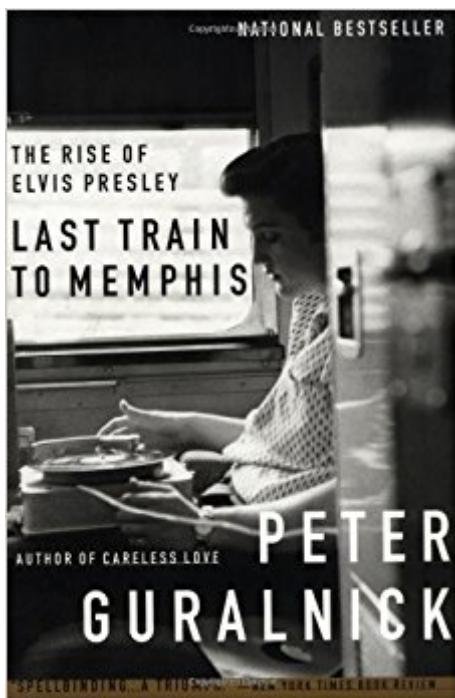


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# Last Train To Memphis: The Rise Of Elvis Presley



## Synopsis

From the moment that he first shook up the world in the mid 1950s, Elvis Presley has been one of the most vivid and enduring myths of American culture. *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* is the first biography to go past that myth and present an Elvis beyond the legend. Based on hundreds of interviews and nearly a decade of research, it traces the evolution not just of the man but of the music and of the culture he left utterly transformed, creating a completely fresh portrait of Elvis and his world. This volume tracks the first twenty-four years of Elvis' life, covering his childhood, the stunning first recordings at Sun Records ("That's All Right," "Mystery Train"), and the early RCA hits ("Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog," "Don't Be Cruel"). These were the years of his improbable self-invention and unprecedented triumphs, when it seemed that everything that Elvis tried succeeded wildly. There was scarcely a cloud in sight through this period until, in 1958, he was drafted into the army and his mother died shortly thereafter. The book closes on that somber and poignant note. *Last Train to Memphis* takes us deep inside Elvis' life, exploring his lifelong passion for music of every sort (from blues and gospel to Bing Crosby and Mario Lanza), his compelling affection for his family, and his intimate relationships with girlfriends, mentors, band members, professional associates, and friends. It shows us the loneliness, the trustfulness, the voracious appetite for experience, and above all the unshakable, almost mystical faith that Elvis had in himself and his music. Drawing frequently on Elvis' own words and on the recollections of those closest to him, the book offers an emotional, complex portrait of young Elvis Presley with a depth and dimension that for the first time allow his extraordinary accomplishments to ring true. Peter Guralnick has given us a previously unseen world, a rich panoply of people and events that illuminate an achievement, a place, and a time as never revealed before. Written with grace, humor, and affection, *Last Train to Memphis* has been hailed as the definitive biography of Elvis Presley. It is the first to set aside the myths and focus on Elvis' humanity in a way that has yet to be duplicated.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There's no mention of sequins, drugs, or peanut butter in this understated biography of the teenaged Elvis, a serious and worthy attempt to answer the question, "Who was this guy before he was an icon, the voice of a generation, the King?" The essential clarity and honesty of Guralnick's prose clearly limns the eager, malleable boy whose immense talent changed the course of American music.

Vol. one of Guralnick's exhaustive, two-volume biography details the King's first 24 years, leaving off when his rise is interrupted by his being drafted into the army. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I've always been fascinated by Elvis. How he went from cutting lawns and truck driving to a teenage idol (all thanks to Colonel Tom Parker). He epitomized something very new in the 1950s - that a star is not born, a star is made through the media/publicity complex. And he blindly let Tom Parker steer him (fueled only by Parker's greed) through so many bad career decisions, from all the B movies to the tacky Las Vegas shows. And like so many others (Michael Jackson, for example) Elvis died in a hailstorm of drugs prescribed by his own personal physician. Guralnick's book is the most thoroughly researched and even handed treatment of Elvis' life you will find. (And he warns you in the preface to the companion sequel to this book that you will be reading a tragedy.)

