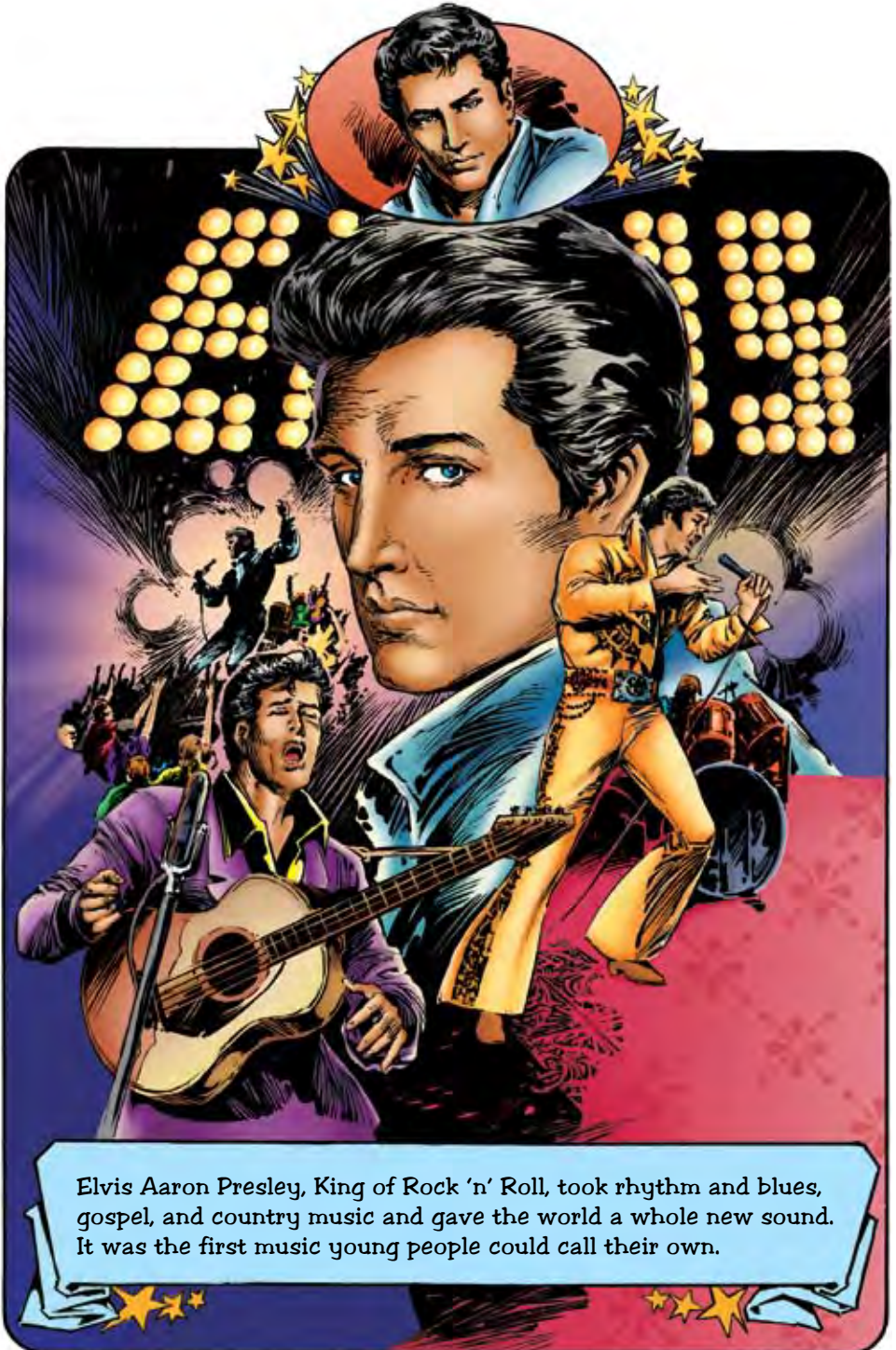


**GRAPHIC  
BIOGRAPHY**

*Elvis*

**PRESLEY**





Elvis Aaron Presley, King of Rock 'n' Roll, took rhythm and blues, gospel, and country music and gave the world a whole new sound. It was the first music young people could call their own.

