

Elvis Presley the “King of Rock n Roll”

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Essential Question: What role did Elvis Presley play in the emergence of a youth culture based on rock n roll?

When a young truck driver named Elvis Presley walked into Sun Studios, Memphis in 1953, he had no idea that his life was going to change. Presley wanted to record a record for his mother as a birthday present. The studio offered anyone the chance to record an album for \$3.98 plus tax. Sam Phillips, recording engineer and owner of Sun Records, thought that there might be something to the young man’s singing and mentioned it to his partner. The partner, Marion Kreisler, continued to remind Phillips about Presley and in July 1954 Phillip’s invited him back.

Phillips knew that the music world was looking for a new sound to take it by storm. He had some ideas about that new sound, but had not heard it yet. When Presley came in for the session on July 5, Phillips was not impressed. Nothing sounded right, so Phillips called for a break. During the break, Presley began to play around on his guitar and started singing the blues classic “That’s All Right,” but in a fast paced style. When Phillips heard it, he knew he had found his sound. He recorded Presley’s version of “That’s All Right,” which became a local hit and launched Presley’s career and rock n roll.

Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi on January 8, 1935. He grew up surrounded by his mother’s love and the gospel music he heard in the Pentecostal church. In 1948, the family moved to Memphis. It is said that as a teenager, Presley would sneak out to Beale Street to listen to jazz and blues musicians. Whether or not this is true, Presley was certainly influenced by those styles of music.

Within a few short months Presley was a star in Memphis and Phillips sold his contract to RCA. “Heartbreak Hotel” became his first across the board hit. Presley’s star power derived not only from his singing ability, but also his good looks and dance moves. Presley’s live performances featured hip shaking dance moves that made teenage girls swoon and outraged many adults.

While there are many examples from Presley’s career of his status as a teen icon, one in particular stand outs. The first was Presley’s 1956 appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. Presley had already scandalized some members of the TV audience when he performed his signature dance moves while singing “Hound Dog” on the Milton Berle Show. When Presley appeared on the Ed Sullivan show on September 9, 1956, he once again sang “Hound Dog” while snarling his lip and gyrating his hips. Eighty-two percent of American television viewing audience was watching. Presley repeated the performance on October 28th. When the studio audience realized he was going to sing “Hound Dog” the crowd went wild.

So did the people at homes who viewed Presley as a threat to morals, decency and American youth. Following the performance, crowds burned Presley in effigy in Nashville and St. Louis. Ministers, politicians and concerned citizens pushed to stop the growth of rock n roll and youth culture. Presley's sexy dance moves had created so much controversy, that when he appeared on Ed Sullivan a final time on January 6, 1957, the CBS censors demanded that he only be shot from the waist up. Presley's critics had won the battle, but they lost the war. Teenagers across America continued to buy Presley's albums and flock to his performances. Presley went on to a wildly successful career with over 100 Top 40 hits and numerous hit movies. Soon other rock n roll groups, like the Beatles would take the stage at the Ed Sullivan show, but nothing defined the shift in attitudes the signaled the birth of a youth culture like Elvis Presley's performance on the Ed Sullivan show.

Author's Note: You can watch Elvis' controversial performance for yourself at <http://www.edsullivan.com/artists/elvis-presley/>

Sources: "This Day in History: Elvis Presley records 'That All Right (Mama)'." *History.com*. The History Channel. 2014. Web. 27 July 2014. < <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/elvis-presley-records-quotthats-all-right-mamaquot>>

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Elvis Presley the “King of Rock n Roll

Write a short newspaper article from the perspective of someone who just watched Elvis Presley perform for the first time. Things to keep in mind: Are you upset or entertained? What is his music like? How did he dance?

(Your response should be about 3 sentences.)

Answers will vary but should address the questions in the prompt.

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Elvis Presley Obituaries

The following obituaries demonstrate different perspectives on Elvis' impact on music and youth culture in the United States.

