

NORFOLK

Men urged to get back on the ball for health checks

Men in Norfolk are being encouraged to take the opportunity for a thorough health check in a campaign which involves football in the battle against cancer.

Health bosses have joined forces with Norwich City Football Club and the EDP to use an unconventional approach to fight three killer diseases and hopefully save hundreds of lives.

Ahead of the Game is part of Football in the Community (FITC) and is predominantly aimed at men aged 55 and over who could be at risk of bowel, lung or prostate cancer.

It was launched last summer and got off to a flying start with more than 100 men opting to be checked out with various tests including lung function, height and weight, blood pressure, carbon dioxide levels and waist circumference.

However the winter weather has seen a drop in numbers and men are being encouraged to get their health checked once again in the new year.

Dan Goffin, FITC health development officer said: "The Ahead of the Game project has proved to be a real success during the first half of the football season, seeing more than 100 men having essential health checks. We now want 2010 to be as successful as last year. Our health team will be at every remaining home fixture throughout the season."

"The health check takes around 10 minutes and is a simple process, we urge every man to take advantage of this complimentary service."

■ To book an appointment call the FITC office on 01603 761122 or visit the Health roadshow from noon to 2.30pm behind the Jarrod stand every matchday.

He sold more than a billion records and changed the course of popular music forever. But as Elvis Presley fans celebrate the 75th anniversary of his birth today, ROB GARRATT asks, why are people still listening?

Exactly 75 years ago today, Elvis Aaron Presley was born into a home-built, two bedroom house in Tupelo, Mississippi.

By his 21st birthday he had changed the course of popular music forever, popularising a new form of music - rock 'n' roll - that is still one of the most popular genres today.

His worldwide record sales total more than a billion - a figure equalled only by The Beatles - and he is one of a handful of stars known worldwide only by his first name.

He has been widely described as one of the most important culture figures of the 20th century. Even his other moniker, The King, implies a greatness and respect not bestowed on other musicians.

As John Lennon later observed: "Before Elvis, there was nothing."

But 75 years since his birth, Kingsley Harris - head of Norwich-based NROne Records and local music columnist - struggled to name a single modern band that champions the star.

"Elvis is just fantastic," Mr Harris said. "He's one of the first and only real music legends."

"Without him we would have very different music today. He is the one who got everyone aware and said 'you can be your own generation - you can throw your dad's Vivaldi records away and be yourself."

"We could not have had The Beatles without him. He's an all-time great and a massive influence on everyone. I could not have a serious conversation with someone in the industry who did not acknowledge Elvis."

"But I don't think many artists today acknowledge him, I've never known anyone cite him as an influence. But you don't have to pay respect now, he earned it at the time."

Elvis's achievements came early. At just 19-years-old his groundbreaking debut single, That's All Right, transformed the airwaves of 1954.

