

A nervous Elvis vomits in the family bathroom before taking a walk. He finds solace in a movie house while WHBQ is flooded with calls to keep playing that great new record. The radio station wants Elvis himself on the air, but he can't be found until the wind kicks up. The brewing bad weather cues Gladys to her son's whereabouts. Outside the theatre he tells her, "There's a storm comin', mama." "I know, honey, I know," she says, saying more than he knows.

No, it didn't happen quite that way. Elvis did go to the theatre that eventful night, and Gladys found him there. But Presley laughs when asked about the storm metaphor.

"He [Elvis] was probably quite poetic," she says, agreeing that the ending is "one of the extras" used to heighten the dramatic impact of "Elvis."

"Has anybody told you you look like Elvis?" St. Gerard is asked.

"No!" he exclaims, laughing. "No!"

But he does. Though his ABC-approved biography doesn't say so, St. Gerard had a cameo role as Elvis in last year's "Great Balls of Fire," the movie that starred Dennis Quaid as Jerry Lee Lewis. St. Gerard also played a rebellious teen in the 1988 movie "Hairspray."

What happens is, when you play a role, you draw on your qualities that are similar," St. Gerard says. "It's a certain carriage, how you hold yourself, really. I'm finding that it's mostly in the attitude, and it does kind of change my face. Elvis had a certain vulnerability and humility, but he was not a wimp."

St. Gerard is television's fourth Elvis, not including the bit Elvis parts in movies such as last season's CBS drama "Liberace: Behind the Music." Kurt Russell played the title role in the 1979 ABC movie "Elvis"; Don Johnson starred in "Elvis and the Beauty Queen," made in 1981 for NBC; Dale Midkiff was Elvis in ABC's "Elvis and Me," the 1988 mini-series based on Priscilla Presley's best-seller.

"I couldn't possibly turn down an opportunity like this," St. Gerard says. "It can get a little overwhelming, yes. But I try to keep it as real as possible. I'm playing a 19-year-old guy who's not sure where he's going. He has no idea he's going to become Elvis, the King."

The producers plan to include Elvis' kingmaker, Col. Tom Parker, in future storylines. Presley's former manager, now 80 and living in Las Vegas, is cooperating in the making of the series, Schilling says. To many he is the man who turned Elvis to mush.

"A lot of people see him as villain, and

I don't," says St. Gerard. "I can't dislike him. Elvis didn't hate him, obviously. Elvis trusted him his whole life. There's a lot of good things about the Colonel, and I think he gets a bum rap."

St. Gerard, who admits to knowing little about current or past pop music, says he has

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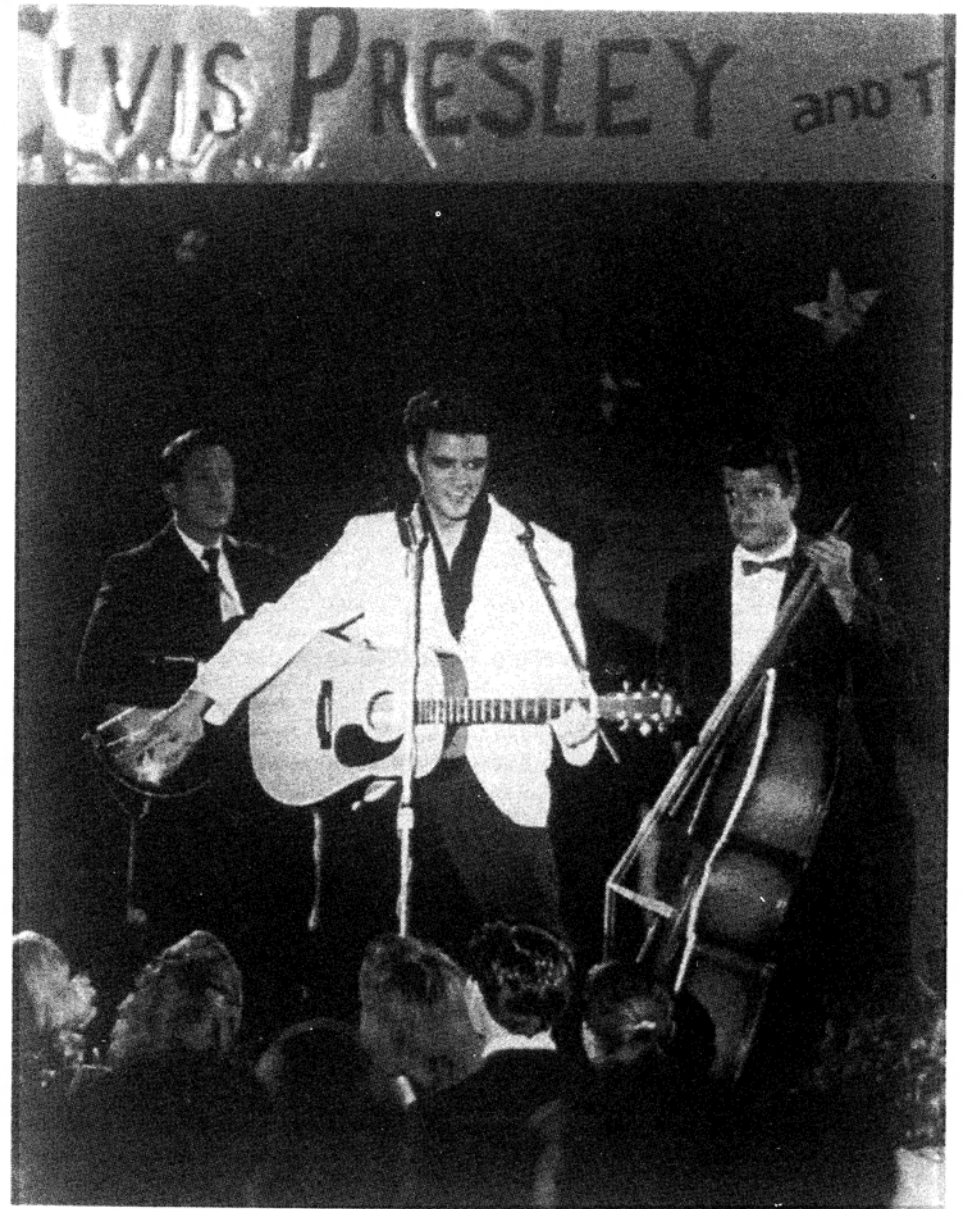
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read virtually every book about Elvis. He also has met many of the King's undying fans during his several months in Memphis, which he calls "Elvis town."

"Everybody in this town is somehow connected with Elvis," he says. "They know someone who did his plumbing or someone who delivered his laundry or his birthday cakes."

Or someone who sells Elvis souvenirs in a city that perpetuates his hold on hearts, minds and charge cards. If "Elvis" the series works, Schilling has another potential moneymaker in mind.

"We've just completed a deal with RCA Victor," he says. "And we're hoping to put out an album each year with music from the series."