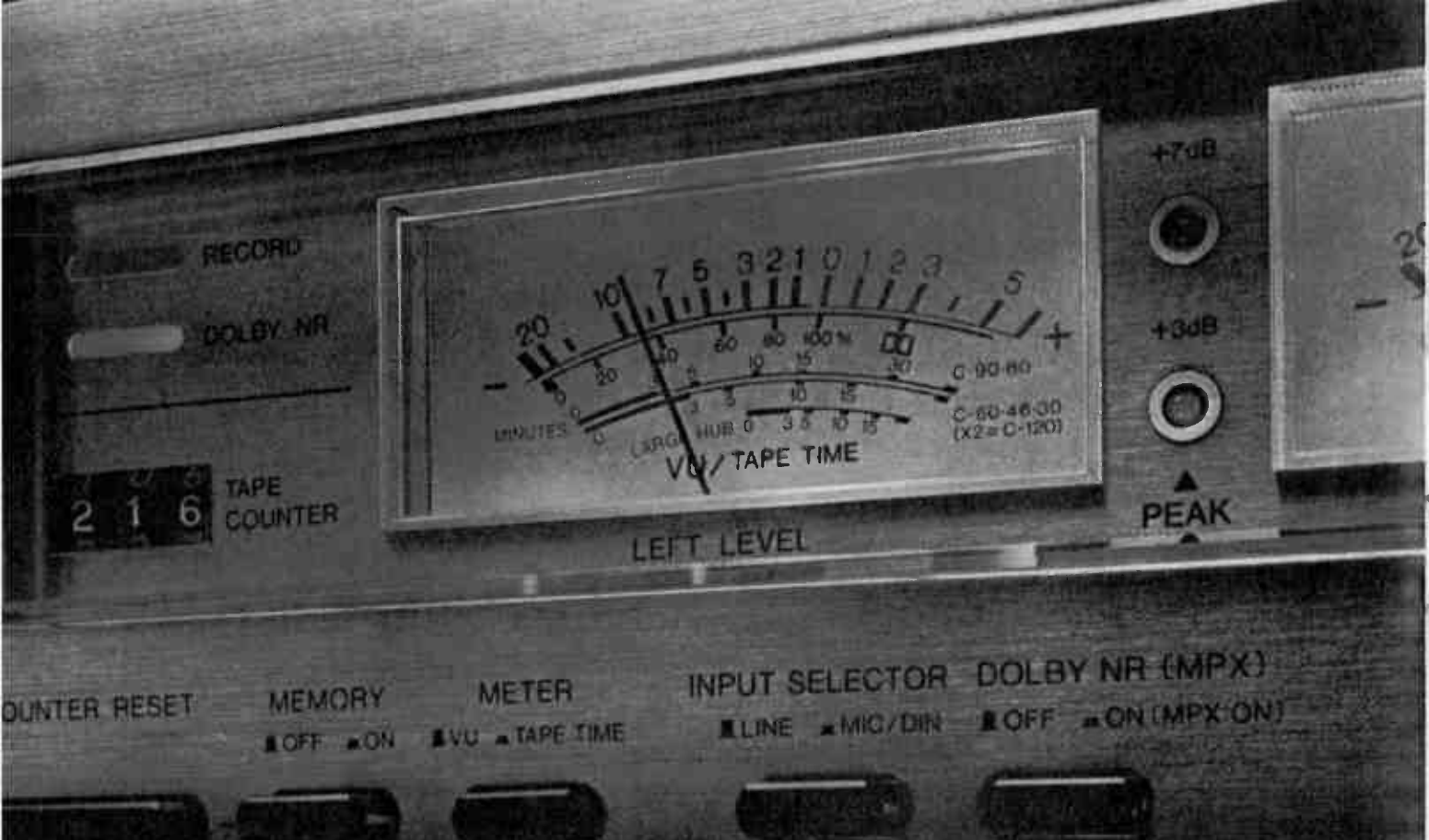
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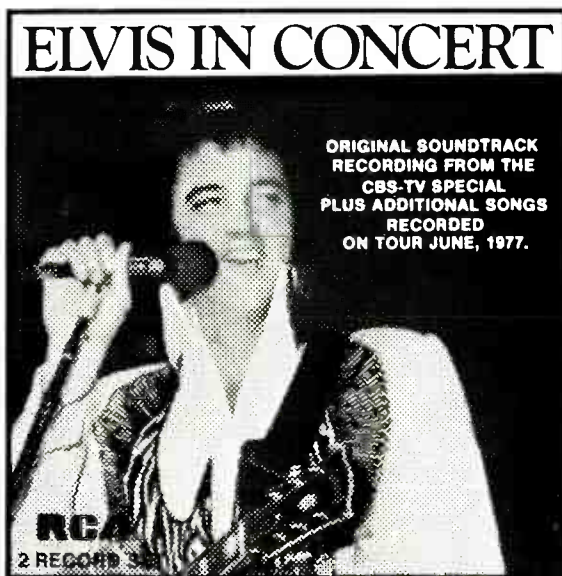


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by
JOHN
MORTHLAND

An oral history of **ELVIS** THE KING REMEMBERED

Most of all, people remember him as a shy, generous man . . .

Perhaps the people most affected by Elvis Presley's meteoric rise to fame were those closest to him—people brushed by his greatness and left to ponder the results. Writer Morthland has collected some of these reminiscences, and what emerges here is a unique portrait of Elvis Presley the man, as seen by people who were in the best position to know.



Elvis at the LA Forum in 1974.

Mrs. J.C. Grimes, Elvis' fifth grade teacher.

To most people he was just all-around good people, but I would say he was best in chapel time, because he liked to sing so well. We sang out of this book, like a church book, and each child had a turn and we just let them sing what they wanted. This was every morning. He came back to my school, in later years. It was right after his mother died, and we talked about her. He went into my class room and told the boys and girls that I had one time been his teacher.

Evan (Buzzy) Forbess, Elvis' childhood friend from Lauderdale Courts in Memphis.

There was four or five of us, regular guys, together all the time—parties and playin' and school and what have you. We had regular conversations, football, sports, the movies, record playing, the whole bit. He wasn't that shy; that's been over-exaggerated. You're talking about a 13-14-15 year old kid; everybody's a little shy then. I certainly didn't like to get up in front of people, but he didn't mind it. In fact, at parties, he was playing his guitar and the center of attraction. He was the music for our parties; we had the greatest entertainer in the world and didn't realize it. It was just his thing. One of us was a little bit better in football, one was a little bit better in baseball; his bag of tricks was playing his guitar and singing.

We listened to just whatever records was popular. It was *Harbor Lights*, country and western, Kay Starr's *Noah*, everything that was going on in the early Fifties. That thing about black music was also a myth. Dewey Phillips had his radio show and played a lot of records by black entertainers and you listened to whatever was there. It's not a case of liking or not liking; he just sang what was. There was just too much emphasis on the black music thing with him as far as I was concerned. I've heard so many people say it that sometimes I guess that's what it was, but I

never did relate it that way. It was all just Elvis to me. Elvis played every song Elvis' way.

As far as his singing ability as a kid, I'd just as soon get out in the front and listen to him then as sit inside and listen to records. There was one I used to get him to sing every time; it was the first thing he ever learned on his guitar, *Won't You Play That Simple Melody*. It gets a little rhythm beat going to it, and gave him a chance to beat on his guitar pretty good. He didn't have the wiggle and what-have-you then, but some things about Elvis never changed. Some people say the wigglin' is what made him, but when Elvis started singing, he'd effect people just with his voice and singing. And the rest didn't make no difference. When he sang *Love Me Tender*, you didn't hear nobody hollering, "Pass the popcorn." He's not wigglin' then, but he's effecting those people just as much emotionally. And then he'll follow that up with *How Great Thou Art* and have people ready to repent. Then he can go with the fast one.

So the leg-shakin' was a part of it, but Elvis' voice and his personality showin' through, that's what made Elvis. I hate to keep hearing people talking about why Elvis is who he is. I hate to hear them keep talkin' about how because of where he grew up, and because there was country music and black music . . . if that was true, every kid that grew up over there would be a superstar. What I'm saying is that Elvis is what he is because of the relationship to his parents, and his personality, his values—he grew up with right and wrong. He had this ability within himself to take this God-gifted voice that he had, and he was smart enough to turn into the type of person he was, to make that person up there on the stage somebody everybody liked to hear about. He was smart enough to want it and want it, to perform and get better. To achieve what Elvis did wasn't because of the geographic area



World Radio History

where he grew up. His accomplishment was not the neighborhood's; it was Elvis' accomplishment. That's what it amounts to.

Guy Lansky, who co-runs Lansky Brothers on Beale Street, where Elvis always bought his clothes.

We handled the ten percent of people, black or white, who loved clothes and fashion. They wanted to be seen in colors. The colors we had—black, pink, char- treuse—we went way out. Of course every- body put him down at that time, but it didn't bother him; that's the way he wanted to dress. One day he told me, "Mr. Lansky, I'm broke right now, but when I make, I'll buy you out." This kid was sure of himself, and that broke me up. Here's a kid with holes in his socks, looked real bad walking up the street, saying he'll buy me out. Then he first started getting his checks and bringing them in. That scared the hell out of me. He'd bring in \$1000 worth of checks and I said, "Oh boy, we ain't got this kind of money." But we had to dig to get it. Here he was buy- ing everybody clothes and I wasn't about to say I couldn't pay it. So I cashed his checks. Big money, big money.

R.W. Blackwood of the Blackwoods

I went to Sunday School with him, at First Assembly of God Church. He missed very few Sundays until he started having the big hits, and then the road became very demanding and you didn't see as much of him on Sunday morning. A lot of people have wondered where Elvis got all his rhythms and moves. Well, see, this church was a Pentecostal church, and when they play the music it's got lots of rhythm, and that's where Elvis became so interested in music. He was so shy, he didn't even sing in the church choir. And a lot of people were afraid of Elvis be- cause he was so different. He'd come out with the long hair and sideburns and the wildest clothes, and they didn't know how to take him. It didn't bother us in gospel music, because back then we always dressed kind of flashy anyway, so we kind of understood what he was doing.

One time I'll never forget, he tried out for my uncle's quartet, the Songfellows. Just a little quartet in Memphis that no- body ever heard of. My uncle was just starting it and they told Elvis they'd get back to him, but they wasn't sure if they could use him or not. It broke Elvis' heart; he was almost in tears. And this was when he had some records out already! He asked me several times how he could get in a gospel quartet. He was already having those southern regional hits and I didn't know what to tell him. I tried to tell him he oughta stay where he's at. Then Colonel Parker got ahold of him and the rest of it's millions of records.

James Tipler of Crown Electric, for whom Elvis drove a truck in Memphis.

He always told us the first thing he



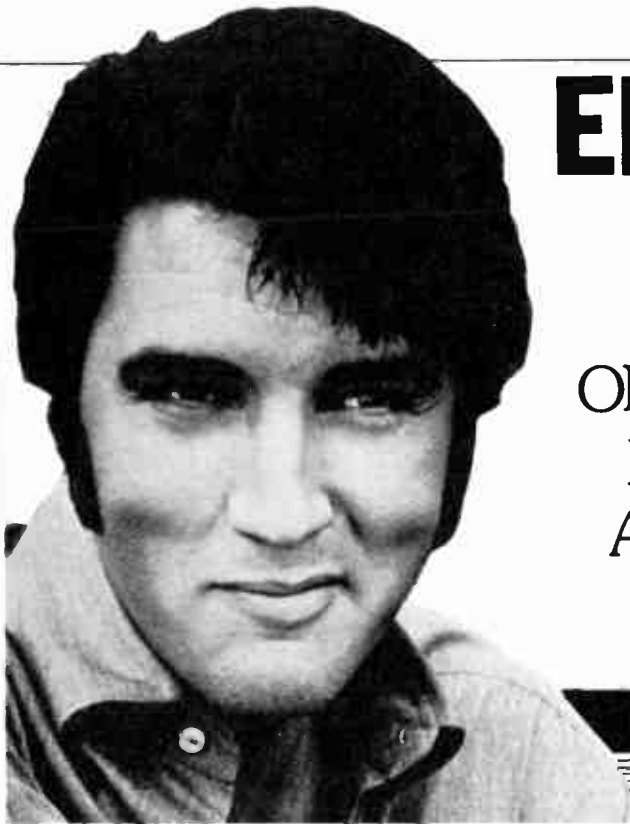


Elvis and Barbara Lang, 1957 (facing page); (above l.) socking Jeremy Slate, 1962; (above r.) early publicity; (middle r. & l.) Elvis leaves the army, 1960; (below) with hound dog, 1957.



