

timeline of his life

JOHNNY CASH

THE MAN IN BLACK

Johnny Cash was a singer, guitarist and songwriter whose music innovatively mixed country, rock, blues and gospel influences.



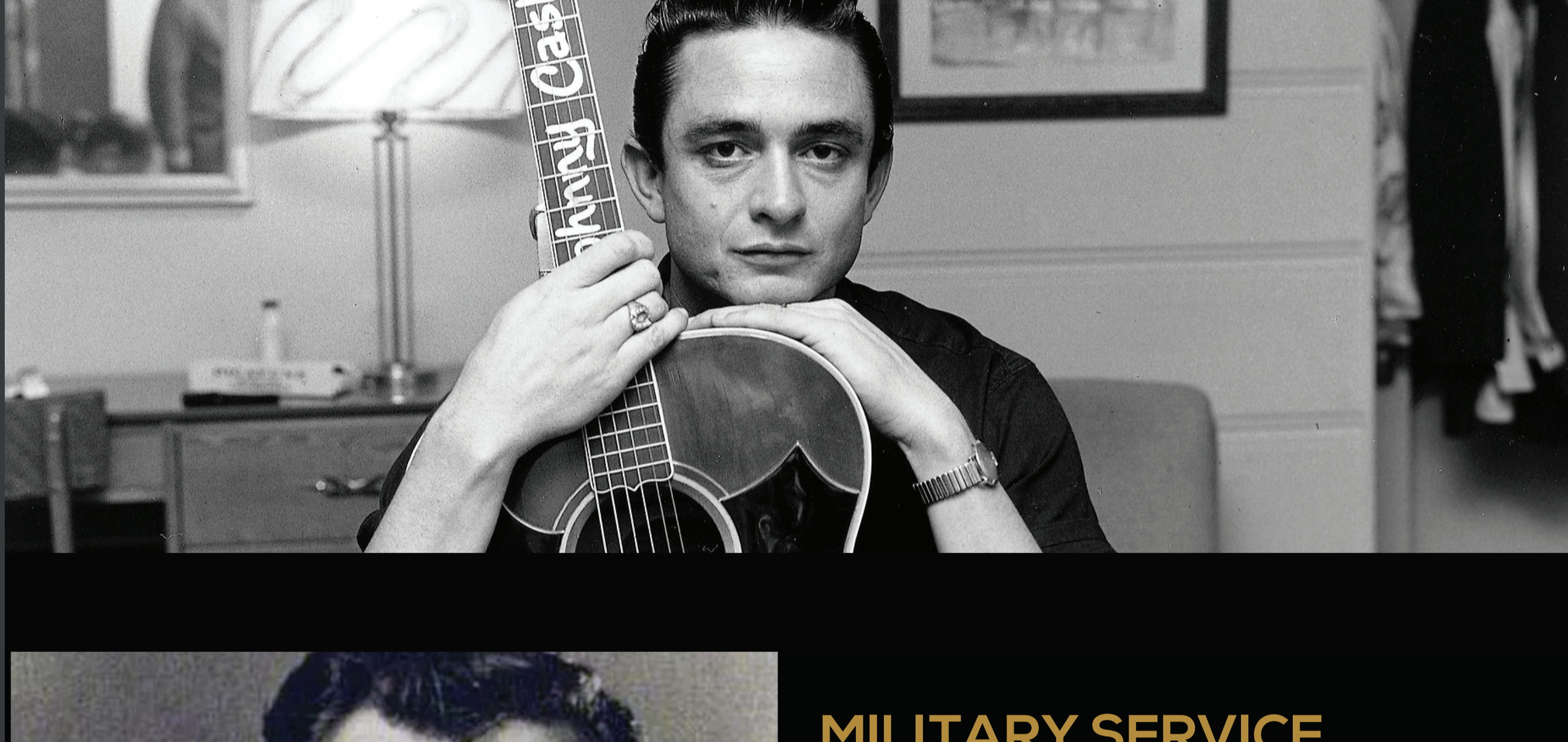
1944 BROTHERS GRAVE

Jack worked to help support the large Cash family, and while cutting wood one Saturday, he was accidentally pulled into a table saw. The saw mangled Jack's midsection, and he exacerbated the problem by crawling across a dirty floor to reach help.