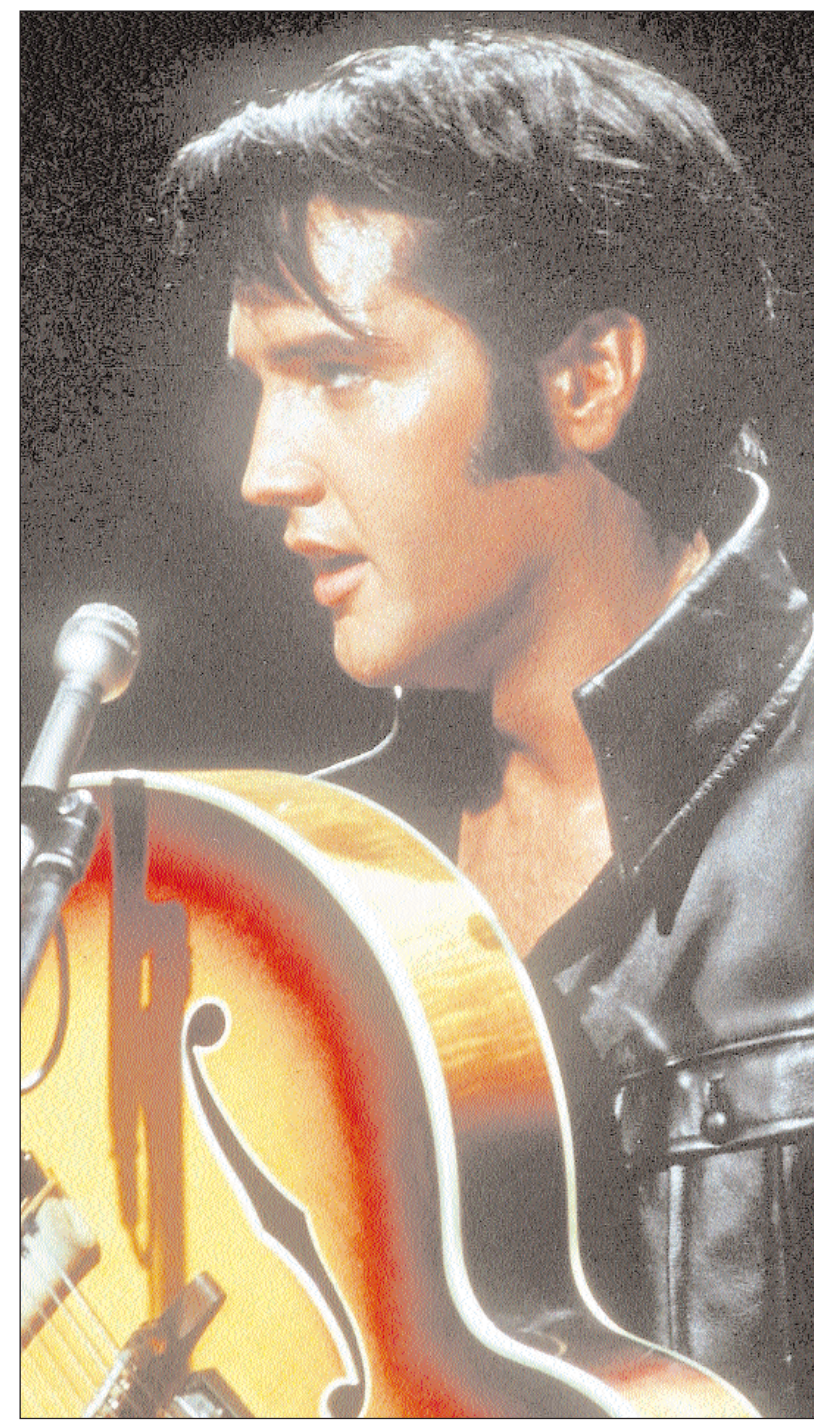
That 45, and the subsequent string of singles on Sam Phillips' iconic Sun Records, helped define rock 'n' roll. Lead by Elvis's wailing, warm vocal, the recordings' earth-shattering sound, which distilled a unique cocktail of blues and country onto acetate for the first time, owed just as much to his consistent backers of double bassist Bill Black and lead guitarist Scotty Moore.

But it was the singles he released for RCA in 1956 - Heartbreak Hotel, Blue Suede Shoes and Hound Dog among them - that were broadcast across the world and cemented his stardom. The following year saw more classics with All Shook Up, (Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear and Jailhouse Rock.

In his fifties heyday, a shake of his hips could cause a riot and he was blamed for spawning the first generation of teenage rebellion.

John Street, UEA professor of politics and author of a number of books on popular music, said: "He remains an integral part of 20th century culture, more when he is dead than alive."

"He invented what it means to be a pop performer and is a very important example of a certain kind of star



Why are we still all shook up over Elvis?

who isn't safe or conventional and is more likely to speak to young people than their parents.

"He made the kind of industry that is able to generate billions for Simon Cowell now."

Elvis's iconic status was cemented early by becoming the first music star to cash in on merchandise, inventing himself as a brand to be bought into by 1950s teenagers with money for the first time.

In 1956 alone, 72 Elvis products hit

the shelves in the USA - everything from bubble gum and action figures to clothes and guitars - grossing \$22m in just 12 months.

Today, high street stores still stock rafts of Elvis-related memorabilia, lapped up by youngsters enjoying ironic kitsch, and middle-aged fans in equal measure.

