


A Memphis love song

Memphis — das ist Musik in den Ohren vieler Menschen. Und tatsächlich dreht sich fast alles in dieser Stadt um die zweit Schönste Nebensache der Welt. RAFAEL ALVAREZ zeichnet ein musikalisch unterlegtes Stimmungsbild.

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Midnight approaches in the River City, a city filled with American music and its many myths. In a downtown hotel room, a radio is tuned to WEVL, a 4,800-watt beacon of all things Memphis at 89.9 on the FM dial. It's a quiet night by the Mississippi River, colored with the late-night mood of the film *Mystery Train*, in which the disc-jockey voice of Tom Waits floats from a green plastic radio to give the time — “It's 2:17 right here in Memphis, Tennessee” — before a pistol goes off.

Tonight, the gun is Lonnie Mack's guitar, loaded with **Chuck Berry** riffs, as WEVL plays “Memphis,” a 1963 hit for both men. Songwriter Berry's version started with the lyrics “Long-distance information, get me Memphis, Tennessee,” while Mack's was an instrumental that launched 10,000 garage bands. Mack's “Memphis” plays for about three minutes above the corner of Second Street and Union Avenue across from the elegant Peabody Hotel, which opened in 1869.

Several of the Peabody's street-level shops are occupied by Lansky's, the company that dressed Elvis Presley. The windows show black-and-white shoes and a “Walking in Memphis” dress shirt based on the 1989 song by Marc Cohn: “Saw the ghost of Elvis on Union Avenue. / Followed him up to the gates of Graceland, / then I watched him walk right through...”

A CLOSER LOOK

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1926, **Chuck Berry** is one of the greatest figures in the history of rock 'n' roll. The guitarist, songwriter, and singer wrote such classics as “Johnny B. Goode,” “Maybellene” and “Roll over, Beethoven.” His music influenced The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, but it's not only Berry's songs that have stood the test of time: the singer still performs his classics today.

All music, all the time

In a far corner of the hotel, a better lit but less glamorous spot does late-night business as a FedEx outlet; Memphis is the firm's global headquarters. There, a young musician named Jonathan Ledezma helps customers lamine their keepsakes, make photocopies of résumés, and get packages out the door in time for next-day delivery.

A singer, bass player, drummer, and keyboardist who grew up in Pottsville, Arkansas, Ledezma lives about 20 miles south of the Tennessee border in Mississippi and travels into the city to work. In 2007, he sang Chuck Berry's “Memphis” in an early round of *American Idol*, but was eliminated when his version of Led Zeppelin's “Dazed and Confused” was judged “too broad in tone.”

Yet “broad in tone” is what the music scene in Memphis is all about; it has always welcomed a wide variety of music. It's broad enough to include the spectrum of heavy metal to Oscar-winning hip-hop from Three 6 Mafia, a group that formed here in the early 1990s. At the same time, Memphis is frozen in the public ear somewhere between postwar blues and late-60s' soul. That's why so many bands play rhythm-and-blues memories for tourists in the bars on Beale Street.



On Beale Street: music clubs and the promise of a good time fill the summer evenings

Atlanta/Schappavalow

Ledezma, 25, says he's involved with heavy metal right now, but that Memphis music is “lost in time.” That time is timeless, anchored by an eternal Elvis, who moved to Memphis from Tupelo when he was 13. His spirit receives more than 600,000 guests each year at Graceland. The Memphis sound is grounded in blues that moved to the big city from the Mississippi Delta and never left, and it is marketed to people from around the world who prefer music that's hard to find on the radio.

While Ledezma describes a local metal club called the Buccaneer — so small, it holds fewer people than a Volkswagen van — a living legend walks in to ask if there's time to make the last outgoing shipment of the night. There isn't, but bassist James Alexander makes time the next morning for coffee in the lobby of the Peabody to talk about music in his hometown and about his world-famous soul band, the Bar-Kays.

all things ... [ɔ:l θɪŋz]	alles, was mit ... zu tun hat
American Idol [ə,merɪkən 'aɪdɪl] US	ein Fernseh-Talentwettbewerb
anchor sth. ['æŋkəɹ]	etw. festmachen/festlegen
beacon ['bi:kən]	(Leitstrahl)Sender; hier auch: Verbreiter
dazed [deɪzd]	benommen
dial ['daɪəl]	Skala
dress shirt ['dres ʃɜ:t] N. Am.	Hemd, das man zum Anzug trägt
eternal [ɪ'tɜ:nəl]	ewig; hier: unsterblich
Graceland [ˈɡreɪslænd]	Elvis Presleys Anwesen
headquarters ['hed,kwɔ:rtərz]	Hauptsitz
keepsake ['ki:pseɪk]	Andenken
keyboardist ['ki:bɔ:rdɪst]	Spieler(in) eines Tasten-instrumentes
lamine sth. [læmɪneɪt]	hier: etw. sicher verpacken
launch sth. [ləʊntʃ]	etw. starten
lyrics ['lɪrɪks]	Songtext
make time [ˌmeɪk 'taɪm]	sich Zeit nehmen
mood [mu:d]	Stimmung
outlet [ˈaʊtlet]	Laden; hier: Servicestelle
résumé [ˈrezəmeɪ] N. Am.	Lebenslauf
shipment [ˈʃɪpmənt]	Sendung, Lieferung
spot [spɔ:t]	Stelle, Ort
stand the test of time [ˌstænd ðə 'test əv 'taɪm]	die Zeit überdauern
tune sth. to sth. [tu:n tə]	etw. auf etw. einstellen
van [væn]	Lieferwagen, Bus