Elvis and Jennifer Holden, "Jailhouse Rock," (left); with Debra Paget, "Love Me Tender," (below); on stage, 1956: 1974 (above).





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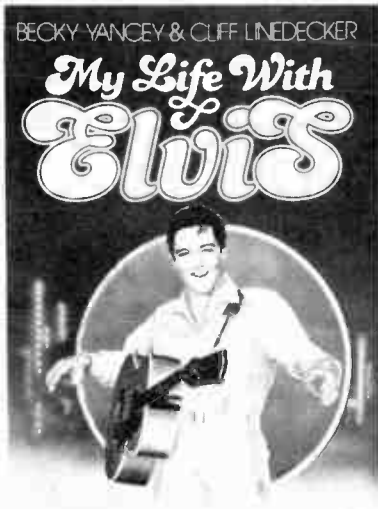
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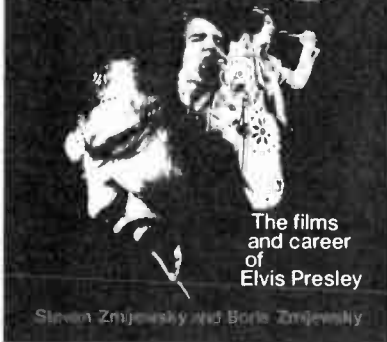


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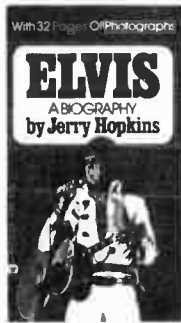
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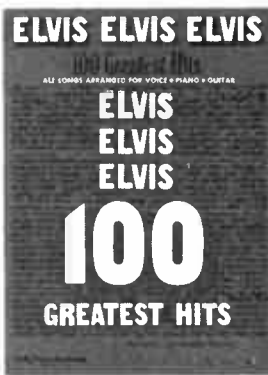
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Elvis on stage (right; far right) at the Forum in Los Angeles in 1974; (above left) Elvis and Priscilla Beaulieu exchange vows in 1967; (above right) Elvis at one of his many charity shows in Memphis, 1961; (above) the King is drafted; Elvis registers shock in 1958 when Uncle Sam calls.



One of the earliest photos of Elvis on stage (far right), taken in 1955; (above) Elvis and Col. Tom Parker as Elvis leaves the army in 1960; (below) his first homecoming in Tupelo, September 1956.





wanted to do if he could ever make enough money was he wanted to buy his mother a new home. And that was the first thing he did, when he had some money. And then he bought this pink Cadillac and he said the first night he sat up in the motel lookin' out the window at it all night long. He used to come back from Arkansas and Missouri and he had lipstick on that thing from one end to the other where different ones had kissed his car.

After he quit his job with us, he used to still drop in. He and Nick Adams, who played *The Rebel* on television, they came in one afternoon right after he'd been on the Ed Sullivan Show. Nick was with him when he went on the Sullivan show. They sat in there from about two o'clock to about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then he was supposed to pick up some movie star that was coming in. I forget her name; they used to send them down to Graceland for publicity.

Last time I saw him was a little over a year ago, in Vegas. We had a little conversation about some of the older days. He showed us his hand where he'd reached down to shake hands with the girls and they'd all clawed him, tried to pull him off the stage.

Bob Neal, Elvis' manager prior to Colonel Parker: Neal was also a local deejay and booking agent at the time.

Several days after the first record came out, Sam Phillips called me and said, "Hey, you got a show coming up, why don't you put Elvis on it?" I had a concert at the Overton Park Shell, an outdoor thing. He was quite nervous. He told me, "Oh, Mr. Neal, I'm scared to death." But when the time came he hopped right out there and hit 'em head on. He stole the show. Even after he left the stage and some of the other performers went on, people kept screaming, "We want Elvis! We want Elvis!"

He sort of developed his whole act by instinct. He would wiggle a leg or something and if the audience screamed, that stayed in the act. If he tried some other kind of motion and nothing happened, he'd drop it. The reaction in the little towns in Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and places like that was not really . . . they were taken aback. But when we went to the bigger towns like Little Rock or Jackson or out in Texas, the reaction was really tremendous from the start. Without any hype or setup of fans or anything like that, it was just amazing, because girls would go into frenzy when he would appear. The young ladies would do all the things that press agents like to see: faint, scream, pass out . . .

There was a lot of activity in the Southwest, generated from his appearances on the Louisiana Hayride. Nationally, however, it was difficult to get his records played. The country music stations felt that he was too far out and the other stations didn't know *what* it was. In that

early part of his career, the best promotion was when he appeared on a show. Before he appeared, record stores would not stock his record. The day after he appeared, they would be mobbed for records, and that spread the gospel right there. Nationally, it took the first television exposure on the Dorsey Brothers Show, but once that happened, it was *Katy Bar the Door*.

Frank Page of the Louisiana Hayride.

The Opry turned him down and told him to go back to truckdriving. We'd already heard his record down here and were playing it: *Blue Moon of Kentucky* and *That's All Right Mama*. The Hayride has always been a very experimenting type of situation, so we brought him down to give him a try. At the first show, he was mildly received—with enthusiasm, like anybody else would've been, but not wildly. So we signed him up and kept him for 18 months. He hadn't developed the wiggle yet. He was clean cut; he always was, of course, but he let his hair grow out longer later on. The snarl and hip-wiggling came later. I recognized he had something, but couldn't quite put a finger on it. Same with the audience. Intrigued is probably the word. Of course they were an older audience at that time, and as he grew in popularity the older people kinda disappeared and the younger people came in. And that was the beginning of the rock era, and no country stars were born at that time. Even people like Johnny Cash and Conway Twitty started rockin' and rollin' and lettin' their hair hang in their eyes and all those good things.

D.J. Fontana, who became Elvis' drummer at the Louisiana Hayride and stayed with him until 1969.

They came in as guest artists; he was invited to the Hayride because his first record was going good. I had heard the record, but at that time I didn't really understand what they were doing. I had done it all, worked club dates playing pop things, combos, cocktail music; then when I went to work for the Hayride I was learning the country end of it. But I heard the slappin' bass, the echo and everything, and I thought what kind of record is *that*? When they asked me if I'd help them that first night, I said, "Sure, that's what I'm here for. But I don't really know what you guys are doing. I'll just kinda stay out of the way until I get the feel of it." That slappin' bass kinds took the place of the drums, and Scotty had the echoplex guitar, and it was poppin' back. And then Elvis was playing rhythm. So I did it that first night and somehow or another it fell together. And it got better as we worked a few days together. It had been Scotty's and Bill's idea originally. They said they needed something to sorta build it up. Elvis'd dance around the stage and I played cymbal crashes and he kinda enjoyed that. So I got to learn all his

moves; we all did, because after he got really big the crowds were so noisy you couldn't hear nothing, even sitting right next to each other. So we learned just to follow his hand movements and his rear end movement, too, and even though we couldn't hear we knew where he was in the song.

He didn't act like the boss. He was like one of the guys and when we had something to do, we'd all get together and do it. He'd never say, "We'll do this my way, boys." It just wasn't like that. He had barrels of energy. We'd get off a date at night and have to drive maybe 4-500 miles and he was so keyed up he'd wanna talk all night. So we'd stop the car at a restaurant and me or Scotty or Bill, whoever's turn it was, would walk him down the road a mile or so. And then when the other two finished eating breakfast, we'd drive up ahead and pick up him and whoever was walking him. We were just trying to wear him out, so we could get some sleep. We'd walk down the road with him for miles sometimes to make him tired; it made us tired, too, but we just didn't let him know it.

Webb Pierce, who headlined Elvis' first tour.

I used to always say I brought in the people and then he entertained 'em. I asked him about the wiggle, what brought

on the wiggle. He said, "Well, it started when I was just getting going, and when I'd get on the stage I was so nervous just standing there singing that I thought I was gonna faint. And I started moving my legs and found out it relaxed me. And then the women started cuttin' up, so I just went to the extreme with it, and it worked. It also kept me relaxed."

Wanda Jackson, who first toured with Elvis in 1955.

He had the first pink Cadillac I'd ever seen, pink and black. I thought it was really strange that he could afford this Cadillac, but he couldn't sit in the air conditioning. He had it in his car, but if he was in air conditioning before he sang, it stopped him up. It was something in 1955 that just everybody couldn't have, and a lot of people would leave their windows rolled up to make people think they had it. And here Elvis had it and yet he drove all over with his windows rolled down.

Faron Young, who did an early tour with Elvis.

I'd get my hotel room and then he'd move in with me to save rent. I'd get a single, but with two beds, and he'd just mix in with me and they'd never know the difference. He didn't understand money

at the time. We'd be going from Dallas to Lubbock, Texas, and he'd give Scotty and Bill \$10 to buy gas for the car; Elvis'd be riding with somebody else or taking a bus. We'd get out of town and then they'd stop me and I'd give them another \$25 so they could get to where they were going. Later, I'd see Colonel Tom and give him the receipt and Colonel Tom would pay me back.

I never will forget when we went to Amarillo and he'd just really gotten hot. He had an old '54 Cadillac limousine, and I had bought a brand new 1957 Cadillac limousine. So we parked them out back of the auditorium, and when the teenagers came out after the show, they thought surely that brand new one was Elvis'. And they just proceeded to dismantle that sunbitch of mine; cost me—I mean, cost the insurance company—\$2700 to get that car repaired when I got it back to Nashville.

Chet Atkins, the head of RCA during most of Elvis' stay there.

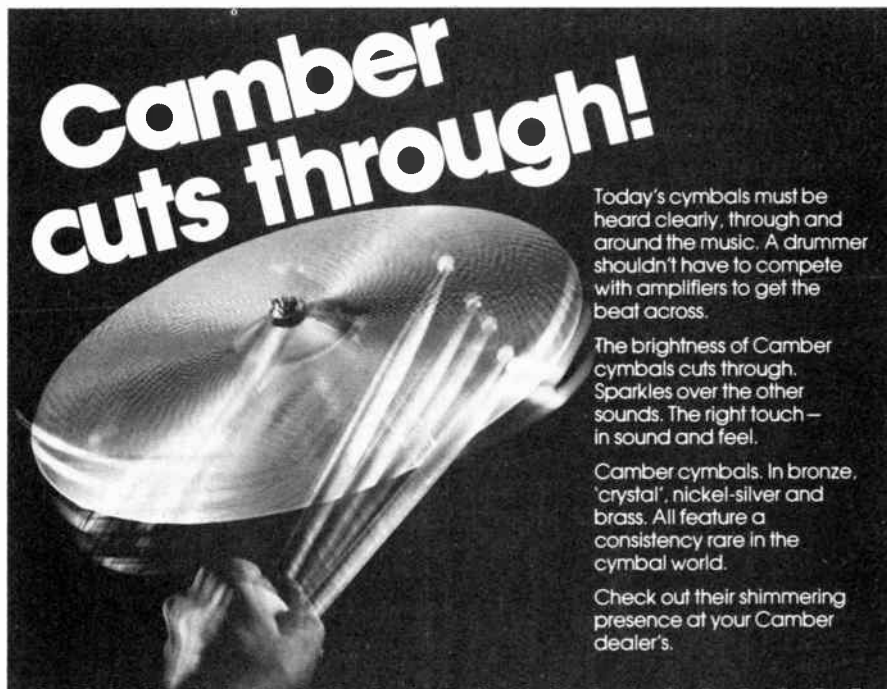
We'd been hearing all this stuff about him from out on the road, people that worked with him, how great he was and how crazy the girls were about him. So I knew he was gonna be sensational, and I think a lot of the people that worked in this part of the country knew that. Mr. (Steve) Sholes, the guy who signed him to RCA knew that. It had already happened with Elvis down here, and we knew that all we had to do was spread it.

