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# Elvis Fans Celebrate 70th Birthday

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Since his debut in the 1950s, Elvis Presley has been considered the King of rock and roll, and the very first rock idol. He was a human link in the evolution of American music with his blend of rhythm and blues, gospel, country and rockabilly that became the new sound called rock and roll.

In 1956, Elvis Presley scored his first Number One hit with "Heartbreak Hotel." He went on to become one of the most important figures in popular music, with dozens of international hits and 33 feature films to his credit. The latest estimates say that Elvis has sold more than one billion records worldwide, more than anyone in music history. In America alone, 149 of his albums and singles have been certified gold or platinum. Research is currently underway to document his record sales in other countries.

As he was making a comeback, Elvis died in August 1977. His talent, good looks and charismatic performances endeared him to millions of fans.

For several consecutive years, Elvis has topped the *Forbes* magazine list as the top-earning deceased celebrity, with more than \$40 million in earnings. In December, his daughter, Lisa Marie, announced that she will be keeping her father's Graceland mansion in Memphis, but will be selling 85 percent of Elvis' estate to businessman Robert Sillerman. The deal is worth approximately \$100 million, with rights to Elvis' name and image. Elvis Presley Enterprises brought in \$45 million last year from recordings and merchandise. And if there's any concern that Elvis' popularity might be on the wane, one fan recently paid \$455 at auction for a small amount of water that had been taken from a cup once used by "The King."

Each year, more than 650,000 Elvis fans from around the world tour his Graceland mansion and flock to Memphis for Elvis Week in August, which commemorates "The King's" 1977 death. Several events are being planned around Elvis' January 8 birthday and will continue well into the year. Television stations and theaters around the USA will be presenting Elvis movie marathons. Special concerts are planned, many featuring Elvis impersonators.

In "The King's" hometown of Memphis, there will be a ceremony on the front lawn of Graceland, with a giant birthday cake for fans. Hours will be extended for the Meditation Garden on the Graceland property, so people can pay their respects at Elvis' gravesite. Visitors to Memphis can check into the actual Heartbreak Hotel, where several events will be held, or dine at Elvis Presley's Memphis restaurant and entertainment center on famous Beale Street.

England has also joined in Elvis' birthday celebration. The U.K. branch of RCA Records has started to release each of Elvis' 18 British Number One singles in chronological order as limited edition CDs or 10-inch vinyl records. The first single, "All Shook Up," comes with a special box that can hold all 18 singles. The campaign will end April 25 with the release of the 2002 hit re-mix of Elvis versus JXL with "A Little Less Conversation." All of the singles have the potential to hit the charts once again.

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Twenty-five years ago August 16, the "King of Rock and Roll", Elvis Presley, was found dead at his Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee. Since his death, Elvis' popularity has continued to grow, attracting a new generation of fans. VOA's Bernie Bernard tells us about the activities in Elvis' hometown of Memphis and the new albums that have been released to honor "The King's" anniversary. Elvis Presley's

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It is hard to believe that it has been almost a quarter of a century since the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley, died at the age of 42. On August 16, a celebration of his life and music is scheduled at Elvis' mansion, Graceland, in Memphis, Tennessee. But Tupelo, Mississippi is another southern American city remembering the late singer. Margaret Kennedy tells us about the places and people close to Elvis. ...

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