



All aboard the Elvis express

Rock ‘n’ roll, rhinestones and jumpsuits – it must be the 25th annual Parkes Elvis Festival

IT’S 7AM THURSDAY MORNING and platform 1 at Sydney’s Central Station is abuzz. Bemused office workers weave through a milling crowd of slicked-back crooners, Vegas showgirls, press photographers and morning television crews. Some of the daily commuters pause to take in the fashions of bejewelled jumpsuits and petticoat skirts, while listening to an Elvis tribute artist (ETA) belt out songs onstage. For the uninitiated (me), ETAs don’t like to be called impersonators, and there are several (collectively known as Elvii) revving up the crowd waiting to board the NSW Trainlink Elvis Express. They’re heading to the Parkes Elvis Festival, which the NRMA sponsors. The central NSW crop-and-livestock town of Parkes, 365km northwest of Sydney, is best known for its CSIRO radio telescope that featured in the movie *The Dish*. But on the

second weekend of January the population of 12,000 swells to 25,000 with an influx of Elvis Presley fans. My girlfriend and I, both festival virgins, board the train with 400 fellow passengers for the six-hour journey to Parkes. Festivalgoers decorate our carriage with balloons and streamers and soon it’s rock ‘n’ rolling in every sense of the word. Parkes Shire Mayor, Ken Keith (pictured above), resplendent in a blue studded jumpsuit and Elvis wig, joins the train at Orange with Miss Priscilla 2016, to welcome us to the festival. It’s celebrating its 25th year, having evolved from a birthday party at Bob and Anne Steel’s Graceland Hotel, which saw guests singing and jiving when they cranked up Elvis’ music. As the Elvis Express pulls into Parkes, it looks like the whole town is waiting at the station, giving us a rock star welcome in the 40-degree heat. With accommodation at a premium we’re

Words and photos: Briar Jensen

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amazing new blue-block sunglasses



"They looked like ordinary sunglasses but I got the surprise of my life when I put them on . . .

by A. Brennan

WHEN I first put on a pair of BLOK® sunglasses it was like seeing with fresh new eyes. I found I could see right through glare with a striking clarity. Everything appeared sharper, crisper and more defined - like a kind of enhanced 3D effect. And colours were much brighter, vibrant and more ‘alive’. I kept taking them off and putting them on again to make sure that what I was seeing was actually sharper, and not just my imagination playing tricks on me. But I could see clearer. It was obvious. I then put on my \$160 sunglasses to compare. They were dull, blurry and glarey - no comparison. I was impressed. But why did these BLOK® sunglasses make such a big difference? I discovered there are two reasons

Firstly:

And most importantly, it’s how the sun’s blue rays affect the retina in your eyes. Your retina is like the film in old cameras, it captures images. And because blue rays are so short in the visible spectrum they land just in front of your retina, not directly on it, as do other colours. This causes what scientists refer to as Chromatic Aberration or “*Blue Blur*”- a chaotic scattering of blue rays that obstruct and slightly blur other colours as they enter your eye. They believe this results in reduced visual sharpness eyestrain and fatigue. BLOK® lenses filter these blue rays, allowing all colours to focus clearly on your retina. So colours are enhanced and objects appear much sharper and clearer*, even in low light conditions. And because they are no longer battling blue rays, you’ll immediately notice a soothing relaxation effect on your eyes - no matter how extreme the sunlight.

Secondly:

The lenses are polarised. Polarised lenses have an invisible film which acts like a ‘venetian blind’ blocking the horizontal glare bouncing off water, cars and other shiny surfaces. They’re particularly good for driving as they (very noticeably) cut hazardous dashboard reflections on your windscreen. The remarkable effect of this blue-block and polarised combination got me very excited about the value of this product. But I soon learnt even more facts that absolutely convinced me. BLOK® lenses also block harmful UV rays and are made from the finest high resolution lens materials in the world. The polarisation and blue-block filters are part of the lens itself - not a cheap coating that can rub off later. The black unisex frame is made from *Hi-Flex TR90* Nylon, making it super strong and durable - yet so light and comfortable you will hardly

know you’re wearing sunglasses.