New York Times

ELVIS PRESLEY DIES; ROCK SINGER WAS 42

Heart Failure Cited by Coroner -- Acclaim Followed Scorn

By MOLLY IVINS

Elvis Presley, the first and greatest American rock-and-roll star, died yesterday at the age of 42. Mr. Presley, whose throaty baritone and blatant sexuality redefined popular music, was found unconscious in the bedroom of his home, called Graceland, in Memphis yesterday at 2:30 P.M. He was pronounced dead an hour later at Baptist Memorial Hospital, after doctors failed to revive him.

Dr. Jerry Francisco, the Shelby County coroner, who conducted a two-hour examination of the body, said "preliminary autopsy findings" indicated that the cause of death was "cardiac arrhythmia," which a hospital spokesman defined as "an irregular and ineffective heart beat." The coroner was not immediately able to determine the cause of the "cardiac arrhythmia."

Mr. Presley was once the object of such adulation that teen-age girls screamed and fainted at the sight of him. He was also denounced for what was considered sexually suggestive conduct on stage. Preachers inveighed against him in sermons and parents forbade their children to watch him on television. In his first television appearance on the Ed Sullivan show, his act, which might be thought of as tame by today's standards, was considered by the broadcasters to be so scandalous that the cameras showed him only from the waist up, lest his wiggling hips show.

Mr. Presley's early hit songs are an indelible part of the memories of anyone who grew up in the 50's. "Hound Dog," "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Blue Suede Shoes" were teen-age anthems. Like Frank Sinatra in the decade before and the Beatles a decade later, Mr. Presley was more than a singer--he was a phenomenon, with 45 gold records that sold more than one million copies each.

Mr. Presley was a show-business legend before he was 25 years old. At the age of 30 he was the highest-paid performer in the history of the business. He made 28 films, virtually every one of them frivolous personality vehicles and nearly all of them second-rated at best, but they gross millions.

In recent years, Mr. Presley, who used to carry about 175 pounds on a 6-foot frame, had been plagued with overweight. A recently published book called "Elvis, What Happened?" by three of his former bodyguards alleged that the singer was given to using amphetamines.

History of Mild Hypertension

Dr. Francisco said yesterday that Mr. Presley had a history of mild hypertension and that he had found evidence of coronary artery disease. Both of these, the coroner said, could have been "contributing causes" in Mr. Presley's death. "But the specific cause may not be known for a week or two pending lab studies," he said, adding, "It is possible in cases like this that the specific cause will never be known."

A hospital spokesman said that the coroner is required by law to conduct an examination if the case of death is not immediately apparent.

Responding to repeated questions about whether the autopsy had revealed any signs of drug abuse, the coroner said the only drugs he had detected were those that had been prescribed by Mr. Presley's personal physician for hypertension and a blockage of the colon, for which he had been hospitalized twice in 1975.

Dr. George Nichopoulos, Mr. Presley's personal physician told the Associated Press that Mr. Presley was last seen alive shortly after 9 A.M. Dr. Nichopoulos said that Mr. Presley had been taking a number of appetite depressants, but the physician said they had not contributed to his death.

Elvis Aron Presley was born in a two-room house in Tupelo, Miss., on Jan. 8, 1935. During his childhood, he appeared with his parents, Gladys and Vernon Presley, as a popular singing trio at camp meetings, revivals and church conventions.

The family moved to Memphis when Mr. Presley was 13. He attended L. O. Humes High School and worked as an usher in a movie theater. After graduation, he got a job driving a truck for \$35 a week. In 1953, Mr. Presley recorded his first song and paid \$4 for the privilege; he took the one copy home and played it over and over.

A shrewd song promotor called "Colonel" Thomas A. Parker was impressed by the early records and took over the management of Mr. Presley's career. Mr. Presley toured in rural areas under the sobriquet "The Hill Billy Cat." Colonel Parker, a character of P. T. Barnum proportions, followed the credo, "Don't explain it, just sell it." He once observed, "I consider it my patriotic duty to keep Elvis up in the 90 percent tax bracket."

