

SAM PHILLIPS - Side 1

PHILLIPS

(To audience.)

Now, ain't they somethin'?!

JERRY LEE moves MIC 1, Piano USR

#1A INTRODUCTION UNDERSCORE (drums, bass)

Every one of my boys started right here, and we've been blessed this past year. Blessed with success beyond our wildest imaginings. Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. And who is this Sam Phillips, you may ask? That'd be me. Samuel Cornelius Phillips. Pretty big name for a little red dirt Alabama country boy, huh? This is mah company. Sun Records.

SUN RECORDS SIGN flies out. QUARTET exits.

See, I was a radio man. Come to Memphis right after the war ... and prob'ly could'a been a big wheel here. But there's a cussedness 'bout me. It's hard as hell to work for someone else. And another thing, I didn't just wanna PLAY the tunes, I wanted to RECORD 'em. So, first of 1950 I threw the cards in the air, and started Sun Records. Now don't be thinkin' I just fell in the luck bucket findin' these kids. It ain't that easy. There were a LOTTA years when dee-jays wouldn't play none a'my records. Back then, I'd PAY 'em, and they still wouldn't play 'em. If I hadn't had faith in what I was doin', I'd a' given up a long time ago. Now, you might'a heard that I had to sell ol' Elvis to RCA, so he ain't on Sun Records anymore. Well, RCA called again... and who do you think they wanna buy now?

(Music Out. Invites audience to guess)

Me! Yeah, offering a LOT of money to fold Sun Records into RCA.

(Music In)

Move up to New York City... Work exclusively with Elvis again. I been stallin' 'em, but they're lowerin' the boom on me. They want an answer – by close of business tonight.

SAM PHILLIPS - Side 2

DYANNE

(Very tentatively.)

That sounds like... a hit to me.

PHILLIPS

(Not really listening. Brushing her off.)

Maybe, it does. I don't know...

DYANNE

(Carefully and quietly.)

That's just it, you DO know. And that's the deal in this business. The NEXT hit, not the last one...

PHILLIPS

(Increasingly combative.)

Well, it ain't that easy, is it? I made these boys... D'ya think Columbia woulda signed Johnny Cash if they'd heard him and his little boom-chicka-boom deal? Hell, no, they'd have laughed their fool heads off. I'm the one who put their records in the back of my car and drove tens a 'thousands a miles a year, visitin' deejays city by city, station by station. The only thing I went out with was faith! I believed with all my heart and soul in what I had in my little bag. -- Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins...

(Takes a moment to catch his breath and compose himself.)

But, hell, maybe you're right.

DYANNE

What do you mean?

PHILLIPS

You and Elvis the ones tryin' to get me to sell out to RCA, an' go on up to New York City.

DYANNE

You're right, but I just wanted for Elvis to be happy... Look, maybe I was wrong.

PHILLIPS

(Beginning to slowly erupt again.)

Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins obviously got no faith in Sun Records or Sam Phillips. Mebbe this place should be an auto parts store again. Mebbe they're all right. This music ain't gonna make it! Hell, you got Congress passin' laws 'gainst it! And you got Church people tryin' to SHUT ME DOWN!!

DYANNE

And you know that'll just make the kids want it even more.

(**PHILLIPS** turns and looks at her.)

Why do you think RCA's after you? Because YOU know how to MAKE this music like no one else does. Jerry Lee needs you. He believes in you and who knows who's gonna be waiting out there tomorrow.

PHILLIPS

Well, I did just sign this kid out of Texas. Funny lookin' dude, funny soundin' name. Roy Orbison.

(**CARL** plays first five notes of "OH, PRETTY WOMAN")

You can call it the Devil's music... say it ain't even music at all... But listen to them in there, (Music builds, then recedes) I'll tell you somethin'... there's times we'll be in here workin' on a song hour upon hour, and then suddenly these guys will give it ten percent more than they ever knew they had. They know it and I know it. Then after the music is over—the guys go home (music out) and I'm here by muhself. I spin the tapes back and listen... and I think, "My god, this is where the soul of a man never dies."

DYANNE turns to exit back into the studio. **PHILLIPS** turns to look at **DYANNE**, who smiles and nods to him, and returns to studio.

PHILLIPS

So here's the deal (chord). All the success I had this past year (chord) didn't make the problems go away. It just changed 'em.(chord into music) Sure, I'd like to hand off the day-to-day crap to RCA and just make my records. But I can't walk away from this place. I hung every piece of tile in that studio and wired the whole set-up so my music don't sound like no one else's. Fact is, I'd rather sell a hundred records by some kid I've brought along myself than a million records with someone else calling the shots.