

ENTERTAINMENT This Week

Randy Friskie

Impersonator impersonates Elvis impersonator in movie

Randy Friskie, Langley's resident Elvis impersonator, returned to his Brookswood home Wednesday after filming a movie in Los Angeles about, appropriately enough, an Elvis impersonator.

The movie, called *It's Only Make Believe*, centres on the career of an up-and-coming entertainer named Tommy Preston who finds that the Elvis numbers in his repertoire evoke wild, ecstatic reactions from the audience. Women are particularly insistent that he perform more and more Elvis, until the hits of the deceased King take over the whole show, and Preston's personal ambitions to promote his own music and talent are put on the back burner.

Much of the movie centres on the true-to-life *Legends in Concert*, which plays continually at the Imperial Palace in Las Vegas, and

in which Friskie himself has appeared appeared as Elvis for "about three months, on and off, two shows a day."

Other performers include replica Beatles, Buddy Holly, Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Liberace, Judy Garland, and Marilyn Monroe, who becomes Tommy's love interest.

Friskie, who has lived in Langley for about seven months, won the starring role over 269 other impersonators invited to audition for the part. He was the only Canadian, a fact which dented some of the nationalistic pride of some of the other singers. Elvis, after all, was an American.

But Randy is, after all, a natural, and that, he said, gave him an edge.

"I just do what comes natural. I do what feels good. My own moves are a little different."
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ent, but they're natural, so people think they're the same as Elvis'. They aren't really."

Speaking from Edmonton, where he performed immediately after filming was done in Vegas and Los Angeles, Friskie told *The Advance* that seeing his competitors made him confident he'd get the part.

Friskie was called on very short notice, leaving no time to prepare or practise the script. When he arrived for the audition, his competitors had been there for days, practising and rehearsing. They were all dressed in Elvis costumes.

"I walked in wearing blue jeans and a muscle shirt. They handed me a script others had seen for days, but I'd used those lines so often before, it was all natural for me. It was like *deja vu*."

"The producer liked me right away," he said. "I had the feeling when I went down there that I had it."

Being unfamiliar with the movie business didn't seem to be a hindrance.

"It was my first movie," he noted. "It's amazing how many ways they have to film a certain scene. But I loved it and it was good to have the opportunity to do something like that. It felt really natural."

The voice he uses for speaking or singing, whether he's doing Elvis or just being himself, is his own. And unlike some Elvis imitators, who have had cosmetic surgery to give them Presleyesque features, the only thing Friskie changes is his hair, sporting long sideburns and a Presley coiffure reminiscent of early Elvis.

Friskie, 27, originally of Niagara Falls, Ontario, is the youngest of five children in a musical family in which he learned to play piano, guitar, bass and drums.

His percussive skills were partially developed when "my father tied me to the clothesline outside and made me practise." It was really a child's safety harness and his father set up the drums on the lawn so he could practise in the summer sun.

He started performing in bars with his father's band at age 14, letting his long hair hide his youthful appearance whenever the police checked out the establishment.

Coming out west to perform at Expo 86, he found he liked everything about B.C., except for the ferries, which hinder the eight to nine months touring on the road each year, an aspect of the career he enjoys.

"I love it. Getting out and doing the show, meeting the people and doing your part is a good feeling."

But he also loves his new home surrounded by tall trees. B.C. and Langley touched something in him right away.

"I really liked the people, the climate, and the mountains, and I just knew this was where I wanted to be. Big cities are okay when I'm working, but I like a little peace and quiet, getting away from all the hustle and bustle of the city."

Apparently, being on the road and wrapped up in show-

biz hasn't ruined Canada's best-known Elvis pseudoclone. A friend of Friskie's in Langley said he is "an incredibly talented performer," who "likes to be in public. He enjoys it and always makes time for his fans." But Linda Penny, 22, also points out his other side.

Referring to his participation in Timmy's Telethon, she said there were performers such as Tanya Tucker, Pat Boone, Mickey Gilley and others there, but Randy spent his free time playing on the floor with the kids.

"He's got a big heart," she said. "And he loves kids."



Randy Friskie & Barbara Bogar



The top image is lifted from the movie promo one sheet.
The bottom photo is a bonus picture by me.