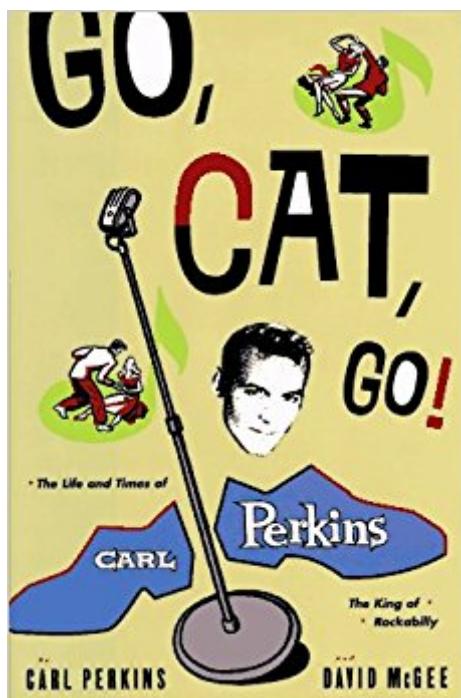


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# Go Cat Go!: The Life And Times Of Carl Perkins



## **Synopsis**

One of the pioneers of rock `n' roll and the composer of such hit songs as "Blue Suede Shoes" offers a candid look back at his life, from his early tours with Elvis Presley to his private battle with alcoholism.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The man who wrote "Blue Suede Shoes," and who will forever be associated with the seminal early rockabilly of Memphis's Sun Records label, has always raised a question mark in rock histories: Why, when his lead-guitar playing was so extraordinary and his songwriting talent so obvious, did he never become a celebrity on the magnitude of his label-mates Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and Elvis? In this unusually pricey amalgam of biography and autobiography (on which McGee holds sole copyright), Perkins and McGee (a music journalist making his book debut) continually play at that puzzle. Born in 1932 as a sharecropper's son in Tiptonville, Tenn., Perkins had a perfect primary education in American roots music: he grew up picking cotton alongside his family, internalizing field spirituals, and as a teenager made music with his brothers in rough-hewn "tonks." When his "Blue Suede Shoes" single sold a million copies in 1956, Perkins found himself singularly unequipped for stardom: married with two children, he disliked mob scenes and had no PR sense. As the Sun years fade, the narrative spins ever faster: the ten years 1969-1979 are dealt with in as many pages. Ultimately, the Perkins/ McGee collaboration hinders narrative flow, with McGee's third-person prose, full of historical and critical insight, frequently disrupted by Perkins's

unilluminating homilies about death, love and self-reliance. Photos, discography not seen by PW.  
Author tour. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A rock journalist for Rolling Stone and other publications, McGee based this "autobiography" of early rock'n'roller Carl Perkins on hundreds of hours of interviews with his subject. Beginning with Perkins's impoverished youth in Tennessee, he accentuates the early career: Perkins's initial interest in music, his experience in honky-tonks, his rise to fame with "Blue Suede Shoes," and his friendships with such Sun Records label-mates as Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash. The author also deals with the singer/guitarist's fall from popular favor and his successful fights against alcoholism and cancer. Though never revealing any shockingly new material, McGee offers an engaging book written in a breezy, easygoing style. He succeeds at portraying Perkins as an honest, self-effacing, religious, family-oriented man molded by his humble upbringing. Recommended for all rock fans. ?David Szatmary. Univ. of Washington, Seattle

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I'll admit it -- I'm biased toward Carl Perkins. I lived several years in his hometown of Jackson, TN and met him many times. Having those experiences, I was curious how this book would portray Mr. Perkins. After reading this book, I have more respect for Mr. Perkins. True, he wasn't perfect (who is?), but he had reason to be bitter about his career and his life, instead he never gave up. He pulled himself up after each setback and kept on striving. When you think about it, what would be the alternative? He was not only a great musician, but an active humanitarian. His work with children and their causes is nearly as impressive as his musical career, yet most people don't know of this. I went to Carl Perkins' funeral, and in the little city of Jackson, TN you would have thought time stood still. This book will give you the feeling of getting to know a true American success story . . .

