



TRANSCRIPTION OF SOUNDTRACK

LEGO® Art – 31204
Elvis Presley "The King"



00:00:03:14 00:00:38:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Imagine crafting your own wall art. Maybe it's a passion that fascinates you, or maybe it's the promise of an immersive, creative experience like no other: a piece of iconic art you can build for yourself. Relax and reconnect with your creative side. We've created unique soundtracks curated around the world of art, animation, music and movies. And in this soundtrack, we'll dive deep into the world of the King, Elvis Presley. First, we meet music expert and Elvis historian John Jackson.

00:00:38:06 00:01:00:12

JOHN JACKSON: It's completely, you know, written off as, "Oh, he was this recluse, and he, you know, this Howard Hughes type person who was just locked up in his house," and couldn't be further from the truth when you actually hear the sessions and you get in there and hear the band having a great time and hear him directing everybody and laughing, and, and... trying to find the sound that he was looking for and really going for it, singing-wise.

00:01:00:12 00:01:03:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Emmy-award-winning costume designer Janie Bryant.

00:01:03:08 00:01:20:11

JANIE BRYANT: It was so much fun to get to know Priscilla a little more and to talk to her about Elvis, and she told me so many things about Elvis, and I'm sure I've looked at her with doe eyes and disbelief that she was even telling me these stories about Elvis.

00:01:20:11 00:01:24:07

PRESENTER: Director of Graceland Archives in Memphis, Angie Marchese.

00:01:24:07 00:01:42:19

ANGIE MARCHESE: You know, Elvis was kind of like a sponge that absorbed all of these sounds of the areas he grew up in. And he was absorbing all of this as a kid. And then moving here to Memphis, which, Memphis really is a melting pot for music and for pop culture.

00:01:42:19 00:01:50:20

ANDREA COLLINS: And then, we'll also hear from LEGO designer Kitt Kossman, who created the Elvis images in LEGO Art that you might be working on right now.

00:01:50:20 00:02:05:19

KITT KOSSMAN: And especially the guitar strings was a bit of a battle, because the guitar strings on the ultimate are larger than actually strings on the guitar would be, so it was a lot of playing around with colours to make them seem smaller and not so obvious, like they were... were becoming.

00:02:05:19 00:02:15:04

ANDREA COLLINS: You can listen as you build at your own pace, and get the inside story. Ready to dive in? I'm Andrea Collins. Welcome to LEGO Art.

00:02:23:11 00:02:39:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Our first guest is John Jackson. He did the world's first bachelor degree in rock 'n' roll history, and then his thesis work specifically on Elvis. Then, he went to work at Sony's Legacy Recordings, overseeing Presley's catalogue.

00:02:39:13 00:02:41:17

Welcome, John, how're you doing?

00:02:41:17 00:02:44:06

JOHN JACKSON: Thank you, I'm doing great. How're you?

00:02:44:06 00:02:48:22

ANDREA COLLINS: I'm good, thank you. Would you describe yourself as an Elvis historian?

00:02:48:22 00:03:10:08

JOHN JACKSON: Yeah, definitely. I would say less of an Elvis, like, trivia person... There are plenty of, erm, of wonderful folks who are way more into, sort of, the trivia and facts and stuff, and... I'm more into the cultural impact and, sort of, what was doing or trying to do in various, er, stages of his career.

00:03:10:08 00:03:10:23

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm.

00:03:10:23 00:04:08:07

JOHN JACKSON: And I think that there's a lot of it that's misunderstood by the public. Er, so I think that some of the work that we tried to do at Sony, and then, y'know, continuing to do with other projects, including this podcast, is trying to help people understand what it was that he was doing in his life. You know, the, the... His story gets shortened and shortened and shortened over the years, so what we were trying to do was going into different periods of his career and saying, "Well, no, no, no, he actually was trying to do this, and he was trying to record this kind of material, and he was trying to make this kind of a record." And, er, you know, unfortunately, the way that the industry was at the time, through the '60s and '70s, and the way that the... y'know, his management was at the time, and the record label was at the time, a lot of his material is... is widely misunderstood, so... In terms of being a historian, that's... that's the kind that I'm trying to be.

00:04:08:07 00:04:37:12

ANDREA COLLINS: Hmm. That's so interesting, John. I'd like to hear more about that in a bit, but, er, let's first say hi to Emmy-winning costume designer for Mad Men and Deadwood. She's the author of The Fashion File, that offers readers a peek into the dressing room of Mad Men. She's also been a speaker at Elvis Week at Graceland, talking about how Elvis Presley was, and still is, an inspiration on fashion, artists and her own work. Janie Bryant, welcome and thanks for being with us today.

00:04:37:12 00:04:48:20

JANIE BRYANT: Thank you so much! I'm so excited to talk about Elvis because Elvis is one of my favourite subjects, so I can't wait for this. Thank you so much for having me.

00:04:48:20 00:04:52:22

ANDREA COLLINS: And I am so excited to talk about Elvis fashion with you. This is so fun.

00:04:52:22 00:04:53:09

JANIE BRYANT: Yeah.

00:04:53:09 00:04:58:11

ANDREA COLLINS: Now, first of all, what is your own relationship with Elvis?

00:04:58:11 00:05:41:19

JANIE BRYANT: You know, I started listening to Elvis when I was a little girl because my father loved Elvis so much. I mean, he loved Elvis so much that he had the sideburns, he had the gradient eye glasses, everybody told him he looked like Elvis... He was super stylish, and in so many ways, my father reminds me of Elvis, and my father loved Elvis and he really got me started listening to Elvis' music. We always had to watch the concerts together, y'know, on TV, and he sang Elvis all the time, so my dad was really the one who got me... introduced me to Elvis and loving Elvis and loving all his music.

00:05:41:19 00:06:17:09

ANDREA COLLINS: Wow! The influence of dads with sideburns. I can't wait to hear more about what Elvis was wearing and how he inspired your work as a costume designer, but now, let's go to Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee, and bring in Angie Marchese. She's the director of Graceland Archives in Memphis. Here, her role is to oversee the Graceland Archives, develop new exhibit concepts and maintain the current exhibitions. Angie started working as a tour guide at Elvis Presley's home in Memphis all the way back in 1989, so it's been... let's see, trying to do the math here...