Some people were skeptical. But the adults all hated him and the kids loved him; you can't stop something like that, there's no way. You could stop it for a while maybe back in New York, or you could at the time, but he changed all that. The music business until he came along was controlled out of the Brill Building in New York. He changed all that, or did about 50 percent of it. We were makin' a few hits here, but we still got a lot of songs out of there, and a lot of decisions were dictated from New York City. He helped make Nashville a larger recording center.

I hadn't seen Elvis since he recorded in our studio the last time, which was four-five years ago. He was dressed like a deputy, wearing a badge and gun. He was tellin' about when he played on the Grand Ole Opry and what an experience it was. They didn't like his music at the Opry, and the audience reaction was mixed. It was kinda like when Charlie Pride was on. There was kind of a gasp, and then they loved it.

Gordon Stoker, leader of the Jordanaires.

I saw him last year at the quartet convention; he came down just to watch. The audience did not know he was there. I went back to see him and he was just so warm and happy. But he was very nervous, very high pitched, keyed up, and his looks . . . he didn't have the look in the eye



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that he should have. I can't really put my finger on it, except there was such a change from the last time I'd seen him . . . he was changing too fast to last very long; a body can't survive what he was going through. He had one main problem: not eating. Food was just something he didn't do, and a body can't survive on no food. Of course he took the uppers and downers a lot, as you know. I don't like to call Elvis drug-related, I will not accept that fact, because he wasn't a constant user of anything except uppers to get him going and downers to put him to sleep. But that wasn't the problem: the problem was he didn't eat food to counteract that. He ate junk food, no good meals at all. The autopsy report said he hadn't eaten anything in two days—not a bite.

Once when we were doing a picture at Paramount, Elvis sat next to me in the cafeteria. I had a steak and when I cut into it he said, "Ooh, how do you stand that? That's just like goin' up and takin' a knife and cuttin' a hunk out of a cow. I don't know how in the world you can eat that stuff." I've seen him go all day long on three-quarters of a hamburger, a bowl of vegetable soup and a glass of milk. And he's been doing this for twenty years.

He always believed he had a weight problem. He'd go to the film rushes and see what he'd just done and he'd slide down in the seat and say, "Hey, take that off, take that off, he's too fat." And really he wasn't fat at all, but he always thought he was. The thing we always tried to tell him was, "It doesn't matter if you're fat, you'd have just as many fans, they'd love you regardless of what you do." We told him once he'd be just as big if he walked onstage and burped into the microphone. Would you believe he did that one time on one of his appearances? We all laughed, and the audience didn't know what we were laughing at; they just screamed and hollered, and this tickled us even more.

There's days you could talk about Elvis. There's no way to describe the excitement of being onstage with Elvis Presley. The joy and thrill of seeing him, working with him, and being with him. We've worked with everybody, and he's the only artist we ever worked with who'd walk into the studio with a big smile on his face and go around to each person—each person—and shake hands and say some little greeting. And on the movie sets, the same way. He did not exclude anyone.

Yvonne Craig, who played the lead opposite Elvis on *Kissing Cousins* and also had a part in *It Happened at the World's Fair*.

The funny thing was he evoked all sorts of strange maternal instincts. One time I went up to his house and watched movies, and at one point we went back to "his quarters" and watched television. And I said to him, "You know, I hate to tell this to you but you must be careful in Hollywood, because there are a lot of people you cannot trust and they could say any-

(Continued on page 79)

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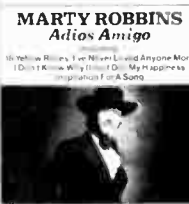
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Barbie Benton	KZ 34740		ZA		Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs	CS 8158		18C 00116	
CASH, JOHNNY Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	CS 9478		18C 161 00264		More Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs	CS 8272			
At Folsom Prison	CS 9639		18C 161 00404		More Greatest Hits	CS 8435			
At San Quentin	CS 9827		18C 161 00674		Marty's Greatest Hits	CS 8639		18C 00096	
COE, DAVID ALLAN Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy	KC 32942		CA CT		Devil Woman	CS 8718			
Once Upon A Rhyme	KC 33085		CA CT		I Walk Alone	CS 9725			
Longhaired Redneck	KC 33916		CA CT		My Woman, My Woman, My Wife	CS 9978		18C 00864	
David Allan Coe Rides Again	KC 34310		CA CT		Greatest Hits, Volume III	C 30571		18C	
DAVIS, MAC Song Painter	CS 9969		18C 00914		Have I Told You Lately That I Love You	C 32586			
Mac Davis	C 32206		18C		STATLER BROTHERS Flowers on the Wall	CS 9249			
DUNCAN, JOHNNY The Best Of	KC 34243		CA CT		Sing the Big Hits	CS 9519			
Johnny Duncan	KC 34442		CA CT		Oh Happy Day	CS 9878		18C 09878	
GILLEY, MICKEY (Playboy) Room Full Of Roses	KZ 34736		ZA ZT		WYNETTE, TAMMY Till I Can Make It On My Own	KE 34075		EA ET	
City Lights	KZ 34737		ZA ZT		You And Me	KE 34289		EA ET	
Mickey's Movin' On	KZ 34739		ZA ZT		Let's Get Together	KE 34694		EA ET	
Overnight Sensation	KZ 34742		ZA ZT		Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad	BN 26305		18E 10042	
Gilley's Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	KZ 34743		ZA ZT		D-I-V-O-R-C-E	BN 26392		18E 10124	
Gilley's Smokin'	KZ 34749		ZA ZT		Greatest Hits	BN 26486		18E 10230	
First Class	KZ 34776		ZA ZT		Greatest Hits, Volume II	E 30733		18E	
JONES, GEORGE All-Time Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	KE 34692		EA ET		WYNETTE & JONES Golden Ring	KE 34291		EA ET	
Nothing Ever Hurt Me (Half As Much As Losing You)	E 32412		18E		* Cassette Available for the First Time. ■ NOT AVAILABLE				
The Grand Tour	E 33083		18E		<p>SEND TO: King Karol c/o Country Music Magazine 475 Park Avenue South New York, N.Y. 10016</p> 				
NELSON, WILLIE Red Headed Stranger	KC 33482		CA CT		Name _____				
The Sound In Your Mind	KC 34092		CA CT		Address _____				
The Troublemaker	KC 34112		CA CT		City _____ State _____ Zip _____				
To Lefty From Willie	KC 34695		CA CT		I have checked my selections as follows:				
PAYCHECK, JOHNNY Greatest Hits	KE 33091		EA ET		_____ LP's at \$4.98				
Slide Off Of Your Satin Sheets	KE 34693		EA ET		_____ LP's at \$4.98				
PRICE, RAY She's Got To Be A Saint	KC 32033		CA CT		_____ Tapes at \$5.98				
You're The Best Thing That Ever Happened	KC 32777		CA		_____ Tapes at \$5.98				
If You Ever Change Your Mind	KC 33560		CA		Total _____				
The Best Of	KC 34160		CA CT		N.Y. State Resident add Sales Tax				
Help Me	KC 34710		CA CT		Add for postage and handling				\$1.00
Greatest Hits	CS 8866		18C 00094		I enclose my check / money order for				



"But there's just no such thing as being an island unto yourself."

SUNSET

An interview with Sam Phillips
by Walter Dawson

"He needed help from a standpoint of forgetting the damn money, forgetting the damn fame. I'm not putting anybody down, but I'm sure that after a long time Elvis just felt like he didn't know how to do that."

Sam Phillips, the man who first worked with Elvis Presley in the studio and the one who helped guide him into becoming the rock and roll legend he was, reminisced about his relationship with Presley as a man and an artist.

Part of the problem with Presley's life, Sam feels, was that he became trapped in a life-style that kept him on a pedestal with the public, but also kept him out of touch.

"I really wish more people could've known him as a person. I got to know where he was coming from, and the guy was a much, much deeper and much more of a spiritual man than a lot of us may have thought."

Presley, Sam said, seemed uncomfortable with the way he was closed off from the pleasures of everyday life.

"I talked to his doctor a few years back. Elvis then was having trouble sleeping, and I said, this man, bless his heart, needs more than anybody I've ever seen in my life to, at least in his own hometown, throw away the whole damn book and do what he damn well pleases. Let him be seen on the streets. It may take awhile and a few guards at first. But I feel as fervently as I feel anything that he would be alive today if that had happened. . . . You know, I think it's entirely possible to die of a broken heart . . . and I think that was a contributing factor."

Life, of course, wasn't always so reclusive for Elvis. In the mid-1950s when he first walked into the Phillips studio, Presley was a shy young truck driver who just loved to sing. He walked in, supposedly to cut a record for his mother's birthday present, and Phillips' secretary made a note of his name. A few months later, Phillips

called him in and began to work with him.

"There was no question in my mind—my business was to hear talent, no matter what stage of polish it was in. Of course, none of us knew he was going to be that big, but the minute I heard the guy sing—it was an Ink Spots thing—he had a unique voice. Now there's very few things I'm gonna say are unique, that there's nothing else like them.

"I called (guitarist) Scotty (Moore) and told him to get hold of (bass player) Bill (Black). And I said, 'Now, I've got a young man and he's different.' I told him and Bill to go by and work with Elvis a little. I said, 'Now, he's really nervous and timid and extremely polite.'

"And it took us awhile; we worked off and on for about five to six months. I knew there were a lot of things we could've cut, but they weren't different. It was up to me to see the uniqueness of his talent and to go hopefully, in the right direction."

Elvis, at that time, obviously knew he had talent, Sam said, but his modesty was overwhelmingly genuine.

"You remember Clyde McPhatter? Elvis thought Clyde McPhatter had one of the greatest voices in the world. We were going somewhere one time—down to the Louisiana Hay Ride or to Nashville—and we were singing in the car. Well, Bill Black couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, and Scotty was worse. So Elvis and I were the only good singers in the car. But we were talking about Clyde McPhatter, and he said, 'You know, if I had a voice like that man, I'd never want for another thing.'

"But Elvis knew he had talent. I think he just had a little trouble gaining confidence."

It was while working with Phillips, Black and Moore that Presley evolved his style of rock and roll, but he also picked up something else at the Sun Records studio—a love for piano.

"He loved to sing and always wanted to play guitar real good—of course, he never did learn to play guitar that good—and he wanted to play piano like Jerry Lee Lewis. Oh, he loved Jerry Lee's playing, thought it was unbelievable.

"He didn't envy Jerry Lee or anything, but he did sit down and learn piano. And I think it was because he loved to hear Jerry Lee play so much. Man, he loved to play the old spiritual licks."

In his early career years, even after he left Sun for RCA-Victor Records and became the phenomenon of the 1950s, Presley still liked to go back to the Sun studio or Phillips' house to sit and talk, one on one.

"He'd come by to see me, totally informally, on every occasion unannounced, and we'd go off together and sit and talk philosophy. He called in '68 from Vegas (when Elvis was preparing to make his long-awaited return to live appearances) and he says, 'Mr. Phillips, I just got to have you come out. I'm scared to death. I got to have somebody I know, some friends, in the audience.'

"I think Elvis was truly scared of being hurt, probably more than any person I know."

