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Elvis magic still undiminished

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ELVIS Presley has left his mark on the hearts of millions worldwide. It has been 26 years since he died but the impact he made has not diminished.

He had 131 albums and singles to his name, with sales surpassing US\$1 billion (RM3.8 billion). Elvis also earned gold and multi-platinum awards and received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award for his work and contribution to the music industry by the age of 36, notwithstanding 14 Grammy nominations and three wins.

On Aug 16, 1977, he died in his Memphis home, Graceland, but left his fans with enough memories to keep them entertained for generations to come.

This is certainly true for Suraj Singh, a well-known Elvis impersonator in the country. To him, one thing is certain: Elvis lives!

He says: "Elvis had a God-given talent which he shared with the world. That and his good looks, sensuality, charisma and good humour won him the love of millions, as did the kindness he expressed throughout his life."

But, believe it or not, to this day, some hardcore fans still refuse to believe the King is dead, and many think he is alive and roaming the streets incognito. Many claim to have spotted him buying groceries or having a meal in their neighbourhood. Aside from these Elvis "sightings", approximately 600,000 fans visit Graceland every year, on a pilgrimage of sorts. Graceland is the centre of an annual string of parties, fan get-togethers and memorials focused on the death anniversary. Although its attraction is all year-long, estate managers expect up to 4,000 people a day at Graceland and even more to shop at its complex of souvenir stores and museums.

Several countries outside the US also have issued Elvis stamps over the years. Currently, there are over 625 active Elvis fan clubs worldwide. Elvis' popularity is at an all-time high and his legacy continues. On Saturday, Suraj will perform as Elvis and emcee at a function in Sunway Pyramid, Petaling Jaya to launch a 12-metre book tower as a tribute to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The tower, in the shape of the Petronas Twin Towers, will include key books written by Dr Mahathir and other notable books by Malaysian authors. The tower will gain a mention in the Malaysia Book of Records as the tallest book tower in Malaysia and will be submitted to the Guinness Book of Records in the hope of being named tallest book tower in the world.

* The launch is from 3pm to 4.30pm on Saturday at the East Wing of Sunway Pyramid and open to the public. Admission is free.