

ELVIS, THE KING: 1954-1965



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

ELVIS, THE KING: 1954-1965

- 1 **Good Rockin' Tonight** (1954)
- 2 **My Baby Left Me** (1956)
- 3 **Anyway You Want Me (That's How I Will Be)** (1956)
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- 22 **Crying in the Chapel** (1965)

SEE PROGRAM NOTES INSIDE

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TCD-126

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
ERA

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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-26 TIME
TCD-126 **LIFE**
MUSIC

- 1 Good Rockin' Tonight 2 My Baby Left Me 3 Anyway You Want Me
4 Blue Suede Shoes 5 Lawdy, Miss Clawdy 6 That's When Your Heart-
aches Begin 7 Mystery Train 8 Treat Me Nice 9 Money Honey
10 (You're So Square) Baby I Don't Care 11 Loving You 12 Party
13 I Feel So Bad 14 Return to Sender 15 (You're the) Devil in
Disguise 16 I Got Stung 17 I Need Your Love Tonight
18 (Marie's the Name) His Latest Flame 19 Such a
Night 20 Good Luck Charm 21 A Mess of
Blues 22 Crying in the Chapel

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*The King signs autographs
for adoring teen-age fans
in Texas in 1956.*

ELVIS, THE KING: 1954-1965

Unlike many of today's great rock singers, Elvis Presley composed very little of his own music. The Presley genius shone in the way he could handle a song and make it a vehicle for his own inimitable style. This meant that for most of his career, Elvis was constantly in search of fresh material. In his early days, he often found it in older records by blues and pop singers of the 1940s, and by R & B groups of the 1950s. Later on, when his fame assured at least some success for anything he recorded, writers from both the Nashville country and the New York rock 'n' roll scenes eagerly submitted their latest efforts to him. During the period 1954-1965, Elvis was getting first crack at many of the best new songs available, and the recordings he made of them represent some of his finest work.

Good Rockin' Tonight, Presley's second Sun release, was recorded in September 1954 and issued the following month under the names "Elvis Presley, Scotty and Bill"—the latter two being Scotty Moore and Bill Black, the electric-guitar-and-bass team that would be the cornerstone of the Presley sound for the next four years. The song itself, an old R & B number written by blues singer Roy Brown in 1947, had been popularized as a jump tune by Wynonie Harris in 1949. Elvis introduced it in July 1954 at Memphis' Overton Park band shell, where he caused a sensation. Surprisingly, the record didn't sell as well as Presley's first single, *That's All Right*, even though it earned a major review in *Billboard*, in which Elvis was called "a sock new singer" who appealed to three audiences: pop, country and rhythm and blues.

His last Sun single, **Mystery Train**, was released in August 1955. Presley's victory was influenced by an earlier Sun recording made by Arkansas blues singer Herman "Little Junior" Parker in October 1953. (The term "mys-

tery train," dating from World War II, refers to army trains that carried coffins of dead soldiers back home.) By this time, Presley had justified *Billboard's* rave. He was headlining his own barnstorm tour of the South with a country jamboree featuring Johnny Cash, Jimmy "C" Newman and Wanda Jackson. He had also signed a management contract with the flamboyant Colonel Tom Parker, who was busy studying the various offers coming in from record companies like Columbia and Atlantic. When Elvis appeared at the annual DJ convention in Nashville in mid-November, he so impressed talent scouts from RCA that the label soon bought his contract from Sun, and with it all the Sun masters. *Mystery Train*, which was already high on the charts as a Sun single, was reissued in December, marking Presley's official RCA debut.

The label wasted no time with its hot new star. On January 10 and 11, 1956, Elvis went into RCA's new Nashville studios and cut five songs, including **Money Honey**, an R & B chart topper for the Drifters in 1953. Three weeks later, while in New York for an appearance on *Stage Show* with the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, Elvis recorded **Blue Suede Shoes**, a big hit written and already released by Carl Perkins, Presley's former Sun labelmate. Driving up to New York to perform *Blue Suede Shoes* on *The Perry Como Show*, Perkins was seriously injured in a car crash. He later recalled: "While my song was No. 1 in the nation, I lay in a hospital bed as Elvis performed it." Presley gave it national exposure on *The Milton Berle Show*. His recording, which didn't come out until September, offered the fans another reading of what was to become a rock 'n' roll anthem.