Why then would a person of such sensitivity allow himself to be wrapped in a social cocoon, cut off from all but his closest friends?

"It's a vicious cycle. You start out and you're so proud of your success and you say, 'God, I'll do anything to stay on top.' And then you find yourself saying, 'Well, gosh, I know it's got to be over before too long and I've got to keep up this image. I'm very mortal, but I can't let the people know I'm mortal.'

"But there's just no such thing as being an island unto yourself." ■

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Records

It's hard to believe that in the twenty-three years of Elvis's career, his records went from monaural 78s to stereo 45s to quadrophonic albums, from Sam Phillips' single-track mono tape recorder at the tiny Sun studio to the sleek 24-track units of RCA. Most of the musical legacy he left behind is still available (though at this writing many record bins lay empty), but it's uncertain how much, if any, unissued material remains in the RCA vaults. No matter; Elvis's released works are enough to satisfy anyone, and it's little wonder many record buffs devote their energies to him alone. Space considerations dictate that I stick to the major singles and albums, dealing only generally with less representative areas of his music such as movie soundtracks.

Elvis's recording career developed in four distinct stages. At times he evolved and improved with each succeeding release; at others he vacillated wildly between uninspired mediocrity and the brilliant, compelling music everyone knew he had in him. By looking at each of these periods, Elvis the recording artist and musician can be better understood.

Phase 1: Sun, 1954-1955

This single year was the most important of all, for it gave both the music industry and Elvis himself an idea of just what he could do. Conventional wisdom has it that on the evening of July 5, 1954, Elvis,

clowning with Arthur Crudup's *That's All Right (Mama)* in the Sun studio, suddenly, dramatically, fused blues and country to create rockabilly. Not quite. What he'd stumbled upon had been around country music since the forties, a boogie-woogie tinged style played by everyone from the Maddox Brothers and Rose to Tennessee Ernie Ford.

Elvis may have been the only one in America at the time who could break through successfully with this music. He

didn't wear a cowboy outfit and had the voice, good looks and unbridled sexuality that made it easy to steal a show from a hard-country headliner, as he once did from Ferlin Husky.

After the July, 1954, release of *That's All Right (Mama)/Blue Moon of Kentucky* (Sun 209), the Presley rockabilly style developed quickly. Backed by Scotty Moore's electric guitar, Bill Black's bass and his own Martin acoustic, Elvis was unsure at first and sang

self-consciously around the other musicians. But by May of 1955, after nearly a year of stage and studio experience, he'd gained plenty of confidence as *Baby, Let's Play House* (Sun 217) reveals and in July, when he cut *Tryin' To Get To You*, (a Sun outtake later released on RCA) his voice took on an almost maniacal desperation. He was singing *against* his sidemen, pushing them far into the background. The band, too, had progressed. With D.J. Fontana's drums added, Bill Black was freed from carrying the beat. No longer were they just "a little rhythm," as Phillips once called them, but a cohesive, functioning unit. RCA was watching all of this activity from the sidelines and finally ended this formative phase by buying Elvis's Sun contract in the fall of 1955. They also got the Sun masters, now available as *The Sun Sessions* (APMI-1675), an excellent, well-annotated package.

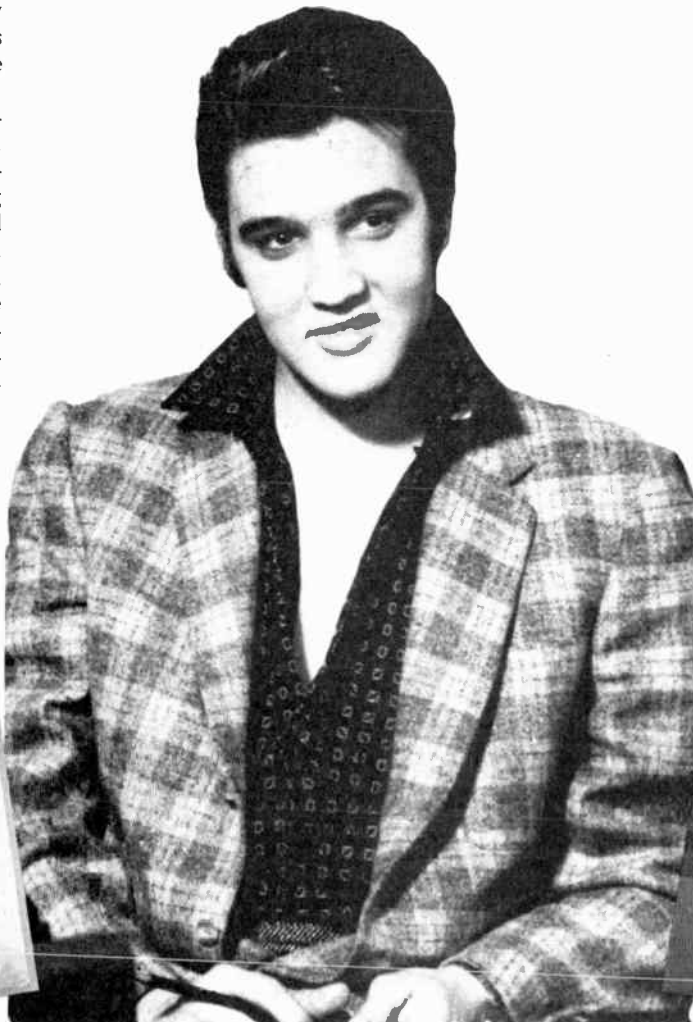
Phase 1: (To order see page 66) *The Sun Sessions* (LP APMI-1675 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-1675 \$6.98)

Phase 2: RCA, 1956-1958

Steve Sholes, Victor's Nashville A&R chief, risked his job by signing Elvis, but his track record and visionary concept of what he'd bought helped him ride out the initial snickering. When he finally got Elvis and band into RCA's Nashville studio in January 1956, he made a few changes. Scotty's stinging lead guitar was rightly left

The King On Record

by RICH KIENZLE



Records

alone, but added were Chet Atkins, the voices of the Jordanaires and pianist Floyd Cramer, whose ability to hit the right notes at exactly the right time as he did on *Heartbreak Hotel*, was a valuable asset. The Sun sound had been augmented out of existence. Though *Heartbreak Hotel* recalled the sparseness of the Sun sides, *Hound Dog* and *Don't Be Cruel* were something else. All hell was breaking loose and like it or hate it, no one could ignore it. But Sholes also knew the value of restraint. *Love Me Tender*, featured only Elvis, a rhythm guitar and the Jordanaires; just one more instrument would have been too much.

His first two albums, *Elvis Presley* (LSP-1254) and *Elvis* (LSP-1382), both released in 1956, featured the new style



filtered through Carl Perkins's *Blue Suede Shoes*, Little Richard's *Reddy Teddy*, *Rip It Up* and *Tutti Fruitti* along with country favorites like *Old Shep*, the Red Foley hit and a few Sun leftovers. In mid-1957 his first movie soundtrack LP, *Loving You* (LSP-1515) was issued and also followed a country boogie/rockabilly sound. While his fourth album was more subdued, it quickly became his most controversial. *Elvis' Christmas Album* (CAS-



2428) was a tasteful blend of secular and sacred holiday material, but one that upset the anti-Elvis fringe element enough to get it banned in most radio markets. Enough flak about "bad taste" flew to get one Oregon deejay who played a bit of it fired.

In March of 1958 after filming *King Creole*, Elvis left for the Army, the same month RCA introduced Elvis' *Golden Records* (LSP-1707), the first of many greatest hits sets. Included were all the number one songs from 1956 through fall, 1957 and a few lesser hits along with an unusually lucid written account of each recording date.

Two 1959 albums, *For LP Fans Only* (LSP-1990) and *A Date With Elvis* (LSP-2011) provided interesting contrasts by mixing the early Sun sides with more recent covers of R&B hits like *Lawdy, Miss Clawdy*, *Shake, Rattle and Roll* and songs from *Love Me Tender* and *Jailhouse Rock*. Late that year came *Elvis' Golden Records Vol. 2* (LSP-2075), featuring a striking cover shot, multiplied sixteen times of Elvis in his legendary gold lame suit and ten hits from 1958-59.

Phase 2: (To order see page 66)
Elvis Presley (LP LSP-1254 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-0382 \$6.98)
Elvis (LP LSP-1382 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-0383 \$6.98)

Loving You (LP LSP-1515 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-0384 \$6.98)
Elvis Christmas Album (LP CAS-2428 \$2.98) (8TK C8S-9001 \$3.98)
Elvis Golden Records (LP LSP-1707 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1244 \$6.98)

For LP Fans Only (LP LSP-1990 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-0386 \$6.98)

A Date With Elvis (LP LSP-2011 \$5.98) (8TK APSI-0387 \$6.98)

Elvis Golden Records Vol. 2 (LP LSP-2075 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-2093 \$6.98)

Phase 3: 1960-1968

For all the flap his early records caused, this was in some ways Elvis's most controversial period. Many Presleywatchers in both the music industry and the press saw him moving to-



ward a safe, easy listening sound during these eight years when he was preoccupied with his movie career. Many of his recordings, particularly *A Mess of Blues* and *Good Luck Charm*, from 1960 and '62 respectively, prove otherwise. But Elvis did widen his musical horizons a bit. In fact he always loved the very mainstream pop music he rode roughshod over in 1956. His moves in this direction were probably his own, though whether or not he was always successful is a matter of opinion. In any case it increased his acceptance among older audiences; there was now something for everybody (the title of one 1961 album) and it worked, as evidenced by the cross-section of Americans who mourned his death.

His first few days as a civilian in March 1960, Elvis entered RCA's Nashville studio to record *Elvis Is Back!* (LSP-



2231). There was little hint of a softer sound here, though, and plenty of rock and blues like *Reconsider Baby*. The first changes came in July with the release of *It's Now or Never*, a lush ballad based on *O Sole Mio* and in November with the old Al Jolson hit *Are You Lonesome Tonight*. Both topped the charts.

Gospel was always a perva-

sive influence on Elvis since he and his parents sang at the Assembly of God church in Tupelo. He'd sung *Peace In the Valley* on his last Ed Sullivan gig, warmed up for recording sessions with spirituals and cut an EP in 1957, *Peace In the Valley* (EPA-4054) that sold well. Finally, in 1960, he explored these roots deeper with *His Hand In Mine* (ANLI-1319),



aided by the Jordanaires, and the results were so successful it's easy to see why he nearly joined a Blackwood Brothers spinoff group as a kid. His next release, a more secular one, was *Something For Everybody* (LSP-2370), out in mid-1961, featuring one side of soft ballads like *Sentimental Me* balanced by *I'm Comin' Home* and six other rockers.

Phase 3: (To order see page 66)
Elvis Is Back (LP LSP-2231 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1135 \$6.98)
His Hand In Mine (LP ANLI-1319 \$5.98) (8TK ANLI-1319 \$6.98)

Something For Everybody (LP LSP-2370 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1137 \$6.98)

The Movie Music

In many ways, Elvis was a victim of his movies and the accompanying music, and even some fans consider this his low point artistically though iron-

Records

ically the 1961 *Blue Hawaii* soundtrack (LSP-2426) has up to now been his top selling LP. For years critics have written that the songs, like the plots themselves, were childish and trite. In all fairness, even the best movie soundtracks are secondary to the plot itself, and out of thousands of movie and musical comedy scores, only a handful of songs ever become lasting favorites. Elvis didn't pick the songs; they were written for the films on a deadline, but though he did his best with them, that often wasn't enough. Unlike such older songs as *Jailhouse Rock* and *Loving You*, both written with Elvis in mind, even Bing Crosby could have handled most of the later ones.

Still, the best were quite good, including the songs from *Jailhouse Rock*, *Loving You*, and *King Creole* along with *Follow That Dream*, *Can't Help Falling In Love*, *One Broken Heart For Sale*, *Return To Sender*, *Let Yourself Go* and *A Little Less Conversation*, among others.

