ELVIS PRESLEY: "ALL SHOOK UP"

The Man and His Music

Elvis Presley is the most celebrated individual not only in '50s rock and roll, but perhaps in the history of the genre. He was the first rock and roll superstar. With his extravagant lifestyle and innovative music performances, he shattered both societal and musical barriers, changing American culture forever. Presley revolutionized American popular music by brilliantly melding country, gospel, pop, and blues while fusing these black and white genres to create his unique sound. With his music, he blurred racial borders that dissolved as if they never existed in music, while performing with a natural sexuality that made him a teen idol and a role model for generations of rockers.

Perhaps the most controversial musician in rock history, Presley not only thrilled but also threatened American society by journeying to the greatest extremes with his ability to imitate black blues singers and his nerve to cross color borders, combined with his flamboyant, uninhibited performance behaviors. His love of roots music and respect for the past, along with his rejection of it and his demand for uniqueness, combined with his desire to raise his financial and social status to give him an intense drive to succeed. Presley signaled to '50s society that it was time to be liberated, that it was okay to listen to and partake in exciting rock and roll music. He helped launch the '50s youth culture as teenagers acquired their own radios and record players. With Presley, popular music began to challenge conventional tastes, and exhilarating rock and roll music began to dominate society.

Ever since his amazing ascendance in the mid-1950s, every rock and roll performer has been measured against Presley. Today, many years after his death,