

## Elvis Presley: Collecting The King

by Jeff Figler

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Is Elvis still alive? Enough people think that they have sighted Elvis to make others stop to think that The King really still might be alive. After all, Jerry Glanville, the former National Football League head coach of the Atlanta Falcons and the Houston Oilers, leaves tickets for Elvis to games he coaches. In addition, couples will trek to Las Vegas' The Elvis Wedding Chapel, among others, to get married by none other than – Elvis himself!

Whether you believe that Elvis is still among the living – or died that fateful day of August 16, 1977 – is a personal decision. However, the undeniable fact remains that Elvis' memories are very much alive among billions of people across the world, and very definitely alive among collectors of Elvis memorabilia. You don't need to have gone to an Elvis concert, or even have been alive for that matter when he was a performer, to realize the impact of his music. There is a reason why Elvis was selected by the Atlantic Magazine as one of the top hundred most influential Americans of the 20th century. As we know, Elvis was instrumental in bridging the generation gap, although that was not the feeling in the beginning. The "Elvis the Pelvis" nickname, usually used derogatorily, and the banning of his appearing on the small screen from the waist down, did eventually give way to the general acceptance of Elvis as a musical innovator, a respected movie actor, and a very generous and giving person.



The devotion of Elvis collectors and fans alike only grows, even 31 years after the death of The King.

As an example of Elvis' generosity, in 1961 he gave a benefit concert in Hawaii that raised \$65,000 toward the building of the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. Adjusted for inflation, in today's dollars the figure is about \$4 million. With his help, the memorial opened a year later. In 1970, the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, or Jaycees, named him as one of the ten outstanding young men in the United States.

Elvis Presley's popularity has been evident to the United States government as well. Besides Elvis' well-documented meeting with President Nixon on December 21, 1970, the U.S. Postal Service announced in 1992 that Elvis' image would be used for a commemorative postage stamp. In an unprecedented move, the Postal Service let the American public decide whether to use the image of Elvis as a young rocker or one of him starring in a special Hawaiian performance. The image of the young rocker won out, and the Elvis stamp is the most widely publicized stamp issue in history, and the top selling commemorative postage of all time. More than 500 million Elvis stamps have been printed, more than three times the print run for any other commemorative stamp.

Collectors are often quick to point out that because such a huge number of Elvis stamps that were issued, that the value of an individual stamp is minimal. However, the stamp issued in 1993 does serve as a good memory

of Elvis.

Some Elvis collectibles are extremely valuable, and are in demand by collectors. In fact, any Elvis collectible would be a treasure in any pop culture collection. The most expensive piece of Elvis memorabilia, Elvis' peacock jumpsuit performance costume, recently sold for \$300,000. Previous to the selling of this jumpsuit, the record for an Elvis collectible was \$295,000 for one of his classic cars. An Elvis jeweled cape was auctioned for \$105,250 a few years ago. One of his leather jackets went for \$37,000, and his personal script for the film "Love Me Tender" sold for \$5,400.

The value of his items keeps on increasing. Elvis' memorabilia, if you can even find them, trade for record prices. Keep in mind that you don't have to go for the most expensive pieces. Collectors should stay within their financial limits. Yes, it is nice to own an Elvis cape, or his personal movie script, but even owning a movie poster or record album of the King is a collectible that the average collector can afford, and be very comfortable with. Of course, if the movie poster or album is signed, its value is increased.

An Elvis Presley-signed baseball is very tough to find, and is worth several thousand dollars. Most of the baseballs that Elvis signed were inscribed to a particular person, which typically decreases the value a bit. As with any piece of memorabilia, particularly if it is signed, a collector should try to find out the origin and source of the item, and keep in mind that the condition of any item will help dictate its value.

Adore him or not, Elvis' music numbers are astonishing. Industry experts estimate that he has sold more than one billion record units worldwide, more than anyone in history. He has had 149 songs on the Billboards' Hot 100 Pop Chart, of which 18 went to number one. Of course, he also had country western, rhythm & blues, and gospel records as well. Elvis also starred in 31 feature films and two concert documentary films.

In October 2005, Variety Magazine inducted him in their top ten entertainment icons of the twentieth century, along with the Beatles, Marilyn Monroe, Lucille Ball, Marlon Brando, Humphrey Bogart, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Chaplin, James Dean, and Mickey Mouse.



Castle Kashan, a landmark Malibu mansion housing a priceless collection of Elvis Presley memorabilia, burned to the ground last year.

There is no better time than now to collect Elvis memorabilia. He has been widely recognized as one of the greatest entertainers of all time among several generations, and his popularity continues to grow.

Whether it be an Elvis signed photo worth a couple thousand dollars, a jump suit valued at several hundred thousand dollars, or merely an old 45 record, an album, or even one of the 500 million commemorative stamps of Elvis, try to collect The King's items. Even though most people think that Elvis died some 31 years ago, at the age of 42, his memory is as vivid as ever, and his collectibles are more popular than ever.

By the way, if you happen to see Elvis, can you ask him for his phone number and email address for me. I have some items I would like for him to autograph.

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*JOTS FROM JEFF...*

A few upcoming auctions to check out:

*August 22..... Inside the Park Collectibles  
(516-747-7932)*

*August 22..... Collectible Classics  
(724-446-3079)*

*August 27 & 28...Mastro  
(630-472-1200)*

Bob McCann is currently having a sports sale (not auction). For more information you can call (610) 367-1827.

Recently, one of the T206 Honus Wagner Cards was auctioned for \$1.62 million. It was not the Gretzky T206 card, but was one of the T206 cards in better condition.

For what its worth:

In a recent Harris Poll of 245 American adults conducted between June 9-16, Democrats favored the New York Yankees, Republicans the Atlanta Braves, and Independents the Boston Red Sox.

The FBI seems to be underway in a new fraud investigation "much bigger" than Operation Bullpen. Stay tuned.

