

Tom Petty: Elvis

When Tom Petty was 10, his uncle got a job on the set of Elvis Presley's 1962 film *Follow That Dream*, and Petty stopped by. "He arrived in a fleet of white Cadillacs," Petty says. "People were screaming, handing records over a chain-link fence for him to sign. I remember his hair was so black that the sunshine was glowing off of it. Just a nod and a hello made your skin tingle. I was high for weeks. It lit a fever in me to get every record I could, and I really digested it. Elvis became the soundtrack of my early years."

1. "That's All Right" 1954

Elvis and his band were fooling around at the end of a session at Sun with this song, and Sam Phillips heard it right away. It was a pretty obscure Arthur Crudup song, and it's incredible to me that Elvis knew it. He really put his own whack on it. He sings with a hiccup in the timing - I don't know where that came from. The Sun stuff is really high art. It's so pure, and that sense of discovery is there.

2. "Baby Let's Play House" 1955

Arthur Gunter's original was a really obscure blues number - and a really great record. But there's something about Elvis' version that's just otherworldly. Scotty Moore was always such an underrated guitar player. He plays around everything on the track and just fills the holes.

And then when he solos, it's from Mars.

3. "Heartbreak Hotel" 1956

It could have been the national anthem. It rocks, and when the piano comes in, it starts to roll in this really sensual way. The track is very spooky and very empty - there's just bass and a little piano, with D.J. Fontana playing the deepest groove.

4. "Hound Dog" 1956

I love Big Mama Thornton's version, but Elvis changed the gender of the song and completely made it his own. What a vocal.

5. "Mean Woman Blues" 1957

"She kiss so hard she bruise my lips/Hurts so good my heart just flips." That was pret-

ty heavy stuff for a little kid like me to hear. He brought in backup singers the Jordanaires, and used them as a rhythm instrument, which was usually done in old gospel music. That added a whole other dimension.

6. "One Night" 1958

Elvis changed the lyrics of Fats Domino's version, from "One night of sin is what I'm paying for" to "One night with you is what I'm now praying for," which is great. It starts as a standard blues, but then he takes things even higher with the bridge, which leaps out of the song. You're not expecting that, and it's heavenly.

7. "Santa Claus Is Back in Town" 1957

"Santa Claus is coming down your chimney tonight" sounds absolutely filthy when Elvis sings it. It might be his best blues vocal ever, with those beautiful stops that nobody could do but him.

8. "Can't Help Falling in Love" 1961

When it came on the radio, it'd make you swoon every time. I prefer Elvis before he went into the Army in '58, but he did come back and do a few great things. It wasn't all over.

9. "A Mess of Blues" 1960

It was one of his first sessions when he came back from the Army, recorded with this great band from Nashville - one of the best ones of that era. The lyrics are sad, but he sounds triumphant.

10. "(Marie's the Name) His Latest Flame" 1961

An acoustic guitar and a snare drum played with brushes carry the rhythm, but when the six-string bass comes in and the piano goes up to the high register, the whole thing jumps out of the speaker. I used to have a tape of alternate takes. It was kind of a mess when they started, and it turned into this beautiful arrangement.