00:06:17:09 00:06:19:19

ANGIE MARCHESE: It's actually been 32 years.

00:06:19:19 00:06:22:11

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs> Wow... That's a long time, Angie.

00:06:22:11 00:06:27:09

ANGIE MARCHESE: <laughs> I try to tell people not to do the math when I tell 'em when I started. I'm like, "Don't do the math."

00:06:26:04 00:06:27:22

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:06:27:22 00:06:34:23

ANGIE MARCHESE: But it's great. Erm, it's great to be here. It's, you know, wonderful to be able to talk to you guys about Elvis, one of my favourite subjects.

00:06:34:23 00:06:41:01

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah. So, and did I describe your role correctly? Like, what's... what's the day-to-day of your... your job?

00:06:41:01 00:07:02:24

ANGIE MARCHESE: My day-to-day is very unique. It goes from exhibit cleaning and maintaining the mansion to developing new exhibits to doing research, erm, in the collection, trying to figure out if stories are true, finding photos, helping licensees, erm... Running day-to-day operations, basically. Erm, yeah.

00:07:02:24 00:07:05:05

So, every day's a different day in my world.

00:07:05:05 00:07:10:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Would have ever imagined that, when you started in 1989, you would still be at Graceland?

00:07:10:16 00:07:36:09

ANGIE MARCHESE: No. When I started in 1989, I literally was a tour guide, and I never thought in a million years that I was beginning a career. I really thought that it was going to be a fun summer job, erm, I got to talk about Elvis to people from around the world, and then I would go on to college, and I really wanted to go into PR and move back to Florida. That was my goal. Erm, 32 years later, I'm still here. It's like my summer's never ended, basically.

00:07:36:09 00:07:41:11

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs> So, where is your office in the grand scheme of things, when we think about the mansion?

00:07:41:11 00:07:46:13

ANGIE MACHESE: So, my office is to the right of the mansion, directly across the street from the Lisa-Marie airplane.

00:07:46:13 00:07:48:00

ANDREA COLLINS: Wow, that's so neat.

00:07:48:00 00:07:52:03

ANGIE MARCHESE: So, the nose of the airplane points to our office building where my office is located.

00:07:51:11 00:07:53:00

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs> That's so great.

00:07:53:00 00:07:57:23

ANGIE MARCHESE: And I got a quick access to the property through Elvis' secret entrance behind our corporate offices.

00:07:57:23 00:08:01:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Get out! And what's the secret entrance? What's it like?

00:08:01:05 00:08:21:11

ANGIE MARCHESE: It's... It's cool. There's a back gate to the property that Elvis... The building we're in used to be a church, and Elvis paid the church rent to access this back street that he paved in case the front gate was too crowded, that he could just go out the back part of the property, out the church, onto Elvis Presley Boulevard. And we still access it today.

00:08:21:11 00:08:30:19

ANDREA COLLINS: Wow, that's so amazing. Let's jump over the Atlantic to Denmark and bring in LEGO Senior Designer Kitt Kossman. Welcome, Kitt!

00:08:30:19 00:08:32:04

KITT KOSSMAN: Thank you so much.

00:08:32:04 00:08:35:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Now, are you an Elvis fan like the rest of us?

00:08:35:05 00:08:50:09

KITT KOSSMAN: Actually, I am definitely an Elvis fan. Er, when I grew up – I grew up in Denmark, I am Danish – and mostly, we were just listening to songs on the radio, and that was a lot of Danish pop music, and both my parents were very fond of Danish pop music.

00:08:50:09 00:08:50:23

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:08:50:23 00:09:44:08

KITT KOSSMAN: Er, so the first time I actually listened to... to Elvis' voice through the radio, that was so different from what I'd heard before, also, like, the whole thing about singing in English, and his sound was so different from what I'd ever heard. So, I remember that. And then, er, when I got a bit older, I remember, like, seeing a picture of him, and, er... in his white suit with his rhinestones on. And, to me, that was just, like, whoa. Like, I knew nobody who was dressing like that. And it felt really good, because I myself liked to dress up as a child, and also like to dress up now as an adult, but definitely did it also then, and every day was a new day – I always dressed up in new ways. So, kind of seeing this, like, role model in his white, er, suit was just such a... a stem for me to... it being okay to go all-in and dress up, even though it's just a normal day.

00:09:44:08 00:09:44:22

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:09:44:22 00:10:04:04

KITT KOSSMAN: So, er... <laughs> So, I really love that part of it as well, and a funny fact is that I later started to become a fashion designer to kind of make a statement that it's okay to be different and look different. So, erm, I would say, like especially the way he was dressing was... was an eye-opener to me.

00:10:04:04 00:10:07:01

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. That level of self-expression through clothing...

00:10:07:01 00:10:07:17

KITT KOSSMAN: Yeah.

00:10:07:17 00:10:08:22

ANDREA COLLINS: He owned that.

00:10:08:22 00:10:09:23

KITT KOSSMAN: He did.

00:10:14:19 00:10:25:22

ANDREA COLLINS: John, I'd like to hear a bit more about what you said in the introduction about Elvis being misunderstood. I'm sure there's many, but what's one that you would say is a common misunderstanding of Elvis?

00:10:25:22 00:11:30:24

JOHN JACKSON: I mean, the biggest one is that he was struggling in the '70s, er, and that he sort of, as soon as he put the white jumpsuits on and, you know, was doing live shows that the recorded material, the studio stuff, started to suffer, and he was doing songs he didn't like to do, and, you know, he became this recluse type of a person, and all of that is completely untrue. Erm... He was always trying to record fresh material. He was always trying to update his sound, he was always trying to sing better. He was always trying to, erm, find material that was meaningful to him, erm, and the unfortunate situation was that, at that time, it's completely written off as, "Oh, you know, he was this recluse, and he, y'know, this Howard Hughes-type person who was just locked up in his house," and couldn't be further from the truth when you actually hear the sessions and you get in there and hear the band having a great time and hear him directing everybody and laughing and trying to find the sound that he was looking for and really going for it, singing-wise.

00:11:30:24 00:11:39:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Wow, that's so interesting. Er, I'd like to hear a bit more about Graceland, Angie. You have a big event every year at Graceland called Elvis Week.