His single releases during this time were far better, though overshadowed by the numerous changes in pop music. He

did well with *Good Luck Charm* and *Devil In Disguise*, both of which rocked like mad and were featured on Elvis' *Gold Records Vol. 3* (LSP-2765), issued in fall, 1963. The Beatles had a headlock on the charts throughout 1964, yet in the spring of 1965, he was holding



the number three spot with, of all things, *Crying In The Chapel*. It had been cut by Elvis and the Jordanaires in the late fifties and finally released after much delay. That summer RCA released *Elvis For Everyone* (LSP-3450), a pistache of movie songs along with *Your Cheatin' Heart* and *When It Rains It Really Pours*, and excellent blues written by Sun blues artist Billy "The Kid" Emerson. The soundtrack albums

continued and now featured "bonus songs," since the film music couldn't always fill an entire LP. Some, including Jerry Reed's *Guitar Man*, showed Elvis's throbbing rockabilly raunch had, if anything, improved with age.

The Movie Music: (To order see page 66)

Blue Hawaii (LP LSP-2426 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1019 \$6.98)

Elvis' Gold Records Vol. 3 (LP LSP-2765 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1057 \$6.98)

Elvis For Everyone (LP LSP-3450 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1078 \$6.98)

Phase 4: 1968-1977

The movies had stigmatized him, and many industry people weren't sure about Elvis anymore. Fortunately, when planning began for his first TV show, a holiday special on NBC, the producers did what the movie men wouldn't: they tailored everything to Elvis instead of the opposite and even prevailed over Colonel Parker, who wanted 90 minutes of Christmas carols. The music looked back to the Sun days with help from Scotty and D.J., to the downhome blues and spirituals he grew up with and

reprise many old hits, pulling apart the Presley persona, examining each piece and reassembling it stronger than ever. The soundtrack, *Elvis* (LPM-4088), reflects all this, as he sat around swapping old blues



and clowning much like he probably did at Sun. The production numbers were gutsier than in the movies and Elvis was singing as if he'd just rediscovered his voice. In a way, he had.

He hadn't had this kind of momentum since 1956, and was quick to follow it up with his first Memphis session in 14 years. The results of these sessions, filling two albums, *From Elvis In Memphis* (LSP-4155) and *Back In Memphis* (LSP-4429) were gratifying, the material heavy on country-politan like Vern Stovall's *Long Black Limousine*, *It Keeps Right On A-Hurtin'*, Eddie Rabbitt's *Inherit The Wind*, Net Miller's *From a Jack To a King* and Mac Davis' *In The Ghetto*, a top five hit in April of 1969.

The earliest Vegas shows stuck to simple arrangements of Elvis classics as reflected on *From Memphis To Vegas* (LSP



6020—also paired with *Back In Memphis*). He ripped through *Blue Suede Shoes*, a tooth-grinding performance of *I*

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MC-12

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MC-12

Records

Can't Stop Loving You and a note-for-note recreation of the Sun version of *Mystery Train*, paired with *Tiger Man*. **On Stage: February, 1970** (LSP-4362) was a bit more pop-oriented, but followed the same basic pattern. In late 1970 came a massive package, **Worldwide Gold Award Hits, Vol. 1** (LPM-6041) that encompassed the top sellers from 1956 to 1970 in glorious monaural. That was a blessing, since the earlier songs suffered from the echo excesses of reprocessed stereo.

His return to the singles charts seemed solid. In August of '69 he'd had his first number one hit since 1962, the excellent *Suspicious Minds* and followed up with Mac Davis' *Don't Cry Daddy* which hit number six in November. The brilliant *Kentucky Rain*, written by Eddie Rabbit, released in January of 1970 was a radical departure, a short story en-

hanced by Elvis's controlled vocal and creative arranging. Though it was less successful, it remains one of his finest later tunes. In 1971, came his best, most consistent album of all: *Elvis Country* (LSP-4460)



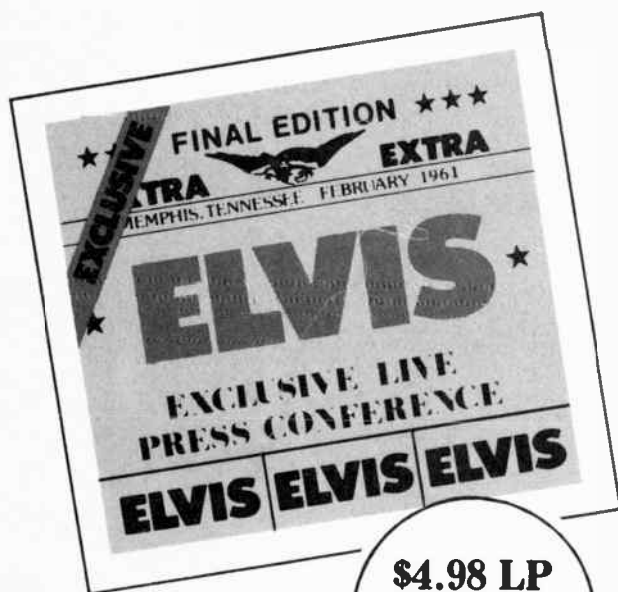
focused on old and new country standards with inventive twists like a hard rock arrangement of *Faded Love*, and Elvis singing Bill Monroe's *Little Cabin On The Hill* with a neo-bluegrass band that recalled the

spirit of the original. He turned the goodtime feel of *Whole Lotta Shakin'* into a dead serious snarl that made every "shake, baby, shake" a direct order, punctuated by slide guitar.

Amazingly, his comeback was made without sacrificing any of his vocal power, and everyone waited to see what he'd do next. They were disappointed, for by 1972 he was slipping into a musical rut again and filling up his albums with unimaginative covers of everyone else's hits. He could do well with simple, basic songs like *Polk Salad Annie* and *Proud Mary*, but flagged badly when the material was as lightweight as *Gentle On My Mind*, and *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me*. They just didn't work well with Elvis's voice or his forceful delivery and it's a shame he didn't draw on the work of writers like Eddie Rabbit and *Burnin' Love* composer

Dennis Linde, who could custom-tailor their songs to fit him. Yet nobody gave up on him—even the weakest albums boasted at least one song that worked so well everything else was irrelevant. Good examples were *Today* (APLI-1039), where his reading of Red Foley's *Shake A Hand* stood head and shoulders above everything else, and his more recent *Promised Land* (APK1-0873) dominated by a pumping title song, written by Chuck Berry in the fifties and a minor hit for Elvis two years ago.

There were also a number of live albums, including the 1972 *Madison Square Garden* (LSP-4776) concert, which showed the development of his live show with the addition of good material like Shotgun Willie's *Funny How Time Slips away* and junk like *The Impossible Dream*. *Aloha From Hawaii*, (VPSX-6089) was almost identical except for seven new songs



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and a gutty interpretation of James Taylor's *Steamroller Blues Having Fun With Elvis On Stage*, (CPMI-0818), originally a bootleg, consisted of his one-liners between songs and no music. The greatest hits sets took a different tack with *A Legendary Performer Vol. 1* (CPL1-0341) and 2 (CPL1-1349) which featured unissued

ELVIS



material from the '68 TV show, from EPs and a few selected hits in a package complete with a book showing artifacts from the earliest days with RCA.

Elvis recorded very little during his final months, even cancelling sessions occasionally. But the releases continued. *Welcome To My World* (APLI-2274) featured numerous left-over live cuts, the best being *I*

Can't Stop Loving You, the Don Gibson hit and *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*, arranged like B.J. Thomas's mid-sixties version. *Moody Blue* (AFL-2428) (which may surpass *Blue Hawaii* as top-selling LP) was equally inconsistent, with failures in *Let Me Be There* and *If You Love Me (Let Me Know)*. But there was also the ferocious *Way Down* and Johnny Ace's *Pledging My Love*, which show that despite his rumored health problems he could still whip-lash his voice against a driving accompaniment and win, just like 1956. Ironically, the day Elvis died, *Way Down* became his first number one hit in nine years.

Phase 4: (To order see page 66) *Elvis TV Special* (LP LPM-4088 \$5.98) (8TK P8S-1391 \$6.98)

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The Bootlegs

There are Elvis fans and there are *Elvis fans*; the latter group wants anything they can get their hands on he recorded—live tapes, rare interviews and all the rest. A thriving bootleg record market has developed

to serve them by issuing stuff available nowhere else, some with excellent sound, some wretched. It began in 1970 with *Please Release Me*, which featured movie songs never commercially released and part of his 1960 Frank Sinatra TV spot. *The Hillbilly Cat*, of Canadian origin, was recorded on the sly at a 1970 Vegas show. Only a couple hundred copies were pressed, making it the rarest boot of all, and it inspired a number of other live-performance bootlegs. Others were interview oriented, like *Elvis Talks Back* while *Got A Lotta Livin' To Do* (Pirate 101) had the musical segments of *Loving You* and *Jailhouse Rock*, with relevant dialogue taped from the films. *Good Rockin' Tonight* (Bobcat 100) featured alternate takes of Sun selections with between-song chatter and is now impossible to find. The '68 *Comeback* (Memphis 101) consists of outtakes from the TV special. Still, the best bootlegs of all are *The Dorsey Shows* (Golden Archives 100) with his earliest TV appearances and *From the Waist Up* (CA-150) a newer set of all the 1956-57 Ed Sullivan shows with a great color cover photo of Elvis playing a honky-tonk during the Sun days. Also known to exist are tapes of his Louisiana Hayride spots including one of him singing Lefty Frizzell's *Always Late*, along with his 1961 Hawaii benefit show, his Steve Allen and Milton Berle TV shows and the "Million Dollar Quartet" session featuring Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins jamming on six gospel songs. It's unknown if any of this material will be issued to anyone.

Ultimately, Elvis's recordings reflect the humanity of the man himself: some slips, many more accomplishments. In death they've become the national resource he himself was in life: American music's Declaration of Independence, always there for inspiration. ■

The Bootlegs (Not Available Through Country Music Magazine)

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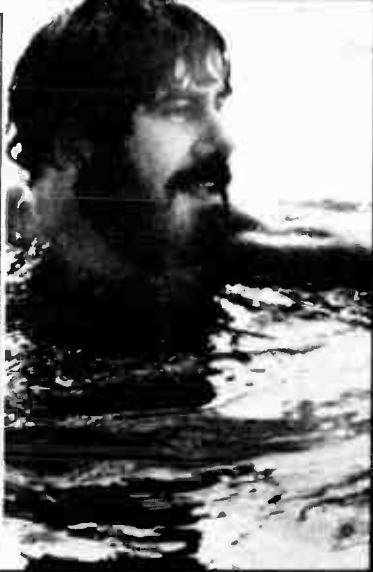
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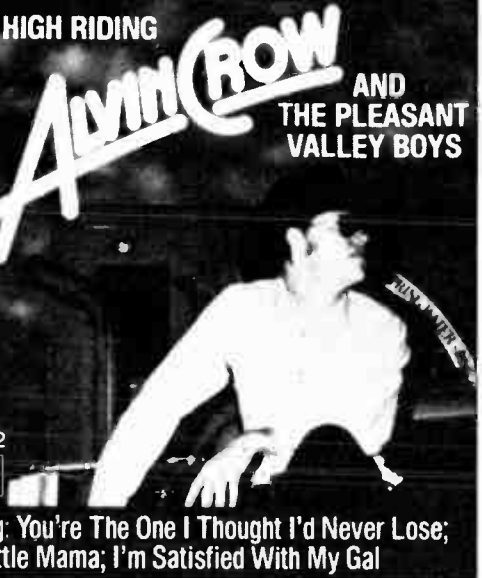
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by Hans Fantel

AUDIO

Good Sound For Christmas

If there ever was a special season for music, it's Christmas. So it's hardly surprising that sound equipment seems to be right at the top of nearly everybody's Christmas list. Anyway, my mail has been piling up, and most of the letters ask the same question: What's a good buy?

