



Elvis Is Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Myself

Lewis Grizzard

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The 1950s were simple times to grow up. For Lewis Grizzard and his buddies, "gallivanting" meant hanging out at the local store, eating Zagnut candy bars, and drinking "Big Orange bellywashers." About the worst thing a kid ever did was smoke rabbit tobacco, rolled in paper torn from a brown grocery sack, or maybe slick back his hair into a ducktail and try gyrating his hips like Elvis. Even as late as 1962, that world still made sense for boys like Grizzard, who was 16 and had his driver's license and a blond girlfriend. Elvis was still singing, Kennedy was still president, Sandy Koufax was still pitching, John Wayne was still "the Duke," Arnold Palmer was still winning golf tournaments, and restaurants still served hand-cut French fries.

But then assassinations, war, civil rights, free love, and drugs rocked the old order. And as they did, Grizzard frequently felt lost and confused. In place of Elvis, the Pied Piper of his generation, Grizzard now found wormy-looking, long-haired English kids who performed either half-naked or dressed like Zasu Pitts. "And I thought Janis Joplin was Missouri's entry in the Miss America Pageant," said Grizzard.

Even country music changed. Willie Nelson first challenged fans by growing a beard but then pushed them to the edge by wearing an earring. And sex became more prevalent than twin-fiddle intros in country music. Grizzard felt trapped between two generations. "Although I live in a new world, I was reared to live in an old one." His confusion continued into the 1980s and - as explored in his award-winning columns and best-selling books - made Grizzard a household name.

Elvis Is Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Myself is the witty, satiric, nostalgic account of Grizzard's efforts to survive in a changing world. Sex, music, clothes, entertainment, and life itself received the Grizzard treatment. In this, his sixth book, Grizzard was never funnier or more in tune with his readers. He might not have felt so good himself, but his social commentary and humor can still make the rest of us feel just fine.

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