

VIVA LAS VEGAS TURNS 60!

May 2024



'Viva Las Vegas' translates from the Spanish as 'Live Las Vegas' and more loosely as 'long live Las Vegas'. Recognised as such for many years by residents and visitors alike, the desert city became really famous and ever more popular after Elvis' 1964 movie **VIVA LAS VEGAS** starring the lovely Swedish actress, **Ann-Margret Olsson**.

The film is generally regarded by film critics and fans alike as one of our man's best films. Two racing car drivers compete to win a race and end up also competing for the same girl!

Lucky Jackson (Elvis) goes to Vegas with his Elva Mark VI to compete in the city's first ever Grand Prix Race. However, in order to win, Lucky has to find his car a new engine! He wins enough money to pay for it, loses the money after being thrown into the swimming pool by swimming instructor, **Rusty Martin** (Ann-Margret), then has to work as a waiter and enter a talent contest in the hope of winning a cash prize, enough to settle his hotel bill and pay for his car's new engine!

A pleasant rom-com of a movie promising songs, a lovely locale, a 'bumpy-ride' love affair, an exciting race sequence and just generally a great deal of fun. And we all know that Lucky will get his girl in the end!

BUT...

Could there be another reason why this movie was such a big hit, grossing almost \$9,500,000 at the box office? Here's what a **Rotten Tomatoes** critique says about the interaction between Elvis and Ann-Margret: '*Ann-Margret keeps Elvis on his toes and together they elevate Viva Las Vegas into a naughty and rockin' mild delight*'.

Filmink says: '*Ann-Margret had so much energy and pep that she had blown her previous three male co-stars off screen, but Elvis could match her. He was the best on-screen partner she ever had, and she was his. It's the most purely entertaining Elvis movie ever, a complete delight and it's unbelievable they were never teamed again*'.

Anyone who has not seen the movie yet, give it a go! The real-life on-screen chemistry between the two stars is palpable!

THE AFFAIR – SPARKS WERE FLYING!



As the two lead stars spent more time with each other, they discovered just how much they had in common. The press could not get enough of their romantic liaison. Ann-Margret became known as *'the female Elvis'*. They were the hottest couple to hit the screen in 1964 and both well-known by just their first names!

Meanwhile, Priscilla was back at Graceland in Memphis, hearing and reading about what her man was up to in Hollywood! That cannot have been easy for her!

The press was relentless. Elvis and Ann-Margret had become engaged, the beautiful Swede replacing Priscilla as Elvis' leading lady! To add salt to the wound, a picture was leaked and published of the two getting married in the film, a picture the public thought was real! Understandably, Priscilla was furious! Elvis ended the relationship with Ann-Margret and eventually he and Priscilla married in 1967.

Ann-Margret says in her memoir, *My Story*:

'We continued to see each other periodically until we had dated for almost a year. Then everything halted. We knew the relationship had to end, that Elvis had to fulfil his commitment'.

and

'There were other factors in Elvis's life that forced him apart from me, and I understood them. Elvis had always been honest with me, but still, it was a confusing situation'.

It seems their love for each other did not diminish. They stayed in distant contact up until Elvis' death. A few years after Ann-Margret's marriage in 1968, she had a residency slot at a Las Vegas hotel. And on the morning of every show, Elvis would send her a bouquet of flowers in the shape of a guitar to wish her luck.

Years later, Ann-Margret looked back fondly on her relationship with Elvis saying:

'We both felt a current, an electricity that went straight through us. It would become a force we couldn't control.'

DID HE MARRY THE WRONG GIRL? What do YOU think?