

# nightbeat



## Almost Elvis

Ron Young Apes the King  
With Uncanny Accuracy

Ron Young at Danny's Place restaurant and lounge, 5231-B Memorial Drive, Stonemont Village Shopping Center, Stone Mountain, 296-6773. Band begins at 9:30 p.m. and plays three dance sets; Young performs at 10:20 p.m. and 12:20 a.m. Monday through Saturday; booking ends July 2. Adjoining restaurant open for lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday. Draught beer \$1.05, wine \$1.05 and mixed drinks \$1.55 to \$1.95. \$2 cover for men and \$1 cover charge for women on Friday and Saturday; no minimum. Dress requirements: shirts with collars, no ragged jeans, no tennis shoes. Master Charge, BankAmericard, C & S and American Express credit cards.

By CHARLES McEWEN  
Journal-Constitution Staff Writer

"I don't think I'm Elvis," says singer Ron Young. "I just do a tribute to Elvis because I think he's a great entertainer."

For some of the women in the audience, that distinction scarcely seems to matter. They scream anyway, particularly when Young launches into "All Shook Up" or "Hound Dog."

Physically, Young resembles Presley, particularly the longish sideburns and the black hair elaborately styled and sprayed.

For one show, Young wore a white studded jumpsuit—open down the front, a dead ringer for the one Presley himself wears.

Backstage after his show, Young says, "It's all like a replica," pointing to the two gabardine jumpsuits he wears, both aglitter with chrome studs. "This blue one is taken from his (Presley's) Hawaiian (TV) special, except it was white. And the white one here is from his Madison Square Garden appearance."

The suits cost \$500 each, Young said, each made by Atlanta seamstress Martha Dollar.

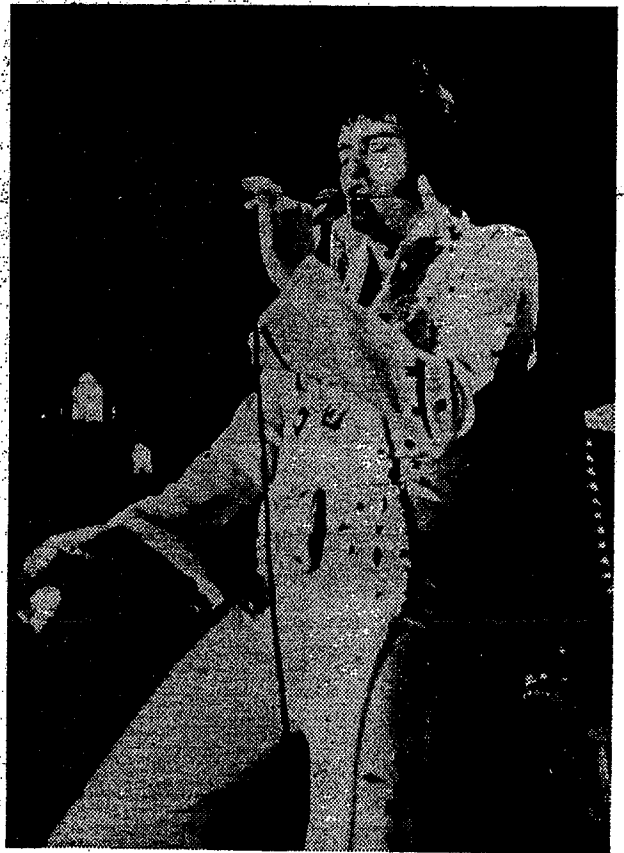
Vocally, Young's resemblance to Presley is striking, a resemblance that is accentuated by the reverberation in the speaker system he uses.

And like Presley, Young has his own fan club. "We've been coming every night since he's been here," said Merlene McDaniel of Marietta, co-president with Nancy Taffel of the Ron Young Fan Club.

During Young's performance, Ms. McDaniel operated a sound-on-film movie camera, recording all of the songs and gyrations on stage. She had on a dark T-shirt that bore Ron Young's name on the front and "Almost Elvis" on the back in silvery iridescent letters.

"I've been an Elvis fan since 1955," Ms. McDaniel said. "I went to his first concert in Atlanta in 1956. Ron is the closest to him (of any of the Presley look- and sound-alikes). He uses his real hair and voice."

Young's decision to parlay the Presley popularity into a nightclub act goes back about 10 months. He first began performing in St. Louis with a trio, throwing in an Elvis song



Ron Young doesn't think he's Elvis Presley—but he thinks Elvis is a great performer. And so the tribute, complete with the Elvis-coiffed hair and slinky Elvis jumpsuits. He even sounds like the King.

here and there. And those songs drew the biggest audience response.

Young, 24, has been a Presley fan "since I was about 8 years old. His records prompted me to go to his movies. Then after I saw him in the movies, well, when you're a child you are impressionable.

"When I was in high school—when people put you down, when everybody was calling Elvis a greaser, I stuck with him."

Young's admiration for Presley is simple and unquestioning: "Let's put it this way, without sounding hokey or corny: He's got to be one of the greatest if not the greatest performer. In my day and age, he's the greatest performer. He proved that in 1970 when he came back after eight years of movies."

Like Presley, Young has learned how to choreograph his act, throwing in lots of hip movements, karate kicks and assorted shimmies. The more suggestive the move, the more the women screamed—or so it seemed.

"Sex is part of entertaining," Young says. "Elvis is a sex symbol—so are Gina Lollobrigida and Ursula Andress. It helps to be sexy, but what pleases the people more than anything is going out there and singing and entertaining. What's more important to these people is your smile."

Do people come to see Young himself or to see an Elvis surrogate?

"I wish it was me, not Elvis," Young said, "but after you win a club, they come to see you, not Elvis."

For his booking at Danny's Place, Young is backed by a five-piece group called Fox, which also plays three dance sets a night. The musicians are Ken DuBose on bass, his wife Michelle on string ensemble, Richard Rogers on drums, David Drew on keyboards and Larry Elliott on guitar.