When Colonel Parker went to negotiate with 20th Century-Fox on a film deal that would be Mr. Presley's screen debut, the studio executives dwelled on the singer's youth and inexperience. "Would \$25,000 be all right?" one executive finally asked. Colonel Parker replied: "That's fine for me. Now, how about the boy?"

"Heartbreak Hotel," Mr. Presley's first song hit, was released by RCA in January 1956. A blood-stirring dirge about love and loneliness, it burned up the jukeboxes and eventually sold two million copies. A phenomenal string of hit songs followed, and Elvis Presley fan clubs sprouted all over the world; membership at one time numbered 400,000.

In 1957, he went to Hollywood to make his first film, "Love Me Tender." It opened to unanimous jeers from the critics and grossed between five and six times what it cost to make.

His later films were conducted equally obnoxious by cinEastes. One critic remarked of "Jailhouse Rock" that Mr. Presley had been "sensitively cast as a slob." Mr. Presley responded, "That's the way the mop flops."

Drafted Into the Army

In the spring of 1958, Mr. Presley was drafted into the Army as a private, an event that caused as much stir as an average Super Bowl. "The Pelvis," as he was known, was stationed in West Germany for two years and was given an ecstatic welcome home by his fans.

In 1967, Mr. Presley married Priscilla Beaulieu, the daughter of an Air Force colonel. They met during his military service, and had a daughter named Lisa Marie, born on Feb. 1, 1968. Although concrete details of their private life remained sketchy through his deliberate design, the fan magazines were full of reports of marital difficulties, and the couple separated in February 1972. They were divorced in Santa Monica, Calif., in 1973.

Mr. Presley was said to have been a shy person, and rarely granted interviews. He seems to have been scarred by some of the early heavy publicity, and returned from his stint in the Army more withdrawn than he had been.

In the early 60's, he made no personal or even television appearances, but earned \$5 million a year simply by cutting a few records and making three movies a year. He made a picture called "Harem Holiday" in 18 days and was paid \$1 million.

In the 70's Mr. Presley appeared with some frequency in Las Vegas, Nev., nightclubs. Although he sometimes appeared bloated, he was still an excellent showman and audiences always loved him. In his nightclub act, he would occasionally parody himself. "This lip used to curl easier," he joked, referring to his one-time trademark of singing with a sneer.

It was believed that Mr. Presley neither smoked nor drank, but according to the book by his former aides, he depended heavily on stimulant and depressant drugs. He is also said to have been depressed by the book's "iconoclastic" treatment of him.

He was a generous and often sentimental man. He deeply mourned the death of his mother, and kept a suite for his grandmother, Minnie Presley, at his home in Memphis. The house, Graceland, was an 18-room \$1 million mansion with a jukebox at the poolside. Mr.

Presley surrounded himself with a retinue of young men called the Memphis Mafia, who served as bodyguards, valets and travel agents. He had a passion for cars, especially Cadillacs, which he tended to acquire in multiples.

Preferred Night Hours

Mr. Presley also gave Cadillacs away with startling frequency. He would from time to time see some stranger, nose pressed against a car-showroom window, and invite the person to go inside and pick out the color he or she liked best. Mr. Presley would then pay the entire cost of purchase on the spot.

Mr. Presley was a nocturnal person who thrived when most others were asleep. Maurice Elliott, a vice president and spokesman for Baptist Hospital, said Mr. Presley had gone to sleep yesterday morning at 6 A.M. Some time during the evening or early morning hours, Mr. Elliott said Mr. Presley visited a dentist. Then, between 4 A.M. and 5:30 A.M. he played racket ball on the court of his mansion, the hospital official reported.