There's no simple answer to that. There are lots of good buys. (Sure enough, there are also plenty of duds—but we'll help you steer clear of those). The trick is to find out just what's a good buy *for you*—and that depends on one small personal item: how much money you have to spend.

With good sound systems ranging from a couple of hundred bucks all the way up into the four-figure stratosphere, you have to peg your own stereo budget somewhere between those extremes. Once you have decided how much cash you can lay out, the choice gets a lot easier.

Fortunately, there is plenty of good equipment in every price range, and by picking the best designs in each price class,

you can get good value for your money regardless of the total amount you spend. That's why I listed some of the outstanding current models in three different price groups—Economy Class, Golden Medium, and Strictly DeLuxe—to serve as a kind of Christmas shopping guide. Of course, I couldn't possibly list all the good components available, but the choice hasn't been arbitrary. I tried to single out those models that offer exceptional dollar value—where the level of performance exceeds the norm for its price class.

Economy Class

The heart of any stereo system is the amplifier. Most people also want a tuner so they can listen to the radio on their rig, and the cheapest way to get both is to buy them combined in a single unit called a "receiver." A good receiver, even in economy class, isn't exactly cheap. To get decent sound—clean in the highs and with enough power to give the bass some wallop—you'll have to spend around \$200.

Here are some of my suggestions in this group:

Sony's STR-1800 puts out 12 watts per channel at 0.8% harmonic distortion (which is very clean sound) and sells for \$180. The Technics SA-5060 has the same power rating and just an imperceptible bit more distortion (0.9%), which for all practical purposes is fine indeed, and lists at \$170. With Kenwood's KDR-2600 receiver you get a bit more power at the same distortion level, and the price tag is \$190.

If you like your music loud and your bass on the hefty side, it may be worthwhile for you to spend a little more money and get a receiver with a bit more muscle. Standouts in a group delivering 25 watts per channel are the Technics SA-5160 (\$230), the Akai AA 1125 (\$240), and the Sansui G-2000 (\$230). The distortion figures on these receivers are even lower, typically about 0.5% or less.

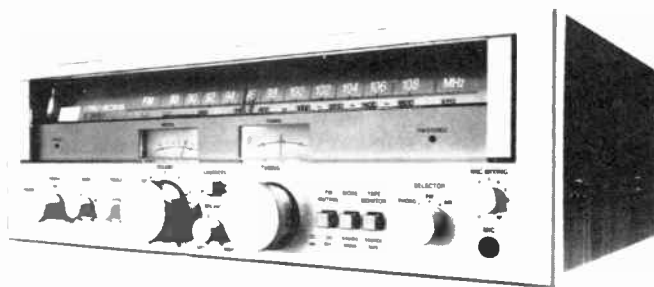
Of course, you'll need a pair of speakers



Pioneer SX-950



JVC KD-35



Sansui G-2000



Sony STR-6800SD

to go with these receivers. Fortunately, a number of recent low-cost designs have very fine sound. If they lack anything at all, it is only the very lowest bass notes, which naturally can be reproduced only by larger speakers. But their overall balance is so smooth that only a very few super-critical listeners are likely to miss those rock-bottom lows. My own favorites in this group of speakers include the **Advent/3** (\$50), the **Acoustic Research AR 18** (\$65) the **BIC-Venturi Formula 1** (\$75) and the **Altec Model a** (\$99).

Among turntables in the economy group, you'll get remarkably smooth and rumble-free performance from **JVC's SL-A20** (\$100), **Pioneer's PL-115D** (\$125), and **Technics' SL-23** (\$130). They all come with automatic stop at the end of the record and a cueing-device for setting the arm down gently on the first groove. If you prefer an automatic changer, you might consider the **BIC 940** (\$110) or the **Dual 1237** (\$135). For a reliable cassette deck to add to your economy rig, you get an excellent bargain in **Fisher's CD-4020**, which sells for \$170.

All put together, components in this "economy group" will give you the kind of sound for which you don't have to make any excuses and which is a lasting joy.

Golden Medium

Receivers in this group are a lot more powerful, able to put out convincing bass even in a large room and at high volume. You'll hear what I mean when you take a listen to the **Pioneer SX650** (35 watts per channel, \$325), the **Kenwood KR-4070** (40 watts per channel, \$300), or the **JVC JR-S200** (35 watts per channel, \$300).

Naturally, you'll want to match up these excellent receivers with speakers capable of bringing out all the sound in the signal. For that, I doubt that you could do better than get the **Infinity Q_a** (\$149), the **Technics SB-5000A** (\$160), or the "Big Advent Loudspeaker" (\$149). You'd have to spend a lot more to top the sound of any of these.

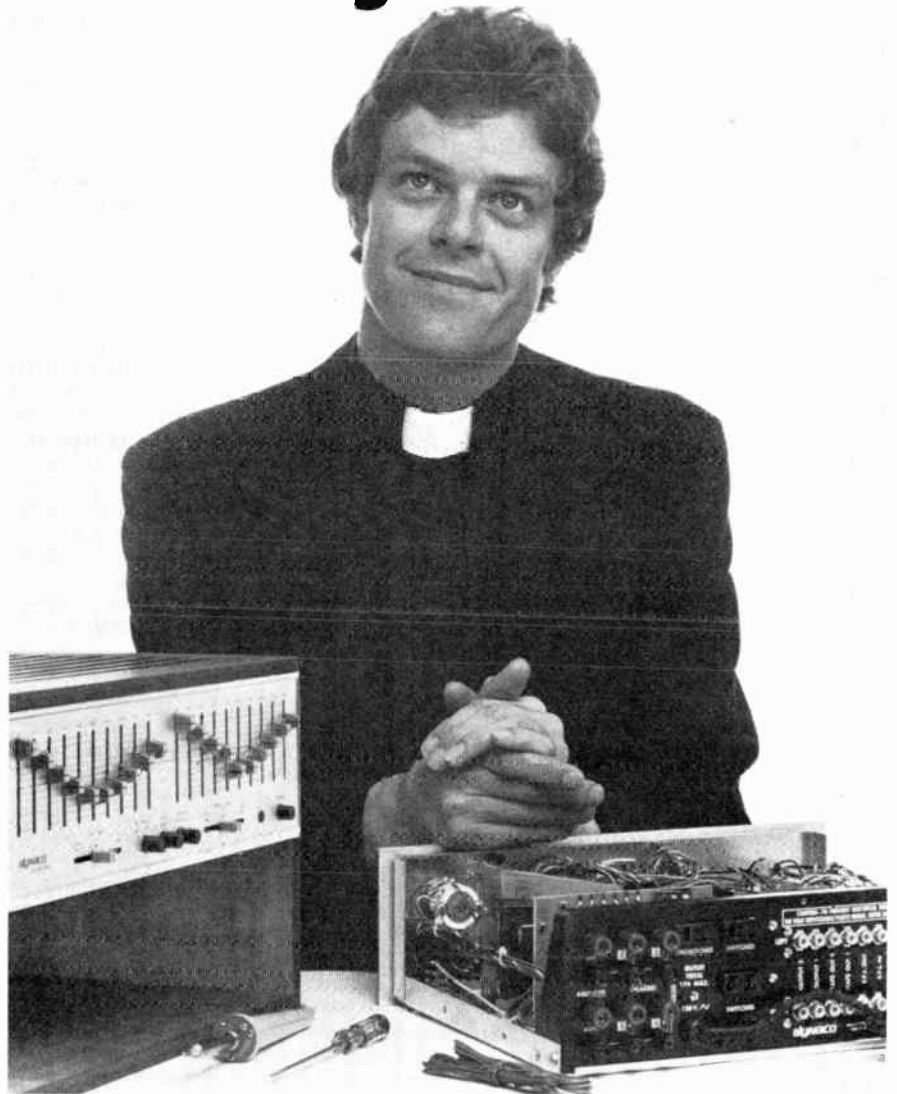
Even in this price bracket, I'd still pick the same turntables I mentioned before but would also consider remarkable values at a slightly higher ticket, such as **Sony's PS-T3**, a fully automated direct-drive platter at \$180. As far as tape decks are concerned, I'd go for items like the **JVC KD-35** (\$260), the **Toshiba PC-4360** (\$250), or the **Pioneer CT 4242** (\$225).

Strictly DeLuxe

If you're among the lucky few who can afford to splurge, keep in mind that a \$2000 sound system doesn't necessarily sound twice as good as a \$1000 system. As you reach the higher price brackets, you run into diminishing returns. Granted, the very expensive sound gear sounds better—but it really doesn't sound all that much better than the components in the Golden Medium class. And while it's perfectly possible to spend many thousands of dollars on super-fancy equipment, you can get amazingly close to the same re

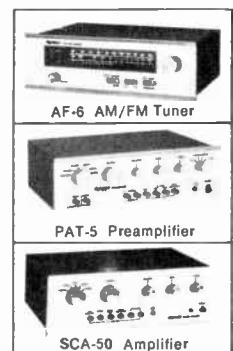
(Continued on page 79)

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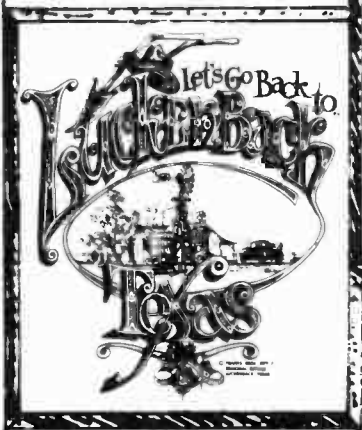
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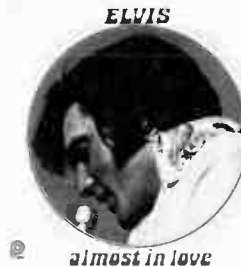
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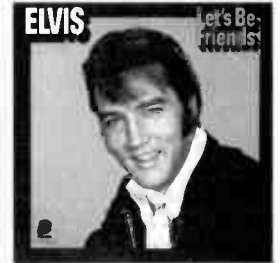
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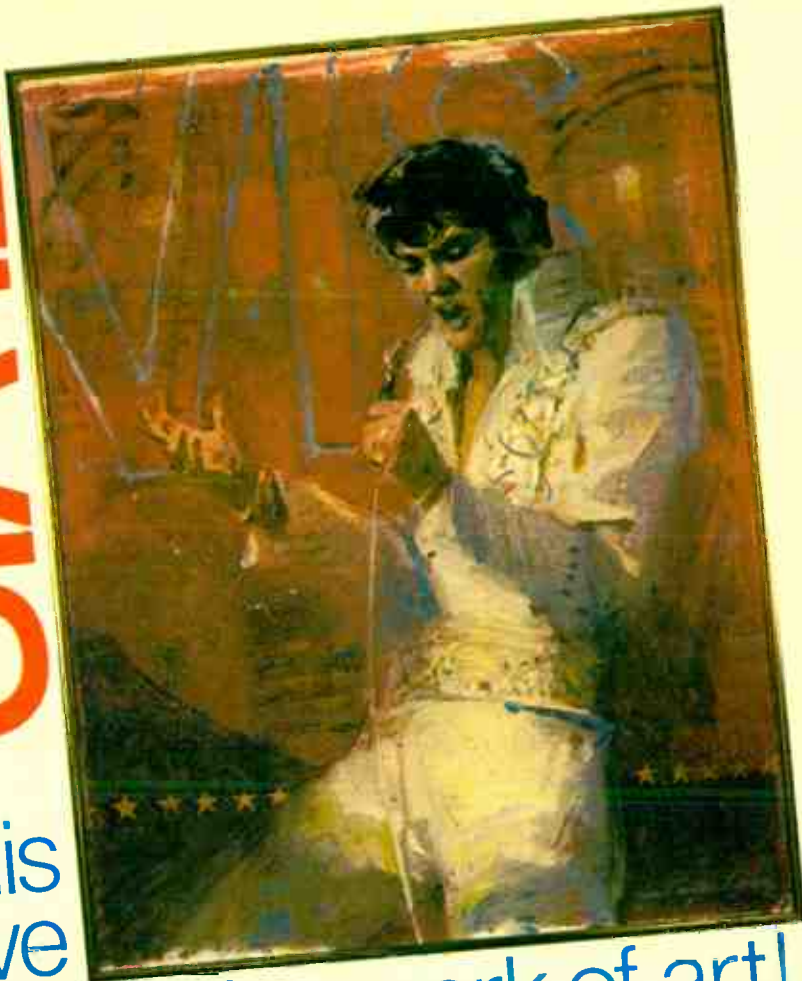
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OFF STAGE

(Continued from page 26)

phis theater after midnight and invite friends along for a special showing of current movies.

