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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Super Search » People Finder » Business Finder » OnLine Shopping » Careers » Autos 	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">Elvis tribute to rock Surrey's weekend</div> <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 5px;">John Mackie</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">Vancouver Sun</div> <div style="text-align: center; font-style: italic; margin-bottom: 10px;">Wednesday, July 30, 2003</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">Randy Elvis Friske, will play Elvis Mania at Fraser Downs.</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">Patsy Cline impersonator Cassandra Friske is Randy Elvis Friske's daughter.</div> <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">ADVERTISEMENT</div>

Vancouver has a jazz festival, a folk festival and a children's festival, a comedy festival, a Shakespeare festival and a fringe festival.

Now we have a festival for The King.

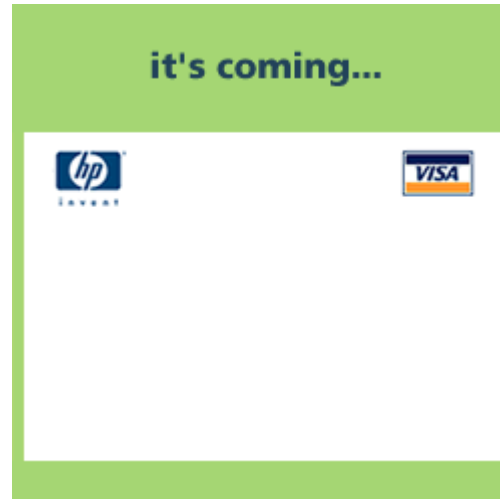
The Elvismania Music Festival will be taking over Fraser Downs in Surrey on Saturday through Monday.

Elvismania has a bit of everything for the Elvis-o-phile: Elvis imitators, Elvis' buddies talking about Elvis, a rock and roll oldies show, Elvis memorabilia, collector cars from the '50s and '60s, and a midway.

A "King of the Northwest" Elvis imitator competition will feature 25 hunks of burning love rippin' it up on three stages. Elvis' friends Joe Esposito and Jerry Schilling will share their memories of Elvis onstage along with the King's original drummer, DJ Fontana and local legend Red Robinson, who emceed the Elvis show at Empire Stadium on Aug. 31, 1957.

The headliner Saturday will be Randy Elvis Friske. Sunday, Ronnie McDowell -- who had the biggest Elvis tribute hit, The King is Gone -- will headline.

The oldies show on Monday afternoon will feature Tommy Roe (Dizzy), Spencer Davis (Gimme Some Lovin'), Freddie Cannon (Palisades Park), Mitch Ryder (Devil With The Blue Dress On), the Tokens (The Lion Sleeps Tonight), Donnie Brooks (Mission Bell) and Dick and Dee Dee (Mountains High). Local hero Terry Black (Unless You Care) will also be making a rare appearance.



Red Robinson concedes he was at first skeptical about Elvis festivals.

"I thought I was going to a Batman convention, guys walking around in capes," he said.

But then he went to one, and was blown away.

"I thought 'What the hell do I want to go and see tribute artists for, because I met the real McCoy,' " he said.

"But they're presenting to people a little hunk of their memories of the past, and for the people that weren't there, [they're showing] what all the noise was about. It's almost like a living documentary. It blew me away. I was totally, totally, totally shocked."

The most renowned local Elvis imitator is Friske, whose career took off when he did an Elvis show at Expo 86. He does Elvis year-round all over North America, and hopes to take his show to Europe soon.

He did his first Elvis show when he was only 15, spontaneously jumping up onstage.

"We went to see this guy who was supposed to be the Elvis at the time," he recalls.

"This guy had attitude, and it just bothered me, because Elvis didn't, he was a nice guy. This guy was walking around like a rock star. My buddies said 'Randy, you should get up there and sing, 'cause you'll smoke him.' So I did, and people went kind of crazy."

Friske is now 41, but still does a killer young Elvis. This comes in handy at gigs when teenagers out-number the grandmothers.

"I did a Canada Day show in Surrey," he relates. "I looked at the crowd and thought 'This is not a jumpsuit crowd,' 'cause it was all kids. You go out there in a white jumpsuit and they're going to slay ya. I'm a musician, I know this. So I put on tight black pants and a black shirt and went out and did the '50s and '60s. I must have given out 100 scarves to these

kids, all teenagers.

"I went sidestage and it was funny, guys with multi-coloured hair were coming up to me and saying 'Man, I never listened to Elvis but you brought him back, man.' If the music is portrayed right -- which is why I keep trying to do the young crazy stuff -- the kids are diggin' it. It's not dying."

Imitating late musical stars seems to run in the family. Friske's 13-year-old daughter, Cassandra, is a Patsy Cline imitator, and will be performing at noon on Saturday.

Cassandra first got turned onto Cline's songs by another teenage singer, LeAnn Rimes. When she discovered Rimes was doing covers, she sought out the originals on the Internet, downloaded them and learned them for fun.

Then she stunned her dad.

"I had a big show coming up, and the Patsy Cline [imitator who was the opening act] could not get along with some of the guys in the band," recalls Friske.

"I was pulling my hair out. We were on the Internet looking for stuff and Cassandra went into Sweet Dreams. I said 'Do that again.' She hit this big deep note for a little girl, and I said 'Can you learn five songs in three weeks?' "

Cassandra has now been doing Patsy for three years, and tours with her pop when she isn't going to school in Abbotsford.

She loves having an Elvis imitator for a dad.

"It's the best," she said. "All the kids love him. It's awesome. Not many kids have an Elvis for a dad. We get called a normal family and that's what so cool.

"You know what? He does the '50s Elvis better than anybody I've ever seen, and I'm not saying that just because he's my dad."

Organizers hope to attract about 20,000 people over three days, at a ticket price of \$45 for Saturday, \$50 for Sunday and \$55 for Monday. A three day pass is \$140, and tickets are available at Ticketmaster and at the gate. Doors open at 12 noon Saturday and 9 a.m. Sunday and Monday. For more information, call 604-513-5847 or visit the Elvismania Web site at www.elvismania.ca.

jmackie@png.canwest.com or 604-605-2126

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