When Mr. Presley was a patient in the hospital, Mr. Elliott recalled, "he would put tin foil over the windows. He would normally not get up until noon or thereafter, and not go to bed until 2, 3, 4 A.M."

Mr. Presley's movie career ended in 1970, and in that year he made a successful television special. Critics remarked on how little he had aged. He kept in shape for years with karate, in which he had a black belt. But his penchant for peanut butter and banana sandwiches washed down with soda finally caught up. In one of his last appearances, his trademark skintight pants split open.

After his death became known yesterday, radio stations around the country began playing nothing but old Presley records. Mr. Presley recorded about 40 albums, many of them soundtracks of his films. They include "Loving You," "King Creole," "Frankie and Johnny," "Paradise, Hawaiian Style," "Clambake" and "Speedway."

At his death, Mr. Presley had been an indelible part of the nation's musical consciousness for 20 years.

The funeral is being handled by the Memphis Funeral Home. A spokesman said late yesterday that arrangements had not been completed.

Mr. Presley is survived by his 9-year-old daughter, father and grandmother. His father and his daughter were reportedly at Graceland at the time of his death.

Source: Ivins, Molly. "Elvis Presley Dies; Rock Singer was 42." *www.nytimes/learning*. New York Times, 2010. Web. 27 July, 2014. <
<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0816.html>>

The Guardian

London, England

Elvis Presley dies and the age of Rock is over

Singer hailed as the "King of Rock 'n Roll" has died from a heart attack at the age of 42

By: Martin Walker

The King is dead and there will be no replacement. Elvis Presley, the founder, the greatest exponent, and the most passionate figure in rock and roll, died last night in the emergency ward of Memphis Baptist Hospital of "acute respiratory distress."

A hospital spokesman said Presley was found unconscious at his home by his road manager, Joe Esposito who called the fire department ambulance. Ambulance personnel tried to resuscitate the singer as he was being rushed to hospital but Presley's personal physician, Dr George Nichopoulos, pronounced him dead.

Thus ended at the age of 42 the career of the man who recorded more than 400 songs, who sold more than 260 million records and who will always embody not only rock and roll but the sudden explosion of young white affluence which created it. He received dozens of offers to perform in Britain but turned them all down.

Elvis Aaron Presley was born on January 8, 1935 in East Tupelo, Mississippi. His twin brother Jesse died at birth and his parents, Vernon and Gladys Presley raised him in the kind of loving and religious poor white home which was the very essence of the deep south.

After winning several talent competitions as a child, working as a cinema usher and a truck driver, the job he always said he liked best, Elvis Presley met his first inspiration, Mr Sam Phillips, the owner of the Sun Record Company.

It was the early recordings of songs by black musicians that attracted the attention of Colonel Tom Parker, who was to become Presley's Svengali, guiding his career and personal life with the object of making as much money as possible. Within year of Col. Parker becoming his manager in November 1955, the young Presley had won his first six gold discs and an international reputation as the most dangerous thing to hit civilisation since the atom bomb.

US churchmen, politicians and Senate leaders railed against "Elvis the Pelvis," whose bucking hips and passionate rhythms on stage were sending shudders of sexual excitement through a whole continent of American girlhood via the new medium of television.

Worse than that, Presley had taken black songs, and a black style of aggressive presentation and sold this passionate music as a neat package wrapped in his acceptably white skin. Years before civil rights legislation, and while the Deep South was still segregated, Presley brought the black man's blues to the hearts and minds of young America.

The songs that Presley spread around the world were hard driving, uncompromising celebrations of toughness or maudlin despair. Just as in his private life the young Presley regularly flattened the many men who challenged him to fight, and yet publicised his almost sickening devotion to his mother, so his songs were either masculine and hard like Jailhouse Rock or appallingly sentimental, like Heartbreak Hotel and Love Me Tender.

