

Review: 'Priscilla' is an eye-opening look at life with Elvis Presley



CHENNAI: It would not be a reach to say everybody knows of Elvis Presley — the king of rock and roll has been widely written about and has been the subject of many a film. But very few know about his young wife, Priscilla, and director Sofia Coppola made it her mission to share her story.

Coppola's film "Priscilla" is based on the 1985 memoir "Elvis and Me" penned by Priscilla Presley. Cailee Spaeny ("Mare of Easttown," "Bad Times") headlines the film while Jacob Elordi ("Euphoria," "The Kissing Booth") plays Elvis, who has been fantastically directed so as not to upstage his on-screen lover.

Having had its world premiere at this year's Venice Film Festival, the film then travelled to the recently concluded Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival. "Priscilla" is a fascinating work that fetched Spaeny the Volpi Cup for Best Actress in Venice.

The love story begins when teenage Priscilla Beaulieu meets Elvis Presley at a party. Seen through Priscilla's eyes, the movie underlines the unknown side of the American legend as well as the couple's long courtship and a marriage that ran into turbulent waters and eventually hit the rocks. A journey from a German army base camp to the dream estate at Graceland in the US, "Priscilla" turns out to be a fantasy and a story of fame and love — as well as one of extreme control, co-dependence and the pitfalls of fame.

One of the first songs one hears in Coppola's work is Frankie Avalon's "Venus" wafting from a jukebox in a snack bar in 1959. The director has always had great choices in musical scores, but this song is thrillingly perfect.

Coppola then details the young lady's struggle over the next 14 years to hold on to her man. Her's was a life lived in the overwhelming shadows of a legend, an entertainer par excellence who intoxicated her in no small way. The ups and downs of their relationship are well charted, and we see how it falls into addictions and power.

The film does not moralize, nor does it shy away from sadness. It does not take any easy routes and its lead star gives an intense performance.
