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**LONDON**  
GRID FOR LEARNING

The "King of Rock and Roll", Elvis Presley, dies at the age of 42 in Memphis  
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## Elvis dies and the age of Rock is over



Presley as idol, 1958

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 a 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 rallied 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 a 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 in concert, 1977

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Presley regularly fattened 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

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.