During his early RCA years, Elvis continued to cover R & B material. **My Baby Left Me** (1956) was based on a 1950 recording by Mississippi blues singer Arthur "Big

Boy" Crudup, who was also the source for Elvis' first Sun record, *That's All Right*. **Lawdy, Miss Clawdy** (1956) was originally a 1952 smash by New Orleans singer-composer Lloyd Price, best known for his 1959 hit *Personality*. **I Feel So Bad** (1961) came from "the Sheik of the Blues," Atlanta singer Chuck Willis, who made the R & B top 10 with it in 1954.

That's When Your Heartaches Begin (1957) has a special place in the Presley canon. It was one of two songs Elvis had done on his first studio date in 1953, when he visited Sam Phillips' Memphis Recording Service to cut a custom disc. The song had been popularized by the Ink Spots, a smooth-singing black quartet that dominated the charts in the 1940s. Accompanied by the Jordanaires, Elvis faithfully re-created the Ink Spots' arrangement, even down to the pseudo-basso narration in the middle.

By the time Elvis began work on his second movie, *Loving You*, in early 1957, he was having no trouble attracting original songs. Freddy Bienstock, Elvis' A & R man for Hill and Range music publishers, sent copies of the new film script to dozens of his writers, with "slots" for songs marked in the script. Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who became one of the most influential writing and production teams in rock history, had their first contact with Presley after reviewing the script. They had established themselves as hit-makers for the Coasters in 1956, and had penned *Hound Dog* for Big Mama Thornton—learning only after the fact that Elvis had already covered it. Having successfully created the movie theme song **Loving You** in early 1957, the duo provided material for Presley's next film, *Jailhouse Rock*. This yielded **Treat Me Nice** and **Baby, I Don't Care**, on which Mike Stoller played piano.

By the late 1950s, Freddy Bienstock was encouraging Hill and Range composers to send in material for upcoming Presley recording dates. Soon a regular stable of

*"Elvis the Pelvis"
caught in 1956 at
his gyrating best.*





writers, including Otis Blackwell, Doc Pomus, Mort Shuman and Aaron Schroeder, were sending Bienstock a steady stream of demo records of their songs. The best ones were auditioned the day of the session. As engineer Bones Howe recalls: "They'd come in with these stacks of dubs, stacks that were twenty inches high sometimes. Elvis hadn't heard them before arriving at the studio." Howe played the dubs one at a time until Elvis found one he liked; then he would learn the song, with the band often doing as many as 13 or 14 takes before everyone was satisfied.

Two such recordings were made on June 10 and 11, 1958, while Elvis was on a weekend pass from the army. Rushed into a Nashville studio by RCA, which was desperate to have product to issue during his military stint, Elvis cut **I Got Stung** and **I Need Your Love Tonight**. It was Presley's first session without his pals from the Sun days.

In place of Scotty Moore and Bill Black was a cadre of crack Nashville studio musicians, including guitarists Hank Garland and Chet Atkins and pianist Floyd Cramer. *I Got Stung* came out in October, but the country-flavored *I Need Your Love Tonight* was held in the vaults until March of the next year.

Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, brought into the Presley circle by Leiber and Stoller, had written songs for the Drifters, Dion and the Belmonts and Ben E. King before they started collaborating with Elvis. Pomus and Shuman had worked as blues musicians, which explains the feeling they got in **A Mess of Blues**, a 1960 effort from Elvis' first recording date following his army discharge. It's one of the few times that Presley really tries some straight blues singing, complete with a daring falsetto at the end. (**Marie's the Name**) **His Latest Flame** (1961) reveals the team's mastery of the 1950s' rock 'n' roll idiom. Built on a familiar "Bo Diddley" beat,

framed by Floyd Cramer's piano, the performance proved that, despite his increasing preoccupation with turgid movie sound tracks, Elvis could still rock with the best of them.

Presley never forgot his roots, as evidenced by two of his better mid-'60s records. **Such a Night** (1964) was a reworking of the 1954 hit by the Drifters. Sparked by two drummers (D. J. Fontana and Nashville regular Buddy Harman), Boots Randolph's sax and the Jordanaires, Elvis uses the bridge to launch into one of his uninhibited vocals, concluding with a Ray Charles-like series of call-and-response patterns with the singers.

