

Top UK Elvis star booked for event

By SARAH CODDINGTON

He looks like the King; he sounds like the King; he even moves like the King.

The world's No 1 Elvis tribute artist will be performing at the Elvis in the Gardens concert at the Auckland Botanic Gardens on February 23.

In celebration of the concert's fifth birthday organisers have signed Ben Portsmouth who was crowned by Elvis Presley Enterprises as the worldwide ultimate Elvis tribute artist 2012.

Elvis in the Gardens, a free annual event, attracts more than 10,000 people. This year it's expected to pull in even more with the special appearance by the British performer.

Event organiser Kerry Winn says people are calling Portsmouth the reincarnation of Elvis.

"He has the best voice I have ever heard and I'm quite critical," Mr Winn says.

"It is a big deal for us to get him over here to play. He usually gets big money to play."

Portsmouth's triple octave vocal range and perfect pitch allow him to hit the most challenging high notes, Mr Winn says.

"There was only one Elvis but Ben is the closest you will ever get



there's more online

Go to eastandbayscourier.co.nz and click on Latest Edition to see Ben Portsmouth in action.

The King: Ben Portsmouth, direct from the United Kingdom, will perform at Elvis in the Gardens next month.

in terms of Elvis' looks, his singing voice and his on-stage charisma."

Portsmouth grew up on a diet of

Elvis songs and started his journey as a tribute artist in 2005.

Audiences and promoters saw his

talent and he rapidly rose through the ranks of tribute artists in the United Kingdom.

Just a year into his career he was voted the best Elvis at the international Elvis festival in Wales.

He went on to be crowned the world champion Elvis tribute artist by both the judges and a public vote in 2010.

Other Elvis in the Gardens crowd favourites next month will include Sydney's Paul Fenech, along with New Zealand tribute artists Brendan Chase, Steve Fitter and Mr Winn himself.

Elvis in the Gardens began five years ago when Mr Winn and his wife Katrina decided to use their skills and give back to the community by launching a top quality annual free concert to encourage family and community togetherness.

A bucket collection is taken to support a different charity each year. This year it will be the Heart Foundation New Zealand.

Previous recipients have included KiwiCan, Surf Life Saving New Zealand, SPCA and Franklin Hospice.

The family event will have plenty for the kids too with bouncy castles and face painting for the children, along with a vintage dress competition and a visit from the Mad Butcher, Sir Peter Leitch.

■ Go to elvisinthegardens.co.nz for more information.