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**CELEBRITY SERIES:
MEMPHIS**

OHIO'S GUERNSEY COUNTY

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ABOUT THE COVER

Once reserved only for Hawaiian royalty, surfing became a more common sport in the early 1900s. By the 1950s, big-wave surfing took hold. Today, the Hawaiian Islands, the birthplace of big-wave surfing, is still the epicenter for folks looking to catch the perfect wave.

"I think everybody needs to have a little bit of Southern in them," said actress Elisabeth Röhm. She was referring, of course, not to a strict family upbringing, but rather to a perspective or point of view original to the American South. "There's such heart to it," she said. "The South has old-fashioned values that appreciate family and beauty and food and enjoying life."

When it comes to backgrounds, the actress, who starred in *One Life to Live*, *Angel*, *Law & Order* and *Heroes*, has lots from which to choose. She was born in Europe, raised in New York and has homes in Venice, Calif., and the Hamptons in Long Island, N.Y. But it was her schooling in the South that left a permanent imprint.

"My mom is originally from Memphis, and I still have family there," she said. "I go back several times a year."

A history major in college, Röhm appreciates the richness and depth the city has to offer.

"Memphis is a beautiful, complicated stamp of America's past," she said. "In Memphis, the past is written all over its streets."

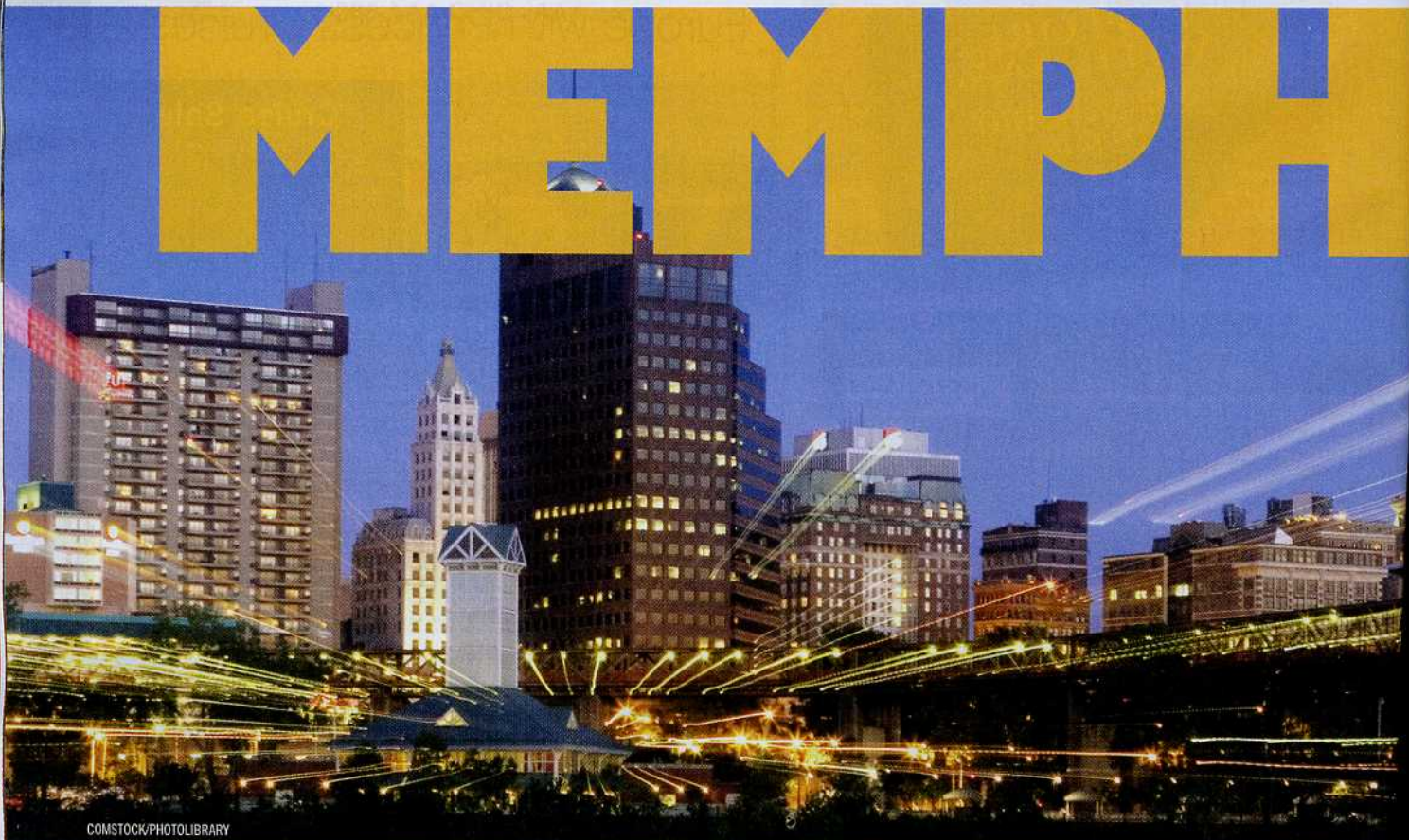
While there's no trace of twang in her accent and she's more straightforward than Southern belle, Röhm has blue eyes that light up when she's discussing barbecue.

