



Ceremonial dress to Elvis success

by Darren Gallagher

I always wondered just what it was about the Navy Ceremonial Uniform that really struck that good note with me. Initially, I was convinced that it was the traditional aspects. The seven folds of the sea in the Bell Bottoms, the lanyard, collars etc, and I don't doubt that was a significant part of it.

But, like a flickering light globe in an outback toilet, my mind has gone 'bing' and I have finally figured it out. It was the Elvis Jumpsuit similarities! I'm sure of it now. There are reasons why I was a big fan of Evel Knievel too incidentally, and I'm not much for motor bikes.

Now by this stage in the article, I know you have already been distracted at least once by the pics that I have enclosed here (and yes, that is me modelling the...creation). And in case you're wondering, the uniform shot was taken of me when home on my first weekend leave in the RAN. The second (in suitage) was taken in October. You can see, that like Elvis, my weight has also undergone a few changes. (Note: while I would like to pretend that I put on weight for this upcoming role, this is not the case).



Above: Thank-you, thank-you very much.

'So why would you bother with this?' Or simply, 'why?' would be the most common questions I would expect you to ask. Well, you see, I'm getting married. And no, I don't intend to wear this at the altar (as much as I would secretly like to...Vegas style wedding has its appeal that's for sure).

Being the traditionalist that I am, I fully intend to partake in that 'Bucks Party' caper. Did you know that the bucks party came about in around the fifth century in Sparta, where military comrades would feast and toast one another on the eve of a friend's wedding, and this whole 'last taste of freedom' vibe is just something that came late in the game?

Having spent 11 years in the RAN previously, it may come as a surprise to some that I have actually already had the 'enjoyed a few quiet drinks at an exclusive Cabaret' experience. As such, the idea of doing this before my wedding was a little uninteresting. Rather than suffer the bitter disappointment of a poorly organised event, I figured it best to plan my own 'Stag' night. Enter stage left, The 14th Annual Parkes Elvis Festival 6 to 8 January 2006.

For the record, I'm not an overly big Elvis fan. So I put out an invitation, or dare really, to all of my closest friends asking them to join me on the 'Bucks Bus' that I have hired to take us all to the event. I did stipulate that everyone on the bus must be dressed as Elvis. A bus full of 'Elvi' you might say. So it's 'ALL HANDS TO ELVIS STATIONS! THIS IS NOT A DRILL'

Purchasing a suit seemed boring. Hiring a suit seemed too risky - well, I am the groom and you would expect that peril may await me at every turn. However, having had my Ceremonial Dress revelation, I decided to make that bad boy myself. Stop right there readers! I know there are going to be puritans out there that a screaming, 'How can you do this?! This is blasphemy!' Or you can fill in your own statement of non-belief here in the section provided :

But, I assure you all, that while others may throw their uniforms away when their service is complete, this one will now be worn time and time again, and each time in celebration. Now what can be better than that?

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Above: The before shot. Long, long, before.

Now, for a few project stats for your reading pleasure.

- 1322 - The amount of sequins used on the suit.

- 207 - The amount of times Darren threaded too much cotton in an ambitious attempt to get more sequins sewn in one go.

- 204 - The amount of times that the excess cotton became tangled

- 204 - The amount of times Darren vocally cursed the cotton.

- 138 - The amount of times Darren yelled in pain after sticking himself with the needle.

- 107 - The amount of times Darren's fiancée was heard snickering in the other room.

- 95 - The amount of hours the suit took to make.

- 52 - The amount of times Darren actually drew blood after sticking himself with the needle.

- 45 - The amount of long necks of home brew that Darren consumed while making the suit (for medicinal purposes of course)

- 25 - The amount of bandaids actually applied at the scene of the injury.

- 13 - The amount of times Darren yelled 'Medic! At the rush!' (at which point his ever patient fiancée would arrive with bandaids at the ready.)

- 1 - The amount of times Darren's fiancée told him to 'Not thread so much cotton in one go', before realising that he was too stupid to actually listen to her.



Above: Darren bracing himself under the weight of his bedazzled Elvis suit.

Truly one of those projects that was forged out of blood, sweat, and beers...mostly blood actually...all of which was mine.

So, now to the conclusion. That one sentence at the end that brings it all together and makes sense of at least part of what I have written above. A snappy cliché like 'nothing worth doing is ever easy' would be fitting (rather like my suit incidentally).

I guess if anything, the message to all the aspiring Stags is this. Don't be afraid to live outside the circle, because you never know just how much fun you might have. And to their ever patient ladies, compared to having your fella traipsing around the country side in an Elvis suit, the 'night out with the boys' doesn't seem that bad now does it?

Editor's Note: Stay tuned for the autumn 2006 edition when Darren reveals what happened on the bus.