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For polarised sunglasses of this quality - without our unique lens - you could easily pay \$200 upwards. But because we don’t sell to shops (no middlemen) we can supply them directly to you for just \$89 plus \$10 postage & handling. Each pair comes with an attractive carry case and has a full **One year warranty**.

Compare for yourself:

I’m very proud to be involved with BLOK® sunglasses, so I urge you to order a pair today and give them a try. When you receive them take out your old sunglasses and compare. Notice how colours are far more vivid and how much clearer and sharper objects appear with BLOK® sunglasses - even through water. Notice the absence of glare and how quickly you stop squinting. Notice how nicely relaxed and comfortable your eyes feel. And if you don’t instantly see a dramatic difference - exactly as I’ve described here - then return them to us within 60 days and I’ll ensure you get a prompt and courteous refund. That’s my personal promise to you. You have no risk. We live close to the biggest ozone hole on Earth. Blue light and UV dangers exist all year round, even on cloudy days. So protect your eyes and at the same time enhance your vision with one of the most advanced pair of sunglasses you can buy. Order today.

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98% of customers love BLOK sunglasses
Here’s what some of them say ...

“I’ve bought 6 pairs & found that only your BLOK sunglasses offer the eye protection we need. I can’t recommend them highly enough for all outdoor activities” Dr. Neil Birchley -Calamvale QLD

“We are so impressed with BLOK sunglasses that we ordered 2 more pairs. What sold us is the clarity, robustness and comfort. The blue filtering and polarised lens gives me better clarity than my prescription tinted glasses” Chris - Cabramatta, NSW

“I am an ardent supporter of your sunglasses and have told many people how good they are. I am happy for you to use anything I write if it helps sell more of these excellent glasses”
Dr. Jeremy Huyton - Bruce ACT

“I took 2 weeks before sending for your sunglasses, thinking it must be a gimmick. My wife has Macular Degeneration and can’t stand the sunlight in her eyes, even with other sunglasses on. So I thought I’d give the BLOK’s a go. Now she has no more eyestrain and is delighted with them!” Mr D Lowe - Modbury North SA

“When I used your BLOK’s I was absolutely astounded at the improvement in clarity to my vision. I’ve recently had lens replacements due to cataracts and this has brilliantly restored my eyesight. So you can understand my amazement when I used your product and found my vision improved even further. I am now in the incredible situation where I can see better than ever before much of which is due to your sunglasses”
Mr K Schmierer - Boonah QLD

“Having tried various sunglasses I find the anti-glare factor and improved vision with BLOK to be amazing. Even driving on overcast days my vision is still sharp and clear. I have Macular Degeneration so I highly recommend them”
Mr Noel Colman – Peakhurst NSW

“My old eyes no longer deal well with sunlight flashing through trees whilst driving. This is where BLOK sunglasses demonstrate that they play a very important role in making our roads and drivers safer. I did hesitate before buying them sight unseen, but now I would thoroughly recommend them to anyone” Mr A Darby – Henley Beach SA

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Festivalgoers of all ages, shapes and sizes wear Elvis garb, making people-watching a favourite pastime

lucky to have scored a bedroom through the town's home-stay program, serviced by a festival shuttle bus.

Dressed in 1950s gear, we board the shuttle for the first time to a chorus of 'hellos' from the bee-hived and brylcreemed passengers already singing along to the sound system. We arrive in the centre of town to find one enormous, good-natured party revolving around Cooke Park, where an open-air stage features non-stop entertainment and surrounding food and market stalls. Clarinda Street transforms into Festival Boulevard as buskers battle it out in front of Elvis-themed store windows. Vintage cars and caravans line the street and, at night, The King is projected onto building facades.

