

Elvis Presley Arrives in Bremerhaven as a GI (October 1, 1958)

Abstract

Elvis Presley was already a global star when he was called up for military service. He completed his basic training in Texas and was eventually stationed in Germany. On October 1, 1958, he arrived by ship in Bremerhaven from New York. Hundreds of fans were waiting for him. The reporter's attempts to understand the reasons for Elvis' popularity, especially among young female fans, seem almost comical at times. At the end of the report, you can hear Elvis himself shortly after his arrival.

Source

/Speaker: You should have been in Bremerhaven today, at the Columbus quay, where America's most popular recruit arrived on the troopship "Randall": Elvis Presley. At 8 o'clock in the morning, the fans were already standing like a wall.

/Reporter: What do you think of Elvis? And why are you interested in him?

/Girl: Because he inspires me so much, such a great voice. I think he's just great, I think there's something so special about Elvis, I think he's just great.

/Reporter: But you won't be able to get close to him now.

/Fans: But see him!

/Reporter: I don't think so either. He'll be about 200 meters away, I think it'll be difficult.

/Girl: I'll be happy if I only see his left arm!

/Reporter: What's your opinion of Elvis?

/Girl: I don't think Elvis is all that good in general.

[Protest from the fans]

/Reporter: Kids, be careful, you have to stay objective. If someone says something against him, you don't have to shout right away. Wait a minute.

/Girl: I don't think he can sing that well, but I think other singers are better.

[Protest]

/Reporter: Yes, she can come here too just because she's interested.

/Girl: No, there's no such thing!

/Reporter: Why's that?

/Girl: Elvis is a man!

/Reporter: Yes, of course he's a man. And why do you think Elvis is so great?

/Girl: Precisely because he's a man and he sings the way young people want it today.

/Reporter: What do you mean he's a man, we're men too!

/Girl: But he's young! He sings the way young people want it today.

/Reporter: You're convinced that he sings the way young people want it today and the others don't sing like that?

/Fan: They sing too, but with Elvis it really comes from the heart.

/Reporter: Do you have any of his records at home? How many records do you have?

/Girl: 20.

/Reporter: Where did you get the money to buy these records?

/Girl: My uncle brings them to me from the PX.

/Reporter: Ah yes, he has the best connections?

/Fan: Yes, he does.

/Fan: He's the best singer of all!

/Reporter: And what do you expect from seeing the young man here now?

/Girl: I don't expect anything from it.

/Boy: He acts like a 16-year-old. Elvis. What a disgusting guy.

/Reporter: Why did you come here?

/Girl: You have to have seen something like that.

/Boy: To shout "boo"! Elvis is a screamer. I'm against that.

/Girl: I quite like him and I like the songs. But sometimes he looks so funny in the magazines and that's why I wanted to see him here.

/Reporter: Do you think Presley has much use for you?

/Fan: He needs us.

/Reporter: He needs you?

/Fan: Of course, otherwise he couldn't exist if he didn't have any admirers.

/Reporter: So are you one hundred percent convinced that he's talented or is it something else?

/Fan: Something else, because you can say that anyone can scream like that, but the rest is somehow so great.

/Fan: Not everyone can do that! Anyone can sing like Vico Torriani, but not like Elvis.

/Reporter: But there are also many, many good singers among young people today and why don't you like them as much?

/Fan: Because he looks so great and the way he sings. There's something special about it.

/Reporter: How old are you?

/Fan: 11.

/Reporter: You're 11. And you?

/Fan: 11.

/Reporter: And you?

/Fan: 13.

/Boy: The rhythm and everything, he doesn't stand so stiffly in front of the microphone. He gets you right into it.

/Reporter: If he sang German, for example...

/Boy: That's just it! The lyrics are usually very schmaltzy, and well, you don't understand them at all [as a German, you don't understand them at all, so they don't affect the song at all. And he doesn't always stand so stiffly in front of the microphone, he has a guitar and all that.

/Reporter: But many others say he moves too much in front of the microphone.

/Girl: That's the beauty of it, I think. That's why the vocals come out quite differently. When you move like that, the voice comes out differently. Once to the front, once to the back. Elvis somehow puts you in ecstasy, so I think it's just great.

/Reporter: How old are you?

/Girl: 15.

/Speaker: And then the time had come: the first GIs left the ship. And then he came.

/Reporter: Hello Elvis!

/Elvis: Hello! I'm happy to be here, Sir. I'm very happy to be here. Thank you, Sir.

[From the crowd]: Elvis, Elvis!

[Reporters ask for an interview]

/Elvis: I don't think they want me to say anything right now, Sir. I'm sorry.

/Girl: Mr. Presley, your flowers!

/Elvis: The flowers are where, M'am? [To the reporters] Better not Sir, really.

[Question about a ring Elvis is wearing]

/Elvis: My ring? Honey, that's a gift.

/Narrator: At ten o'clock, the train left for Friedberg in Hesse, where Elvis will be on duty as a truck driver. His admirers stayed behind to bid him a hearty farewell.

[Fans]: Elvis, Elvis!

Source: SWR2 Archivradio

<https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/archivradio-geschichte-im-original/elvis-presley-landet-als-gi-in-bremerhaven/swr2/94824944/>

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