

# Velvet Elvis Reunites



Famed Lexington Band reunites for a November Benefit

Velvet Elvis played their first gig at JDI (corner of S. Limestone and High) in November 1984.

They disbanded Fall of 1990, and will reunite for a November 14 show at Cosmic Charlie's.

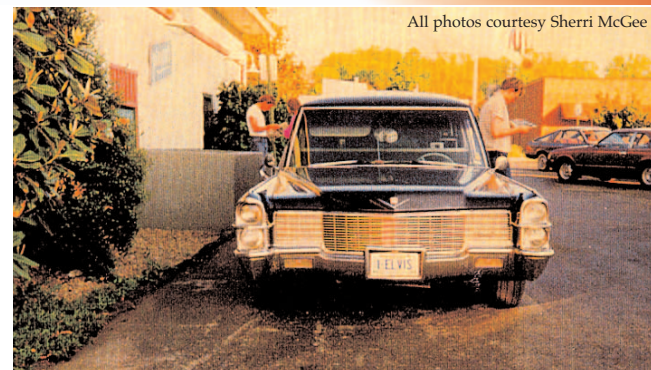
It may have been the best of times (for raw energy) and the worst of times (for hair and clothes), but nearly everyone has fond memories of Lexington's creative culture in the '80s. Kacie Urch wrote the 1985 *Kentucky Kernel* column: "Radio Free Lexington: What UK Needs" in 1985. (She was a founder of WRFL in 1988; *Ace* came along in 1989). The culture that spawned the Renaissance centered around Lexington's thriving, vibrant local music scene. Clubs populating the downtown landscape in the '80s included LMNOP, Bottom Line, Great Scotts, BabylonBabylon. Memorable bands included Paul K and the Weathermen, Ted Bundy's Volkswagen,

Active Ingredients, and of course, Velvet Elvis.

Velvet Elvis originally consisted of Dan Trisko (guitar, vocals), John Clark (bass, vocals), Sherri McGee (drums, vocals) and Doug Carman (keyboards, guitar, vocals). Scott Stoess (bass, vocals) and Jeff Yurkoski (keyboards, vocals) later replaced Clark and Carman. They played for the first time at JDI.

Everyone expected them to break out into mainstream success, and when Mitch Easter (R.E.M.) produced their 1988 album on *Enigma*, it seemed close.

Dan Trisko remembers it well. "Somewhere around '85 or '86 Velvet Elvis bought a killer 1965 Cadillac hearse that we



All photos courtesy Sherri McGee





used to haul our gear around. But Velvet Elvis never toured until after we got a record deal, so it got limited weekend road use to Louisville, Cincinnati ... She would sit unused for long



stretches of time and get cranky. So the night after the Enigma Records A&R guy offered us a record deal, he tagged along with Sherri and me in the Caddy for a Saturday gig in (I believe) Bowling Green. Halfway there on the Bluegrass Parkway, the Caddy blows a head gasket, white smoke billowing out the exhaust, and dies an undignified death."

The deal still went through. Enigma released Velvet Elvis

(the follow-up to two self-produced albums, *Fun and Trouble*, and *What in the World*.) They toured from Spring of 1987 through the winter of 1988, playing 40 states along the way. On the arena tour with UB40, they played the Spectrum in Philadelphia in front of 20,000 people.

What happened to that car?

Trisko says, "We got towed in and made the gig, but the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Velvet Elvis: The Pedigree