Elvis Presley was born January 8, 1935, in Tupelo, Mississippi. His parents, Vernon and Gladys Presley, lived in a two room house.

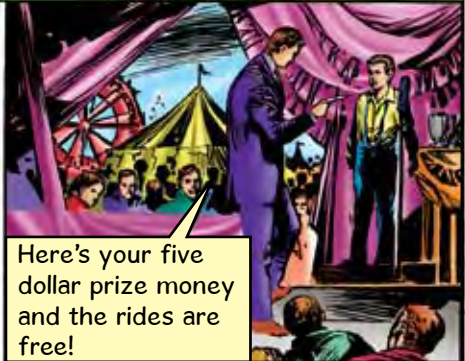
Vernon Presley worked whenever he could—sharecropping, driving a milk truck, or sorting lumber.



Gladys taught her son to be polite and kind. She took him everywhere she went. Vernon taught him to defend himself against bullies.



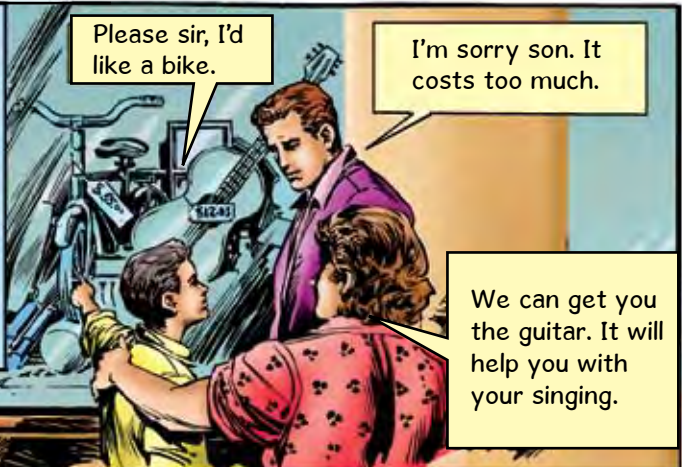
I like to see the minister shout, clap his hands, and get excited!



Here's your five dollar prize money and the rides are free!

When Elvis was ten, his school principal took him to the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show. Elvis won second prize for singing "Old Shep."

Elvis listened to the popular country music and the blues singers on the radio. He copied the sounds. He never did learn to read music, but he had a good ear for it.



Please sir, I'd like a bike.

I'm sorry son. It costs too much.

We can get you the guitar. It will help you with your singing.

First they lived in a one room apartment. Later they moved to a two bedroom apartment in a low cost housing development.



Well, there's no work here. Let's hope Memphis, Tennessee, will be better.

Vernon got a job packing paint cans starting at 83 cents an hour. Gladys sometimes worked in a curtain factory.

The high school Elvis attended had 1,600 students, more than the whole population of East Tupelo. He made some good friends. He liked football, ROTC, and shop.



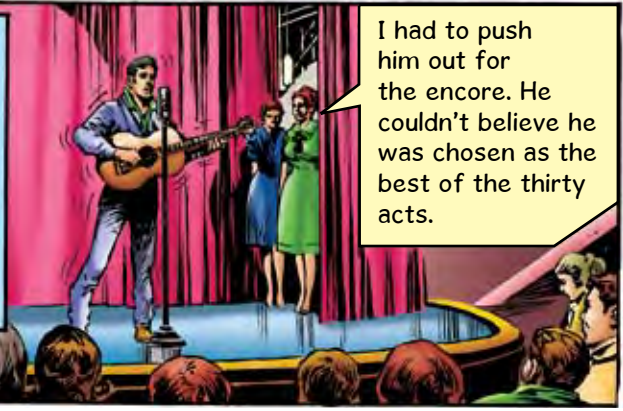
Elvis sure loves football. He's good too!



