

SAM
PHILLIPS
#1

ALL (CON'T)

BUT LAY OFF OF MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES
WELL IT'S BLUE, BLUE, BLUE SUEDE SHOES
BLUE, BLUE, BLUE SUEDE SHOES
BLUE, BLUE, BLUE SUEDE SHOES
BLUE, BLUE, BLUE SUEDE SHOES

CARL

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING
BUT LAY OFF OF MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES

(Song ends... lights down on ALL but SAM PHILLIPS, who has entered the studio and is illuminated by a mystic shaft of light, and on the FOUR BOYS, who are facing forward toward the AUDIENCE, each framed in their own individual shaft of the otherworldly light of Sam's imagination...bass and drums continue to play quietly underneath.

PHILLIPS

(To AUDIENCE)

Now, ain't they somethin'?!
START

1A: INTRODUCTION (UNDERScore)

Every one of my boys started right here, and we've been blessed this past year. Blessed with success beyond our wildest imaginings. Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, and Johnny Cash.

(PHILLIPS crosses downstage, lights begin to dim on QUARTET, who exit in the dark)

And my name is Samuel Cornelius Phillips. Pretty big name for a little red dirt Alabama country boy, huh? This is mah company. Sun Records. See, I was a radio man. Come to Memphis right after the war...and prob'ly could'a been a big wheel here. But there's a cussedness 'bout me. It's hard as hell to work for someone else. And another thing, I didn't just wanna PLAY the tunes, I wanted to RECORD 'em. So, first of 1950 I threw the cards in the air, and started Sun Records. Now don't be thinkin' I just fell in the luck bucket findin' these kids. It ain't that easy. There were a LOTTA years when dee-jays wouldn't play none a'my records. Back then, I'd PAY 'em, and they still wouldn't play 'em. If I hadn't had faith in what I was doin', I'd a' given up a long time ago. Now,

PHILLIPS (CON'T)

you might'a heard that I had to sell ol' Elvis to RCA, so he ain't on Sun Records anymore. Well, RCA called again...and who do you think they wanna buy now?

(Invites AUDIENCE to guess)

Me! Yeah, offering a LOT of money to fold Sun Records into RCA. Move up to New York City...work exclusively with Elvis again. I been stallin' 'em, but they're lowerin' the boom on me. They want an answer--by close of business tonight.

(Lights transition into studio)

— END

Hey fellas. Elvis just called. He's up the street at Jo-Jo Coogie's place and he's comin' by directly. Don't none of y'all tell Carl when he gets here. Got it?

BROTHER JAY AND FLUKE

Yup.

PHILLIPS

Them boys prob'ly ain't seen each other since I had 'em doin' shows offa that ol' flat bed truck in Grenada, Mississippi.

(To FLUKE)

Musta bin 'bout a year, huh?

FLUKE

Yup. We all come away with four bucks apiece.

BROTHER JAY

Yeah, four bucks.

PHILLIPS

And now--now we all got Cadillacs and diamond rings.

(JERRY LEE re-enters from outside)

JERRY LEE

Not me, buddy. I got a broke-down Ford. And, Mr. Phillips...I might need me a little payday loan...what with gas up to twenty-five cents 'n all.

SAM
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#2

JOHNNY

Uh, some other time, Mr. Phillips.

PHILLIPS

(Holds out a guitar to JOHNNY)

Come on, boy. Don't keep saying no to the fella who give you your break.

(JOHNNY just stares at PHILLIPS for a second)

PHILLIPS

Come on son, you're home.

(JOHNNY takes the guitar from PHILLIPS)

JOHNNY

Alright, I'll do it for the boy's mama. Give me some Luther, Carl...

*(CARL plays first eight notes unaccompanied...
BAND kicks in on boom-chicka-boom)*

#5: FOLSOM PRISON BLUES

JOHNNY

I HEAR THE TRAIN A COMIN'
IT'S ROLLIN' 'ROUND THE BEND
AND I AIN'T SEEN THE SUN SHINE
SINCE I DON'T KNOW WHEN
I'M STUCK IN FOLSOM PRISON
AND TIME KEEPS DRAGGIN' ON
BUT THAT TRAIN KEEPS A-ROLLIN' ON
DOWN TO SAN ANTONE

(FLASHBACK BEGINS)

START —

PHILLIPS

(To AUDIENCE)

John come to see us first of '55, right after he got out of the Air Force.