00:11:39:08 00:11:39:20

ANGIE MARCHESE: Mm-hmm.

00:11:39:20 00:11:41:01

ANDREA COLLINS: What can you tell us about it?

00:11:41:01 00:12:34:11

ANGIE MARCHESE: So, Elvis Week is a week of celebrations and events that happens here in Memphis. It actually was kind of a grassroots thing that started when we first opened up for tours in 1982. And so, we greet fans... welcome fans from around the world here, erm, and it surrounds the anniversary of Elvis' passing. But it's not a very sombre time. Erm, there's a moment of reflection on the night of the 15th when we hold

our annual candlelight vigil, but the rest of the week is dance parties and celebrations and conversations about Elvis in the movies or in the studio and... or shows from the archives, and things like that. It's all about who Elvis is and who he still is today, and it's so much fun. It's kind of like a big family reunion, erm, where you have fans that gather every year, they're from different states, and their common thread is that they all love Elvis.

00:12:34:11 00:12:35:18
ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:12:35:00 00:12:42:00
ANGIE MARCHESE: And so, it's always a lot of fun, you see a lot of familiar faces, but it's our opportunity to kind of celebrate his legacy.

00:12:42:00 00:12:46:11
ANDREA COLLINS: That sounds fun. And you've gone to that party for 32 years, now?

00:12:46:11 00:12:54:00
ANGIE MARCHESE: I've gone to the party, I've worked events, I've been host of several events, and every year is always a lot of fun.

00:12:54:00 00:13:01:08
ANDREA COLLINS: Er, that's awesome. Janie, you've been a speaker there, talking about Elvis Presley's style. What was it like for you to be at Elvis Week?

00:13:01:08 00:13:11:12
JANIE BRYANT: It was incredible. I was actually with Priscilla Presley, and, er, because I was a part of the, erm, Elegant Style weekend.

00:13:11:12 00:13:12:02
ANDREA COLLINS: Cool.

00:13:12:02 00:13:44:17
JANIE BRYANT: And it was so much fun. It was so much fun to get to know Priscilla a little bit more and to talk to her about Elvis. And she told me so many things about Elvis, and I just... I'm sure I looked at her with, like, doe eyes and disbelief that she was even

telling me these stories about Elvis. I... I... You know, it's like, I've loved Elvis from afar, and she had this amazing relationship with him, and so it was so fun to just listen to her stories.

00:13:44:17 00:13:46:06
ANDREA COLLINS: No kidding, that must have been surreal.

00:13:46:06 00:14:01:10
JANIE BRYANT: It was. I know. I really had to pinch myself. I don't get star struck too often, you know, I work with actors every single day, famous people, every single day, but to hear Priscilla talk about Elvis was such a true gift.

00:14:01:10 00:14:02:03
ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:14:01:19 00:14:08:11
JANIE BRYANT: But yeah, so I was with... I was with Priscilla at Graceland for that weekend, which was so much fun.

00:14:08:11 00:14:09:13
ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:14:08:17 00:14:11:06
JANIE BRYANT: It was great.<laughs>

00:14:11:06 00:14:18:07
ANDREA COLLINS: John, you've been part of Elvis Week at Graceland many times. Er, what's it like for you, as a speaker and an Elvis fan?

00:14:18:07 00:14:19:18
JOHN JACKSON: Oh, it's the best.

00:14:19:18 00:14:20:20
ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:14:20:03 00:14:57:09

JOHN JACKSON: Erm... The Graceland folks are just amazing, I mean, er... They're so welcoming, it's like, er... a clubhouse. Y'know, when you get down there, because it's just all people who have dedicated their lives to appreciating Elvis. And I mean the fans, and I mean the people that work there, and the people that worked with him during their lifetime, and the people that have studied him, the people that are working on different projects of him all the time... It's really a... a commonality that you don't find with other artists. There's not something that is, y'know, once a year, a pilgrimage to go down and just interact with your fellow Elvis fans.

00:14:57:01 00:14:57:22

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:14:57:22 00:15:12:22

JOHN JACKSON: Y'know, the Graceland folks are all Elvis fans, and you can tell, because they really care, they go the extra mile, all the exhibits, all the panels they put together, just spectacular. And, erm, it's actually something that I look forward to very much every year.

00:15:12:22 00:15:14:24

ANDREA COLLINS: No kidding. You're with your people.

00:15:14:24 00:15:15:10

JOHN JACKSON: Yes.

00:15:15:10 00:15:26:22

ANDREA COLLINS: It sounds so fun! Er, now, Janie, you were a costume designer for Mad Men for eight years, and that takes place starting in 1960 through 1970, so how did Elvis inspire your work on that?

00:15:26:22 00:16:16:16

JANIE BRYANT: Er, well, Elvis inspired my work on, y'know... many years of designing Mad Men. Erm... You know, Elvis had and wore a lot of suits, erm, especially, y'know, the 1960s suits. There's a photograph of Elvis and he's wearing a grey sharkskin suit with a white shirt and a navy tie, like, a skinny navy tie. And at the time when I was designing Mad Men, I had designed a costume exactly the same colour scheme for Don Draper.

That, y'know, he wore that costume a lot, it was one of my favourites, and it wasn't only until later that I'd been looking at photographs of Elvis and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, that's the same outfit that Jon Hamm wears in Mad Men."

00:16:16:16 00:16:17:05

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:16:17:05 00:17:11:09

JANIE BRYANT: And it was just kind of a coincidence, but, y'know, I watched a lot of the Elvis movies during the time that I was designing Mad Men, and always inspired me for Don Draper, because they had kind of like similar colouring, too? You know, like, this dark, dark, hair, and like, I just loved... He really inspired me for, like, the colour scheme of Don Draper, which was so masculine. And also, when Harry Crane was kind of making that transition into the very groovy 19... late years of the 1960s, erm, y'know, Elvis wore a lot of scarves, and that inspired me for, er, Harry crane and his costume design when he was kind of shifting from the early '60s to the later '60s. Yeah, so he, y'know... Elvis kind of... Well, he always inspired me for Mad Men, for sure.

00:17:11:09 00:17:16:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Can we see Elvis' influence in Deadwood, or other parts of your work?