Jack lingered for a week after the accident, but he stood no chance of surviving. His death had a profound impact on the young Johnny Cash, who until that time had been a gregarious boy, full of jokes. By all reports, he became more introspective afterwards and began to spend more time alone, writing stories and sketches. Jack's deathbed words about seeing angels also affected him deeply on a spiritual level.

1944 FIRST TIME

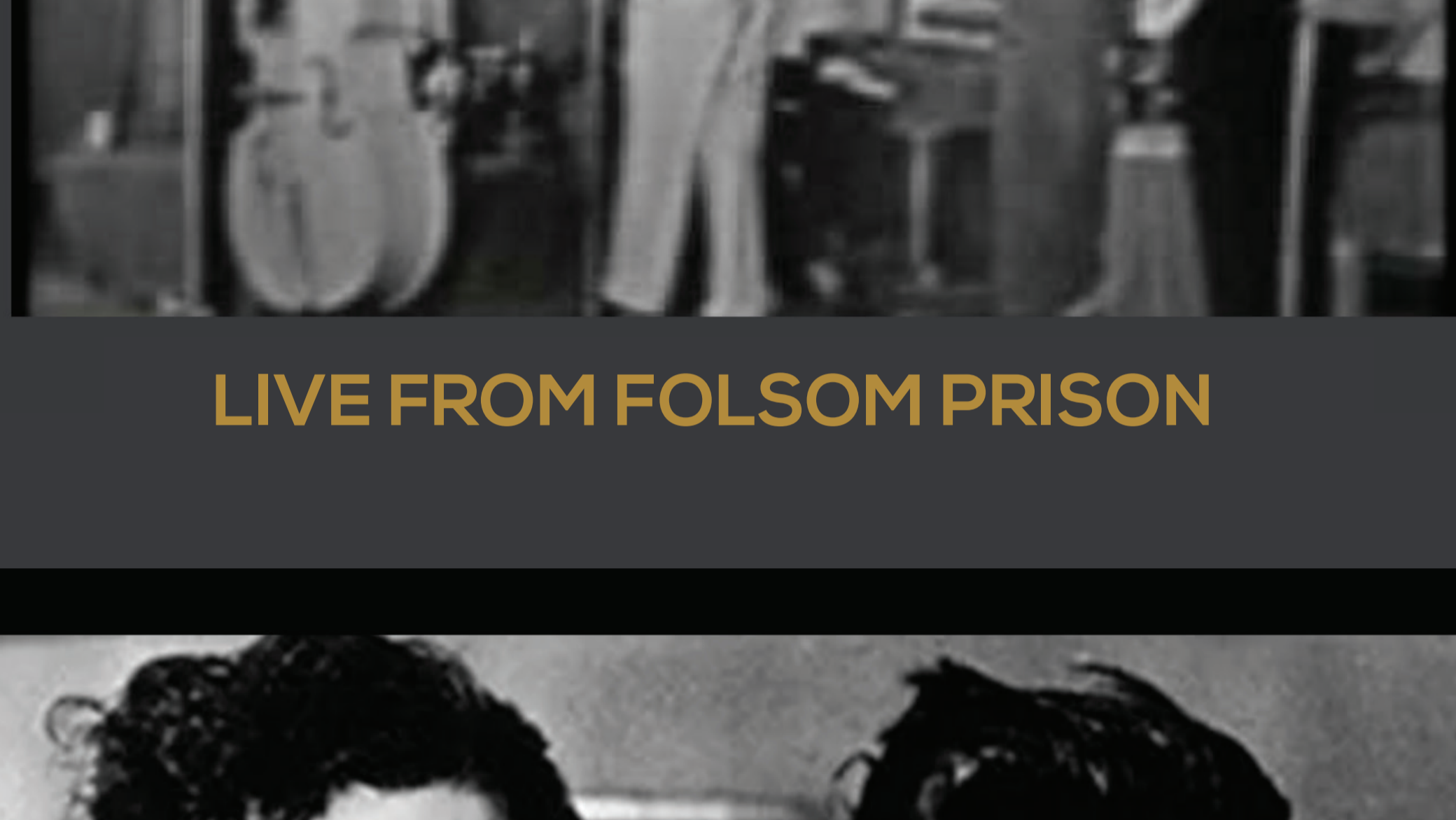
