



Elvis Presley points at a movie camera held by an ecstatic fan during a show at Miami's Olympia Theater, August 4, 1956.

king of celebrity

OVERZEALOUS FANS RIPPED OFF ELVIS'S PANTS DURING A MIAMI PERFORMANCE IN AUGUST 1956, SHOWING THERE'S NEVER BEEN A SHORTAGE OF FAME-CRAZE IN THE MAGIC CITY. BY OMAR SOMMEREYNS

By the time Elvis Presley arrived in Florida in the summer of 1956, he had already appeared on national television and beguiled fans all over the country with his seductive baritone and risqué antics. In fact, a Jacksonville judge forbade him from dancing “indecently,” unless he wanted to be arrested. He ended up toning it down during the performance, but at one point shook his finger, to mimic the hip motions, as a sardonic gesture.

In August that same year, Elvis reached Miami for the first of seven shows over two days at the Olympia Theater, now part of the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts. “I went with my mother, and the line to get in had completely circumvented the block,” says Joanne McCool, a Miami resident who was 14 back then.

Elvis mania was at its peak, and his Miami fans were particularly rabid. As pointed out by Jay Gordon, host of the syndicated radio series *Elvis Only*, “At one show, fans tore at his pink jacket and black pants, and left the theater clutching the pieces like trophies. He had driven into Miami in his new Lincoln Premiere, which was promptly defaced by teenagers who scratched their names into the finish or wrote on the car with lipstick. When he left town, he was driving a new Continental.”

Elvis was a harbinger of things to come. Now you never know when you'll see paparazzi flashbulbs going off on a pair of Louboutins exiting Casa Tua or a Bentley pulling up to LIV.

Miami is indeed synonymous with celebrity and stargazing, but Elvis was one of the originals—pants on or not. **OD**