00:17:16:16 00:17:37:07

JANIE BRYANT: Oh, yes. There's, er, a film that I love called Charro that Elvis did. A western. And, y'know, I really loved... it really inspired me for Deadwood because, you know, it was like a very, kind of like, dark and dirty western, and that was a film that really inspired me for Deadwood.

00:17:37:07 00:17:39:15

ANDREA COLLINS: Oh, that's so neat. Keep an eye out for that.

00:17:39:15 00:17:43:06

JANIE BRYANT: Yeah. It's a good film. And Deadwood's great, too.

00:17:43:06 00:17:43:18

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah. <laughs>

00:17:43:18 00:17:45:13

JANIE BRYANT: <laughs>

00:17:51:14 00:18:03:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Now, let's go back to the beginning for a bit. Erm... Can you explain what made Elvis' music so different back then? Y'know, what was the inspiration for his music, where did it come from? Angie?

00:18:03:13 00:19:44:19

ANGIE MARCHESE: Y'know, Elvis was kind of like a sponge that absorbed all of these sounds of the areas that he grew up in. Starting in Tupelo, going to church every week, and then going and listening to the African American blues singers down in Shake Rag, and just kind of... He was just a sponge absorbing all of this material, all this authenticity, 'cause that's what it was all about, was being authentic, and that's what that music really is about. And he was absorbing all of this as a kid. And then, moving here to Memphis, which... Memphis really is a melting pot for music and for pop culture, because this is where everybody was migrating to at the time, and they were bringing with them their stories and their history and their culture, which included music, and being able to continue to absorb what he was seeing and what he was hearing, and actually being able to translate that into how it made him feel when he performed, or when he heard the music. And that's what kind of happened at Sun Studios in 1954, it was all of these years of absorbing all of this material, and then being able to express himself and express the way the music made him feel. And that spoke to people. And it still speaks to people today. The music that Elvis put out is timeless. It's so funny because you'd think that, these records were recorded 60-plus years ago, but you put 'em on today and they're still so authentic, they're so real, and it's something that people can connect to.

00:19:44:19 00:19:47:17

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. John, what do you think?

00:19:48:13 00:21:00:21

JOHN JACKSON: Elvis' music, when he started out, was not that different from other music. What was different was that he was a... a young white person who was doing the music he wanted to do, and the music he grew up with, and was so... ingrained in his head in a way that, actually, white people could listen to. Because he was so handsome,

so charismatic... It was sort of, y'know, sneaking the rhythm and blues and the rock 'n' roll music that was already a thing into the... what at the time was a mainstream, very straight, white culture. And that was really the thing. And he was the only one that could do it, because he knew the music he grew up with, the music... He was from a different culture than the mainstream white culture, and it just came out when he sang. And that's why he was the one to actually spark that revolution of rock 'n' roll music, and get people to go, "Well, hang on. White people can have soul, white people can have emotions, let their feelings out through their music." And that was a big deal then.

00:21:00:21 00:21:10:14

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah, and when you think of the quick rise to fame he had, and how he really changed music forever and made people like the cool Sinatra look so old-fashioned almost overnight...

00:21:10:14 00:21:20:17

JOHN JACKSON: Oh, absolutely. Erm... You know, he was doing blues, straight blues, y'know, in a very up way, he was doing straight bluegrass music...

00:21:20:17 00:21:21:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm.

00:21:21:06 00:22:33:13

JOHN JACKSON: Y'know, Sinatra and the... and the, sort of, crooners of the '30s and '40s were doing much more sort of professionally-written music, music written to be sung by famous singers, y'know, whether it was Tin Pan Alley or Broadway music or, y'know, music made for movies, that sort of thing. It was very... a professional songwriter writing for a professional singer to make a professional album to then sell to people. But, y'know, Elvis was doing, y'know, Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup songs, and Lloyd Price songs, and Big Joe Turner, Flip, Flop and Fly and stuff like that, and it was just like... He elevated that music and sort of broke it into the culture in, sort of, a way that Sinatra never would have. He wasn't interested in it. And, you know, Sinatra... Using Sinatra as an avatar, but, y'know, people like him, Bing Crosby or even Al Jolson or, y'know, people like that who had been very popular before that... Y'know, were very much, they were a singer. That was what they did. They sang better than anybody else. And so, they could stand there on the stage and sing into a microphone in a tuxedo, and that was their job.

00:22:33:13 00:22:34:08
ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:22:34:08 00:23:08:18
JOHN JACKSON: And so, when Elvis came along and injected being a singer with, "You have to look amazing, you have to move to get people's attention," so it was about, what did it look like? What was the presentation of it? Er... In a way that just hadn't happened before, and that's what really kicked the door open to... "There's this whole other world of music out there that you don't know about." And, er... And so, that's sort of how rock 'n' roll started.

00:23:19:10 00:23:24:18
ANDREA COLLINS: Kitt, I'm looking at the three different designs of Elvis that you made. They're amazing.

00:23:24:18 00:23:25:17
KIT KOSSMAN: Thank you.

00:23:25:17 00:23:30:09
ANDREA COLLINS: Can you tell us about the images you chose for these three?

00:23:30:09 00:23:59:14
KIT KOSSMAN: I can. Er... Like, the three different images kind of represent the different aspects of, er, Elvis' character. The biggest image on the packaging, that is kind of representing the set is of Elvis looking at us. Then, there's the smiling and charming Elvis we all know from the movies, at least what we see in the movies, and then there's the grown-up Elvis that is kind of singing with his characteristic large sideburns and his white jumpsuit on. So, I wanted it to kind of, like, represent three different areas in his career.

00:23:59:14 00:24:06:07
ANDREA COLLINS: And tell us a bit about how they ended up the way that they did when you took the photo and then recreated it with the LEGO pieces.