"Elvis loved motion pictures. He would really get into the plots—like some kind of film scholar," remembers Miss Goodman. "Sometimes, he would see the films in advance then invite friends along for a second showing. He would provide a running commentary and start predicting what was going to happen next. Finally, everyone would guess that he had already seen the movie. Elvis could be very witty when he was in a good mood."

In the best of times, Presley experienced periods of deep depression. In the months preceding his death those periods became more frequent and of longer duration.

During those bad times, he might seclude himself in his room for days and brood about his mother, his health, his broken marriage, an upcoming tour or an ex-friend for some real or imagined betrayal. On such occasions, he was temperamental and, sometimes, prone to violence.

Once, when he arrived home in the early morning hours to find the gate locked and nobody around to open it, he reportedly shoved the driver aside, backed up his Cadillac and crashed through it.

The most damning reports, though, came from former bodyguards Red and Sonny West and Dave Hebler in the book *Elvis: What Happened*. The book painted the unpleasant picture of a man increasingly into drugs—mainly uppers and downers; increasingly shrinking into the tiny world behind the walls of Graceland. From a commercial standpoint, the timing of the book could not have been more perfect—it was released a few short days before Elvis' death. At least one of the authors, Red West, was reportedly shattered by Elvis' death and the timing of the book.

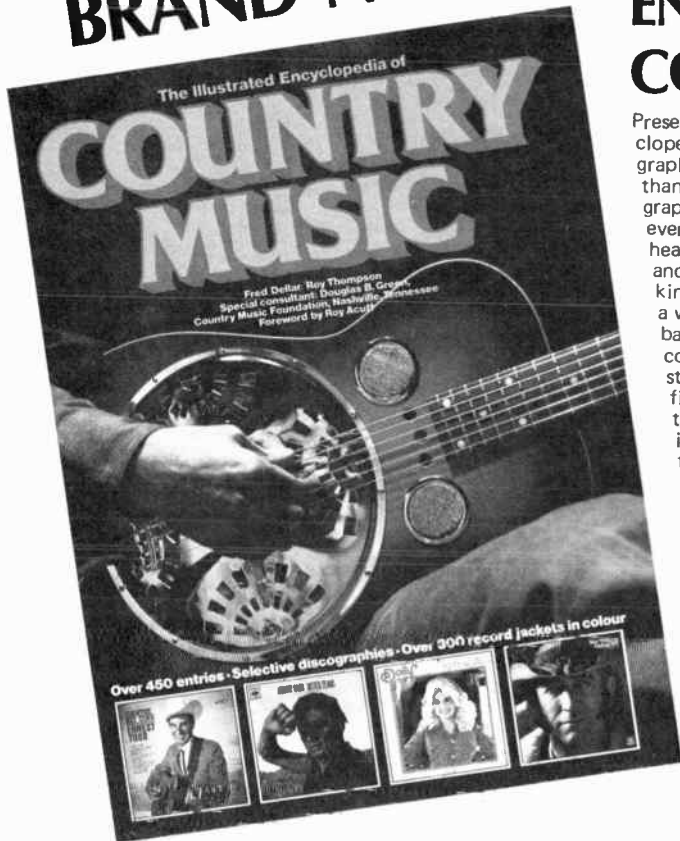
"No matter what he said in that book, man," said one insider, "Red loved Elvis. He never wanted to hurt him this way. Red really cared. The hell of it is, too much of what that book said was true. But look at it this way—you could write almost exactly the same book about *any* big name performer. And that's the absolute truth."

There were a few friends who wanted to see Elvis break out of the walls of Graceland—one remembered Elvis lamenting: "You know... I've never even been able to take my little girl to the carnival...."

But the fact is that the walls finally won, and Elvis died a man trapped in his own legend.

"You know," one person close to Elvis said, "He really wanted to just be able to go out and walk around Memphis like a normal person. But there were a whole lot of people who didn't want that. And Elvis died for it." ■

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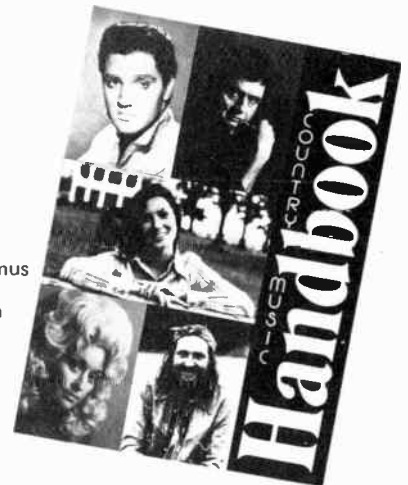


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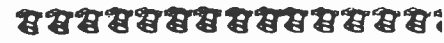
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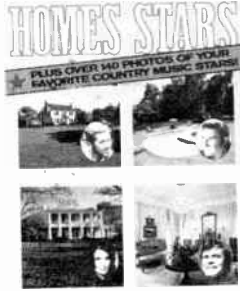
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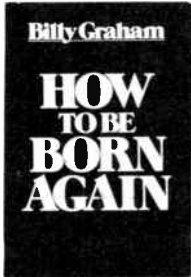
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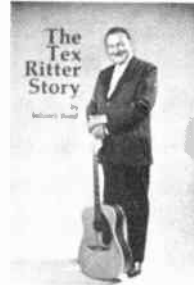
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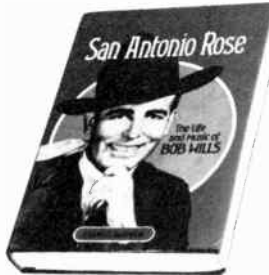
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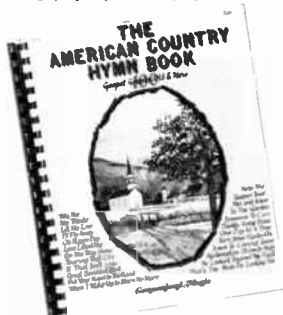
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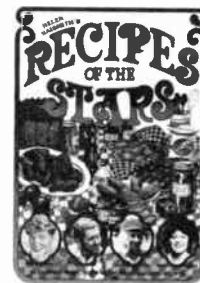
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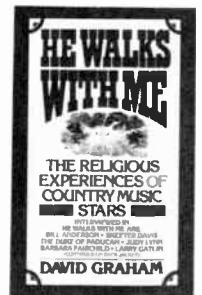


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MO127

AUDIO

(Continued from page 69)

sults with some of the following items:

For a receiver, try the Sony STR-6800 (80 watts per channel, \$600), the Sansui 7070 (70 watts per channel, \$520) or the Pioneer SX-950 (\$650). As for speakers, I'd still pick the ones listed in the Golden Medium group, because they're really hard to beat. But I'd also check out such excellent speakers as the Yamaha NS-690-II (\$290), the ADS L-710 (\$250), and the uniquely designed Bose 901 Series III (\$700 per pair). You may prefer their sound despite the added cost.

And since this is the splurging bracket, you might as well treat yourself to such blue-chip turntables as the Kenwood KD-5033 (\$280), the Sony PS4300 (\$280), or the Sansui FR-5080S (\$260). If you want an automatic changer, you couldn't top the Technics SL-1650 (\$300) or the Dual 1250 (\$280). And cassette decks to fit in such fancy company might include the TEAC A-303 (\$350), the Marantz 5520 (\$380) or the Sansui SC3000W (\$370).

Well, that's what I consider the pick of the lot in terms of dollar value. I don't expect everyone to agree with me absolutely, but I'm pretty sure that the items listed here would rank pretty near the top of any line-up. They'd be a source of Christmas cheer for a long time to come. ■

NOTE: All the prices listed in the Audio column are strictly suggested list prices. Hans suggests that with a careful choice of stores and a bit of judicious bargaining, even better deals are available.

THE KING

(Continued from page 31)

onel agreed to the live recording only if Felton was paid a full fee, as though he was there.

Then there was an episode on a film set. As Elvis related it to Jarvis some time after it actually happened, he wanted the Jordanares singing with him on one song. The director said that was impossible. "When you're singing this song in the movie, you're riding down the highway on a motorcycle," the director chastised Elvis. "Now where would the Jordanares be coming from?" To which Elvis replied, "The same darn place the band is coming from."

The last time Felton saw Elvis alive was between two recent tours. He drove to Graceland from Nashville to get Elvis' approval on the final mix on the *Moody Blue* album. When Felton arrived near sundown, Elvis was lounging on the front porch in his pajamas, and he was "very happy in a real good mood, didn't seem like he had a care or worry in the world."

Felton believes that Elvis' biggest remaining ambition at the time of his death was to tour Europe (especially England) and Japan. "He talked about it an awful lot. He'd always say, 'That's one thing I got to do and I don't want to wait until I'm too old and have to go over there with a walking stick,'" Felton recalls. "But it was one of those things where he'd always say, 'We'll do it tomorrow; today I'm too busy.' And tomorrow never came." ■

HISTORY

(Continued from page 56)

thing in the world is going on back here. And if it goes before a judge, Elvis... I mean, you could be called up for paternity suits and rape cases and all sorts of things, just because of who you are. I mean, it's all right with me, but how do you know? You don't really know." So I was giving him this really weird motherly talk, right? He said, "Yes m'am, yes m'am." As I was driving home later I thought to myself, "I can't believe I just gave him that long lecture. The fellow has been a superstar for a number of years, and I'm certain he must know all of these things." But he sort of brought that out in people, who really wanted to protect him, I think.

Songwriter Doc Pomus

Elvis seldom knew the songwriters; he would just listen to the songs. They'd be on demo records, and he would copy them very closely. We'd load up the demo records to get something that approximated a record. Most of the time my ex-partner Morty Shuman sang, because he kind of interpreted the songs the way Elvis liked them. If you notice something, not that many of his songs are recorded by other people. Because it was Elvis. And I'm tell-

ing you as a songwriter, he was the best singer for my money that ever sang popular songs. He could sing every kind of song. He made so many mediocre songs sound great. There are many great singers, great stylists, but they're all like branches on a tree, man, and he was the tree. He could bring an extra dimension to any kind of song; the minute you heard him sing, you knew it was him, man. And usually that's only true of guys that write their own material. But every time he sang a song, he was like writing it.

Bones Howe, Los Angeles producer

When he first came to Los Angeles to record, I was working at Radio Recorders as a tape operator. This was before he went into the Army. Then I was part of a production company that did his first television special in 1968; I was music producer for that show. When we were called to do the show, we were told that Elvis was gonna do a Christmas Special; he was gonna sing 25 Christmas songs, say "Merry Christmas everybody and good-night," and that'd be it. Because the Colonel had run a very successful Christmas radio special the year before on a lot of independent Southern stations, an inspirational kind of special.

