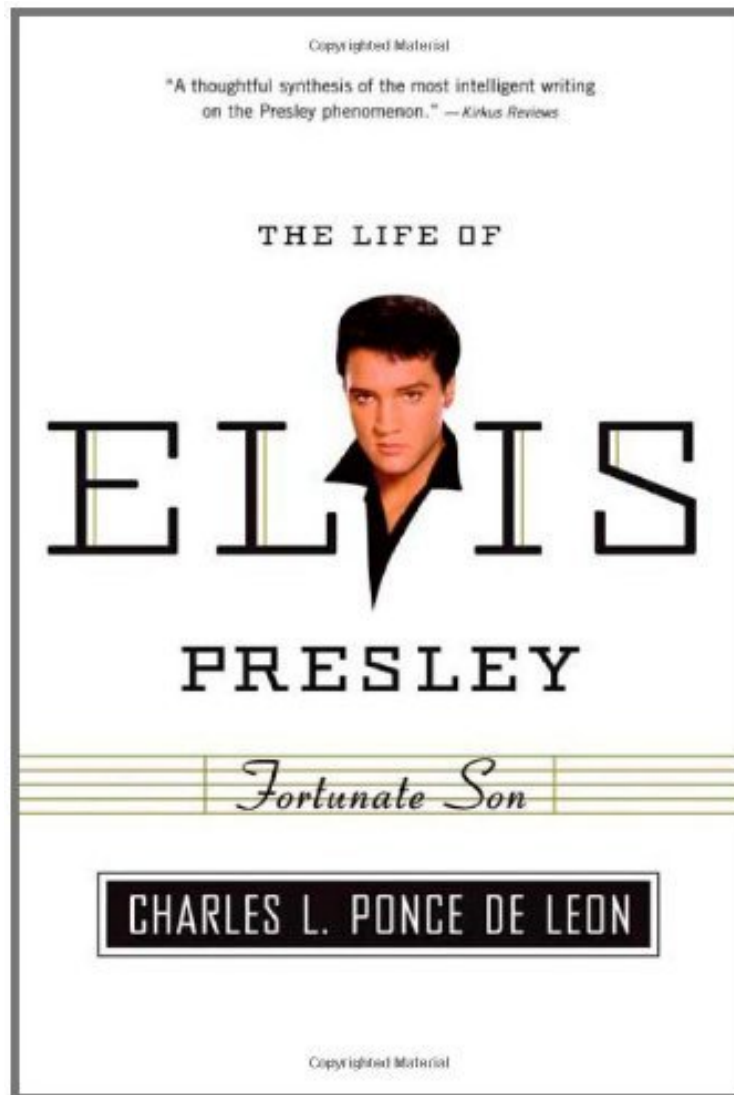


[Library ebook] Fortunate Son: The Life of Elvis Presley (American Portrait (Hill and Wang))

Fortunate Son: The Life of Elvis Presley (American Portrait (Hill and Wang))

Charles L. Ponce de Leon

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Charles L. Ponce de Leon : Fortunate Son: The Life of Elvis Presley (American Portrait (Hill and Wang))
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fortunate Son: The Life of Elvis Presley (American Portrait (Hill and Wang)):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By RickRaussso good, can't believe how much I didn't know about Elvis. Clever writing
6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The King Has No Clothes
By Bohdan KotElvis Presley's story is so fairly well known that it has become part of the American Dream canon of rags to riches. A new biography by history professor, Charles L. Ponce de Leon, begs to ask the question: What can another