### Jeff Yurkoski

**Commodore Express** (Country) 1979 - '81

**The Spys** (New Wave Original) 1980 - '83

**Spree 33** (New Wave Euro/Original) 1983 - '85

**Various bands w/ Joe Broughman** 1984 - '95

**Velvet Elvis** 1986 - '89

**City Slickers** (Alt Country) 1988 - '90

**The Yonders** (Alt Country) 1990

**ZydeGator** (Cajun Zydeco R&B) 1992

**PainKillers** (Blues Rock w/ Joe Broughman) 1995 - 2007

**Jeff Yurkoski Trio** (Piano Jazz/Standards) 2001

**Muscle Relaxers** (Country Blues Trio feat. Joe Broughman) 2002 - 2007

**Fazed Cookies** (Rolling Stones tribute) 2007

**Domino** (Soul, R&B, Dance) 2008

### Scott Stoess

**The N, Velvet Elvis, Dirty Soul, Alma Gitana**

### Dan Trisko

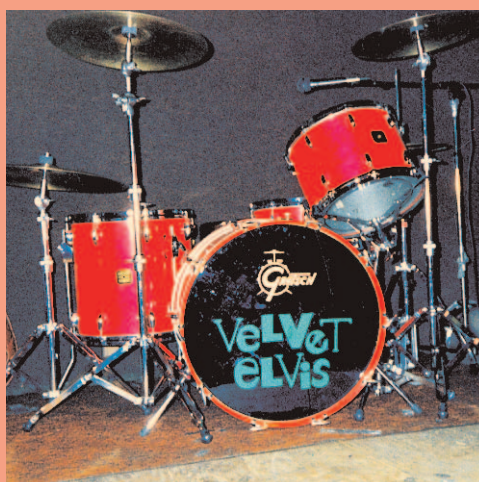
**Eurmama, The Heat, Velvet Elvis, Veljeeta, The Strolling Ruins, The Longnecks, Dirty Soul, Domino**

### Sherri McGee

**The Flying Scotsmen** (my 1st group other than marching/concert band) A 17-piece swing/big band, mostly old men ... and me. I was 15. Glasgow, KY 1976

**UK Marching Band** — "little" (top) bass drum Lexington, KY 1980 - '81

**The Twinkettes** — Sam Mason's creation.



A '60s girl group type band (like the Supremes) playing old Motown and Sam's original songs. I played drums, then sang up front, then played drums again, then sang again. Lexington, KY 1981- '82-ish? \*I started writing my own songs around this time, too, and performing at some songwriter's nights around town. Strictly country, for some reason.

**Spree 33** — '80s new wave cover band. First band with Jeff Yurkoski. (dumbest band name ever!) Lexington, KY 1982- '83-ish

**Velvet Elvis** — self-explanatory

**Veljeeta** — Country rock covers. Matt Patterson and Matt Renfro from the Jeeters, with Velvet Elvis members Dan Trisko and Sherri McGee Lexington, 1985

**Let's Talk About Girls** — original rock/pop

& covers. These guys, originally from Detroit, moved to LA. They had heard of Velvet Elvis and were so excited to have me, they got me an article & picture in the *Burbank Daily News*! We played a lot and got paid! And, no, it was NOT an all girl band. I was the only one. (Second dumbest band name ever!) LA 1990

**WOD** — '70s white boy funk—all original. I LOVED this band! Way too short-lived! LA 1990 - '91

**Loaded** — original melodic rock. Probably my favorite band of ALL time! Humble Pie/Faces/Black Crowes Led by Mark Dutton (Muddy Stardust), one of the most talented songwriter/producers I know. We got to tour Finland for a month! LA 1991 - '93

**Blue Bonnets** — Blues band-covers (done our way) & cool originals. Started by Kathy Valentine (Go-Go's) and me. Finally got talked into an all-girl band, which actually turned out to be really cool. Needless to say, I met MANY a famous person during this time, jammed with lots of actors, rock stars, etc. AND, we always got paid. Los Angeles, CA & Austin, TX 1991 - '94

**Little Miss Tammy Smith** — pure honky-tonk originals & covers and her all good-lookin'. Found my long, lost estranged sister, & booked her male band, The Inbreds in some famous joints like the Palomino & House of Blues. Los Angeles, CA 1992 - '94; Austin, TX 1994 - '95; Los Angeles, CA 1996 - '99; Lexington, KY 1999 - present

**Joel Hamilton** — a blues trio: husband & wife & me. Austin, TX 1994

**B-Girls** — a crazy, loud original punk rock band. And, NO ... this was not an all-girl band either.

I was the token female, as usual. Austin, TX 1994

**Lucky** — original, some covers melodic country rock? Whatever you call it. Recorded a CD produced by Charlie Sexton. Austin, TX 1995

**The Delphines** — same as the Blue Bonnets, but without a lead singer. LA 1995 - '97

**Charley** — again ... one of the most exciting pop/rock bands I've ever known on Eggbert Records, genius songwriting, extra fun to play with. Los Angeles, CA 1996 - '97

**Disco Divas** — oh, yes...ALL girls! covered '70s/'80s disco, classic rock/pop we even had costume changes. LA 1997 - '99