00:24:06:07 00:24:10:11
KIT KOSSMAN: Oh... Now it's getting a bit technical, so you might want to hang out there. <laughs>

00:24:10:11 00:24:11:08
ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:24:11:08 00:25:17:24
KIT KOSSMAN: Oh... The way we... we do it when we make these, them... these images is that it goes through a lot of loops. The first loop is to get the face, er, the size of the faces right, and, er, that takes a lot of trials and errors to get that right, because, especially with portraits and working with a limited amount of pixels, you need it to be just the right size to catch all the features. And, like, Elvis has a lot of features, like, he has this very particular mouth and he has a chin and he had his hair, so all these features I needed to kind of capture in the images. That's the first, like... First, capture the size of the face and make sure that you're able to kind of get all the features inside the face right. Then comes the next loop, like, with getting eyes and nose and mouth correct. And when you work with pixels, that can be a bit hard, because what happens is that if you're too close to the image, it's actually hard to see what it is, so it takes a lot of walking to it, walking away from it, like...

00:25:17:24 00:25:18:10
ANDREA COLLINS: Mm.

00:25:18:10 00:26:47:18
KIT KOSSMAN: Asking a colleague, "What do you see? Is this good enough? Should I change something?" And that is part of the process. And what I normally do is that, when I think that I'm pretty far with my image and I've made it into LEGO colours, er, which is a whole other story that I'll get back to, then... <laughs> Then, I take that image that I'm kind of satisfied with, then I make a copy of it, start working on that and making it better, and take a copy of that one, so we're taking a copy of the second one, making a third one, optimising that, and then I continue doing that until I have about five to eight images lying next to each other, and then I start picking and choosing, like, saying, "OK, the eyes were the best on number two, and the mouth was the best on number five," and then I start combining them to make the best version of the portrait. Yeah. It is some work, and like, it's not done in a day, 'cause actually, you need the time to get away from it and get back to it to see if you've reached what you wanted to reach or not, and because of it being pixels and being a lot of gradients of colours to make nose and depth and chin and everything, then, like, you really need to step away from it to determine whether actually the nose is all wrong or whether you got it. And

actually, his mouth is not easy to do either, and also, his kind of sad look... The eyes and the mouth and the nose is just really hard to capture, and if you do it wrong, then it's not Elvis any more.

00:26:47:18 00:26:51:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah, and it probably doesn't take much to make it not look like Elvis any more.

00:26:51:16 00:26:57:19

KITT KOSSMAN: You'd be surprised about the impact of just getting a few pixels wrong. It's just, like, "Oh, my God, what happened?" <laughs>

00:26:57:19 00:27:01:15

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs> It's Elvis' weird-looking twin!

00:27:01:15 00:27:04:24

KITT KOSSMAN: Yeah, exactly. <laughs> It's a lookalike.

00:27:04:24 00:27:05:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:27:05:08 00:28:40:09

KITT KOSSMAN: The colours of the image is a story of its own. When I originally got all the pictures, I tried out a lot of different colour combinations, because what we do when we have to change something from a real image into a mosaic image is that we have to make it into less colours. And in this case, I think there's 16 colours in it. So, what I needed to do was kind of to sit there and determine whether this shade of brown is dark brown or a bit lighter brown, and that is how you work with it until, like, all the pixels on the image is become into the mosaic image in LEGO colours. So, it's very manually. And about the colour palette, the colours actually ended up being quite true to the original image because I tried a lot of variations out to see whether there was something that could look better, some combinations of colours that could look better, but actually, the colours we chose ended up being very true to the original image, and that just gave it its nostalgic feel, with this very deep, dark red in combination with the light blue as a contrast colour. And the funny thing is that a lot of the images of Elvis back then has this warm tone of voice to it. That is, the colours almost, they are too

much, they are too bright, compared to actually how they were. But that is also what I wanted to capture in these images. I wanted to keep that atmosphere in these images as well.

00:28:40:09 00:28:43:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Well done. Yeah, you really get that feeling of those old photos.

00:28:43:06 00:28:46:16

KITT KOSSMAN: Yeah, exactly. Like, I wanted, like, this '50s feel to it.

00:28:46:16 00:28:55:17

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah, yeah. Okay, Kitt, let's talk about the ultimate, the one where, y'know, it's the big image, he's standing there with the guitar... What can you tell us about the ultimate?

00:28:55:17 00:29:25:09

KITT KOSSMAN: The ultimate is a model that you can build together if you buy three of the same boxes. And in this one, I had the opportunity to show more of his body because it's longer, and therefore, we chose to have a guitar on it, both because it's nice to have something else to build than just a jacket and a pair of pants, so it's nice also to have the guitar there, but also, to bring in the link to his music career and also his love for his, er... his guitar. Like... I think he wore his guitar almost like an accessory, didn't he?

00:29:25:09 00:29:25:23

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm.

00:29:25:23 00:30:45:04

KITT KOSSMAN: Er... <laughs> But doing the ultimate as such is actually pretty much the same as doing the normal images. Of course, it's different to make a guitar instead of the faces, and especially the guitar strings was a bit of a battle, because, erm, the guitar strings on the ultimate are larger than actually strings on a guitar would be, so it was a lot of playing around with the colours to make them seem smaller and not so obvious, like they were becoming. So, that was a bit of a challenge. And then, there was his jacket, because he has this... I think it's a tweed jacket on, it had a lot of different blues and greys, and I had to create this pattern inside the jacket without it looking too,

like... It should be random, the pixels in it, so that it looked like a tweed jacket, and also, I should also be careful that I still kept the colour on the jacket and also where the arms on the jacket were, and also, there was like, I think it's bending a bit where the guitar is, and there's a shade of the guitar over the lower part of his stomach. So, to capture that randomness, that was also a bit of a challenge, but I think the good thing about it is that if you built it now, it's not going to be tedious, because you're still going to have to be on your toes to get that pattern right.

00:30:45:04 00:30:49:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. That doesn't sound like an easy job. <laughs> That must have...

00:30:49:05 00:30:50:06

KITT KOSSMAN: No. <laughs>

00:30:50:06 00:30:53:20

ANDREA COLLINS: That must have taken some leaving and coming back to a few times.

00:30:53:20 00:31:02:01

KITT KOSSMAN: Yeah. I would say, like, a portrait is, of course, harder, because portraits have to look like the person you are portraying.

00:31:02:01 00:31:02:14

ANDREA COLLINS: Right.

00:31:02:14 00:31:06:04

KITT KOSSMAN: Er... But a guitar is not easy, and a hand is not easy, either.

00:31:06:04 00:31:07:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:31:06:17 00:31:07:19

KITT KOSSMAN: But... yeah.

