

MUSIC

Can't help falling in love with Friskie

Thirty-four-year-old Randy Friskie was once mistaken for Elvis in Graceland.

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Women have torn his shirts, ripped off his chains and even cut pieces of his hair out.

But except for a few bald spots, Randy Friskie isn't complaining. It's just what comes with being a King — or at least impersonating one.

To celebrate Elvis Presley's 65th birthday, Randy "Elvis" Friskie will bring to life the King through the '50s, '60s and '70s at the Chandos Pattison Auditorium at 10238-166th St. in Surrey this Saturday Jan 8.

"It's probably the biggest, most exciting show that I've ever done," he says. "I've got some of the best players in the business to do this, and I'm just really excited."

Friskie will perform a two- to three-hour show that will include a full orchestra and an assortment of singers, dancers and acrobats.

The 34-year-old Friskie, who puts on Presley shows all around the world, insists he's different from the other Elvis impersonators out there.

"The thing about me is that I'm me up there and I let people know that through my show," Friskie says. "A lot of people get up there and try to do exactly what Elvis did. I move to the music the way I feel comfortable. At the end of my show I say I'm not trying to be Elvis — I'm just trying to give you folks a chance to maybe relive memories or maybe give you a chance to see what it would be like to see Elvis live."

While Friskie says he's not trying to be Elvis, some people can't tell the difference. A couple of years ago during Elvis Week in Memphis, Tennessee, an out-of-costume Friskie was approached by a woman who wanted to take a picture of him for an Elvis contest. After some pictures, she took him to Graceland in a limousine, where a

swarm of ladies coming out of a tour bus were screaming, "Elvis, Elvis, Elvis!"

"These ladies were freaking," says Friskie, laughing. "I asked the security guard, 'Is this normal?' He goes, 'I've been here for five years and I haven't seen anything like this.'"

Friskie loves all the eras of the King. He likes the '50s and '60s because of the sensual hip motions, and the '70s for the more challenging songs. Friskie doesn't portray Presley during the troubled years when the King weighed more than 250 pounds before dying of an overdose in 1977; instead he prefers to capture the younger, slimmer, more vibrant Presley.

For the Niagara Falls native, there's always been a little King in him. His first memories of Presley were watching him perform *Love Me Tender*, and listening to old records. In grade school, when the teacher asked him to make a puppet and put on a show, he made an Elvis puppet. And at age 12, Friskie finally saw Elvis live, and was able to experience what made the King so extraordinary.

"He's got some kind of aura," Friskie explains. "There's a lot of singers out there who I think are good singers, and then you watch them in an interview and they have cocky attitudes. With Elvis, he was always polite, down to earth, and I've met people that have worked with him and lived with him and they say that's the way he was in real life. He also lived to perform and tried to make people happy."

As a teenager, Friskie would sneak into clubs, and play drums and sing the occasional Elvis tune with his father's band.

"Everyone was like, 'Hey, you sound just like Elvis, and if you cut your hair, you'd look like him, too,'" says Friskie. "I saw a couple of other guys doing it, that thought they were all that — and I thought, 'You know that's not the way he was and he never ever acted like that.'"

So Friskie traded in his long rocker mane for a sexy, preppy Presley look,



photo submitted
Randy "Elvis" Friskie performs at the Chandos Pattison Auditorium this Saturday night.

and started to sing the King's songs on a regular basis.

The "Elvis, Elvis, Elvis" show, an international show based out of Vancouver and Las Vegas, heard about Friskie and asked him to audition. Up against dozens of other Presley look-a-likes, Friskie's look and voice made the cut. From there, he was picked up by Expo 86, which launched his career. Friskie performed in front of record-breaking sold-out crowds at Expo, for eight straight weeks and impressed the women so much, many of them started fan clubs.

Friskie went on to appear in the movie *It's Only Make Believe* and in numerous television and radio commercials as well. He's performed in Las Vegas and Reno with Legends in Concert and American Superstars, and has also appeared with Bob Hope and many others who knew and worked with Presley.

Today, Friskie has homes in Abbotsford, Edmonton, and Las Vegas, and it's sometimes a strain on his partner and young daughter because he's often on the road. Friskie has pondered

the thought of getting a "regular" job, and once quit the Elvis act for four years — but each time his passion for music and performing brought him back.

"As long as there's someone out there that still wants to see it and I can do it to the best of my ability, then I'll do it," he says.

When he hangs up his jumpsuit, he would love to record some of his own songs and also produce and write shows. Right now, he's producing a show called Mini Superstars in Concert, where little kids perform tributes to their favourite stars. Friskie's daughter enjoys singing Cher songs, and at the Abbotsford Air show, she gave quite the little performance, he said.

"I remember my daughter saying to me, 'I wish we could get up and do this all again tomorrow.' I'm like, 'Oh no, she's got the bug — she's in trouble.'"

For now, Friskie's got the bug and he loves it.

Tickets are available through Ticketmaster or you can charge by phone at 280-4444.