**Miss Melba Toast** — original country & comedy. LA 1997 - '99

**Neil Mooney** — original honky tonk. LA 97 - '99

**Satchel** — original melodic rock songwriting LA 1998 - '99

**Cousin Lovers** — original hopped up, electrified bluegrass! LA 1998 - '99

**Dirty Soul** (later called, Domino) — danceable covers. Lexington 2000 - '05

**Taildragger** — original math blues/rock. Lex 2005 - '07

**The Spoilers** — 3-piece variety covers & originals. Lexington 2006 - '07

**The Royal Bat Fangs** — original surf rock Lexington 2006-present

**South 75** — original bluesy, southern hard rock. Richmond 2008

**The Yellow Belts** — original rock. Lexington 2008- 09. ■

## The Benefit

The Velvet Elvis Reunion/80s show will help defray the healthcare costs of Sue Trisko, Dan Trisko's sister-in-law.

Sue Trisko has been an established artist on the West coast scene for over 30 years. In May of this year, Susan was diagnosed with lung cancer, undergoing a lengthy radiation



and chemotherapy treatment. Though recently completed, she still suffers the lingering effects of the treatment and continues with ongoing medical issues. Reproductions of her oil paintings will be available for sale during the benefit. It is the band's deepest hope that she will soon return to her easel where unfinished work still awaits. ■



Caddy was D.O.A. and was eventually replaced by a 15 passenger Dodge van we bought with the advance we got from Enigma (the incident didn't score us additional sympathy bucks). The four-

band members (plus our roadie, Ozzy) toured in that vehicle-with all our personal luggage AND equipment (we did not use a trailer or roof rack) — from coast to coast for the next 2 years."

What could reunite them and get them back on stage? Trisko explains, "Sue Trisko is married to my brother Chuck, who was the Trisko family member to give sole credit/blame for my obsession with all things rock n'roll. When I was five, I stood next to him and watched the Ed Sullivan show and got equally fixated over the Beatles. That show started, for both of us, a quest to sing and play guitar, and we both followed similar paths--form band(s), sign to major label, tour, lose label deal--a familiar story, but one that neither of us regret. So when we heard about Sue (diagnosed with cancer earlier this year), the family wanted to rally together and music seemed like the logical way to try and help."

Drummer Sherri McGee has memories that rival the busted Caddy. For every sold-out gig, there was another that was less glamorous. She recalls, "There was this gig in Jackson, Mississippi. We were on tour. Once we found the 'club,' we couldn't believe our eyes! It could have easily been

Velvet Elvis will reunite for a special benefit show Nov 14th at Cosmic Charlie's to raise medical expense funds for Sue Trisko, sister-in-law of Velvet Elvis guitarist Dan Trisko, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in May and is undergoing treatment.

Two Small Bodies, Rebel Without A Cause, VelJeeta, and No Excuse will also reunite for this very special evening of Lexington indie rock, '80s style.

in a Jesco White movie. It was a single-wide trailer, gutted, with a make-shift counter (bar) at one end. There were no PA speakers, no mic stands, no cords, no nothing! Oh, but they did have three growling, ferocious-looking Dobermans patrolling in the 2-inch deep mud all around the 'entrance.' We actually waited for a few hours until someone showed up with some speakers. We played some songs, and then there was no money to pay us our guarantee. So....we waited until someone went to get our money. 'Cept, it weren't money. It was a big ol' bag a' homegrown." She adds, "Don't know if you can print that or not." (Sure can. There were no follow-up questions as to what became of that payment.)

The band has reunited before. In 2001, they played a New Year's Eve show at Lynagh's — the same location where they will play November 14 (the new Cosmic Charlie's). McGee remembers, "I was VERY ... I repeat ... VERY pregnant! Pregnant to the point that if I rocked too hard, 'something' might actually 'break,' and I don't mean drumsticks. So, we had my brother, Jon, sitting on the sidelines to take over the throne, 'just in case.' After all ... the show must go on!" (Her brother is Jon McGee, of another critically-lauded local band that toured nationally, Black Cat Bone, and later Taildragger. Their stepdad is Greg Martin, of Kentucky Headhunters.)

Velvet Elvis last played together as a band for a fundraiser in 2003 at the Phoenix Bar and Grill in Victorian Square. The Cosmic Charlie's show might not be as dramatic as the drummer verging on labor, but you never know. ■

*Velvet Elvis is at [myspace.com/VelvetElvisKentucky](http://myspace.com/VelvetElvisKentucky).*