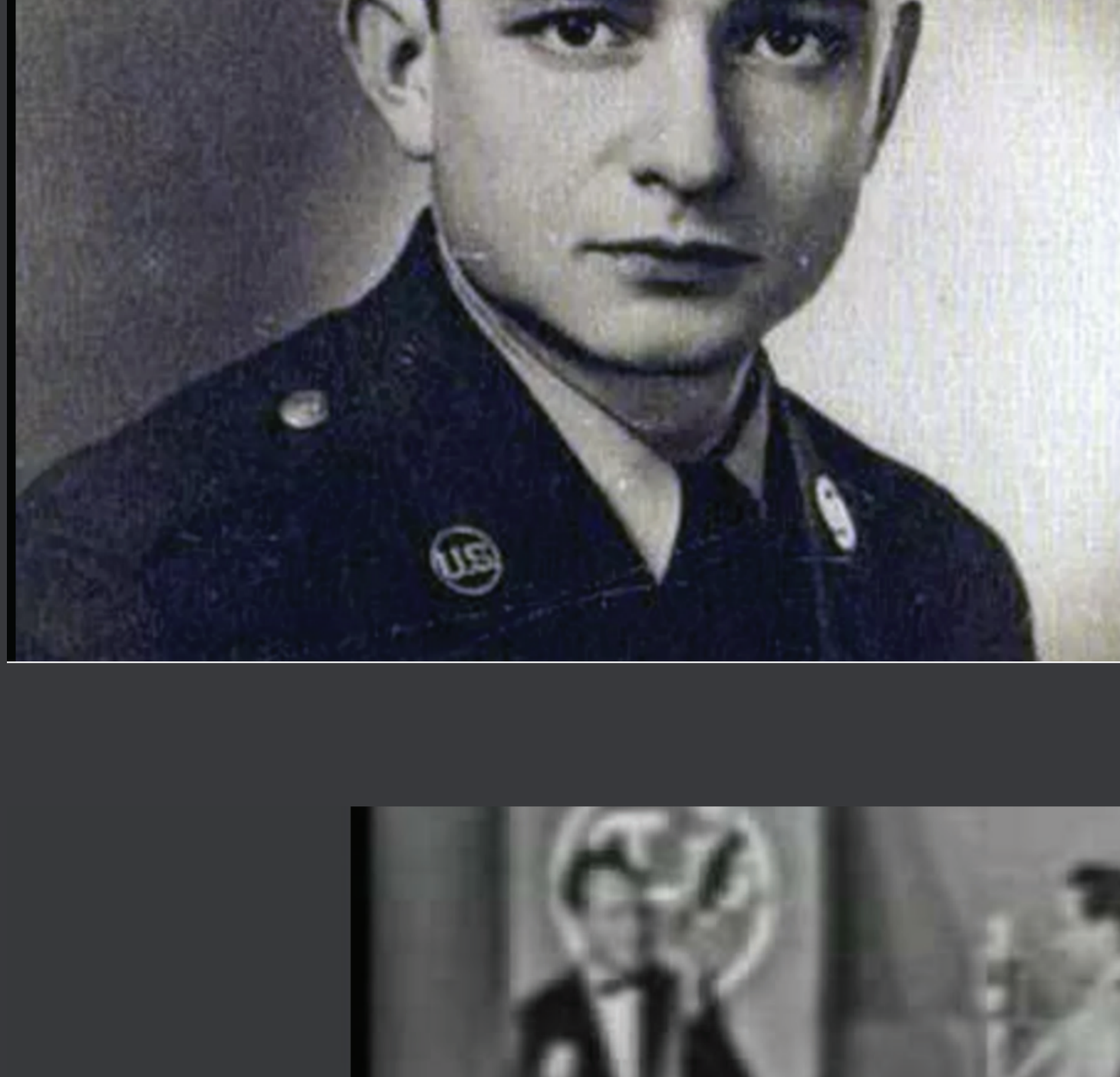
From an early age, Cash, who began writing songs at age 12, showed a love for the music that enveloped his life. Sensing her boy's gift for song, Carrie Rivers, Cash's mother, scraped together enough money so that he could take singing lessons. However, after just three lessons his teacher, enthralled with Cash's already unique singing style, told him to stop taking lessons and to never deviate from his natural voice.