00:31:07:19 00:31:20:20

ANDREA COLLINS: It's these things you don't really think about when you're not the one actually designing it, and then hearing you say it, I'm like, "Yeah, what do you do with guitar strings in the little pieces to make it with limited colours, and, y'know..." It's definitely a challenge.

00:31:20:20 00:31:21:07

KITT KOSSMAN: Yeah.

00:31:21:07 00:31:28:19

ANDREA COLLINS: So, was it teamwork with these sets, with these models? Did you work on these alone? What was the process like?

00:31:28:19 00:32:06:01

KITT KOSSMAN: Yes, it is teamwork when you're doing it like... The way that we work in the LEGO Group is that each designer is allocated to a product, so you are working on this product yourself, but since we are such a big house and there's a lot of other designers, it's just a great opportunity to ask others as well, like, how they see it and if there's anything that they can see that you can do to actually make the image better. So, we use each other a lot. Er... So, I can't... It wasn't only me who did it, like, I would say this is teamwork, when we are doing it.

00:32:10:20 00:32:28:14

ANDREA COLLINS: Now, Elvis was a trendsetter in so many ways: his music, his dancing, his just, like, coolness vibe overall, but it was very much about what he was wearing. So, Janie, can you help us understand how it was very different at the time, like, what he chose to wear.

00:32:29:05 00:33:39:21

JANIE BRYANT: Yeah, I mean, I really call Elvis the triple threat. He could dance, sing and act. I should actually call him the quadruple threat, because he also had great style and he knew how to dress. And, erm... Y'know, so much of his inspiration, not only in music and in style, was from Black culture. Y'know, like in the '50s, he was a big trendsetter with the baggy jackets and the baggy pants and wearing pink and black, and wearing a lot of, like, mixed, matched patterns. And, y'know, Elvis was really the one who was a huge trendsetter in that '50s style. And if you think about how he was a trendsetter in

the '60s with the black leather suit, 1968, erm, and then, in the '70s, he really made the jumpsuits popular and fringe popular and beading popular, and also, like, the gradient sunglasses and the sideburns, I mean... Throughout all the three decades, he really was a trendsetter in every decade.

00:33:39:21 00:33:56:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Oh, y'know, he's been described as sort of, like, this sweet mama's boy from the South, but at the same time, he could make all these bold fashion choices, and he just didn't look very self-conscious about it, y'know? He was a trendsetter. Where do you think that courage came from?

00:33:56:08 00:34:26:23

JANIE BRYANT: I think that, y'know, he was born with that, and I think that he was a true performer, and he found that within himself. And he was a person who was very different, y'know, his whole life. And I think that's something that you are born with, and you know that about yourself, and you pull those things out of yourself to express who you are.

00:34:26:23 00:34:29:04

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah. What do you think, Angie?

00:34:29:04 00:35:05:07

ANGIE MARCHESE: Y'know, actually, Gladys was pretty feisty, is what I hear, so he probably inherited a lot from his mom. She could be... She was very, erm, outspoken and she was very self-confident in who she was as a person, and I think that Elvis got a lot of those traits from his parents – how you could still be very hospitable and have all the Southern hospitality that you want but yet still have strong beliefs in who you are as a person, at the core of who you are. And that came from his parents, and from, er, being raised in such a close-knit family.

00:35:05:07 00:35:07:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Got it from his mama! <laughs>

00:35:07:05 00:35:08:03

ANGIE MARCHESE: Yes, he did!

00:35:08:03 00:35:09:12

JOHN JACKSON: <laughs>

00:35:09:12 00:35:24:10

ANGIE MARCHESE: And the funniest thing is that, when we're recreating things for exhibits and I'm looking at photos and I'm like, "Wait a minute, is that a striped jacket with a paisley shirt?" And you look at it and it's like, it looks so cool on him but it would probably look ridiculous on anybody else.

00:35:24:10 00:35:25:01

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah, yeah.

00:35:25:01 00:35:39:00

ANGIE MARCHESE: But the one thing about him and fashion is that he never set out to be a trendsetter. He was very comfortable in what he wanted to wear. And it goes back to some of the photos we have of him in high school, when he started turning the collar up when nobody else was.

00:35:39:00 00:35:57:09

Or, you know, he was mix-matching colours, wearing a lot of pinks and blacks and things like that in the '50s, when other guys were wearing jeans and t-shirts. Y'know? It was really... He was really cautious about who he was and his sense of style, and he never strayed from that.

00:35:57:09 00:36:03:21

ANDREA COLLINS: How do you think his youth growing up in the southern states of the US influenced his style?

00:36:03:21 00:37:01:16

JANIE BRYANT: Oh, God. I love that question because I love that Elvis got so much influence from Black culture and mixing, like, all the music styles of, like, gospel and country and soul and jazz and, y'know, so much of that influence was from, y'know, Black culture in the United States. And especially, you know, in the South – I mean, I'm southern, too, and, erm, y'know, it's – it's like, it is in our culture, and Elvis just really, totally, you know, embraced it and wanted to learn from the Black culture, from the music to dance to dressing, erm... And, you know, just all of those gifts that we have

from... from the Black culture in our country. It's such an amazing gift to all of us, and Elvis really was influenced by that.

00:37:01:16 00:37:19:21

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. Now, let's talk about jumpsuits. Still around today. Definitely more women than men has become, I guess, you know, the more mainstream. But it was something that Elvis did well, very well, and made it look so masculine. So, can you kind of talk about jumpsuits with us?

00:37:19:21 00:37:55:11

JANIE BRYANT: Yes. Well, I love a jumpsuit, and I love that Elvis loved jumpsuits and that he did make it look, y'know, so manly. And, y'know, part of why he loved jumpsuits was because it was, y'know, a clean line... Y'know, he loved them looking neat and put-together on stage. So, y'know, with a jumpsuit, you don't have a shirt that you're tucking in, y'know, he moved around and he danced so much that a jumpsuit really created, like, this clean, straight, solid line for him, and he could...

00:37:55:11 00:37:55:24

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:37:55:24 00:38:13:14

JANIE BRYANT: ...do his dancing, the karate, like, all of the moves and perform and still look put-together and neat and, like, seamless, I should say. Erm, and so, that is really, like, where the jumpsuit came into play. It was all about looking great on stage.