Great book detailing the highs and lows of Carl Perkins' life. From sharecropper's son to songwriter and appreciated from Elvis to the Beatles, Carl's travels through show biz is nicely detailed. This was written while Carl was still alive. I am fortunate to have this hardback, signed by Carl.

Perfect gift for a fifties music lover.

CARL PERKINS IS THE TRUE KING OF ROCK AND ROLL WITH ELVIS AND CHUCK BERRY, GENE VINCENT, BO DIDDLEY AND LITTLE RICHARD. HERE YOU HAVE A GREAT HISTORY OF

HIS LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DESTINY. THE NORMS WRITES OUR DESTINY AND NOTHING YOU CAN CHANGE.

Great book on a true legend.

Book is Great!

Carl Perkins, along with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis, was part of Sun Records' famous Million Dollar Quartet. Perkins, often referred to as the King of Rockabilly, was the son of dirt-poor sharecroppers and cotton pickers in rural Tennessee. Author David McGee writes that Perkins' music was an "assimilation of gospel, country, blues and bluegrass." During the summer of 1955, Perkins toured with Elvis and Johnny Cash. It was during this time that Cash suggested that Perkins write a song about blue suede shoes. Perkins, who opened for Elvis, said he stole Elvis' thunder in two consecutive performances, upsetting Elvis. Perkins never played with Elvis again after the incident. In 1956, "Blue Suede Shoes" was No. 1 on the country, pop and R & B charts, the first record ever to accomplish the feat. Ironically, it was Perkins' only career Gold Record. Over the years, he had an occasional hit record, but generally he had a dismal showing on the record charts. One of the reasons I read this book was to find out why Perkins' career was the least successful of the Million Dollar Quartet. To his credit, author David McGee does an excellent job of detailing the reasons. As early as 1957, Perkins was caught in the dilemma of whether he was a country singer or a rock n' roller. It seems listeners were uncertain and his record sales lagged. Additionally, much of the material he recorded for Sam Phillips at Sun was not released. He and Cash felt Phillips was paying too much attention to Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis. "Carl saw himself left behind as the music he helped create mutated into new forms, as artists he started out with sustained their popularity through single and single as his strongest studio efforts wasted away--in a tape box, unissued," writes McGee. Carl never thought about how to evolve his music, according to McGee. He was a man out of step with the times. His best material drew from his poor upbringing, a subject that didn't resonate with, or attract teens. By the time he left Sun Records (which he later said was his biggest career mistake), the era of rockabilly was over. The death of his brother Jay at age 24 drove Carl, who already had a drinking problem, to the bottle more and more. He lost his enthusiasm for touring and for his music. His lack of assertiveness along with his drinking undercut his career in the 1960s more than the failure of his record companies to promote his work. Johnny Cash said that Carl's music wasn't conducive to the Nashville scene, and that no producer ever got

the best out of Carl's ability. Carl tried to deliver what he thought the producers wanted rather than what he wanted. Carl, who was admired by the Beatles, sobered up in 1968, and went on to play with Johnny Cash's band for many years. He left Cash's band and started a band with his two sons. At age 59, he was diagnosed with throat cancer, but he beat it and continued to play until his death in 1998.

A very important book about one of the founding fathers. That may be a cliched phrase for a man who was repelled by the stale cliches abounding in pop music at the time of his career kick-off in 1954. But once again we have a biography written by two people - why would a poet like Carl need anybody more than an "editor"? Same goes with Sun label buddy Scotty Moore - his book too had that unnecessary narrator - an excellent piece of prose, like with Carl, but the thought of it gets me depressed. Do you think Dylan or Costello would need a helper? '50s friend Chuck Berry did his all by himself. The defiant Rocker wrought the defiant Writer. (And baby, that is Rock and Roll....). Love reading about that Sun to Columbia to British career "rescue" period. As a CP fan/collector I was naturally disappointed in the lack of details as to the lesser-known should-been-million-sellers and the conspicuous absence of a much-needed sessionography. A Perkins \*Discography\* is always helpful. But when in the world am I gonna learn when and where he cut "We Did It '54"?

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