This is an excellent book on the young Elvis and his rise to fame. I enjoyed all of it and have no complaints. Little known facts abound, and the author traces the slow rise to stardom meticulously. The contributions of Sam, Scotty and Bill to the musical Elvis are very well-done. Indeed, many people would argue that Elvis music on Sun was the best he did. Certainly, there is an argument to be made when one listens to the songs That's Alright, Mama; Good Rockin' Tonight; I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone; Baby, Let's Play House and Mystery Train. This Elvis was a rebel, a threat, a musical and stage dynamo, and a really nice guy who liked to have 'safe' girlfriends that his parents

could like such as Dixie, Barbara, June and Anita. On the road, Elvis could enjoy himself with other women that did not meet the same standards of the girls his parents knew. This is an outstanding book that is difficult to put down. Indeed, it demands to be re-read over and over again. By the way, my grandmother worked at RCA in Toronto, and said he was a very well-mannered young man. After that meeting with Elvis she did supply me with Elvis 78's tucked between records by Perry Como and other artists I did not care about. lol

This is a big book with a lot of details of Elvis life which gives him the human feel that so many of us who grew up with the legend didn't have. I was absolutely in love with Elvis (and I am very much a heterosexual male) when I was a kid. Starting at age 10 I decided I wanted to be a singer because of him. I began singing every day all day long trying to mimic his sound. I eventual gave up on the dream and became less mesmerized by his persona as I grew and matured. The book only covers the period up to the height of his career and fame. Edition 2 covers his later years and I have yet to read that. What I found most interesting about the book was much of what I had heard about him over the years actually was true. Especially the stories we would hear of his generosity to strangers and his love for his mother. At heart he was a very good person but over time became somewhat morally corrupt due to his heavy and abusive use of prescription drugs (not covered in this edition of his life.) Though he never saw that in himself. I never felt that he would live into old age because it seemed to me that the only place he ever really felt alive was on stage in front of his fans. And no life lived their can last but so long. Though the book is long and did drag on occasion for me with details that were a bit too drawn out on matters not directly related related to his persona, it was an excellent read and well worth the time it takes to read it. Then again, I am not a fast reader and do not dedicate that much time out of my day for reading so for you it may not take as long.

The remarkable story about Elvis' amazing rise from obscurity to super stardom is wonderfully related in Peter Guralnick's Elvis biography, *Last Train to Memphis*. I've read various books on the life of Elvis and didn't think there was anything else to know but this book proved me wrong. While it contains some in-depth accounts of Elvis' musicology (after all, this is what this author does), it also gives us an in-depth look at the man who changed music history forever. Unfortunately, Elvis never kept a diary or a journal; he never related his innermost feelings on paper. All we have are the reflections and memories of those who were closest to him, and Mr. Guralnick spent an incredible amount of time gathering the information and recording it for posterity. And I'm glad he did! I'm now reading the follow-up biography, *Careless Love*, and am enjoying it, too.

This book was well written and informative, especially if you are a really great fan of Elvis. It shows how he started as a young man, his love of music his first loves and the basic character formation of the older Elvis. Yes, he was spoiled by his mother but he was a good son and helped support the family as his father was not with the family because of his troubles in Elvis' formative years. Life was tough then, but the Presley family pulled together even so far as Elvis handing his money over to his mother from his job to help out. It was really nice to see what a nice person he was and how the talent God gave him, especially for his love of music and his singing voice which was to become iconic. He made the fifties a lot of fun for us 50's teenagers, and we saw the possibilities for him in the future that truly made him the "King of Rock and Roll. I recommend this book for all Elvis fans. It will make you happy to read about Elvis before the so-called Vegas years.

If you can only read one biography about Elvis, make it Last Train to Memphis. Stellar, amazing, triumphant and heartbreak are only a few accolades I can heap on this book. The way Peter Guralnick weaves history and heart together is genius.

A great book for sure! Though I can tell he is avoiding getting too deep into certain relationships through Elvis' life and mostly focusing on his career, which is very detailed and thorough. I highly recommend this book if you're an Elvis fan!

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