Having worked with Elvis before, I said to Steve Binder, who was the director of the show, that in my experience with Elvis,

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he was the first real self-produced artist. Elvis chose all his own songs and he ran the actual sessions. He did it at his own pace and he directed all the other guys involved. So I told Steve all he had to do is get Elvis involved in the production of the show and he'd have a really interesting show. Because he'd come up with all the ideas. It'd make him feel more comfortable on the screen, and it'd also be much more Elvis than if we tried to get some writers from the outside to write him big production numbers—that's what he'd been going through in Hollywood that he wanted to get away from.

So Elvis would come to the office every day at one o'clock and he spent the whole day there for several weeks. He came up with idea after idea, all sorts of things he wanted to do that we ended up doing. The show changed from being a Christmas Special, which would have been very boring, to being a special which showed an involvement with him and his music. As the Colonel saw this show develop and Elvis' enthusiasm about it, he backed off. I was never involved in a meeting, so I don't know exactly what was ever said, but I think that just day by day it began to change.

Guitarist James Burton, who put together the 1969 Vegas comeback band and stayed with Elvis from then on.

Elvis said he'd been in movies and that he would like to get back into personal contact with the public, the people that bought his records. Once he got on the stage, it was like he was home free. He told me it was the happiest he'd been in nine years. We were real close, real friendly, talked a lot and all that. But I didn't wanna get involved with him personally beyond the work, you know what I mean? He had so many bodyguards, so many people around him already, that I figured the less people around, the better. . . . He'd tell stories about being in the army and stuff like that, but you could sit and listen to 'em for hours, because he had so many of them.

He always made the statement to me, "I can afford the best, and I will definitely have the best." That was his personal philosophy. He definitely *felt* what he liked; he had such a fantastic ear for music, it's unreal. The guy's got what you might almost call perfect pitch.

Guitarist John Wilkinson, who joined Elvis with the 1969 Vegas comeback shows.

August 9, 1969. I remember that night quite vividly. He couldn't have been any more nervous than we were. I think his main thing was he was afraid he'd be laughed at rather than appreciated. But that wasn't the case at all. There was standing ovations throughout the entire performance. His eyes lit up, he sorta turned around to us a couple times and made a face like, "Geez, we got it guin' again! Yeah!" That whole engagement

was just one knockout after another. The excitement was there, the newness was back, the electricity, the whole air was charged with that energy.

The last time I saw him was in Indianapolis, the last city of the final tour that he did. He seemed to be in good spirits. He was tired, but his voice was good. He just didn't seem as excited, but a lot of things had changed since 1969. It was a good show, one of the best shows we had done on these tours. But it took a lot out of him. We'd started doing shorter tours because the pace was too much for him. He would get tired quicker, but he still gave 'em what they wanted. I thought he should take quite a lot of time off and get his health put back together again and rest. But that's not the way he wanted it—he really wanted to work. One theory that's been advanced to me by some people is that maybe he realized that he didn't have all that much time left, and he wanted to cram as much into a short period of time as he could. He'd say from the stage, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's a lot of stories going around about my health. Don't believe anything you read. I'm fine." But he was saying that for the fans.

Chip Young, Nashville producer, who also played guitar on Elvis records for the last eight years.

He didn't like to spend a lot of time on songs, y'know. Once he learned the song

. . . he usually learned them on the sessions, unless it was an old song he'd been singin' a long time. But new songs, we learned it as he learned it. And then when he learned his part right, if you didn't have your part right, you could go back and fix it later. When he was ready, that was it. He hated to overdub; he wanted to do his part right there with the pickers. He hated headphones, too. Normally, he had a hand mike, and if he dug what you were playing, he'd get right down there with you—not the best recording conditions, and it could drive an engineer wild.

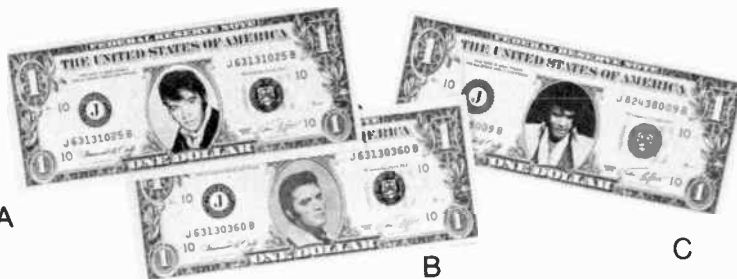
There's only a few words you can say that sums it up: he was the greatest. He was the greatest entertainer alive, and he gave more people identity in our age than any other one person. Like wearing more casual clothes, and things like longer hair. He made the simple things in life a pleasure.

Sean Nielsen—Elvis' tenor singer

There has been a lot of sensational publicity surrounding Elvis both before and since his death, but the Elvis Presley I knew was a far different man from many of the published stories.

I know him as a generous, sensitive man. Of course, he was moody at times and could be very unpredictable—that's well known—but all these stories about his guns and his pills, well, I can honestly say I *never* saw him take anything stronger than a sleeping pill, and although he did

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love guns and have a huge collection of them, I never saw him fire one or anything like that. I don't know how they got all that about TV sets being shot up... I certainly never saw it.

The things that I remember are the shopping trips, and of course there his generosity is legendary. They'd just close up the store and let us wander through. One time I was looking at a nice coat and he said "You like it?" and I said "Oh, yeah, sure." He said "It's yours." I found out later it cost \$750!

He was actually a good bit more generous than that with me in particular. Not long after I joined the show we were talking—I suppose if I'd known him better then I never would have brought it up—and I mentioned that I planned on a long career in show business, and that I'd eventually have to have my teeth capped and get a hair transplant, because my hair was getting prematurely thin. *That night* a dentist Elvis had flown up from L.A. appeared and he began working on my mouth with portable equipment. The *next* day the plastic surgeon was there to begin the hair transplants. Now you talk about an overwhelmed country boy!



Elvis in "Viva Las Vegas" with Ann-Margret.

I'll never forget the first time I met him. I was with the Imperials and Elvis had seen our syndicated TV show in Memphis. He must have liked what he heard, because he called on us to do his album *How Great Thou Art*. So here we were at RCA's Studio B and in he came with his big entourage. Well, I just stood over in a dark corner trying to look like wallpaper, you know, and he walks right up to me and sticks out his hand and says "Hi, I'm Elvis Presley," and went on to say he'd watched our TV show and had our records and that I was one of his favorite singers. Talk about a shock and a thrill! Whew!

The funny thing is, they say a singer really doesn't hit his peak until he's between forty and fifty. When he died Elvis was singing better than he ever had, had more range and more expression. He may have slowed up a little in his movements on stage, but I think that comes with maturity. As a singer he was just reaching his peak. ■

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LETTERS

(Continued from page 8)

After the shock, the anger, the grief and tears, I feel now is the time to write to you to tell you how I personally feel about Elvis' death. There are so many feelings inside, it is difficult to put them into proper perspective.

First of all, I like nearly everyone else, didn't believe it. Surely it must be a horrid rumor. When I realized it was not, I was plunged into sickening grief and tears for several days. The thought never leaves me and the tears are waiting to spill constantly. I try to act naturally, but for now it is impossible. It is as if a major part of my life has been shattered. I don't think I could feel worse if a member of my own family died. I loved him deeply. It was a different love from the love you have for a husband or child or parent. It is a love only another Elvis fan could understand.

He was more than a giant of an entertainer. He was the ideal man; talented, beautiful, virile. He was everything. I have had great difficulty functioning this week. When I go out into a crowd I wonder if anyone is suffering as I am. And if they aren't, how can they possibly not be? I can't understand anyone who didn't love him. With his death I lost my favorite entertainer, an idol, a dream, a lover I never knew, the joy of my life, and a big reason

to live.

I will always love him as I loved no one else. There will be no one else like him. There could never be anyone to take his place.

B. KAY DAVIS
NEW PARK PA.

Birth to a Legend; Goodby to a Friend

The place was Tupelo Mississippi, in a two room shotgun shack, Where the rich folks said you were born to the wrong side of the track.

Twins were born that joyous day in nineteen and thirty five, And God was good to this world, one remained alive.

Such a different kind of babe he was and and his fame was meant to rise, Just a poor Ol' Country Boy in Memphis, who caught America's eyes.

"White Trash" they did call him as he sang songs from his heart, But all us kids loved him, right from the very start.

As Moody Guts Blues began to "Rock and Roll" across the stage, The girls began to scream and their parents began to rage.

Million Dollar sellers smashed the country, all rockin in two by two, *Hound Dog* with it's swivel hips and tears in *Loving You*.

Then came motion pictures, the increase to his fortune and fame, He earned the "Good Housekeeping Seal," "Elvis" was a house hold name.

Then came the time with Uncle Sam, He

served for a worthy cause, As America watched and waited, it's parents gave a round of applause.

"The White Trash Legend" was born, unjustified by the critic's pen, After all was said and done, Elvis was the critic's friend.

From there he lived to honor as a king upon a throne, "Graceland" was his castle and America was his home.

His last song recorded *Way Down* bore it's name, Another "Rockin" example of Presley's living fame.

Then without the slightest warning, came that dark and dreary day, The news flashed Elvis Presley, The King, had past away.

God called down from Heaven, "Time to leave this land, Come lead my choir in paradise, the home for you I've planned."

So grieve no more America, Let your tears and sorrows cease Elvis is now in Heaven, Rest El', Rest in Holy Peace.

JIMMY CARR
WINNSBORO, LA.

I can't believe the lengths some people will go to protect Elvis Presley's reputation. I read a letter in the October issue of *Country Music* and can't believe a person would write something that stupid.

It's as if this person believes that Elvis never made a sloppy record in his life. Who does this person think Elvis was, Mr. Perfect.

Anyway, I think the writers of this magazine are doing a great job, and I don't think they'll lose any readers.

KEITH BISBEE
OAKHURST, N.J.

In deference to the hundreds of letters we received about our review of Moody Blue, we must admit the timing couldn't have been any worse. But we also want to point out that a critic's lot is not a particularly easy one. Each album must be weighed on its own merits, regardless of one's personal feelings toward the artist. The greatest artists in the world can and do make sloppy records; just as sometimes the very worst artist will produce an artistic masterpiece. If we have seemed to be hard on Elvis' past records, it is only because we knew what he was capable of doing. In short, Elvis set the standard for comparison—even for himself. A good critic must listen to a lot of records, and usually there's only a tiny handful of records that a critic will listen to when not "working." Most of the critics I know—myself included—have at least one Elvis Presley record that stays in the "personal" stack and is never refiled. And that says more about Elvis Presley's music than all the reviews in the world. . . Editor.

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Patrice Rushen. If she did any more with a Rhodes, she'd be Wonder Woman.



Patrice, you've played with people like Jean-Luc Ponty, Stanley Turrentine, Lee Ritenour and Flora Purim for some time. You wrote, arranged, produced, played and sang on your new Prestige album, *Shout It Out*. And you're studying film scoring?

Yes, and I just finished arranging the strings and horn tracks for a real talented singer here in L.A. And oh yes, I play a little Fender[®] bass.

That's a lot for someone so young.

Well, I started early. My folks enrolled me in a pre-school music program at the University of Southern California called "Eurythmics." I started piano—classical—at five. But I didn't get into jazz until I joined the Jazz Ensemble at Locke Junior High. I sat on pillows to reach the keys.

When did you get your first Rhodes?

In high school, a Suitcase 73. Going from piano to Rhodes was easy because the feel is so similar. I still compose on my 73 and take my Suitcase 88 on the road. That's all my gear because Rhodes has a very special color and texture to its sound and blends so well whether I'm playing traditional jazz or jazz-funk like in *Shout It Out*.

Do you customize?

No, I get any effect I want with just the vibrato. Of course, the instrument is so adjustable you might say it can be customized for any player by the dealer when he sets it up. Both of mine were adjusted for the timbre and touch dynamics I like. They feel natural and comfortable. When I need a change, the switch from standard to stretch tuning is a snap. The sound is something else.

What does the future hold for Patrice Rushen?

A lot, I hope. After all, I'm only twenty-two!



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