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Aid to heartbreak motels

Jonny Barber knows all about imitation.

He does, after all, make a living from it.

Known as Denver's Velvet Elvis, Barber covers early Elvis Presley songs for his day job, making performances throughout the state in tribute to the "King of Rock." With shows ranging from the sock-hop at his children's elementary school to gigs at Lannie's Clocktower Cabaret, Barber brings hip swivels and an uncanny Elvis resemblance to his entertained viewers.

The Velvet Elvis most recently shook up crowds at Aurora's Fox Theater March 31.

In true Elvis fashion, Barber took the theater's stage to fundraise for the Colfax Community Network, an organization known for working with disadvantaged families and children living in hotels on Colfax.

"I feel that if I am going to perform Elvis' music, I should do it in the spirit of him," Barber said. "Velvet Elvis is a perfect vehicle to do charity-type events."

With a deep appreciation for Colfax Avenue, Barber contacted the Colfax Community Network and informed them of his plans for the fundraiser.

"It was a bit of social conscience, I guess," Barber said. "It was like, 'Hey, let's do something for homeless mothers and kids.'"

Barber initially made contact with the Colfax Community Network through his website, colfaxavenue.com. He posted a link to the organization and began working with the network soon after.

Prior to the March 31 performance at the Fox, Barber worked with the network one other time. He contacted the organization and asked to help, then performed at a family night for the organization at various churches for families.

"He was wonderful," said Maggie Tidwell, executive director of the Colfax Community Network. "Everyone loved it. He came and worked really hard for a group that most people don't bother paying attention to."

Then, Barber again approached the network in preparation for last weekend's fundraiser.



Photo by Shannon Davidson/Aurora Sentinel & Daily Sun

Fox house rock: Jonny Barber, known as the Velvet Elvis, performs a variety of Elvis Presley songs during a show that encompasses the history of rock and roll and how Elvis got his sound during a performance at the Aurora Fox Theater in Aurora March 30.



"He called and told us of the fundraiser and that we were welcome to come and see," Tidwell said. "He offered to let the Colfax crowd come for free."

As his first attempt at throwing a fundraiser, Barber aimed to improve Colfax's reputation while helping others.

"I hope to bring people back to Colfax, to improve the eyesores," Barber said. "I just love Colfax. The amount of things that have happened on Colfax alone; there's so much Colfax history. I just think Colfax is the coolest street. I know Aurora has been working to make the area into an arts district for a long time. I don't even know the last time there's been a rock-and-roll show at the Aurora Fox."

Along with stand-up bass player Michael Baird and electric guitarist Pasquel Guimbard, the trio performed a variety of hits focusing on the Sun Studio era March 31.

"It's about as close to Elvis in 1956 as you're going to see," Barber said. "We have been working hard to put on a good show."

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