

Being 'all shook up' is fine with me

Mark Pavilons



My leg has been twitching for almost a week now.

And my hips feel a bit loose, too.

No, it's not some strange medical condition or result of too much fun in the sun.

The truth is, I'm all shook up? after attending the 20th annual Collingwood Elvis Festival.

For those few days Elvis truly did 'live?' and could be seen on almost every street corner, every stage and every venue in this well known resort.

This huge annual event is a must-see for everyone, whether you're a fan or not. It's a celebration, not only of one of the world's biggest icons, but of our love of music and entertainment. It brings people together ? from all over the world, from all walks of life. There were pre-teen Elvis enthusiasts and the granny fans, decked out from head to toe in Elvis gear. It makes me smile just thinking about it.

Cliff Wright was named the Collingwood representative for the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Contest, to be held in Memphis during Elvis Week in August. Wright, from Athens, Alabama, was selected during the grand finals competition at the Collingwood festival.

Just to get a handle on the magnitude of this event, during preliminary rounds of the competition, 128 Elvis Tribute Artists hit the stages.

Gordon Hendricks, from the United Kingdom, was named the Grand Champion for Collingwood, however, as he had already qualified at another location, he was ineligible to attend Memphis representing Collingwood.

These 128 ETAs were not your run-of-the-mill impersonators or karaoke singers. These are among the best of the best, talented entertainers who command audiences all over the globe.

My son Liam commented that these performers could be earning big bucks, and should appear on TV shows like 'American Idol.'?I?mentioned they are quite likely earning money through their singing.

Scanning the biographies of the competitors, they range in age from 20 to 60. Some are full-time entertainers, while others are RCMP officers, military personnel and career professionals. But they all share one thing ??a deep passion for Elvis's music and this legend.

If you think about it, almost all of us were exposed to Elvis at some point in our lives. From his early years, through his movies, and during his comeback years, we all caught glimpses of this impressive performer.

And his record speaks for itself.

He's regarded as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 20th century, and earned the title 'The King.'

The total number of his original master recordings has been estimated at roughly 700. Commercially successful in many genres, including pop, blues and gospel, he is the best-selling solo artist in the history of recorded music, with estimated album sales of around 600 million units worldwide. He was nominated for 14 Grammys and won three, receiving the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award at age 36, and has been inducted into multiple music halls of fame.

How among us haven't tapped a toe to 'Don't Be Cruel, Hound Dog, All Shook Up' or 'Suspicious Minds'?

Many of his lines have been embedded in our speech. I can't count how many times I heard the phrase 'thank you, thank you very much' that weekend. I'll admit it, I've uttered that very phrase to friends, family and co-workers countless times over the decades.

While Collingwood was home to Elvis for four days, it exuded much more.

It brought people together, literally dancing in the streets and village square. It was a place where the cheap sunglasses and sideburns were acceptable attire.

Music, regardless its genre and widespread appeal, has a magical quality. It's one thing that brings a smile to our faces and crosses cultures and language barriers. It's a beautiful thing.

And festivals like this one are simply a way for people to share in this love of music. If you're going to pick a star to follow, why not make it 'The King'?

This year's festival was a blast for me and my family. It made getting away from it all that much better, even if it was just for a day.

The Collingwood is finished for another year. If you haven't attended, mark it in your calendar for next year!

Until 2015, Elvis has left the building.