"I really love ribs, shrimp and grits—all of it," she said. "When I'm in Memphis, I'm going to go to (Charles Vergos') Rendezvous for ribs, even if I have to go by myself because everyone's on a diet. I don't care—I'm going."

As the pork barbecue capital of the world, Memphis has decadent culinary delights not to be missed. But it's Memphis' distinction as the birthplace of rock 'n' roll that

Elisabeth Röhm's

MEMPHIS



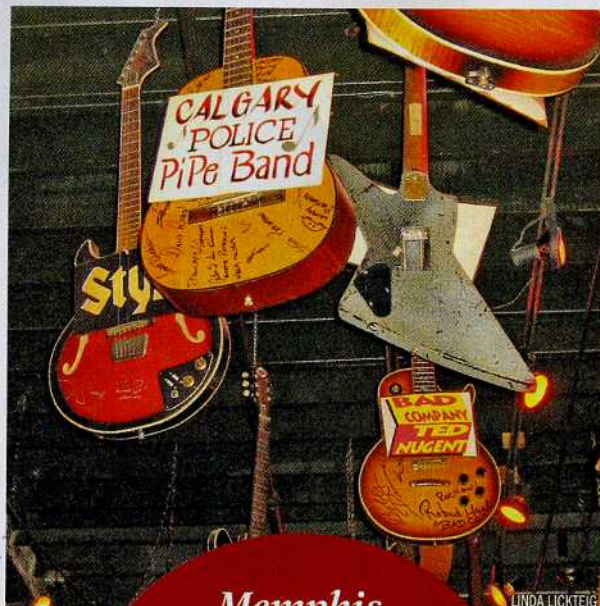
COMSTOCK/PHOTOLIBRARY

**Soul, blues
and barbecue make
for a Hollywood
actress' favorite
home away
from home.**

BY BARBARA
WAYMAN

IS





*Memphis
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truly makes it a city unlike any other. Music lovers can head to two major landmarks—Elvis Presley's Graceland and blues capital Beale Street—as well as several excellent music museums that share the story of how these bluffs along the Mississippi River became the nexus of gospel, soul, blues, rockabilly and country sounds.

Guitar Man

Johnny Cash, B.B. King, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and Carl Perkins all made early significant recordings in Memphis, but Elvis Presley, the King of Rock 'n' Roll, is the city's biggest draw.

"Memphians are very proud of Elvis," Röhm said. His Graceland estate attracts 600,000 guests a year—it's one of the most visited private residences in the country. Tours showcase the famous Jungle Room, decorated to remind Elvis of one of his favorite places, Hawaii. Part of his extensive car collection is also on display, along with two of his private planes, the Hound Dog and the Lisa Marie, which features gold-plated seat belts and a blue-suede bedroom. Elvis was quick to point out that the plane's interior was designed by the same team who did Air Force One.

■ *Barbara Wayman is a regular contributor from Dublin, Ohio.*

"Children love Graceland because everything's really theatrical with Elvis," Röhm said. "It's really, really fun, and I love it every time I go."