Crying in the Chapel (1965), popularized earlier by country artists Rex Allen and Darryl Glenn, pays homage to Presley's first musical love—gospel music. The track was slated for Elvis' 1960 all-sacred LP, *His Hand in Mine*, but for some reason was dropped from the final lineup; five years later it was resurrected when RCA needed an Easter song to release as a single. Shipped in April, the record rose to No. 3 in the U.S. and did even better in England, where it knocked the Beatles from the No. 1 slot. Ironically, this would be Elvis' last top-10 hit for four years. When he returned to the top 10, it was with a different style for a different era.

—Charles K. Wolfe



DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Good Rockin' Tonight** (2:10) *Music and lyrics by Roy Brown. Sun 210 (1954). Did not chart.*
- 2. My Baby Left Me** (2:13) *Music and lyrics by Arthur Crudup. RCA 6540 (1956). No. 31**
- 3. Anyway You Want Me (That's How I Will Be)** (2:12) *Music and lyrics by Aaron Schroeder and Cliff Owens. RCA 6643 (1956). No. 27**
- 4. Blue Suede Shoes** (1:57) *Music and lyrics by Carl Lee Perkins. RCA EPA 747 (1956). No. 24**
- 5. Lawdy, Miss Clawdy** (2:07) *Music and lyrics by Lloyd Price. RCA 6642 (1956). Did not chart.*
- 6. That's When Your Heartaches Begin** (3:20) *Music by Fred Fisher, lyrics by William Raskin and George Brown. RCA 6870 (1957). No. 58**
- 7. Mystery Train** (2:24) *Music and lyrics by Sam C. Phillips and Herman Parker Jr. Sun 223 (1955). No. 1 (country)**
- 8. Treat Me Nice** (2:02) *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. RCA 7035 (1957). No. 27**
- 9. Money Honey** (2:32) *Music and lyrics by Jesse Stone. RCA EPA 821 (1956). No. 76**
- 10. (You're So Square) Baby I Don't Care** (1:53) *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. RCA EPA 4114 (1957). Did not chart.*
- 11. Loving You** (2:15) *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. RCA 7000 (1957). No. 28**
- 12. Party** (1:27) *Music and lyrics by Jessie Mae Robinson. RCA EPA 1515 (1957). Did not chart.*
- 13. I Feel So Bad** (2:54) *Music and lyrics by Chuck Willis. RCA 7880 (1961). No. 5**
- 14. Return to Sender** (2:05) *Music and lyrics by Otis Blackwell and Winfield Scott. RCA 8100 (1962). No. 2**
- 15. (You're the) Devil in Disguise** (2:17) *Music and lyrics by Bill Giant, Bernie Baum and Florence Kaye. RCA 8188 (1963). No. 3**
- 16. I Got Stung** (1:50) *Music and lyrics by Aaron Schroeder and David Hess. RCA 7410 (1958). No. 8**
- 17. I Need Your Love Tonight** (2:04) *Music and lyrics by Sid Wayne and Bix Reichner. RCA 7506 (1959). No. 4**
- 18. (Marie's the Name) His Latest Flame** (2:06) *Music and lyrics by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman. RCA 7908 (1961). No. 4**
- 19. Such a Night** (2:57) *Music and lyrics by Lincoln Chase. RCA 8400 (1964). No. 16**
- 20. Good Luck Charm** (2:23) *Music and lyrics by Aaron Schroeder and Wally Gold. RCA 7992 (1962). No. 1**
- 21. A Mess of Blues** (2:38) *Music and lyrics by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman. RCA 7777 (1960). No. 32**
- 22. Crying in the Chapel** (2:22) *Music and lyrics by Artie Glenn. RCA 0643 (1965). No. 3**

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NOTES INSIDE

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Executive Producer: Charles McCardell
Recording Producer: Eddie Rich
Creative Director: Don Sheldon
Art Director: Robin Bray
Associate Producer: Brian Miller
Art Studio: Nina Bridges
Production Manager: Karen Hill

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