00:38:13:14 00:39:40:02

JOHN JACKSON: Oh, absolutely. A lot of times... Y'know, now all you see are pictures of him sort of up-close in the jumpsuit, or maybe the Aloha from Hawaii concert that's very sort of tight in on him in the jumpsuit, with the big collars and the huge sideburns, and, y'know... It's something that people sort of have snickered at in the past, but they didn't understand what they were for. Y'know, when Elvis was first going back out on tour and was doing all those concerts, he was playing these arenas in the middle of nowhere. There were no screens behind him with fun stuff on it the way you go to concerts now. There was no, like, camera shooting him close and then showing it on the big screen, so the jumpsuits were a way from him to distinguish himself on stage. If you were sitting at the back of the arena, you know, in the 400 sections and you'd paid two dollars and

fifty cents for a ticket, which little person hundreds of feet in front of me is Elvis? And it's like, well, you could always tell which one, 'cause he was shiny and, you know, this sort of exaggerated version of himself, er, almost like actors wear stage makeup to give that across to people in the 50th row or whatever. And so, that's... that's what those were for, so you could sort of pick him out on the stage and watch him move around and know exactly what he was doing. They weren't really to be photographed so close up like that.

00:39:40:02 00:40:49:13

JANIE BRYANT: And he also knew that, like, white looked great on stage, and that light blue looked great on stage, and that he could really shine on stage, like, wearing those colours and why he wore, er, y'know, white jumpsuits so much. And then, like, all of the embellishments and the sparkle and the fringe, y'know, I mean, he... Elvis loved a lot of embellishments, a lot of decorations, and yes, you're right, I mean, he still made it look masculine. And you're also talking about an era, the 1970s, of, y'know, jumpsuit Elvis, which was another time which men were pretty fancy in their dress and in their style. And I think that, like, we forget that, y'know, men of earlier decades were really about being a peacock more than understated. And luckily, Elvis really, you know, was in an era where being fancy and being fabulous was, like, very masculine, and, like, y'know, I think that's how he really showed that on stage.

00:40:49:13 00:40:51:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah. Fancy and fabulous.

00:40:51:06 00:40:54:01

JANIE BRYANT: Fancy and fab... I know, all the Fs. Fancy and fabulous.

00:40:54:01 00:40:55:07

JOHN JACKSON: <laughs>

00:40:55:07 00:41:29:08

JANIE BRYANT: And also, you know, Elvis had... I mean, it's crazy that he was self-conscious about anything, because, y'know, he was such a beautiful person physically and, er, spiritually, and just in his music, y'know? But, erm... Y'know, he thought that his neck was too long and too skinny. So, he had all of his costumes designed so his collars were really big and tall, and helped disguise his neck.

00:41:29:08 00:41:29:20

ANDREA COLLINS: Huh.

00:41:29:20 00:41:45:10

JANIE BRYANT: And which is why, like, he wore a lot of, like, neckerchiefs and scarves around his neck, and big collars, and you know, that really came into fashion, too, but it was all to kind of, like, disguise what he thought was a flaw in his physicality.

00:41:45:10 00:41:48:24

ANDREA COLLINS: Wow. See, we all have a thing. We all have a thing we're trying to hide.

00:41:48:24 00:41:49:22

JANIE BRYANT: <laughs>

00:41:49:22 00:41:51:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Even the King.

00:41:52:15 00:41:56:00

JANIE BRYANT: Even the King. I know. Well, you know what, that makes him human, right?

00:41:56:00 00:41:57:19

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Good point.

00:41:57:19 00:41:59:00

JANIE BRYANT: Yeah.

00:41:59:00 00:42:02:22

ANDREA COLLINS: What was something else he was wearing that no-one else was?

00:42:02:22 00:42:54:22

JANIE BRYANT: Well, you know, Priscilla told me this really great story about Elvis and his big belts, and how that trend really started, or how he started wearing the big belts. She was telling me that Priscilla was in Mexico, and she had found this belt that she loved, that she brought back to Elvis, and it was this, erm... If I remember the story

correctly, it was, like, this leather kind of woven belt that was like a men's belt that she loved. And she gave it to Elvis and said, "Hey, this would look really good on stage," you know, "you should wear it." And so, that's when he started wearing the big belts, and then it just started developing into belts being made specifically for his jumpsuits. But I love that he brought, like, big belts into fashion.

00:42:54:22 00:43:03:22

ANDREA COLLINS: They say fashion always comes back. Do you think that we'll see men wearing more big belts and bell-bottoms and jumpsuits in the future?

00:43:05:07 00:43:44:05

JANIE BRYANT: You know, that is so interesting, because as we were discussing before, it really seems like the era of men kind of, like, being fancy has kind of gone away, you know? And also, y'know, Elvis definitely knew how to wear a suit and how to wear clothing, and I think that he took great pride in his appearance. I mean, I would love to see that come back for menswear, for sure. I love menswear, and I think that, erm, fancy men are the best men. I love it. I love all those elements of great style and men knowing how to dress.

00:43:44:05 00:43:45:10

ANDREA COLLINS: And accessorise.

00:43:45:10 00:43:53:00

JANIE BRYANT: Yes. I mean, yes. I mean, rings, cuff links, gold chains, I mean, I love it all.

00:43:53:00 00:43:53:17

JOHN JACKSON: The bling.

00:43:53:17 00:43:54:06

ANDREA COLLINS: The bling.

00:43:54:06 00:44:14:02

JANIE BRYANT: <laughs> It'll be interesting to see if men kind of go back to those elements of dressing. I'm not sure about jumpsuits, though. Y'know, they were... they were fashionable, yes, in the '70s for men, er... I think jumpsuits remain to be fashionable for women, for sure.

00:44:14:02 00:44:14:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:44:14:16 00:44:19:06

JANIE BRYANT: Let's just say jumpsuits and big belts will always be stylish for women.

00:44:19:06 00:44:27:03

ANDREA COLLINS: Yes. 'Cause it just accentuates... like you said, it accentuates all the right spots and covers up all the not-so-right spots.

00:44:27:03 00:44:31:17

JANIE BRYANT: It's true, and creates, like, a long line, and it's, like, a seamless look...

