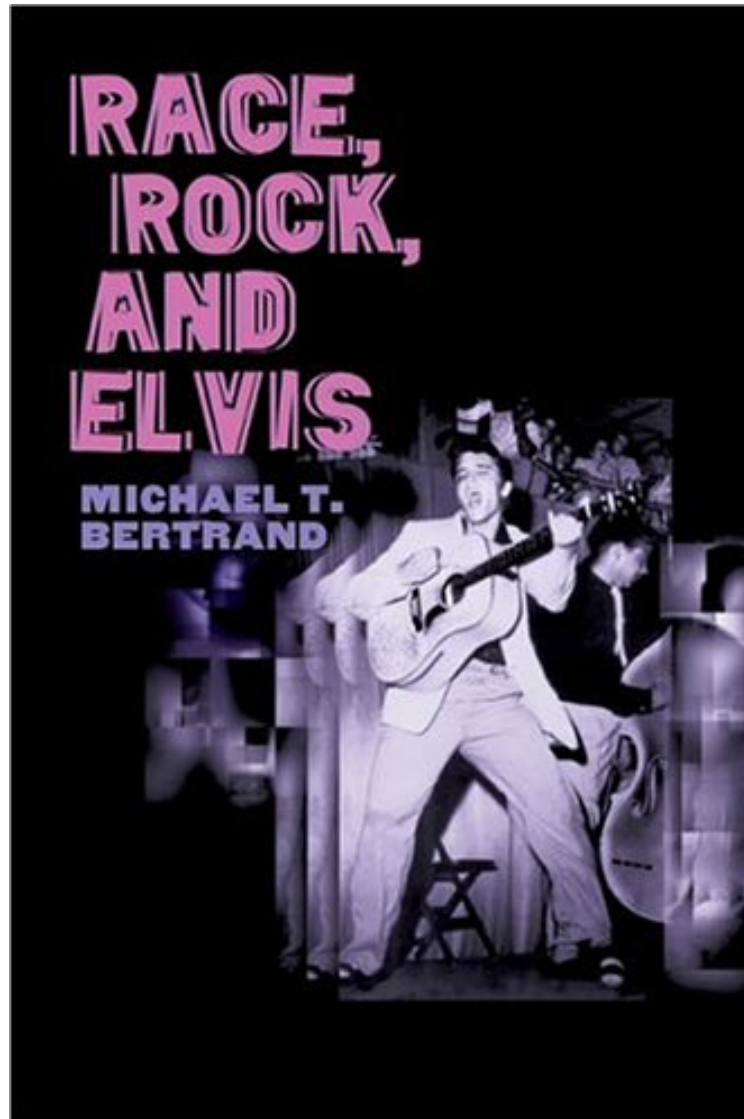


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Race, Rock, and Elvis (Music in American Life)

Michael T. Bertrand

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Michael T. Bertrand : Race, Rock, and Elvis (Music in American Life) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Race, Rock, and Elvis (Music in American Life):

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Elvis. Super interesting, very well put together.

Examines the emergence of rock 'n' roll in a social and regional context. This book connects the music to the larger transformations that were unsettling the post-World War II southern landscape.

"Michael T. Bertrand has managed to argue more cogently and with more evidential authority than any previous commentator that the music that Elvis Presley and his rockabilly cousins fashioned in the South in the 1950s represented a serious threat to various national and regional social conventions, particularly those relating to race, class, and gender." Brian Ward, *Journal of American History* "With his meticulous research and elegant, concise prose, Bertrand explains the class and racial origins of rock 'n' roll, situates the music within the larger context of the turbulent 1950s South, and explores the firestorm of debate that swirled around the music and its chief promoter, the hip-swiveling Elvis." Patrick Huber, *History: s of New Books* "His arguments are always persuasive and his lines of reasoning are clear... A thoroughly absorbing piece of work." Keith Briggs, *Blues Rhythm Magazine* "Convincingly argues that the black-and-white character of the sound, as well as Elvis's own persona, helped to relax the rigid color line and thereby fed the fires of the civil rights movement." Karal Ann Marling, *American Historical* "A major contribution to our knowledge of the cultural importance of early rock and roll." Craig Morrison, *Journal of American Folklore* From the Inside Flap In *Race, Rock, and Elvis*, Michael T. Bertrand contends that popular music, specifically Elvis Presley's brand of rock 'n' roll, helped revise racial attitudes after World War II. Observing that youthful fans of rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, and other black-inspired music seemed more inclined than their segregationist elders to ignore the color line, Bertrand links popular music with a more general relaxation, led by white youths, of the historical denigration of blacks in the South. The tradition of southern racism, successfully communicated to previous generations, failed for the first time when confronted with the demand for rock 'n' roll by a new, national, commercialized youth culture. In a narrative peppered with the colorful observations of ordinary southerners, Bertrand argues that appreciating black music made possible a new recognition of blacks as fellow human beings. Bertrand documents black enthusiasm for Elvis Presley and cites the racially mixed audiences that flocked to the new music at a time when adults expected separate performances for black audiences and white. He describes the critical role of radio and recordings in blurring the color line and notes that these media made black culture available to appreciative whites on an unprecedented scale. He also shows how music was used to define and express the values of a southern working-class youth culture in transition, as young whites, many of them trying to orient themselves in an unfamiliar urban setting, embraced black music and culture as a means of identifying themselves. By adding rock 'n' roll to the mix of factors that fed into civil rights advances in the South, *Race, Rock, and Elvis* shows how the music, with its rituals and vehicles, symbolized the vast potential for racial accord inherent in postwar society.