By 1958, Elvis Presley had achieved the kind of international fame which only John Kennedy and the Beatles were to rival. And then it all changed. On March 24, 1958, he was conscripted into the US Army. His hair was cut, his back was straightened, and the surly curl to his lip was replaced by a bright eye and a strong chin. The teenage monster had become a doughty defender of mom's apple pie.

He married Priscilla Beaulieu, the daughter of a US Air Force colonel, in 1967 after meeting her in West Germany while he was doing his military service. They had one daughter, Lisa Marie born in February, 1968, but were divorced in 1973.

When Presley put on uniform, and after his return, the guts and defiance went out of his music. He had many hit records with medium-paced ballads like His Latest Flame and She's Not You and with very slow numbers like Are You Lonesome Tonight. To the despair of his old fans, Elvis stopped rocking and started to make bland, commercial films which celebrated the wholesome, girl-loving, patriotic decency of young America.

He was taken to hospital several times because of weight problems, and as his weight increased, his public appearances became more infrequent. Sources close to the Presley retinue said he has recently been a heavy cocaine user.

As if to show he could still do it, his records still crept into the charts and in 1969 one of them, In the Ghetto, seemed to echo his old passion and to pay a debt to the black roots of his music.

Source: Walker, Martin. "Elvis Presley dies and the age of Rock is over." www.theguardian.com. The Guardian. 2012. Web. 27 July, 2014. <
<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2012/aug/17/archive-1977-king-elvis-presley-anniversary>>

The Washington Post

Rock Idol Elvis Presley Dies at 42

By Larry Rohter and Tom Zito

Washington Post Staff Writers

Thursday, August 17, 1977

Elvis Presley, who revolutionized American popular music with his earthy singing style and became a hero to two generations of rock 'n' roll fans, died yesterday in Memphis, Tenn. He was 42.

Shelby County Medical Examiner Dr. Jerry Francisco said last night an autopsy indicated Presley died of "cardiac arrhythmia," which he described as a "severely irregular heartbeat" and "just another name for a form of heart attack." He said the three-hour autopsy uncovered no sign of any other diseases -- though Presley had in recent years been treated at Baptist Memorial Hospital for hypertension, pneumonia and an enlarged colon -- and there was no sign of any drug abuse.

Presley's body was discovered at 2:30 p.m. Memphis time by his road manager, Jerry Esposito, in a bathroom in the singer's multimillion-dollar Graceland Mansion. He was rushed to the Baptist Memorial, where he was met by his personal physician, Dr. George C. Nichopoulos, and pronounced dead.

Dr. Willis Madrey, a specialist in liver disease at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, said yesterday that two years ago Presley's doctors sent him a sample of Presley's liver for analysis. "It showed no significant abnormalities," Madrey said, "nothing of any help at all in evaluation."

"I had understood he was having some gastrointestinal problems his doctors were trying to evaluate," Madrey said. But "well over a year ago," Madrey added, he saw one of Presley's doctors and was told "he seemed fine" and "the only problem he had medically was obesity."

Ginger Alden reportedly Presley's fiancée and members of his staff were all at the mansion yesterday at the time the singer was found unconscious, Nichopoulos said.

In 1956, when Presley came crackling out of every radio and speaker in the land, young Americans notions about independence -- from parents, from religion, from the values of the time -- were forming. Elvis became "The King" of rock 'n' roll, but also of the emerging youth

culture. He was a young, hip-thrusting, white singing music that was essentially black. Part of his attraction was that the '50s teenagers viewed him as epitomizing everything they thought their parents feared they would become -- cocky, slick, brash, tough, black-leatherclad, motorcycle straddling, stiletto-shoed.

Their hunches of their parents' fears were well confirmed after Presley's appearance on a 1956 Ed Sullivan show. While millions of teenagers screamed in unison across the land, a Catholic priest in New York scorned Sullivan for this "moral injury" and condemned Presley for his "voodoo of defiance and frustration."