One Norwich store currently stocks a decorative hanger simply reading "What would Elvis do?". One can't imagine "What would McCartney



do?" carrying the same significance.

The peak of Elvis's influence arguably came during the global satellite concert Aloha From Hawaii, which remains the most viewed performance by any solo entertainer in history, reaching approximately 1.5 billion viewers.

Stephen Hall, guitarist and keyboardist with Console Wars, winners of last year's Next Big Thing talent search, says it is hard not to acknowledge The King's contributions to popular music.

The 22-year-old said: "I personally really like him. I prefer his older rhythm and blues stuff and am not so much a fan of his bloated crooner days. The main excitement and relevance was when he came out, but we have been inspired by the chord structures and arrangements of his music, the technical side not the sound."

"It's hard not to be influenced by him to some degree because of how much he achieved. I am sure there are lots of bands today influenced by him. He's an incredible person and it's hard not to be inspired."

Elvis's heritage can be glimpsed all over popular culture, from the wise-talking role model in Quentin Tarantino's script for True Romance (1993), to a troupe of skydiving Elvises in the film Honeymoon in Vegas (1991), to Kirsty MacColl's throwaway 1981 debut single, There's a Guy Works Down the Chip Shop Sweets He's Elvis - not forgetting Andy Warhol's enduring landmark art prints of Elvis.

One longstanding mark of Elvis's place in the pantheon of popular music is the ever-present shadow of tribute artists, a genre of performers in their own right who are frequently seen pitting their impersonations against one another in specialist competitions.

Lead singer of Norwich-based tribute act the Blue Sueders, Mark Fitch, performed last July on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, as well as competing in a European tribute competition in Blackpool.

The 39-year-old said: "I was seven when he died and I can remember my mum and my aunt crying for a week. I thought 'who is this guy who can have such an effect on women?' Their only link with him was his records. "There are a lot of tribute acts because he was an amazing performer who was so well loved and respected. His style is very definitely him, and because he is so unique it makes him easier to imitate."

In a bizarre twist on the tribute game, local band the Dead Presleys have made a name for themselves by reinterpreting The King's back catalogue in a punk style.

It is unclear where the Elvis legend would be today without his unfortunate demise, his body found dead on the toilet floor of his Memphis home Graceland on August 16, 1977.

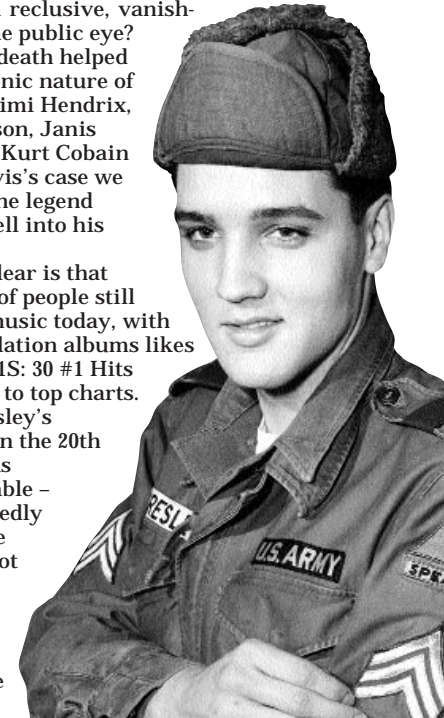
Would he have matured like Johnny Cash, making contemplative acoustic albums into his twilight years, or simply grown more overweight and reclusive, vanishing from the public eye?

An early death helped seal the iconic nature of stars like Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin and Kurt Cobain - but in Elvis's case we got to see the legend growing well into his forties.

What is clear is that thousands of people still enjoy his music today, with new compilation albums like 2002's ELVIS: 30 #1 Hits continuing to top charts.

Elvis Presley's influence on the 20th century was immeasurable - singlehandedly altering the course of not just music, but film, fashion, language and culture forever.

BIRTH OF AN ICON: Elvis, pictured with his parents, Gladys and Vernon, went on to be a worldwide icon who shaped the face of popular music and is still as loved as ever.



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