The boys make fun of your hair and loud clothes, Elvis.

That doesn't bother me. They make me look older.

Elvis liked to sing for his friends but not in front of a group. In his senior year of high school, a teacher persuaded him to sing in the variety show. The students loved his singing.



I had to push him out for the encore. He couldn't believe he was chosen as the best of the thirty acts.

During high school Elvis had a few jobs. But his parents felt they interfered with his studying. Even though money was scarce, his parents always managed to give him spending money.



I like this job. I can listen to the radio. I like working, and I like to listen to music.

After high school Elvis got a job driving a truck. He made \$1.25 an hour. At night he attended school to become an electrician.

You're lucky. The employment agency said you were a nice boy and not to be fooled by your long hair. The men here tease you because they like you. Remember the time they sent you to look for "sky hooks."



Then you said don't let them fool you. There is no such thing. I like them too!



Ma'am, I'd like to make a record for my mother.

In 1953 Elvis Presley paid \$4 to the Memphis Recording Service to make a record for his mother. He sang "My Happiness" and a sad ballad called "That's When Your Heartache Begins."

Once that boy started to sing, I knew you should hear him, Sam. So I taped the rest.

Yes, he's different. But he needs work.



Elvis came back to make a second record.

Sam introduced Elvis to Scotty Moore, a guitar player, and Bill Black, a bass player. They worked together for months, trying to find a style of music they liked.

What the devil are you doing!



I think we have got something.

Sam took the group's first record to Dewey Phillips, a disc jockey for radio station WHBQ. Listeners began calling in asking to have the record played over and over.

I've played that record fourteen times! In a row!



Elvis turned on the radio for his parents. Then he went to a movie, too nervous to listen.



That recording by Elvis, Scotty, and Bill was historic. To "That's All Right (Mama)," the blues song, they gave a country sound.

On the other side of the single, to bluegrass hit "Blue Moon of Kentucky," Elvis sang the blues. It was the first time that country music and blues were mixed. The form later was called "rockabilly."

To perform in Nashville's Grand Ole Opry was the hope of all country and western singers. Elvis made it after his first record. But ...

Son, I suggest you go back to truck driving.



Elvis was so upset that he left a suitcase full of clothes behind.

In October 1954 the second radio booking was with the Louisiana Hayride. It was more successful.



He's great. We'll give him a year's contract.

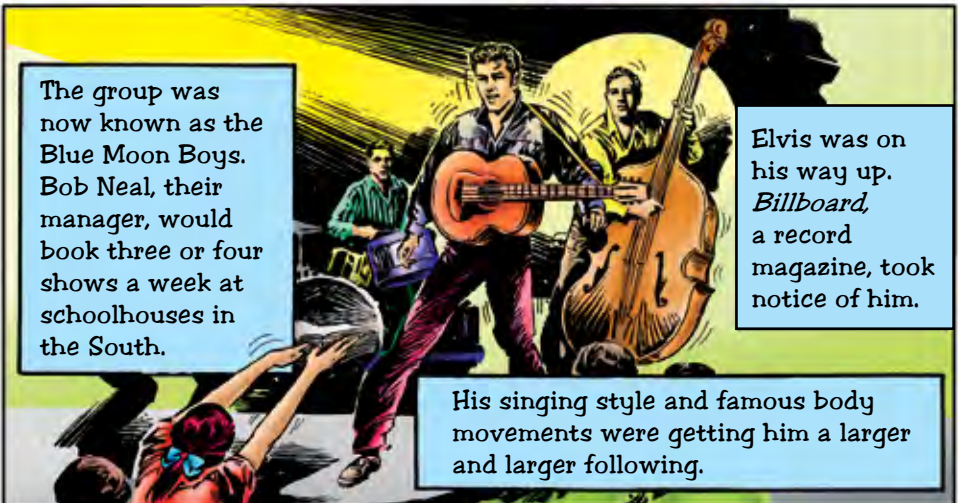
The 3,500 seat auditorium was always filled on the Saturday nights Elvis was to appear.