(JOHNNY slings guitar behind his back and walks to PHILLIPS...BAND continues to play underneath)

JOHNNY

I was a Specialist First Class, Mistuh Phillips.

PHILLIPS

Whadya specialize in, son?

JOHNNY

Beer and fighting. But don't get me wrong, Mistuh Phillips, I've studied the Bible. Studied it cover to cover. And I've wrote a coupla sacred songs.

PHILLIPS

Look boy, I got muh stockroom out back full a' boxes of the best gospel records--every one of 'em unsold. Now, when you can find it in your heart to be a 'sinner' for a few minutes, you come back and see me, y'hear.

(PHILLIPS grins to AUDIENCE)

He was back the very next day.

(Brief pause)

Now this past year John busted wide open, but I ain't no fool. I know them other record companies been sniffin' around him and sayin' "What can a little label like Sun Records do for you?" Well, I made him a star while they all stood by laughin' at me. John knows the hour upon hour I spent with him. It was me givin' him the courage to not sound like ever'one else. And he oughta be mighty grateful. So tonight I'm tyin' him up with a three-year contract extension, and then all them record companies can go to HELL!

(FLASHBACK ENDS)

—END

JOHNNY

WHEN I WAS JUST A BABY
MY MAMA TOLD ME, "SON
ALWAYS BE A GOOD BOY
DON'T EVER PLAY WITH GUNS"
BUT I SHOT A MAN IN RENO
JUST TO WATCH HIM DIE
I HEAR THAT WHISTLE BLOWIN'
I HANG MY HEAD AND CRY
(Guitar solo)
I BET THERE'S RICH FOLKS EATIN'
IN A FANCY DININ' CAR
THEY'RE PROB'LY DRINKIN' COFFEE
AND SMOKIN' BIG CIGARS
WELL I KNOW I HAD IT COMIN'
I KNOW I CAN'T BE FREE
BUT THOSE PEOPLE KEEP A-MOVIN'
AND THAT'S WHAT TORTURES ME

BAND

WOOOOO

START—

SAM
PHILLIPS
#3

PHILLIPS

(To AUDIENCE)

Now, the boy busted out real big, real quick--but my distributors kept "forgettin" to pay me. So comin' up on Christmas 1955, I was flat-on-my-ass broke, I couldn't even afford to buy presents for my wife Becky and my boys, and RCA Victor's talkin' to me about buyin' Elvis. "Sure," I'd tell 'em, "you can have him--for forty thousand dollars." They're saying, "We could fix the World Series for less than that!" Then...here comes this honkin' big check from RCA Victor and Elvis--is gone.

(Bitterly)

Six months later, the only thing ever'one remembers is me sellin' his contract, an' they're all tellin' me I'm the King of Fools... But Sun couldn't have made it to the spring of '56 without that check. Paid all my bills, bought me a radio station and quite a bit of stock in a little business that started up just down the street called--Holiday Inn. Well, if I'm a fool, I'm a happy fool.

(FLASHBACK ENDS)

—END

ELVIS

A WELL DEE, DEET, N DEE, DEE
A WELL DEE, DEET, N DEE, DEE
A WELL DEE, DEE, DEE, DEE
I NEED YOUR LOVIN'
THAT'S ALRIGHT
THAT'S ALRIGHT NOW, MAMA
ANYWAY YOU DO

(Song ends...PHILLIPS looks around at the
"QUARTET")

CARL

Hey, Elvis. This was s'posed to be a Carl Perkins recordin' session. Not some welcome home Elvis party. Betcha didn't know that!

PHILLIPS

(Cuts him short)

Carl, son. That MATCHBOX song is a mammerjammin' HIT but it ain't ever'day I get a by-God...Million Dollar Quartet in my studio. Alright boys, listen up. It's nearly Christmas and we got a lot to celebrate!