Presley biography add to our understanding of the man? "Fortunate Son" would not satisfy the ardent fan of Presley, but would perhaps fit the bill for those who want to know more about Presley's life but do not want to invest the time in reading Peter Guralnick's expansive two-volume biography ("Last Train to Memphis" and "Careless Love"). In fact, "Fortunate Son" reads like a cliff notes version of Guralnick's Presley biography; this point is evident as one peruses the notes section. Ponce de Leon illuminates Presley's high (1956 television appearances) and low points (1960s movies) in a succinct manner without giving the impression of rushing the reader despite the biography being only 212 pages. "Fortunate Son" does not add any new information on the King of Rock and Roll as much as compress and develop a taut, concise picture from various past biographies and historical resources. In Ponce de Leon's view, Presley is a casualty of fame. The author points out 1958 to be the crucial year where the slow unraveling of the King began (Presley is drafted into the U.S. Army and begins ingesting amphetamines to stay awake during his long rounds/drills; Presley's mother, Gladys, dies). Presley's lack of challenge and isolation grew as he was cranking out a "travelogue" (Presley's term for his movies) in as little as three weeks during the 1960s. And sadly, the King's health and appearance went into decline, especially in the late 1970s, but no one in Presley's circle was on par with the King to confront the ailing singer. Ponce de Leon writes, "This was the terrible, tragic downside of being the King. Elvis had no equal; with everyone close to him being in his service, no one close to him could give him the help he needed." "Fortunate Son" not only tracks how someone born in a shotgun house in Tupelo, Mississippi can rock millions by the tender age of twenty-one, but also chronicles how this same Greek-god like singer becomes a parody of himself and ultimately dies prematurely at the age of forty-two. A riveting account told in a tightly drawn narrative. Bohdan Kot0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Solid read By John Moeller De Leon excels in bringing in more cultural and economic history to the story of Elvis, peppering it with a better overall cultural perspective that is not as evident in his major source, Peter Guralnick's two book opus "Last Train to Memphis" and "Careless Love". Where Guralnick spends most of his time delving into the personal and psychological, De Leon builds on the incredibly researched work of Guralnick by adding a more general and broader American cultural perspective that allows those new to Elvis Presley lore to place him better in his context. A very solid effort, De Leon has a nice and erudite writing style that never exudes pretentiousness. A very fine addition for those wanting a shorter and more general overview of a talented singer and even bigger cultural icon.

Elvis Presley was celebrity's perfect storm. His sole but substantial contribution was talent, a fact Charles L. Ponce de Leon is careful to demonstrate throughout his wonderfully contextual *Fortunate Son*. Even as the moments of lucidity necessary to exercise that talent grew rarer and rarer, Elvis proved his musical gifts right up to the end of his life. Beyond that, however, he was fortune's child. *Fortunate Son* succinctly traces out the larger shifts that repeatedly redefined the cultural landscape during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, using Elvis's life to present a brief history of American popular culture during these tumultuous decades.

From Publishers Weekly Is there anything left to be said about Elvis Presley's life since the publication of Peter Guralnick's two-volume biography in the late 1990s? Even Ponce de Leon, who teaches history at SUNY-Purchase, acknowledges his significant debt to Guralnick in an "interpretive biography" that skims over many of the details of Presley's life to focus on cultural context. Unfortunately, this doesn't lead to a new appreciation, just a retread of some familiar themes. Thus Elvis was "influenced by the products of a national mass culture" until he became one of that culture's greatest icons while creating a sound that wove together various strains of music from Southern whites and blacks. The presentation is so compressed that much of the music and many movies are elided, and even the personal details are packed tightly into a psychological reading that sees Presley's downward spiral as an attempt to escape the pressures of fame in "an alternate universe governed by his own whims and predilections." Ponce de Leon's portrait is sympathetic, confidently defending Elvis from those who would brand him a racist, but this is all just reinforcement, not reappraisal. The competent, workmanlike retelling of Presley's life won't alienate fans, but neither will it spark debate. (Aug.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist By now, the story of Elvis Presley is widely known: a humble lad from Tupelo invents rock and roll and becomes a Hollywood star, an icon of the American dream, and ultimately, bloating into a parody of himself, a victim of his own success. Peter Guralnick told the legend best in the definitive *Last Train to Memphis* (1994) and *Careless Love* (1999). While it's agreed that Presley was a singular talent who successfully melded the influences of disparate cultures to create and popularize a brand new sound, "rock and roll would surely have appeared without Elvis," Ponce de Leon writes; but it may not have had the resonance and impact that the figure of Elvis made with it. Reacting to the time and the place--America in the 1950s--promoter Tom Parker saw the potential the new mass media afforded for making Elvis more than a regional star, and the "emerging purchasing power of teens" fueled his rise. Whereas Guralnick provided detail, Ponce de Leon distills Elvis' context. Benjamin Segedin Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "A vivid retelling of the Elvis Saga, and a deft assessment of its meanings." Richard Wightman Fox