

The Sun Story

A quick note of clarification...the "Memphis Recording Service" is a business that Sam Phillips started and located at 706 Union Ave in Memphis, TN. "Sun Record Company" is a label that he founded a couple of years later to produce the product recorded by the Memphis Recording Service and then later at the Sam Phillips Recording Service. "Sun Studio" is now the business that was started in the '80s at the former home of the Memphis Recording Service but is quite often used to refer to the studio of Sun Records.

Sun Studio was opened by rock pioneer Sam Phillips at 706 Union Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 3, 1950. It was originally called the Memphis Recording Service, sharing the same building with the Sun Records label business. Reputedly the first rock-and-roll single, Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats' "Rocket 88" was recorded there in 1951 with song composer Ike Turner on keyboards, leading the studio to claim status as the **"birthplace of rock & roll"**.

Rock-and-roll, country music, and rockabilly artists including Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Charlie Feathers, Ray Harris, Warren Smith, Charlie Rich, and Jerry Lee Lewis, signed to the Sun Records label and recorded there throughout the latter 1950s. The sounds that came from the Sun label during those early years molded and defined rock and roll for generations to come.

Sam Phillips shared the tiny Union Avenue office with Marion Keisker, who took care of most of the non-music end of the business. She also greeted the teenaged Elvis Presley when he arrived there in 1953 to make a personal recording, noting in the studio log that he was a "good ballad singer". In less than two years Sam Phillips took Elvis from a complete unknown who had never played in public to the most sought after singer in the country. The five records that Elvis recorded at Sun Studio fused country, blues and gospel music into a new sound that would literally change music forever. Phillips later sold Elvis's contract to RCA Victor for \$35,000 to relieve financial difficulties he was experiencing. One may wonder whether Sun would have continued to exist at all without Phillips's savvy business decision to sell his hottest commodity!

The studio soon outgrew its Union Avenue location, and Sam Phillips opened the larger Sam C. Phillips Recording Studio in 1959 to take the place of the older facility. In 1969, Sam Phillips sold the label to Shelby Singleton, and there was no recording-related or label-related activity in the building until September 1985. It was in that year that Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash gathered in the empty building to begin the *Class of '55* recording sessions. In 1987, the original building housing the Sun Records label and Memphis Recording Service was reopened as "Sun Studio".

Sun Studio was designated a National Historic Landmark on July 31, 2003.

The Sun Songs *with artist(s), Sun label no. & recording date

That's All Right

Elvis Presley #209 (07-1954)

Blue Moon of Kentucky

Elvis Presley #209 (07-1954)

I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone

Elvis Presley #217 (04-1955)

I Walk the Line

Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two #241 (04-1956)

Rock House

Roy Orbison #251 (09-1956)

Hey Good Lookin'

Johnny Cash LP 1245 (09-1960)

You Win Again

Jerry Lee Lewis #281 (11-1957)

Cry Cry Cry

Johnny Cash #210 (09-1954)

Red Hot

Billy "The Kid" Emerson #219 (06-1955)

Billy Riley & His Little Green Men #277 (09-1957)

Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee

Malcolm Yelvington and the Star Rhythm Boys #211 (11-1954)

Good Rockin' Tonight

Elvis Presley #210 (09-1954)

Jerry Lee Lewis — unissued (1959)

Matchbox

Carl Perkins #261 (01-1957)

Don't Be Cruel

Jerry Lee Lewis SLP 1230 (1958)

Johnny B Goode

Jerry Lee Lewis — unissued (1958)

Boppin' the Blues

Carl Perkins #243 (05-1956)

Put Your Cat Clothes On

Carl Perkins — unissued

Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On

Jerry Lee Lewis #267 (03-1957)

Flying Saucer Rock and Roll

Billy Riley & His Little Green Men #260 ((01-1957)

Blue Moon

Elvis Presley (original Sun master released on an RCA album in 1956)

Good Golly Miss Molly

Jerry Lee Lewis #382 (11-1962)

Trying to Get to You

Roy Orbison SLP 1260 (1961)

Elvis Presley (original Sun master released on an RCA album in 1956)

Mystery Train

Little Junior's Blue Flames #192 (11-1953)

Elvis Presley #223 (08-1955)

Vernon Taylor #325 (07-1959)

Just Because

Elvis Presley (original Sun master released on an RCA album in 1956)

Save the Last Dance for Me

Jerry Lee Lewis #367 (09-1961)

Folsom Prison Blues

Johnny Cash #232 (12-1955)

Great Balls of Fire

Jerry Lee Lewis #281 (11-1957)

Blue Suede Shoes

Carl Perkins #234 (12-1955)

The Sun Players

Clay Arthur — vocals and guitar

Doug Arthur — bass

Rick Burnette — lead guitar

Larry Dahlke — vocals

Moe Ritenour — drums

A note of thanks...

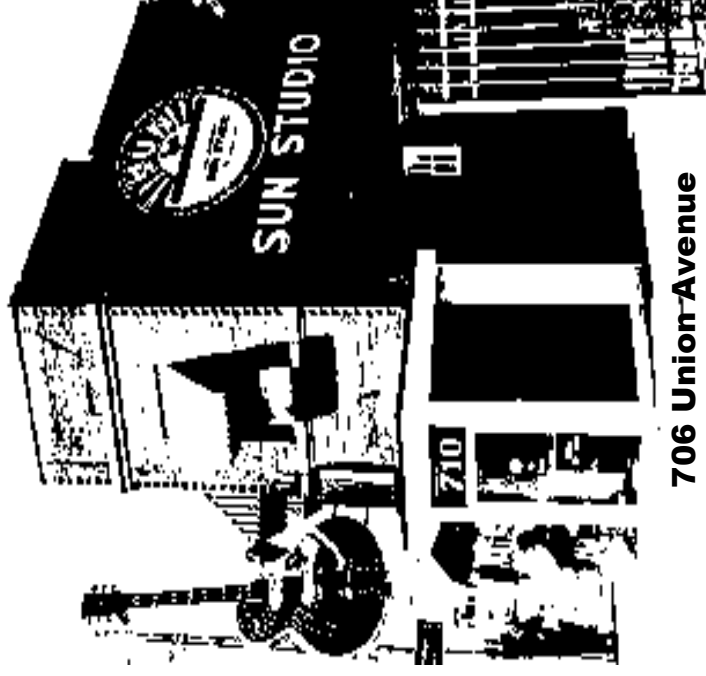
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706 Union Avenue

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AS THE SUN PLAYERS