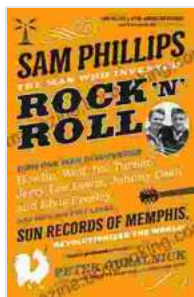


# The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll

## The Extraordinary Story of Sam Phillips and the Founding of Sun Records

In the annals of music history, few figures loom as large as Sam Phillips. As the founder of Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee, Phillips is widely credited with discovering and launching the careers of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis, four of the most iconic and influential musicians of the 20th century. His contributions to the development of rock 'n' roll are immeasurable, and his legacy continues to inspire musicians and music lovers around the world.

Phillips was born in Florence, Alabama, in 1923. He began his career in the music business as a disc jockey in Memphis, where he developed a keen ear for talent. In 1950, he founded Sun Records with a \$300 loan from his mother. The label's early releases were mostly blues and country music, but Phillips was always on the lookout for something new and different.



### Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll

by Peter Guralnick

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 32746 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 748 pages



In 1954, Phillips recorded a young truck driver named Elvis Presley. Presley's raw energy and charisma immediately impressed Phillips, and he knew he had something special on his hands. Presley's first single for Sun Records, "That's All Right," was a regional hit, and it helped to launch his career. Presley would go on to become one of the most successful and influential musicians in history, and Phillips played a key role in his rise to stardom.

Phillips' success with Presley did not stop him from looking for other talented artists. In 1955, he signed Johnny Cash, a young singer-songwriter from Arkansas. Cash's distinctive voice and dark, brooding songs were a perfect fit for Sun Records, and he quickly became one of the label's most popular artists. Cash's songs often explored themes of poverty, pain, and redemption, and they resonated with audiences around the world.

In 1956, Phillips signed Carl Perkins, a young guitarist from Jackson, Tennessee. Perkins was a master of the rockabilly style, and his songs were full of energy and excitement. Perkins' biggest hit for Sun Records was "Blue Suede Shoes," which became a rock 'n' roll classic. Perkins' career was tragically cut short in 1957 when he was seriously injured in a car accident, but his songs continue to be enjoyed by fans around the world.

In 1957, Phillips signed Jerry Lee Lewis, a young pianist from Ferriday, Louisiana. Lewis was a wild and unpredictable performer, and his music was full of fire and brimstone. Lewis' biggest hit for Sun Records was

"Great Balls of Fire," which became a rock 'n' roll anthem. Lewis' career was also marred by controversy, but his music remains one of the most exciting and influential bodies of work in rock 'n' roll history.

Sam Phillips' contributions to rock 'n' roll are immeasurable. He discovered and launched the careers of some of the most iconic and influential musicians of the 20th century. His Sun Records label was a breeding ground for new talent, and his music helped to shape the sound of American music. Phillips was a true visionary, and his legacy continues to inspire musicians and music lovers around the world.

### **The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll: A Timeline**

- 1923: Sam Phillips is born in Florence, Alabama.
- 1950: Phillips founds Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee.
- 1954: Phillips records Elvis Presley's first single, "That's All Right."
- 1955: Phillips signs Johnny Cash to Sun Records.
- 1956: Phillips signs Carl Perkins to Sun Records.
- 1957: Phillips signs Jerry Lee Lewis to Sun Records.
- 1969: Phillips sells Sun Records to Shelby Singleton.
- 2006: Phillips is inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- 2008: Phillips dies at the age of 85.

### **The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll: A Legacy**

Sam Phillips' legacy is vast and enduring. He is widely credited with discovering and launching the careers of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl

Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis, four of the most iconic and influential musicians of the 20th century. His Sun Records label was a breeding ground for new talent, and his music helped to shape the sound of American music.

Phillips was a true visionary, and his impact on rock 'n' roll cannot be overstated. He was a pioneer who helped to create a new genre of music, and his legacy continues to inspire musicians and music lovers around the world.

### **The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll: A Discography**

- Elvis Presley: "That's All Right" (1954)
- Elvis Presley: "Heartbreak Hotel" (1956)
- Johnny Cash: "I Walk the Line" (1956)
- Johnny Cash: "Folsom Prison Blues" (1955)
- Carl Perkins: "Blue Suede Shoes" (1956)
- Carl Perkins: "Matchbox" (1957)
- Jerry Lee Lewis: "Great Balls of Fire" (1957)
- Jerry Lee Lewis: "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" (1957)

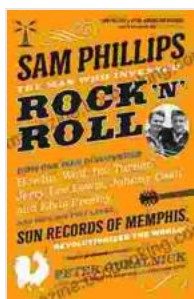
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- Charles Wolfe, *A Good-Natured Riot: The Birth of Rock 'n' Roll in Memphis* (1999)

## The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll: A Filmography

- *The Million Dollar Quartet* (2000)
- *Cadillac Records* (2008)
- *Elvis* (2022)



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