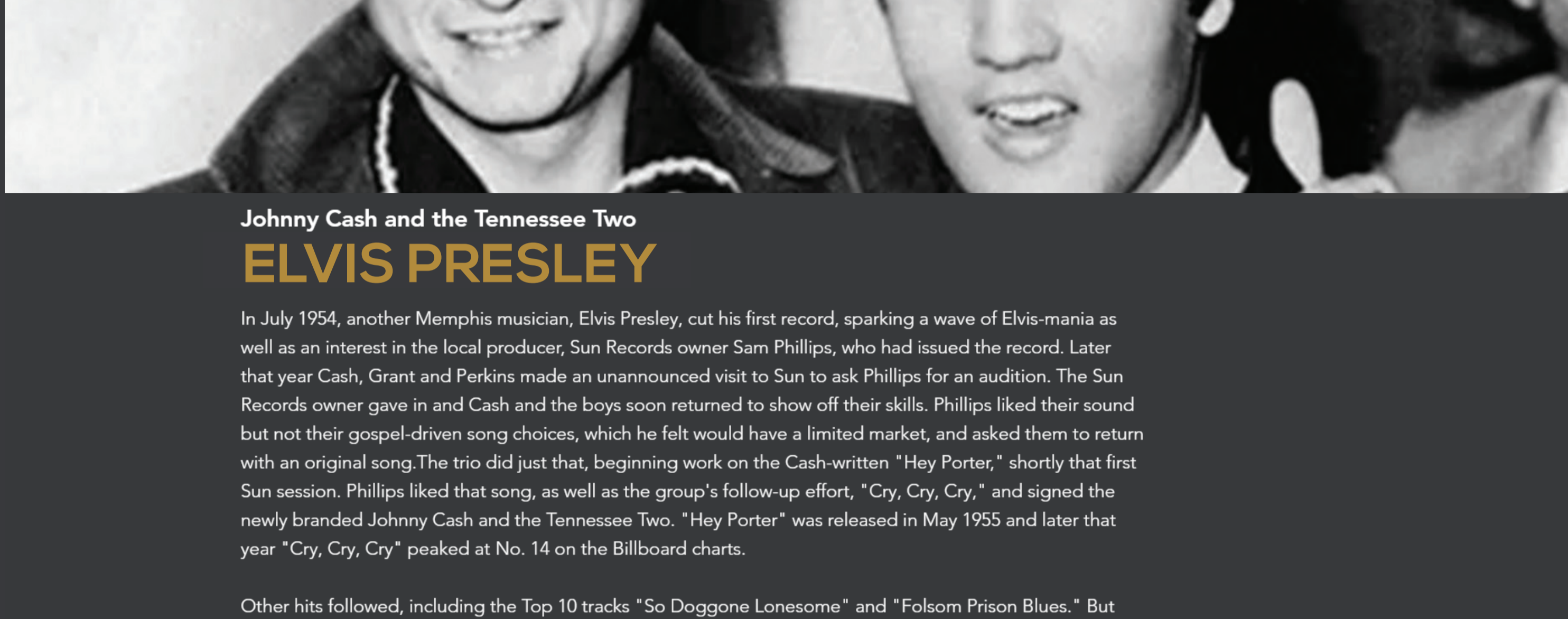
MILITARY SERVICE AND MUSICAL ASPIRATIONS

In 1950, Cash graduated high school and left Dyess to seek employment, venturing to Pontiac, Michigan, for a brief stint at an auto body plant. That summer he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force as "John R. Cash"—military regulations required a full first name—and he was sent for training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, where he met future wife Vivian Liberto. For the bulk of his four years in the Air Force, Cash was stationed in Landsberg, West Germany, where he worked as a radio intercept officer, eavesdropping on Soviet radio traffic.