Overall, he sold more than 500 million records worldwide and made 33 films. He was a millionaire many times over and lived in a style that reflected it: ensconced in his Graceland Mansion behind locked gates, like the reclusive characters in "Citizen Kane," handing out jewels and Cadillacs to friends and even casual acquaintances.

No American performer had so broad an impact on culture around the world. In 1958, Communists blamed the influence of Presley for a riot in East Berlin as youths threatened to kill a border guard. In 1964, Presley received a write-in vote for President. A Memphis businessman who got in a fistfight with the singer had to close his shop because fans picketed the place.

His career began its ascent at virtually the same time of James Dean, another young star with a tough image, and Presley felt a sense of kinship with Dean.

Presley "knew I was a friend of Jimmy's," said Nicholas Ray, director of Dean's second film, "Rebel Without a Cause," so he got down on his knees before me and began to recite whole pages from the script. Elvis must have seen "Rebel" a dozen times by then and remembered every one of Jimmy's lines.

Presley's songs, particularly the early ones, expressed succinctly the rising rebellion of young people beginning to break from the Cold War doldrums of the Eisenhower era: "Have you heard the news/There's good rockin' tonight:" "You can do what you want/but lay off my blue suede shoes:" "Everybody in the whole cell block/Dancin' to the jail house rock:" "Don't be cruel/To a heart that's true:" "Baby, let's play house."

Born in Tupelo, Miss., on Jan. 8, 1935 -- his twin brother, Jesse Garon, died at birth -- Elvis Presley was 18 when he walked into a Memphis studio and paid \$4 to record "My Happiness" and "That's When Your Heartaches Begin" as a present for his mother.

Raised in a religious atmosphere, Presley had begun his singing career by performing hymns and gospel tunes with his parents, Vernon and Gladys, at concerts and state fairs. His parents bought him his first guitar at age 11, and he remained close to them even after acquiring a rebellious image -- his feelings for his mother, who died at age 46 of a heart attack were known to be especially strong.

Sam Phillips, owner of the studio, intrigued by the rough, soulful quality of the young truck driver's voice, invited him back to practice with some local musicians. A few months later Phillips' Sam Records released Presley's version of the blues tune "That's All Right," backed by the country song "Blue Moon of Kentucky," and the singer's career was launched.

The synthesis of black blues and white country music made Presley a unique artist from the start and Memphis was quick to appreciate that. Presley's recording went to the top of the local charts almost immediately, eventually selling 20,000 copies, and Presley was invited to appear on the Louisiana Hayride country show and at the Grand Ole Opry.

At the Opry, however, the first of the many controversies that were to engulf Presley almost caused him to give up his career. Told by the talent booker there that he was no good, Presley broke into tears and left his performing costume in a filling station.

He recovered quickly, though, and went on to record a whole string of hits for Sun Records, which sold his contract for \$40,000 -- then a record -- to RCA in 1955. His first record for RCA was "Heartbreak Hotel," which early in 1956 made him a nationwide sensation.

Months earlier, in November 1955, Col. Tom Parker, an established country music agent, had concluded a management agreement with Presley. Parker was instrumental in arranging Presley's switch from Sun to RCA and was to remain Presley's manager to the end, shrewdly guiding his client's career, limiting or encouraging public exposure in such a way that Presley was almost always able to command top dollar on the competitive concert and recording circuit.

Once, after Presley had been made an honorary narcotics agent by President Nixon, a White House staffer contacted Parker to request a musical performance. Parker told the staffer that Presley would be honored, and that his fee for the occasion would be \$25,000. That ended that.

Six months after the record "Heartbreak Hotel" had rippled heartthrobs through teenage America, Ed Sullivan promised to bring "The King" into the nation's living rooms: for \$50,000 Sullivan signed Presley to three performances.

When the first show hit the airwaves on Sept. 9, 1956, the response was predictable. Sullivan showed him only from the waist up, rocking around on the tube. Record sales soared, and the critics had new ammunition.