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#4

#18: GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

JERRY LEE

YOU SHAKE MY NERVES AND YOU RATTLE MY BRAIN
TOO MUCH A LOVE DRIVE A MAN INSANE
YOU BROKE MY WILL
OH WHAT A THRILL
A GOODNESS GRACIOUS, GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

(PHILLIPS storms out of the building...DYANNE gets her coat and follows him out)

JERRY LEE (CON'T)

I LAUGHED AT LOVE AND I THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY
YOU CAME ALONG AND YOU WHOODED ME, HONEY
I CHANGED MY MIND
YOUR LOVE IS FINE
GOODNESS GRACIOUS, GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

KISS ME BABY, WHHHHHOOOO, FEELS GOOD
HOLD ME BABY
YEAH I WANT TO LOVE YOU LIKE A LOVER SHOULD
WELL YOU'RE FINE, A SO KIND
GONNA TELL THIS WORLD THAT YOU'RE MINE, MINE, MINE, MINE

I CHEW MY NAILS AND I TWIDDLE MY THUMBS
I'M A LITTLE NERVOUS, BUT IT SURE IS FUN
C'MON BABY, YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY
GOODNESS GRACIOUS, GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

(JERRY LEE and BAND continue underneath as lights dim on all but DYANNE and PHILLIPS)

START—

DYANNE

(Very tentatively)

That sounds like...a hit to me.

PHILLIPS

(Not really listening...brushing her off)

Maybe, it does. I don't know...

DYANNE

(Carefully and quietly)

That's just it, you DO know. And that's the deal in this business.
The NEXT hit, not the last one...

PHILLIPS

(Increasingly combative)

Well, it ain't that easy, is it? I made these boys...D'ya think Columbia woulda signed Johnny Cash if they'd heard him and his little boom-chicka-boom deal? Hell, no, they'd have laughed their fool heads off. I'm the one who put their records in the back of my car and drove tens a'thousands a miles a year, visitin' deejays city by city, station by station. The only thing I went out with was faith! I believed with all my heart and soul in what I had in my little bag--Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins...

(Takes a moment to catch his breath and compose himself)

But, hell, maybe you're right.

DYANNE

What do you mean?

PHILLIPS

You and Elvis the ones tryin' to get me to sell out to RCA, an' go on up to New York City.

DYANNE

You're right, but I just wanted for Elvis to be happy...Look, maybe I was wrong.

PHILLIPS

(Beginning to slowly erupt again)

Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins obviously got no faith in Sun Records or Sam Phillips. Mebbe this place should be an auto parts store again. Mebbe they're all right. This music ain't gonna make it! Hell, you got Congress passin' laws 'gainst it! And you got Church people tryin' to SHUT ME DOWN!!

DYANNE

And you know that'll just make the kids want it even more.

(PHILLIPS turns and looks at her)

Why do you think RCA's after you? Because YOU know how to MAKE this music like no one else does. Jerry Lee needs you. He believes in you and who knows who's gonna be waiting out there tomorrow.

PHILLIPS

Well, I did just sign this kid out of Texas. Funny lookin' dude, funny soundin' name. Roy Orbison.

(Lead guitarist plays first five notes of "Oh, Pretty Woman"...he takes a moment...and listens to the music)

Listen to 'em in there.

(He turns to look at her for a moment)

You can call it the Devil's music...say it ain't even music at all...but, I'll tell you somethin'...there's times we'll be in here workin' on a song hour upon hour, and then suddenly these guys will give it ten percent more than they ever knew they had. They know it and I know it.

(With quiet intensity)

Then the guys go home and I'm here by muhself. I spin the tapes back and listen...and I think, "My god, this is where the soul of a man never dies."

(DYANNE turns to exit back into the studio...PHILLIPS turns to look at DYANNE, who smiles and nods to him, and returns to studio...PHILLIPS starts to really listen to the song and begins to realize what it is)

END

JERRY LEE

KISS ME BABY, WHHHHHOOOO, FEELS GOOD
HOLD ME BABY
YEAH I WANNA LOVE YOU LIKE A LOVER SHOULD
WELL YOU'RE FINE, SO KIND
GONNA TELL THIS WORLD THAT YOU'RE MINE, MINE, MINE, MINE

I CHEW MY NAILS AND I TWIDDLE MY THUMBS
I'M REAL NERVOUS BOYS, BUT IT SURE IS FUN
C'MON BABY
YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY
WOOO, GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

PHILLIPS

(To AUDIENCE, with building passion of true believer)

So here's the deal. All the success I had this past year didn't make the problems go away. It just changed 'em. Sure, I'd like to hand off the day-to-day crap to RCA and just make my records. But I can't walk away from this place. I hung every piece of tile in that studio and wired the whole set-up so my music don't sound