

Magazine Article from the Portfolio of
Wheat Williams

“Life After Elvis: The Return of Scotty Moore.” Wheat Williams. *Musician*, February 1997.

Brief article on the reunion album of Scotty Moore and D. J. Fontana, *The King's Men*.

MUSICIAN

20th Anniversary Issue

Life After Elvis: The Return of Scotty Moore

It's a beautiful October day at the foot of Nashville's Music Row, where a small band of graying musicians circle up within the eighteen-inch brick walls of Masterlink Studios, once a Civil War-era church. But these are more than just your typical studio cats; these boys are from Memphis, and they witnessed the dawn of rock & roll.

Guitarist Scotty Moore and drummer D. J. Fontana are recording *The King's Men*, their first collaboration since 1968. It's an all-star tribute, with guest shots by Keith Richards, the Band, and many other contemporary big shots. Today, however, they're reuniting the Bill Black Combo—minus upright bassist Black himself, who died from a brain tumor in 1965.

Moore, Fontana, and Black comprised the Blue Moon Boys back in '55, when they backed Elvis Presley on the sessions that arguably launched the rock & roll era. Today, they're tracking a snaky little shuffle called "Going Back to Memphis," with Reggie Young, a founding member of the Black Combo in '58, on guitar. Beneath a portrait of Muddy Waters, Young lays down a propulsive, twangy rhythm on his well-worn '57 Strat, which he then embellishes on overdub with a tick-tack bass foundation.

Roy Harris, the Combo's original engineer, observes while TNN Broadcasting engineer Stan Dacus leans over an enormous 1970s-vintage Neve console. Aside from using a vintage EMT plate for some warm reverb, there's not much between the pickers and the Otari

24-track. "Stan got his training like they did in the old school," says Scotty. "The shortest distance between two points is a straight piece of wire."

Later, in the basement kitchen, the cats gather around the table and the talk turns from world tours and TV specials to recent troubles with enlarged prostates and colon polyps—a scene, perhaps, from the *Gotterdämmerung* of rock & roll.

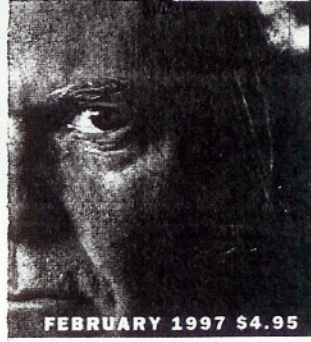
That evening, when almost everyone else has left, Scotty ambles out into the room and tunes up his hollow-body Gibson Chet Atkins, a gift from the man himself in 1988. The manager runs back from the nearest bar and hands Scotty a takeout martini. Scotty has



just finished laying down one final, toasty-warm track when Reggie has a wry idea: At his suggestion, Scotty throws in a lick from "Heartbreak Hotel" on the fadeout. You-know-who may be spinning in his grave.

—Wheat Williams

JIM HARRINGTON



FEBRUARY 1997 \$4.95