It was also in Germany that Cash began to turn more of his attention toward music.



LIVE FROM FOLSOM PRISON

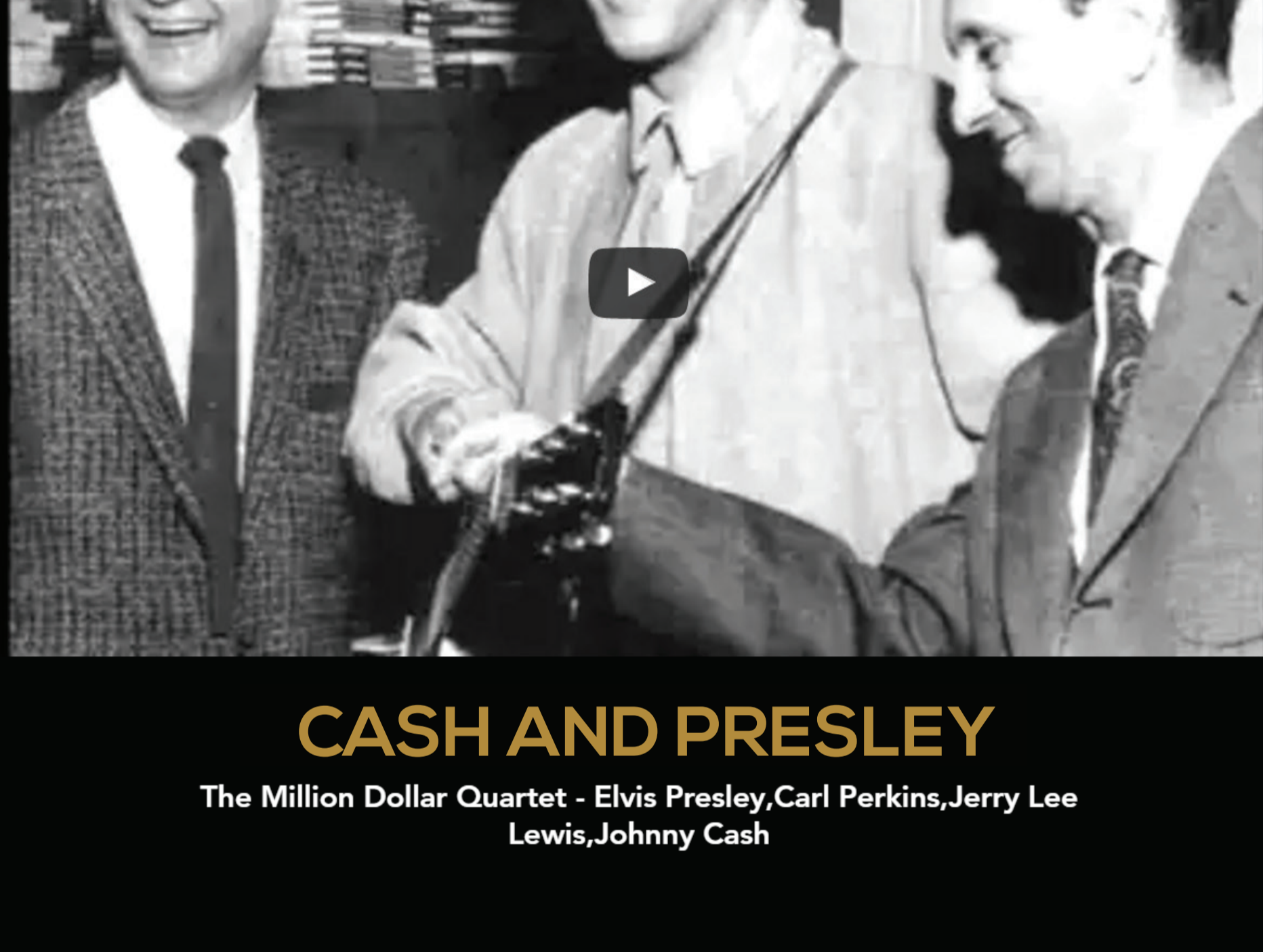


JOHNNY CASH AND THE TENNESSEE TWO

ELVIS PRESLEY

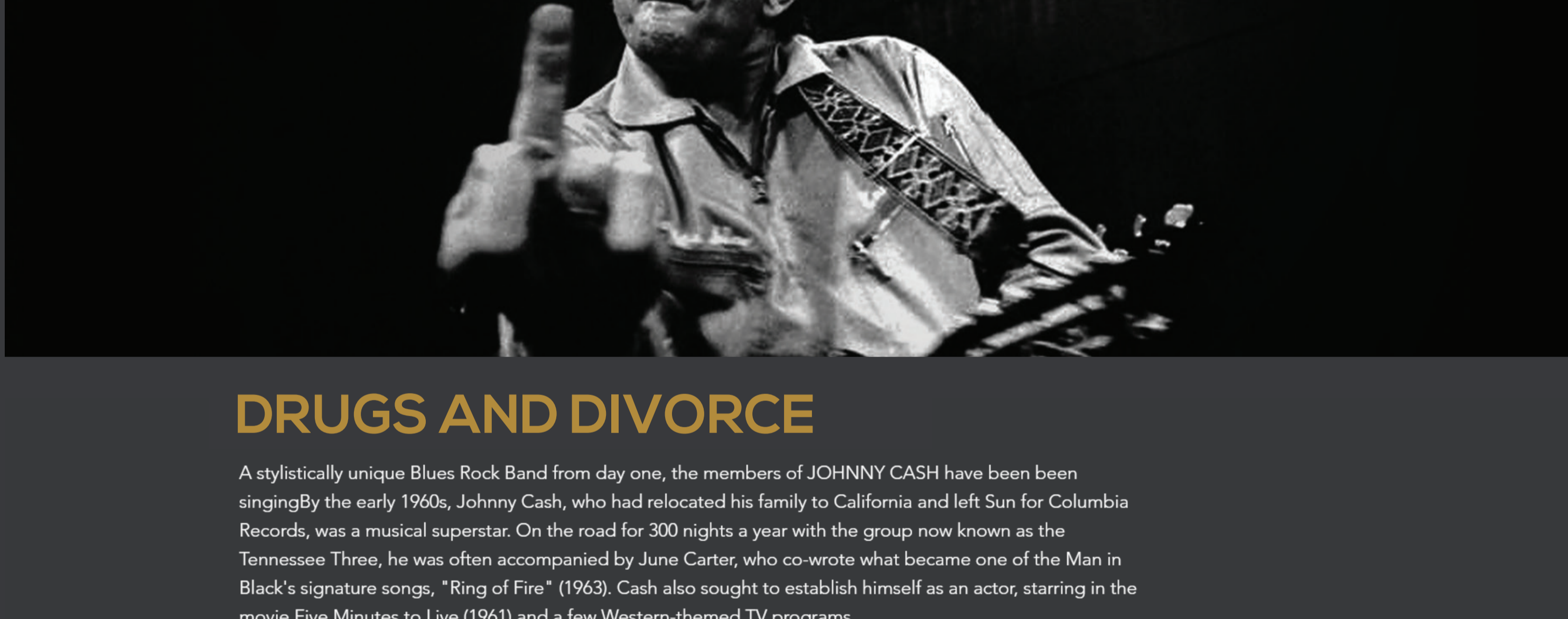
In July 1954, another Memphis musician, Elvis Presley, cut his first record, sparking a wave of Elvis-mania as well as an interest in the local producer, Sun Records owner Sam Phillips, who had issued the record. Later that year, Cash, Grant and Perkins made an unannounced visit to Sun to ask Phillips for an audition. The Sun Records owner gave in and Cash and the boys soon returned to show off their skills. Phillips liked their sound but not their gospel-driven song choices, which he felt would have a limited market, and asked them to return with an original song. The trio did just that, beginning work on the Cash-written "Hey Porter," and shortly that first Sun session. Phillips liked that song, as well as the group's follow-up effort, "Cry, Cry, Cry," and signed the newly branded Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two. "Hey Porter" was released in May 1955 and later that year "Cry, Cry, Cry" peaked at No. 14 on the Billboard charts.

