

JULY 22, 1963

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

1 P.M.

Elvis Presley is Lucky.

The King, playing the role of race driver Lucky Jackson in the film *Viva Las Vegas*, strolls the deck around the Flamingo Hotel's expansive swimming pool. He walks alone, strumming a guitar while singing a love song. Movie extras lounge in the sunshine, pretending to read a book or sip a drink. Elvis keeps singing as he arrives at the door marked "Women's Changing Room," knowing that the woman with whom he is infatuated can hear him on the other side.*

Elvis is twenty-eight, six feet tall, his hair dyed jet black. Inside the "changing room," twenty-two-year-old Ann-Margret, a Swedish-born actress, changes into a swimsuit. Ann-Margret, playing the character Rusty Martin, is a vibrant on-screen presence. As Elvis sings, she slips into a pair of stiletto high heels that match her yellow one-piece and then emerges onto the pool deck.

There, the two stand eye-to-eye as they begin to sing a duet.

"Once the music started, neither of us could stand still," Ann-

* Among the extras who will play roles in *Viva Las Vegas* is actress Teri Garr. Singer Glen Campbell will perform on the movie's title track.

Margret will write in her autobiography. “Music ignited a fiery pent-up passion inside Elvis and inside me. It was an odd, embarrassing, funny, inspiring, and wonderful sensation. We looked at each other move and saw virtual mirror images. When Elvis thrust his pelvis, mine slammed forward too. When his shoulder dropped, I was down there with him. When he whirled, I was already on my heel.”

The song, “The Lady Loves,” is not the rock ‘n’ roll that made Presley famous but a charming pop tune soon to be forgotten in movie history, overshadowed by the eponymous *Viva Las Vegas* theme song. But the chemistry between Presley, strumming his guitar while wearing a gray sharkskin suit, and Ann-Margret, in her form-fitting bathing suit, is scorching.

It is one week since filming began on location here in Las Vegas. The Flamingo’s guests were informed in advance that the pool would be closed this afternoon and tomorrow. Many now watch from the hotel lobby as this highly choreographed scene is repeated over and over. As the couple slowly climbs the pink stairwell leading to the top of the diving board, cries of “Cut!” come from director George Sidney. The cameras must be repositioned. It is taxing work under the desert sun, with the few palm trees landscaping the pool providing little shade to bring down the 106-degree temperature. But neither Elvis Presley nor Ann-Margret shows any sign of exhaustion. Elvis’s makeup and black pompadour are touched up after each scene, and his suit coat shows no signs of perspiration.

In fact, the true heat comes from the actors themselves. The on-screen chemistry is no accident, for their off-screen romance is incendiary. Ann-Margret is not married; nor is Elvis. But it is known around the world that the King has a longtime girlfriend in young Priscilla Beaulieu, who just turned eighteen two months ago.

So the affair is kept secret. Barely.