For this I quit driving a truck—to sleep in a car?



Well, you and Bill don't own cars. Let's just hope this doesn't wear out before my wife finishes paying for it.

The group was now known as the Blue Moon Boys. Bob Neal, their manager, would book three or four shows a week at schoolhouses in the South.



Elvis was on his way up. *Billboard*, a record magazine, took notice of him.

His singing style and famous body movements were getting him a larger and larger following.

## The Colonel

In 1955 Colonel Tom Parker was something of a legend. Maybe Elvis Presley would not have become a legend if it hadn't been for this showman.

Tom Parker was born in 1910 of carnival folks.

How's business, Tom?

Full house, I'm doing fine!

At seventeen, he had his own pony and monkey act.

Later he traveled with other carnivals and shows doing all kinds of work.

Here you are folks. Beautiful canaries!

He became a super salesman but sometimes not an honest one. Once he painted sparrows yellow and sold them as canaries. He cut hot dogs in half put each half at the end of the bun and relish in the middle. Then he sold them as "foot long hot dogs."

He became a press agent for carnivals, circuses, and showboats. Later he became manager for country singers Eddy Arnold and Hank Snow. He put together country shows with singers, musicians, and comedians.

O.K. Plug in the hot plate.

Colonel Parker always had chickens in a cage as a "livestock exhibit" so he wouldn't have to pay a tax for his show.

Once, when Eddy Arnold couldn't sing, the colonel brought out his "dancing chickens." He had put a hot plate under the straw, and the poor chickens stepped lively when the electricity was put on.



By late 1955 Elvis, with his hit records and appearances, was making \$2,000 a week. He bought a pink Cadillac and a \$40,000 Memphis home for his parents.

That boy interests me. I'll help you with his bookings.



Colonel Parker met Elvis when he appeared on the *Hank Snow Jamboree*. Hank Snow was the leading country singer and was handled by the Colonel.

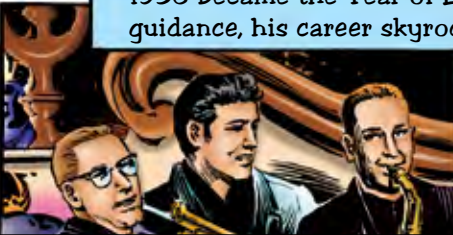
With your help, I can be of assistance to your son.



In order to become Elvis' personal manager, the Colonel became friends with Vernon and Gladys Presley.

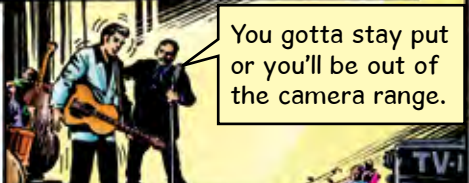
In November 1955 Elvis' manager, Bob Neal, agreed to let the Colonel take over Elvis' career.

1956 became the Year of Elvis Presley. Under the Colonel's guidance, his career skyrocketed. He appeared on TV.



He received \$1,250 for the *Dorsey Brothers Stage Show*. He did five more with them. TV audiences had never seen anything like Elvis before.

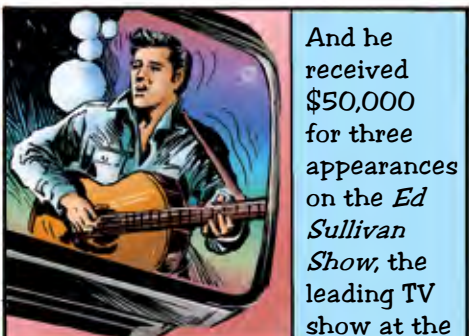
You gotta stay put or you'll be out of the camera range.



He appeared twice with Milton Berle and got \$5,000 for each show.