Other hits followed, including the Top 10 tracks "So Doggone Lonesome" and "Folsom Prison Blues." But true fame arrived in 1956, when Cash wrote and released "I Walk the Line," which catapulted to No. 1 on the country music charts and sold 2 million copies. He released his debut album, Johnny Cash with His Hot & Blue Guitar in 1957, and cemented his fame with chart-toppers like "Ballad of a Teenage Queen" and "Don't Take Your Guns to Town."



CASH AND PRESLEY

The Million Dollar Quartet - Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash



DRUGS AND DIVORCE

A stylistically unique Blues Rock Band from day one, the members of JOHNNY CASH have been singing by the early 1960s. Johnny Cash, who had relocated his family to California and left Sun for Columbia Records, was a musical superstar. On the road for 300 nights a year with the group now known as the Tennessee Three, he was often accompanied by June Carter, who co-wrote what became one of the Man in Black's signature songs, "Ring of Fire" (1963). Cash also sought to establish himself as an actor, starring in the movie Five Minutes to Live (1961) and a few Western-themed TV programs.

But the schedule and the pressures that faced him took a toll on his personal life. Drugs and alcohol were frequent tour companions while Vivian, left home to take care of their family, which now included daughters Rosanne (b. 1955), Kathy (b. 1956), Cindy (b. 1959) and Tara (b. 1961) grew increasingly frustrated with her husband's absence. In 1966, she finally filed for divorce.

Cash's personal life continued to spiral out of control. The following year, after a serious drug binge, Cash was discovered in a near-death state by a policeman in a small village in Georgia. There were other incidents, too, including an arrest for smuggling amphetamines into the U.S. across the Mexican border, and for starting a forest fire in a California park. "I took all the drugs there are to take, and I drank," Cash recalled. "Everybody said that Johnny Cash was through 'cause I was walkin' around town 150 pounds. I looked like walkin' death." performing, and playing in sync as if they'd been together their entire musical careers. Throughout the course of the band's union, they have won over the hearts of music lovers from all walks of life, performing at a variety of venues, making loads of public appearances, all the while recording new music. Learn more by exploring the site, and feel free to get in touch with any of your comments and questions.



REMARRIAGE AND REVIVAL

All new

Cash got the lifeline he needed from his old touring companion, June Carter, who helped him refocus on his Christian faith and get the drug addiction treatment he needed. The two were married on March 1, 1968. The same year his show debuted, Cash also took home two Grammy Awards for the live album Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison (1968). A critical and commercial success, the album was credited with helping to revive the artist's popularity. In early 1970, Cash and Carter experienced more joy with the birth of their first and only child, John Carter Cash.



JOHNNY AND JUNE



FINAL YEARS AND LEGACY

Cash's physical health became more of an issue in the late 1990s. He was diagnosed with the neurodegenerative disease Shy-Drager syndrome—a misdiagnosis that was later corrected to autonomic neuropathy—and was hospitalized for pneumonia in 1998. Over the next year, Cash's health continued to decline. He was devastated when his longtime love, June Carter, died in May 2003, but he continued to work. With Rubin at his side, the singer recorded what would become American V: A Hundred Highways. Just a week before his death on September 12, 2003, from complications associated with diabetes, Cash wrapped up his final track.

"Once June passed, he had the will to live long enough to record, but that was pretty much all," Rubin later recalled. "A day after June passed, he said, 'I need to have something to do every day. Otherwise, there's no reason for me to be here.'"

"I think he'll be remembered for the way he grew as a person and an artist."



"All your life, you will be faced with a choice. You can choose love or hate. ...I choose love."

"You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space."

"It's good to know who hates you and it is good to be hated by the right people"

1932

40s

50s

60s

70s

90s

2003