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Malaysia's King of Rock and Roll

By **STEPHEN NG**

ON AUG 16, 1977, Elvis Presley was found dead in his room. The news sent shock waves around the world.

But, the King of Rock and Roll's legacy lives on, and in Malaysia, we have our very own King of Rock and Roll, following in the footsteps of the man from Memphis.



H.T. Long has had a long association with the King that dates back to the early 1960s. He has even met the man himself, when, at the age of nine, he was a special guest in Memphis.

Long had started impersonating Elvis after watching his movie *GI Blues* in 1960 – using a badminton racquet in lieu of the guitar he did not have.

Golden Voice of Elvis: Long stands out from other Elvis lookalikes in his ability to sing and sound like Elvis Presley.

Every Sunday thereafter, he faithfully turned up at the old Cathay Cinema in Klang to watch other Elvis movies – *Jailhouse Rock*, *Love Me Tender* and *Blue Hawaii* –

which left a deep impression on him.

Thirty years after Elvis's death, Long brings the magic of the King to young and old alike who enjoy his “live” performances of Elvis’s wide repertoire of songs.

Now 56, Long has come a long way since those days when he was nicknamed Klang High School Elvis and pulled aside by the disciplinary master for his Elvis look-alike sideburns and “curry puff” hairstyle.

He has attracted raving reviews from many international television and radio stations. He has been interviewed on Radio TV Hong Kong (RTHK Radio 3 Hong Kong), Philippine Broadcasting Service and Radio Poland, and even appeared on both Japanese TV and RTHK Television in Hong Kong.

For a Malaysian – or anyone else, for that matter – to reach such heights is astounding.

Long became the founding president of the official Elvis Presley Fan Club of Malaysia in 1968, the first in Malaysia to be registered and recognised by Graceland Elvis Presley Enterprise at Memphis, USA.

Reputed to be the first official Elvis Presley of Malaysia, Long stands out from the many Elvis look-alikes not because of his Elvis look, but in his ability to sing and sound like Elvis.

So much, in fact, that the BBC has referred to him as the “Golden Voice of Elvis”.

“His singing voice is so versatile that he can handle Elvis

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Presley songs from all three Elvis eras – the 50s, 60s, and 70s – with ease. And he does an excellent job of it. Not many can do that,” noted Walter Pacheco, president of the official Elvis Presley Fan Club of Canada.

And, well-known Hong Kong radio deejay Ray Cordeiro told his listeners on air: “H.T. Long’s singing voice is so similar to Elvis Presley, it is unbelievable. He is definitely the best in Asia.”

Long has mesmerised audiences in several countries, including Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Britain, and the United States in the past three years. Most recently, he performed for a crowd of more than a thousand people at the Acacia Hotel in Perth, Australia.

But, Long does not only perform abroad; he has also performed in many smaller towns in Malaysia. In a busy week, he can touch down at KLIA and drive the five-hour journey to Penang to perform at a local church, then move on to Ipoh, and then south to Johor Baru, before returning to Penang for another function. His next destination could be Kuala Lipis or one of the smaller towns in Sabah or Sarawak.

“I have been doing this for the past 13 years and I have never grown weary,” said the former businessman. “Thank God, He has touched my heart and now, it is for me to touch the lives of many people who have lived in the Elvis Golden Era.”

Sitting in a small coffee shop in Bandar Sri Damansara, he said, “Everywhere I go, I meet people whom I never knew, but I am grateful that they appreciate my kind of work. One fan told me that her mother enjoyed the songs even while recuperating in hospital,” he said.

Admittedly, many of his fans are also churchgoers.

“For the Perth concert, for example, I was invited by Full Gospel Marketplace, but I also perform at company dinners and other private functions,” he said. “There is still a big pool of Elvis fans out there, and I am going to rock-and-roll with them.”

Once a self-acclaimed atheist, Long said it was the death of Elvis that caused him to turn to God.

“In my younger days, I would sing in pubs. I had no time for God,” he said. “But, when Elvis, whom I had always thought was the greatest – a demi-god of some kind – died, I was forced to ask the question: How can my god, Elvis Presley die?”

Long finally encountered God at a Reinhard Bonke gospel rally at Stadium Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur one November night in 1989, and since then, he said, his life has never been the same. “He touched me. I am changed.”

Long has written a number of gospel songs like *He touched me*, to the tune of Elvis’s rock and roll.

“Elvis, too, had popularised a number of gospel songs, such as *Crying in the Chapel* and *How Great Thou Art*,” he pointed out.

With 12 albums to his credit, Long believes his songs will touch many other Christians in the country who have grown up during the heyday of the King of Rock and Roll.

Two of his albums – *H.T. Long Sings The Golden Hits of Rocky Teoh – A Charity Tribute EP (Elvis Presley)* Album and *Light & Easy with the Golden Voice of H.T. Long* – are well received even in the wider market.

The more popular ones are: *The King is Alive, Songs of Love & Inspiration* and *Best of HT Long: The Golden Hymns*. Among his gospel albums is *From Elvis to Jesus*, in which he shares his personal encounter with the two Kings.

His latest album, *The King is Alive Easter Concert* was an Easter celebration recorded “live” in a church in Petaling

Jaya.

“This CD has been a blessing to many people,” he claimed, “even people lying in a hospital bed are comforted by the singing.”

Long hopes to gather all Elvis fans together for a major function on Aug 16 to remember the late Elvis Presley and seeks major sponsors for the event. In the next three months, he hopes to build up the momentum by doing television and radio talk shows on his memories of the King of Rock and Roll. Songs from Long’s albums are occasionally aired over TraxxFM. Interested parties may e-mail him at [htlongep@yahoo.com](mailto:htlongep@yahoo.com).



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