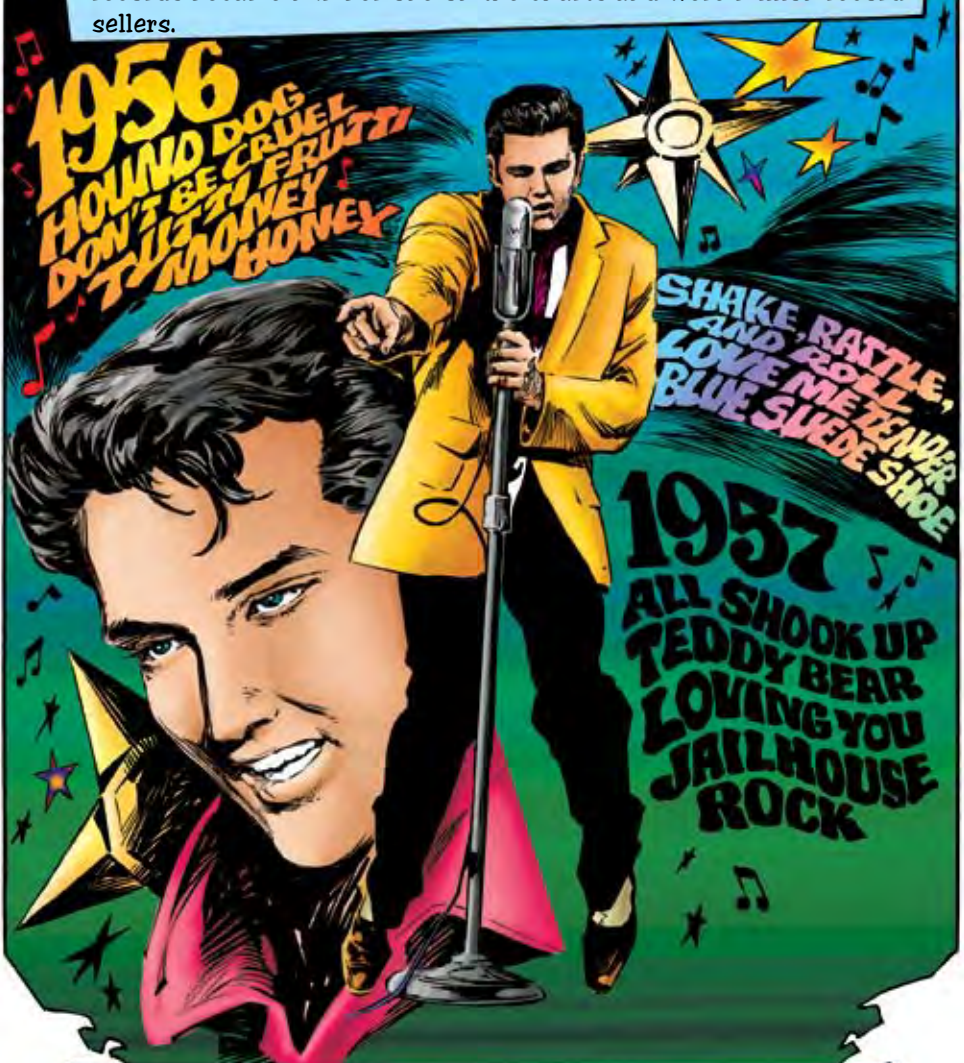
During the summer he appeared on the *Steve Allen Show* for \$7,500. He wore a tuxedo and stood still for his song. The fans were upset.



And he received \$50,000 for three appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, the leading TV show at the time. But because of the uproar his wild movements had caused, Elvis was shown on the TV screen only from the waist up.

The Colonel made a deal with RCA Records. They bought Sam Phillips' contract for \$35,000—giving a \$5,000 bonus to Elvis.

Beginning with "Heartbreak Hotel," one after another of Elvis' records became number one on the charts and were million record sellers.



Popular music was never the same again. In the 1950s, Elvis earned more gold records than other stars did in their entire careers.