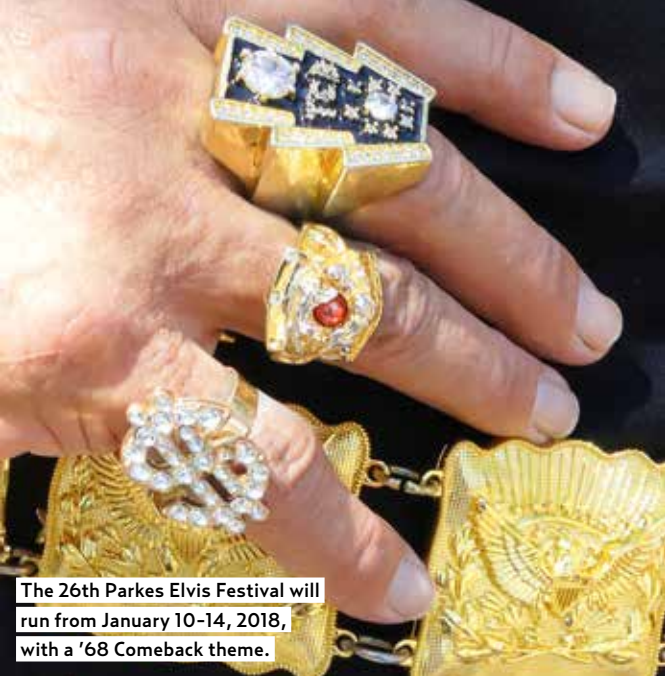
Festivalgoers of all ages, shapes and sizes wear Elvis garb or retro gear, making people-watching a favourite pastime, and everyone's willing to pose for photographs. Elvis' music transcends generations, and it's a family-friendly festival, with junior Elvis and Priscilla look-alike contests, dancing competitions and poolside shenanigans. Most of the entertainment is free, apart from concerts featuring international tribute artists.

This ETA business is serious stuff. The winner of the Parkes Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest gets to compete in the world semi-finals in Memphis. The talent in the final is awesome, but there's only one winner and this year it's Brendon Chase.

Over the five-day festival there are more than 120 events in the park, pubs and clubs. Elvis movies and documentaries play at Parkes Library. There's Elvis bingo, trivia, karaoke and gospel, Elvis at the Trots, Dinner in the Vines with Elvis, and the hilarious 'unofficial' Elvis rugby match, where teams wearing white Elvis jumpsuits that leave little to the imagination play a friendly game over a few beers.

I meet Miss Priscilla 2017, aka Jackie Batt, and she tells me, despite having to get up at 6am for hair backcombing and makeup, it's a great honour to represent a festival that generates millions of dollars for the town. She attends the Renewal of Vows, where an eclectic mix of couples dressed in everything from shorts and thongs to frothy wedding gowns, publicly declare their love in a humorous and heart-warming ceremony.

The Northparkes Mines Street Parade attracts Elvii and Priscillas by the party-load - on floats, in Cadillacs, riding bicycles and on foot. Some have spent months preparing



The 26th Parkes Elvis Festival will run from January 10-14, 2018, with a '68 Comeback theme.



elaborate costumes for the Viva Las Vegas theme, while others have thrown together last-minute entries. It's hilarious good fun.

We squeeze in visits to The Kings Castle, home to Wiggle Greg Page's Elvis memorabilia and the private collection of Elvis Lennox. But it's the music that's the highlight of the festival.

Aaron Mansfield nails his Roy Orbison tribute, bringing tears to some eyes, and deep, sultry voices reverberate off the walls at the Ultimate ETA Finale, where revellers dance in the aisles and fans steal kisses and sweat-soaked scarves from the Elvii.

As the mayor and Miss Priscilla bid the Elvis Express farewell on Monday morning, I think Priscilla must be looking forward to finally letting her hair down - until next year at least. ☺



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