

Sean's the king of all the blue suede crews

By Cameron Lucadou-Wells

NOT many so young are touched by the charisma of The King, but 16-year-old Elvis tribute artist Sean Spiteri has been "mesmerised" since he was three.

At the 2005 Parkes Elvis Festival, Spiteri of Wantirna South won all three Elvis-impersonating competitions: the sound-alike, look-alike and move-alike categories. It was an unprecedented feat.

"Others went in just to love Elvis, but I went in to be professional," he said.

Spiteri's secret to paying tribute to Elvis is "to love the man from the heart".

At the competition, Spiteri warbled *You Gave Me A Mountain* and gyrated to *Jailhouse Rock*, which is also the ring-tone on his mobile phone.

He said that journalist Neil Kearney, who attended the festival, complimented him for seeming to know Elvis better than the much older revivalists.

"I know Elvis' life," Spiteri said. "To study him, you've got to go in a dark room and stay there for two hours. You've got to watch the concert footage and study the Elvis character."

The devotion began with watching a videotape, "the 68 Comeback Special, with Elvis black in leather".

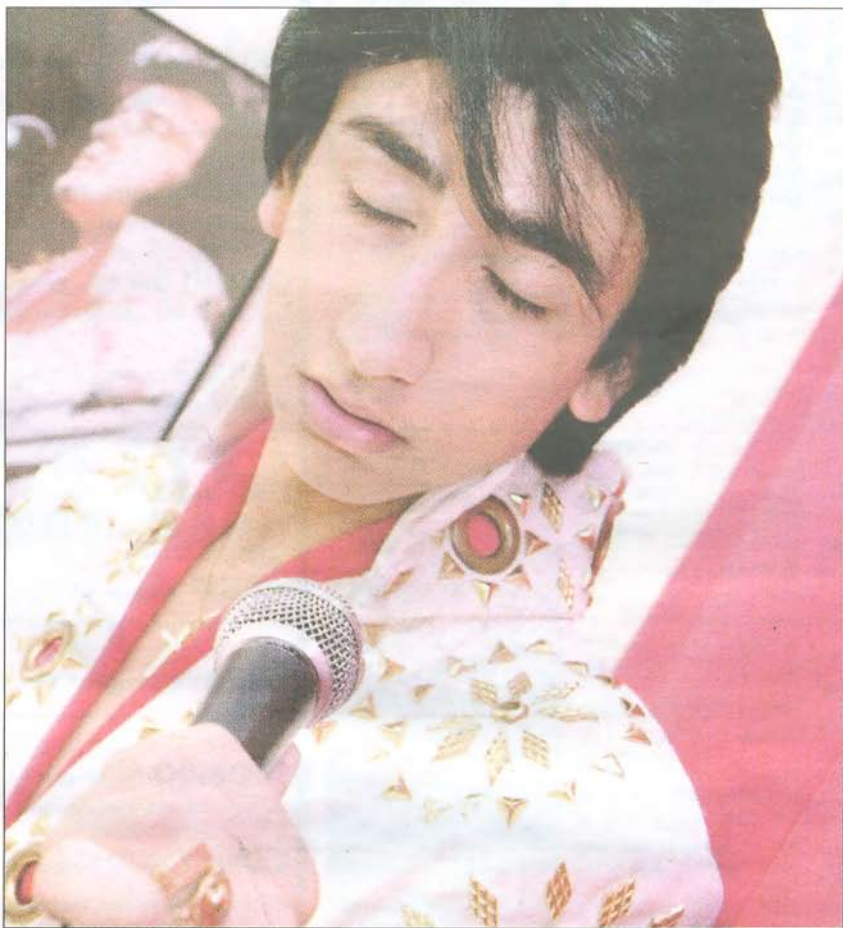
Since the age of three, Spiteri has been watching tapes and trying to move like "the man".

He's performed Elvis professionally since age nine, entertaining audiences at reception centres and theatres, and being backed by a 10-piece band at Melbourne's Hilton Hotel.

Understandably, given his age, he 'nailed' the voice just three years ago.

Spiteri saves the money he makes from every tribute with the aim of taking his version of Elvis to Memphis to join a multitude of impersonators.

Until recently, his act was kept secret from schoolmates. But after a prominent newspaper report of his Parkes Festival victory, Elvis was 'let out of the building'



Young dreams: Sean Spiteri, 16, aims to take his national prize-winning Elvis tribute act to Memphis.

Picture: Melissa Banks

— a revelation that Spiteri says has been embraced by his peers.

Spiteri rails against mockers of Elvis' demise.

"He was a sick man in the end, but he didn't eat like a horse, he didn't pick up a peanut butter sandwich. When you take drugs, fluid builds up in your kidneys and when you fill up, you blow up."

He is also fed up with impersonators

who caricature The King by saying "thank you very much" with a broad accent.

"I'm acting the character, I perform the shyness of Elvis on stage," he said. "Elvis fans in their '50s and '60s say it's like I stepped into his shoes." His mother thinks he could be Elvis reincarnated, but Spiteri says all he aims for is to have the best Elvis tribute show.