

Elvis Presley: 50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong, Elvis' Gold Records Volume 2 Vinyl Releases & Reviews



Above: Original Press 1959 Front and Back Cover (note the absence of any writing on the back cover)

Originally for this album, the *50,000,00 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong: Elvis' Gold Records Vol. 2* title would appear on the front cover while *Elvis' Gold Records Vol. 2* would only appear on the actual record label. There is some discrepancy as to when the *50,000,000 Elvis Fans* title would appear on the record label, but seems to be as early as the 1959 Hollywood pressing. In 1959, three different RCA pressing plants released the album: Camden, NJ; Indianapolis; and Hollywood. However, as early as 1960, it appears RCA began using *50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong* on the record label on all pressings and then again later returned to the standard *Elvis' Golden Records Vol. 2* title. Hence, there is some confusion as to the actual title of the album. What is the reason for this odd title change when Elvis' first compilation of hits released one year earlier by RCA was simply titled *Elvis' Golden Records*? Was it purely an RCA marketing technique to garner more sales as some have suggested? The story for the title change goes back as early as September 19, 1956 from an article in the jazz *Down Beat* magazine. At the time, *Down Beat* often

highlighted the superiority of jazz to all other genres of the time, including the emerging rock 'n' roll genre. In this Sept. 1956 issue, bandleader and editorialist Les Brown wrote a piece titled, "Can Fifty Million Americans Be Wrong," taking a negative perspective at Elvis and his fans in comparison to the more worthy appreciation of serious jazz vocalists and artists.

Left: Les Brown's Sept. 1956 article that sparked RCA to change *Elvis' Gold Records. Vol 2* to *50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong*.



The article concludes, "The educational responsibility seems to fall mainly on the disc jockey, who still has the greatest proximity to, and the greatest influence over, the record-buying public. Fifty million Americans can easily be misled." And what inspired Les' Browns article title? Elvis had appeared on Ed Sullivan's television show just ten days earlier on September 9, 1956. The audience for that Elvis guest appearance show was a

an emotional or anti-intellectual vice, but we are always in need of heroes.

IMMEDIATELY AS ELVIS came into popular renown, the intimate side of his life was revealed, accurately or not. From correspondence and personal conversations I have had with Presley's staunchest teenage supporters, it has become clear that they favor him so much for his looks, his reputed kindness, his concern for his parents, and for the Hermitic Alger character of his climb as they do for his vocal and physical gyrations.

Pure aesthetes have almost nothing to do with it, but that must have been obvious the first time you heard Presley perform.

Presley's miracle came easier than, say, Liberace's; and Libby was adored similarly, but mainly by a more truly element of the public. Yet, only a month before Libby's popularity began to wane by way of his television disc series, you couldn't give him away to the press. Once limited, however, Libby's life was restricted from Atlantic to Pacific on the front pages of the dailies.

Elvis never evaded the press, even from the first. The critics gave it to him with both barrels. Today, in a bid for the circulation nickel, the press is low repressed, and Elvis continues to get plenty of space.

THERE HAVE BEEN WORSE SINGERS than Elvis Presley but few as "famous." If he satisfies even the faint universal need of the moment in 50,000,000 Americans there seems to be no wrong or right about it. As long as they don't pretend to like him for artistic reasons.

What is deplorable is that so many Presley admirers have arranged or are oblivious to, the fine talents of Jeri Southern, Mel Tormé, Dick Haymes, and other serious vocal artists. They're not buying quality as yet, and before they do, they'll have to learn to distinguish between high quality and low quality.

That educational responsibility seems to fall mainly on the disc jockey, who still has the greatest proximity to, and the greatest influence over, the record-buying public. Fifty million Americans can easily be misled.

historic 82.6% of the American viewing public that night! This was estimated to be about 54,000,000 Americans—the largest viewing audience in the medium’s history at the time and one that would last until February 1964. Thus, despite Les Brown’s actual title of his article, the real question Les is asking isn’t “Can Fifty Million Americans Be Wrong?” Rather, his real question is “Can Fifty Million **ELVIS** Fans Be Wrong?” By changing the title of this album in 1959, RCA Victor’s arrogant but absolutely perfect answer would be “*Hell, No! 50,000,000 Elvis fans can’t be wrong!*”

Below: In 1959, starting with the re-release mono pressing, they added writing on the back cover on all subsequent mono releases



Throughout the years, RCA had re-released most albums with modifications to the covers, catalog numbers, vinyl, and labels. Through 1959, the entire RCA Elvis catalog was released only as "Long Play" mono releases. Later, RCA replaced "Long Play" on the bottom of the label to "MONO" in 1963 and "Monaural" beginning in 1964 and ending in 1968. RCA also changed from a rigid to a more flexible vinyl in the late 1960s.

Also, in 1962, the original RCA Elvis catalog of the 1950s that was recorded and released in Mono was re-released in Electronically Reprocessed Stereo, hence the postfix of "(e)" at the end of these catalog numbers.



