

# The King of the Elvis tributes plays the Valley

**IN THE BUILDING:** Randy "Elvis" Friskie headlines acclaimed tribute show this weekend

PETER RUSLAND  
staff reporter

Forget other Elvis clones.

Randy Friskie says his *Tribute to the King* is about as close to seeing the late rock n' roll hero as you can get.

"This is a chance to see what it might have been like to see Elvis Presley live," he said Friday from Edmonton.

Discerning fans can be the judge during Saturday's 7 p.m. Cowichan Theatre show when Friskie will be backed by his 10-piece Las Vegas Show Band.

Those seasoned players, including the Amazing Grace Brothers double-drumming team, will accompany Friskie's Elvis show. Steve Hillis' tribute to country music king Garth Brooks, and Cassandra Friskie's (Randy's daughter) tribute to Patsy Cline.

Randy's pride about his hot show is tempered with a gentle modesty about depicting his musical hero.

"I'm not one of those guys who walks around thinking he's Elvis. I just feel I do a tribute, which is why I've been successful. I've been told 'You're the most normal Elvis we've worked with.'"

"I think Elvis was the best performer who ever lived but it's cool

people can talk to me as Randy."

Friskie, 36, was born in Niagara Falls, Ont. He calls Abbotsford home when he's not on the road.

"I'm in Vegas five months a year. Vegas has changed a lot; the calibre of shows has come down a lot because there's so many shows and hotels hiring people who wouldn't have been up there 10 years ago."

At age 17, Friskie began honing the Elvis act that was discovered at Expo 86 in Vancouver.

"I was hired for the Elvis, Elvis, Elvis show at 86th Street and the producer of Expo asked me to do my own show," the former "long-haired drummer" said.

"I got my own band of B.C. players and we were hired for two weeks then we stayed until the end of Expo."

Friskie admits he's puzzled about why Elvis' life has reached near-cult status since Presley died of a drug overdose on Aug. 16, 1977.

"I was attracted to Elvis because of the way he carried himself. You never heard him say a bad word about anybody."

At age 12, Friskie saw the King perform at New York's Niagara Falls Convention Centre.

"People love his music and the big fairy tale about a country boy who makes it big and has a tragic end."

"He gave it everything and I feel

I'm blessed to be able to do that too."

Friskie made little comment about Elvis' addiction to drugs and food.

"Everyone has a dark side but I've met people who worked with Elvis and all they do is say good things about him."

Friskie's favorite Elvis song to perform? "I'd say *Suspicious Minds* because it's very dynamic and has lots of movement."

"I also like singing his gospel stuff — anything that's challenging."

That challenge is made easier by his powerhouse band.

"They're the type of musicians who don't have to play for a living. One guy owns a drum shop and takes time off to go on the road."

Friskie hits the stage in various trademark Elvis costumes, two of which were made by J.J. Wiggins, tailor to the King.

"My favourite Elvis era is the '50s because I get to bounce around on stage; it's real high-energy."

He works out to maintain the energy level that often draws three generations of fans to his concerts.

"I'm a people person and fans like to feel you're there to entertain and have fun with them."

"I do Elvis moves that are comfortable for me. I just move to the music the way he did."

Tickets are \$30, \$25 students and seniors, \$20 children. Call 748-PLAY.



Singer Randy Friskie brings his *Tribute To Elvis* show to the Cowichan Theatre Saturday at 7 p.m.