"It isn't enough to say that Elvis is king to his parents," wrote jazz musician Eddie Condon. "That still isn't a free ticket to behave like a sex maniac in public before millions of impressionable kids. According to a scholarly friend of mine, Jackie Gleason, we'll survive Elvis. 'He can't last,' said Gleason, 'I tell you flatly, he can't last.' "

New York Times critic Jack Gould observed: "Mr. Presley has no discernible singing ability. His specialty is rhythm songs which he renders in an undistinguished whine: his

phrasing, if it can be called that, consists of stereotyped variations that go with a beginner's aria in a bathtub. For the ear he is an unutterable bore, not nearly so talented as Frank Sinatra back in the latter's rather hysterical days at the Paramount Theater

"From watching Mr. Presley it is wholly evident that his skill lies in another direction. He is a rock-and-roll version of one of the most standard acts in show business: the virtuoso of the hootchy-kootchy. His one specialty is an accentuated movement of the body that heretofore has been previously identified with the repertoire of the blonde bombshells of the burlesque runway."

And at the Washington Post, Richard Coe, reviewing an early Presley movie, spoke of the singer's popularity as a manifestation of an "adulation of youth, youth that is raw, untrained, and undisciplined, youth which worships the most primitive urges and physical appeal, youth which has no truck with its elders.

"...This youth lives in a crowd and insists that it is lonely and misunderstood, appears to have no education, respect for customs or elders and no manners whatsoever."

Other performers, on shows with Presley, were puzzled by the strong reaction the young singer got from audiences. Jerry Lee Lewis took to closing his shows by standing on the piano in an attempt to upstage Elvis. But it did no good. Presley was even able to take others' material -- like Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" -- and make it a hit of even greater magnitude.

"Elvis had the looks on me," Perkins once told an interviewer. "The girls were going for him for more reasons than music. Elvis was hittin' 'em with sideburns, flashy clothes and no ring on that finger. I had three kids. There was no way of keeping Elvis from being the man in that music."

A month after the first Sullivan appearance, 20th Century Fox was readying Elvis' first film for Thanksgiving release. Originally titled "The Reno Brothers," it was changed to "Love Me Tender" to capitalize on the song Presley had introduced on the Sullivan show. The studio made 575 prints of the film for its first run -- the largest in Fox's history.

A year later Presley was drafted into the U.S. Army. Boarding a troop ship for an 18-month tour of duty in Europe as a Jeep driver, he told a reporter: "The first place I want go is Paris and look up Brigitte Bardot."

Presley was just another cog in the military machine, stationed in Frieberg, West Germany. But Col. Parker had ensured that Presley would not be forgotten during the two years he was away by having him record a stack of songs before leaving for Europe.

During his period of military service, Presley made no public appearances and completed only one recording session. Of the five singles released during Presley's absence from the U.S. rock 'n' roll scene, all eventually became million sellers.

When Presley was discharged a sergeant early in 1960, he was still "The King," though stars such as Ricky Nelson had come along in the interim.

Presley returned from the Army to find that rock 'n' roll tastes had changed dramatically in his absence. Presley himself underwent a drastic change of style, eschewing his trademark sideburns and hip-shaking music in favor of romantic, dramatic ballads, such as "It's Now or Never" and "Are You Lonesome Tonight?"

These records proved to be as popular as his hard-rocking numbers, but Presley by this time was more interested in making movies than anything else. After an appearance on a Frank Sinatra TV special, in which he alarmed old fans by performing in tails, Presley retired from concerts and television for nearly a decade.

His movies during this period included such potboilers as "Fun in Acapulco" and "Girls! Girls! Girls!" disillusioning some fans even further. But in 1968, Col. Parker engineered a change of direction, and Elvis who had seemed to many to be old fashioned after the emergence of the Beatles in 1964, once again became the hottest thing in pop music.