1959 Mono Original "Long Play"



1963 "MONO" Reissue Pressing



1964 "MONAURAL" Reissue



1968 "MONAURAL" Reissue Pressing



Above Left: 1962 Electronically Reprocessed Stereo Cover



Above Right: 1968 Electronically Reprocessed Stereo Cover



1962 Reprocessed Stereo Release



1964 Reprocessed Stereo Release



Top Left: 1968-71 Orange Label Stereo Pressing

Top Right: 1976 Tan Label Stereo Pressing

Bottom Left: 1977 Black Label Stereo Pressing



The original 1959 “Long Play” vinyl release in mono sounds superior to all other releases to date. Though there are sonic variations between the tracks recorded at Radio Recorders Hollywood vs. Studio B Nashville (which will be on all pressings since it is on the master tape), the original pressings offers the richest and most palpable sound possible for these recordings. Particularly the six tracks recorded at Radio Recorders, all of the nuances of Elvis’ dramatic delivery are evident, as is the clarity from The Jordanaires backup vocals and associated band musicians.

Through the natural warmth of analog is how Elvis deserves to be heard, and this album offers an eclectic mix of his unique talents. Each syllable of Elvis’ gentle whisper “Don’t” is beautifully captured, as is the

rasping vocals and grunts of the energetic rockers on the album. Elvis' mic sharing on "Fool Such As I" with Jordanaire Ray Walker is also readily appreciated, creating a startling and engaging musical experience. Hank Garland's edgy guitar solos, Floyd Cramer's hammering piano, and DJ Fontana's rhythmic drum percussion also shines through beautifully. Listening to Elvis' rhythmic guitar slapping on "Wear My Ring Around Your Neck," it's revelatory to hear the powerful clarity of that guitar percussion. That driving rhythm, you can't help being drawn into the recording studio of that session. Though the original "Long Play" 1959 mono is the top sonic choice, it is often financially challenging to find one in decent condition, especially among the hardcore Elvis vinyl collectors in the market. The second-best sonic option is to find the EARLIEST 1960s mono/monaural copy possible. These 1960s RCA mono reissues are still in the original mono recording, and a very enjoyable listen, especially the earlier 1960s releases. The sonic differences between these 1960s mono releases and the original 1959 version is subtle; the 1960s mono releases possess a slight more reverb and less immediacy, depth, and nuance to Elvis' vocals. Regardless of the mono release, it's disappointing the sound quality of the four Nashville songs are not on par with the Radio Recorders tracks. One only needs to compare "I Got Stung" (Nashville) vs. "Don't" (Radio Recorders) to hear what I'm referring to. Chet Atkins and Steve Sholes' use of echo at Nashville Studio B noticeably deteriorates the sound, making the musicians sound distant.

All reprocessed STEREO reissues are saturated in echo and the sound is terribly hollow – as if the sound of Elvis and the instruments are coming through a tunnel. The reverb is excessive and there is also a delay between right and left channels. It is a sonic mess and disaster, and I cannot stress enough to avoid these stereo reprocessed reissues. Finding a mono copy, either an original 1959 Long Play or early 1960s Mono/Monaural RCA reissue pressing, is essential for this release. One may ask why is it so important to get the "best" sonic pressing? There is so much to hear in Elvis' voice from song to song, even line to line within a song, that it is easy to miss his nuanced genius. The raspy technique Elvis uses in "One Night," to the gentle and airy whisper in "Don't," to his hiccupping up and down interpretation in "I Beg of You," the better sonic quality will capture all these textural nuances. "I Beg of You" is a perfect example of how Elvis changes style from verse to verse, displaying his creativity as a musician and entertainer. When he belts out "Holy my hand and promise..." toward the end of the song will make your hair stand up and send tingles up your spine, especially on the better pressings. Few musicians possess that aura and certain magic as Elvis does.

This album has two notable "audiophile" reissues, issued under the Friday Music and Music on Vinyl Label. The good news is they are both reissued in mono, making this hard to get mono album much easier. The sound is crisp and clear as well on these releases. However, consistent with these two reissue labels, they are not analog sourced and no mention is given to the original tapes used. When compared to the 1950s or 1960s mono pressings, these reissues lack the warmth, fullness, and presence, and clearly indicate they are digitally sourced. The detail in the recordings is still there, such as instrument separation and the infamous guitar slapping (though with less rhythmic punch and presence), but there is so much in the recordings that these reissues fail to capture. The failings are only often heard after hearing one of the earlier mono pressings. These reissues thin out the body and texture of Elvis/Jordanaires' vocals and the instruments as well.

Two of the tracks are reissued on the Analogue Productions *Elvis Presley 24 Karat Hits* reissue: "Wear My Ring Around Your Neck" and "A Big Hunk O' Love." These are excellent analog mono tracks sourced from the original tapes. They sound wonderful, rich and clear, and will give you a clear understanding on how the Hollywood Record Recorders sound differs from the Nashville RCA sound. Sadly, the Analogue Productions *24 Karat Hits* compilation reissue did not incorporate eight of the ten tracks on this classic Elvis album, many which are definitive all-time classics.

Interestingly, the audiophile Speakers Corner label released all other *Elvis' Gold Records* releases (Vol. 1, Vol. 3, and Vol. 4), but they never released this Vol. 2 release, the more underrated of the Elvis albums.

Speakers Corner is usually very reliable (quiet pressings, analog sourced) and I would recommend it if they decided to reissue it in the future. But as of now, the best sonic pressings are the 1950s Long Play and 1960s Mono/Monaural RCA black label pressings. Though hard to find at a reasonable price, the original 1959 Long Play is definitely superior, but it is easy to recommend the earliest mono copy you can find in good condition (1963-1968) since it will be less expensive and easier to find in better condition. These ten classic Presley singles (perhaps minus "My Wish Came True") compiled on one album are a worthy edition to any album collection, even for the modest Elvis Presley fans.