



## Elvis Presley: A Life

*Bobbie Ann Mason*

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**Elvis Presley: A Life** Bobbie Ann Mason

**A vibrant, sympathetic portrait of the once and future king of rock 'n' roll by the award-winning author of *Shiloh* and *In Country***

To this clear-eyed portrait of the first rock 'n' roll superstar, Bobbie Ann Mason brings a novelist's insight and the empathy of a fellow Southerner who, from the first time she heard his voice on the family radio, knew that Elvis was "one of us." *Elvis Presley* deftly braids the mythic and human aspects of his story, capturing both the charismatic, boundary-breaking singer who reveled in his celebrity and the soft-spoken, working-class Southern boy who was fatally unprepared for his success. The result is a riveting, tragic book that goes to the heart of the American dream.

## Elvis Presley: A Life Details

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Author : Bobbie Ann Mason

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## From Reader Review Elvis Presley: A Life for online ebook

### **Michael Schardine says**

This story is about Elvis Presley's life and how he became the king. Elvis grew up in a very Religious home in Tupelo Mississippi. He came out of nowhere, he became a star after the Ed Sullivin show in the mid 1950s where racial Tensions were on the rise and everybody was scared of the cold war.

"All i wanted to do was drive a truck" Elvins said.

"Some people tap their feet, some people snap their fingers, and some people sway back and forth. I just sorta do 'em all together, I guess."

"the image is one thing and the human being is another...it's very hard to live up to an image."

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### **Rhonda says**

Exhaustive review of the life of Elvis.

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### **Rob says**

One of the best biographies I've ever read. Very brief, so it's hardly encyclopedic, but it does an amazing job of both capturing his spirit and explaining the behavior of him and his family and how they reacted to his sudden fame, and it does it with some fantastic prose. So many of the other books in the (late, lamented, wonderful) Penguin Lives series were written by Serious Historians, so it seemed odd that this one would be by Bobbie Ann Mason, a novelist, but after I read it I realized that she was really the only possible choice to write this. While someone like Greil Marcus might be better able to explain Elvis as a cultural phenomenon, I think this southern novelist was the best choice to explain Elvis as a southern country boy caught in the headlights of fame, to explain Elvis as Elvis.

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### **Rod Brown says**

A nice little bio and a quick read. Elvis always reminds me of my mother. She was a teenager when he exploded into fame in the Fifties. She was such a huge fan that, growing up in our house, any Elvis movie, special or biopic on TV was mandatory viewing. She indoctrinated me into Elvis fandom, and I still love listening to his music today.

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### **Anastasia says**

Overall, I found this book to be very good. It really showed me who Elvis was. It took me through the happy times to the tragic times. this book was really able to capture what drugs and fame can do to a person. My knowledge on Elvis improved as well as my opinion. However, this book was somewhat strange to me. I say this because the author seemed to have a crush on Elvis because of some of the ways that she has used her words while writing.

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### **Ervin Heath says**

After reading this book by Bobbie Ann Mason (no relation, to my knowledge), I have seen more clearly how the South influenced so much of the life and artistry of Elvis. This is true, if for no other reason, than Mason cites William Faulkner as a prime example of how Elvis lived his life and how he battled the tension between his rural, southern upbringing and his Las Vegas stage performances. It is noted that Elvis was born only 15 miles away from where Faulkner was born in Mississippi. There are also several references to the writings of Faulkner. Col. Parker is compared to a Faulkner character, but this time the comparison is far from complimentary. Parker is much like Flem Snopes in "Spotted Horse" and is seen as the ultimate horse trader, and someone who enjoys a good swindle now and again. Presley's mother Gladys is seen to be someone like Eula Varner in Faulkner's The Hamlet, when she (Gladys) was a teenager. Mason writes, "Gladys, like Eula, had spells of lethargy and languidness, her smoldering sexuality throbbing in the Mississippi heat." Vernon is someone not unlike Sutpen in Absolom, Absolom, who has a dream of justice for his life and wants to rise from poverty and claim the American dream for himself and his family. When Elvis begins to reap the benefits of his success, Vernon takes over the financial aspects, but in so doing, he is constantly complaining about over-spending and having too many people on the payroll. In the light of Mason's descriptions, and her idea of seeing Elvis as a southerner allows the reader to understand better how his disintegration can be viewed as the often-told tale of a country boy losing his way in the big city, only in this case, the reality can be hard to accept if one has been a fan. For me, Christmas 1956, while living in Tacoma Park, Maryland, will remain the dominating image I have of Elvis because that was when I received a copy of his first RCA record album. From time to time, I take the record out of storage and recall the pleasure of hearing him sing the very first song he ever sang in public, when he was 10 years old. The song, "Old Shep," may not have been a popular one among his fans, but the Elvis who sang it revealed the deep roots of his love for music and the innocent happiness that comes from simple pleasures. Faulkner and Elvis. Who knew?