"It was a staggering moment," writes Greil Marcus in his book "Mystery Train." "In the months preceding, Elvis had begun to turn away from the seamless boredom of the movies and the hackneyed music of the soundtrack albums, staking out a style on a few half-successful singles, presenting the new persona of a man whose natural roughness was tempered by experience. The records had been careful, respectable efforts, but now he was putting everything on the line, risking his comforts and his case for his chance to start over."

The vehicle of Presley's comeback was a Christmastime TV special, broadcast by NBC. The response to that show encouraged Presley to get together with guitarist James Burton and pianist Glen D. Hardin; two of rock's top recording session musicians and go out on the road again.

His audience on that concert tour -- and on his subsequent tours, which brought him to the Washington area three times in recent years -- was more mature than that of a decade earlier, reflecting perhaps the fact that Presley himself was settling down.

On May 1, 1967, Presley had married Priscilla Beaulieu, the daughter of a U.S. Army colonel. On Feb. 1, 1968, a daughter, Lisa Marie, was born to the couple. The marriage ended, after lengthy and expensive divorce proceedings, in October 1973.

After the divorce, Priscilla Presley, who the singer had begun dating while in the Army, was given custody of the child. Presley never married again, but it was recently reported that he was about to marry 20-year-old Ginger Alden. She was reportedly spotted wearing a \$50,000 diamond engagement ring from Presley.

Reports of Presley's declining health and increasing weight first date from the time of his divorce. By 1976, in the authoritative "Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll," critic Peter Graining was moved to say, "It seems to be a continuing battle ... and Elvis is not winning. His hair is dyed, his teeth are capped, his middle is girdled, his voice is a husk, and his eyes film over with glassy impersonality. He is no longer, it seems, used to the air and, because he cannot endure the scorn of strangers, will not go out if his hair isn't right, if his weight -- which fluctuates wildly -- is not down. He has tantrums onstage and, like some aging politician, is reduced to the ranks of grotesque."

Earlier this year, Presley canceled several performances in Louisiana and returned to Memphis for what his physicians said was exhaustion. And in Baltimore, he cut short a show and disappeared from the stage for several minutes, only to return claiming he had merely been answering "the call of nature." But after hearing of Presley's death, Baltimore fan Beverly Hochstedt, who sat patiently outside the Baltimore Civic Center for 40 hours when tickets for his show there last March first went on sale, recalled not the erratic show, but the man.

"Oh, God, what can I say," sobbed the 31-year-old fan. "I just feel so lost, I feel shattered. I feel like I lost a very, very, close, very, dear friend, part of my own family."

Reaction among fans, performers and music industry executives elsewhere was also emotional. In Santiago, Chile, newspapers stopped the presses and radio stations changed their evening programming to recount the life of "El Rey de Rock 'n' Roll." In Memphis, the telephone system was reported unable to handle the volume of calls coming into the city from around the country. Hundreds of weeping fans gathered outside Baptist Memorial and Graceland Mansion last night.

Two European radio stations also suspended regular programming as soon as Presley's death was announced. Radio Luxembourg, the continent's most widely listened-to pop station, canceled all its commercials to play Presley's music nonstop.

"This is the end of rock 'n' roll," said Bob Moore Merlis, an executive with Warner Bros. Records, who compiled an anthology of Presley's early material several years ago for RCA. "The void he will leave is impossible to gauge," said Pat Boone, an early rival of Presley's.

"The King is dead," said former Beatle John Lennon last night. "But rock 'n' roll will never die. Long live the King."

"His music was the only thing exclusively ours," said Carl Wilson of The Beach Boys.
"His wasn't my and mom and dad's music. His voice was a total miracle in the music business."

The White House said last night that President Carter will "probably issue a statement on Presley today."

No arrangements have been announced yet for Presley's funeral.

Source: Rohter, Larry and Tom Zito. "Rock Idol Elvis Presley Dies at 42."
Washingtonpost.com. The Washington Post. 1977. Web. 27 July, 2014. <
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/elvis/epobit.htm>>