Fans can soak up more history at the funky Sun Studio, where the King's career got its start. Little has changed from Elvis' day; visitors can still see the scuffs on the linoleum from Jerry Lee Lewis' piano. Knowledgeable tour guides let guests pose for pictures with Elvis' microphone while standing in the very spot he stood to record his breakout hit, *That's All Right*, a thrill

that may well be the highlight of an entire trip.

For a greater appreciation of the shifting cultural and social forces that merged so many sounds, tourists should stop by the Stax Museum of American Soul Music and the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum.

"It's all about the music in Memphis, and they've done a really good job of capturing the history," Röhm said. "Memphis is an edgy city, and I'm not surprised it inspired artists to express themselves."

When night falls, the action is on historical, neon-lit Beale Street, where performers such as B.B. King, Muddy Waters, W.C. Handy and Booker T. Jones helped this 1.8-mile stretch become the central force shaping the Memphis blues sound. Alfred's on Beale, B.B. King Blues Club and Rum Boogie Cafe are a few of the more popular clubs where live acts perform nightly, often playing popular Sun and Stax hits.

Walking in Memphis

Close to Beale Street is one of the most significant hotels in the South: the Peabody. It's said the Mississippi Delta begins in the lobby of this grand dame of downtown, and everybody who's anybody has passed through its doors at one time or another. Today the Peabody is known for the five mallards that march up a red carpet with much fanfare to swim in the lobby fountain all afternoon. Crowds gather to watch them parade twice a day—they go in at 11 a.m. and out at 5 p.m. The show is particularly popular with children, and adults can peruse a variety of duck-themed merchandise at the hotel's many gift shops.

Family attractions appeal to Röhm. With a 2-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Röhm has become something of a zoo connoisseur, but she's picky.



Music is king in Memphis, and it reigns on Beale Street, where clubs (opposite left and middle) cater to every taste. Not far from Beale is the Peabody Hotel (opposite right), where pampered ducks hold court. Meanwhile, pandas (above) rule at Memphis Zoo's 3-acre China exhibit. For a closer look at Memphis, trolley tours (above right) travel the Main Street Mall and Riverside Drive.

"I'm uncomfortable at a lot of zoos unless they're promoting the survival of the species, as opposed to just observing it," she said. The Memphis Zoo meets her high standards. Pandas Ya Ya and Le Le are the reigning stars, but there are also more than 2,800 additional animals representing more than 400 species. It's one of only a few zoos in the U.S. to feature a nocturnal animal exhibit, while its Once Upon a Farm exhibit showcases domesticated animals associated with 19th-century farm life.

Children will also enjoy riding restored vintage Memphis Area Transit Authority trolleys that loop through the downtown or hopping on one of the horse-drawn carriages that line up outside the Peabody nightly for 30-minute guided tours. In warmer weather, paddle-wheel boats offer sightseeing and dinner cruises along the Mississippi.

"I've always loved Memphis' architecture, and whenever I go, I always take an afternoon to drive around midtown and look at the buildings," Röhm said. "Sometimes I fantasize about moving to Memphis. It's very decadent. It's a place where the senses really bloom."

Planning Your Trip

For trip-planning assistance, contact a local AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel. Ask for AAA's Graceland Rhythm and Blues Package, which includes a two-night hotel stay and a Platinum tour of Graceland.

Elisabeth's Picks

STAY: "The Peabody Hotel is legendary. My cousin got married there, so I definitely have some good memories."

EAT: "My favorite restaurants are Creole-inspired. Circa by John Bragg and Restaurant Iris are pretty glamorous. Molly Fontaine Lounge is in an old mansion—it's so romantic. You can have a great dinner downstairs and then go upstairs to the lounge, where you can listen to music and have some more cocktails. Also, I never miss the ribs at Rendezvous. I live for that place when I'm back in Memphis."

PLAY: "Memphis In May International Festival is a three-day music festival that really captures what Memphis is all about. There's a barbecue festival that's part of it, and you can't beat that."

DO: "Of course Graceland, Beale Street and the Memphis Zoo are not to be missed, but I think the way to really know a city is to drive through its neighborhoods and really see the houses and get a feel for it. Make sure you spend time just meandering through the residential areas."