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### **Mary says**

Elvis Presley by Bobbie Ann Mason

I can't begin to tell you how upset I was when I went to my local library to pick up my requested book. I just couldn't believe that instead of a book I had 5 discs—a book on tape. As long as I have good vision, I want to read my own books. I considered throwing it back in the return container, but I

wanted to know about the life of Elvis, the best singer in the world.

The tape recorded by Karen White was so well done. It was great! I love the book. I could listen to it and do other things on the computer. Bobbie Ann Mason is the best writer of Southern stories. A++

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### **Mmars says**

Read this on the plane on the way to Memphis. Quick little bio that gave me just enough facts and interesting little tidbits to enlighten my one-time-is-enough visit to the icon's touristo trappo. Good read. Being Southern, Mason vividly describes Presley's parents, agent, etc. and tells his life with typical (and this is a complement) quirky southern charm.

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### **Alan says**

Wonderful examination of a woefully misunderstood life and a true American tragedy by a good novelist. References the Guralnick book heavily, which I've been told is just amazing. Very engaging read, if only to understand the phenomenon.

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### **John says**

As a Southerner , author Bobbie Ann Mason has a natural understanding for much of Elvis' early background which shaped so much of his life. While not an in depth study, the author provides a commentary that lends depth and sympathy to an original American icon. There was no one with a career like Elvis before. Here was a dirt poor Southern boy who shot to unprecedeted fame and fortune without any guidance. In retrospect it was a sad out of control life of a major talent who could not control himself and would not let anyone help him.

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### **Ben says**

This is a great little bio which draws from Peter Guralnick's two part biography and a shelf of other books on the big E. If you don't have time or inclination to wade through Guralnick this is the book for you, and it stands on its own pretty darn well given Mason's deep understanding of her fellow Southerner Mr. Presley's culture and upbringing. There's a lot of great stuff in this short and beautifully written book. It's sympathetic and really gets at the charisma and significance of Elvis, but doesn't spare the less squeaky clean details, of which there are many.

The chapter on E's meeting with Nixon is nicely done and leaves me wanting to read the account by Nixon's man and the one by E's man.

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### **Jesse says**

A breezy and enjoyable little book that doesn't, in the end, manage to convey the enormity of Elvis's life. Understandable, considering how short it is. It's obviously a good starting point, though, and I can't wait to get my hands on Guralnick's two-volume bio of the King.

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### **Tony says**

ELVIS PRESLEY. (2003). Bobbie Ann Mason. \*\*\*\*.

This was another in the series of short biographies produced by Penguin in their "Lives" collection. Bobbie Ann Mason was a good choice for this job, being a Southerner and a novelist. She managed to present Presley's life from both a chronological and a psychological standpoint. All of the familiar figures in his life are there: his parents, his manager, Colonel Thomas A. Parker, Priscilla Beaulieu, and his many hangers-on. To say that Presley was a confused man would be an understatement. He knew what he wanted, but did not have the up-bringing to know how to get it. It was this lack of knowledge that allowed the likes of the Colonel to step in and take over his career. One of the interesting incidents covered in the book was Elvis's meeting with Richard Nixon. Strange. His relationships with other performers of the day were also covered – especially the Beatles. Presley's evaluation of his own personality and image was certainly confusing. This short work provides most of what you'd like to know about this cultural icon. Recommended.

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### **Debbie says**

I listened to this book - wonderfully narrated.

I suppose there's so much written about Elvis that Mason had to pick and choose. I have no idea if she did a good job or not, or what, if any, are her particular insights - but since I don't intend to follow up and be an Elvis scholar, it all worked for me.

As Mason tell it, the Elvis story is basically a parable on the dangers of success. Maybe that's why we keep chewing on it.

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### **Susan Grodsky says**

A brilliant pairing. Bobbie Ann Mason, who grew up on a Kentucky dairy farm, groks the poor boy from Tupelo as few could. Why did Elvis allow colonel Parker to exploit him? Why did he waste his talent on silly movies? Why did he abuse prescription drugs, though he knew the dangers? Bobbie Ann offers answers that are persuasive, though they don't change the essential tragedy of Elvis.

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### **Emmanuel Nevers says**

Really well done history of the King of Rock n Roll. This biography really great at depicting Elvis as a normal human being despite his legendary status. It's throughly thoughtful and well done!

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**Shawn Durham says**

Great book, but such a sad life?

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**Roxanne says**

I liked this book. I was in love with Elvis when I was a teenager. This book is very good talking about his life in the South, which I think shaped him and his music. But he was not ready to become an overnight star and the fame he got was hard on him. I think he craved his privacy.

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**JulieK says**

I really like the Penguin Lives series - the pairings of authors and subjects are often interesting, plus they're short, which is great when you're interested in learning something about a famous person but not quite 900 pages worth of interested. This one is a good example; it fleshed out what I knew about Elvis and gave some insight into how his life took on the trajectory it did.

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**Carla says**

Nicely done, short biography on Elvis Presley. Provides some insights on how his early life influenced his choices and and relationships with key people throughout his career. Bobbie Ann Mason's writing style makes it a pleasurable read.

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