00:44:31:17 00:44:32:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:44:32:06 00:44:40:09

JANIE BRYANT: ...and, y'know, a jumpsuit can always make you look flawless. Maybe this podcast will inspire men to get back into jumpsuits.

00:44:40:09 00:44:42:11

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah! C'mon, guys, exactly.

00:44:42:11 00:44:44:10

JANIE BRYANT: I know! Get with the program.

00:44:44:10 00:44:45:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:44:45:05 00:44:46:15

JOHN JACKSON: <laughs>

00:44:55:12 00:45:27:23

ANDREA COLLINS: Now, David Bowie was a huge fan of Elvis. Bob Dylan, he idolised Elvis as a teenager. Cliff Richard said that Elvis was the one that inspired him and gave him his career, and even John Lennon once said in an interview, "Without Elvis, there

would be no Beatles." But also, we see his influence in current performing artists. I'd like to name some names that maybe – or maybe not – have been inspired by Elvis, and you tell me what you think, and in what way you can see the inspiration. Okay?

00:45:27:23 00:45:28:08

JANIE BRYANT: Yes.

00:45:28:08 00:45:29:09

JOHN JACKSON: Oh, absolutely.

00:45:28:14 00:45:29:15

ANGIE MARCHESE: Yes. Yes.

00:45:29:11 00:45:33:18

ANDREA COLLINS: So, first one, Harry Styles and One Direction. John?

00:45:34:16 00:46:54:07

JOHN JACKSON: I mean, Harry Styles and One Direction is sort of a perfect analogy, because those guys all came from nothing, and auditioned to be on this television show, right? They were all individually on before they were formed into a group. So, just that idea of, "I have this talent, I'm going to make something of myself, I'm going to figure out the best way to do that," is very Elvis. Y'know, when Elvis auditioned for Sam Phillips at Sun Records, he didn't need to go to Sun Records to make an album for his mom, which is what he told people that he was doing. He could've made an album for his mom for a quarter at the drug store in a little booth that they had there. But he went to Sun Records where it cost him four or five dollars to cut a side 'cause he knew that he was auditioning. He knew that he was... that there was this opportunity for fame, whether it was local or however big it was gonna get. But he knew that. So, people that go on The Voice and X Factor and Britain's Got Talent and all these shows, that's what they're doing. They're following his lead of, "What's the most direct path to get to being a famous person?"

00:46:54:07 00:46:54:21

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:46:54:21 00:47:35:24

JOHN JACKSON: And then, obviously, their sort of antics and... and music videos and, you know, just sort of revelling in having fun and... is, is directly from Elvis. Y'know, he... he sort of invented music videos in his... in all of his movies. And then, Harry specifically, as he's broken out as a solo star, is directly out of the Elvis playbook, with his fashion and his hair and his... Y'know, he understands that you have to be the total package. You can't just be a good singer, you have to look the part, play the part, sing the part, y'know, be that person that people need you to be in order to really buy into what you're doing.

00:47:35:24 00:47:37:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm. What do you think, Angie?

00:47:37:16 00:48:09:18

ANGIE MARCHESE: Harry Styles, definitely, erm... He embodies who Elvis was, erm, with his sense of authenticity to who he is as a person, to his artwork, erm, his sense of style, er... His career path, if you look at it, has taken a very similar one to Elvis, first with the music, now with the movies. Erm, but I think also, the fact that he comes across as being such an authentic person that people connect to personally. It's kind of the same connection Elvis had with his fans.

00:48:09:18 00:48:13:10

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. And bit of a risk taker in, like, the wardrobe department.

00:48:13:10 00:48:18:08

ANGIE MARCHESE: And not worrying about what people say or what people think. He's still being true to himself.

00:48:18:08 00:48:18:22

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:48:18:22 00:48:34:22

ANGIE MARCHESE: One Direction actually had several references in their video, erm... Is it called Kiss Me? I think it is? Or Kiss You? Anyways, they're in a Jailhouse Rock scene, they're in a Blue Hawaii scene, so it definitely was a nod to Elvis there.

00:48:34:22 00:48:35:11

ANDREA COLLINS: Right.

00:48:35:11 00:48:50:14

ANGIE MARCHESE: So, I think that, you know... Again, all of those guys being true to who they are as artists, and that they have this connection with their fans that's beyond just the music. It's a very personal connection. And that's the same thing Elvis did.

00:48:50:14 00:48:53:18

ANDREA COLLINS: What about Justin Timberlake? Also a boy from the South.

00:48:53:18 00:49:14:04

JOHN JACKSON: Well, Justin's from Memphis too, and, y'know, similarly, he was going to do whatever he needed to do to be a famous person. I mean, you look at Justin Timberlake and you go, "Well, he was made to be a famous person." Y'know? And he... he started through Disney, which was kind of a path to a career in the '90s.

00:49:14:04 00:49:14:24

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:49:14:24 00:49:53:10

JOHN JACKSON: And, you know, same with Britney Spears and, you know, Christina Aguilera and several other people who ended up being massive. But he was always a little bit above all the other guys, anyway, on the show. And then, when they put *NSYNC together, you could always tell that he was kinda... he was a little bit better than all the other ones, so... Then when he went solo, he's always maintained that credibility, that influence from the Black community that he's always... You know, he doesn't shy away from talking about or celebrating. So, I think in that way, he's very similar to Elvis.

00:49:53:10 00:49:58:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm. Yeah. It's true. He was the stand-out guy from *NSYNC. That was my...

00:49:58:13 00:49:59:07

JOHN JACKSON: For sure.

00:49:59:07 00:50:01:22

ANDREA COLLINS: ...heyday. <laughs> Angie?

00:50:01:22 00:50:04:00

ANGIE MARCHESE: Oh, Justin Timberlake, he's my guy. <laughs>

00:50:04:00 00:50:04:09

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:50:04:09 00:50:57:09

ANGIE MARCHESE: He's another Memphis boy, erm, and Justin, again, being from the South and being from Memphis, absorbed the music and the history here, and was able to translate it into his own music and his own career, again being totally authentic to who he is as a person, and as he is to his music. And it goes back to being a good old Southern boy. Yes, ma'am, no, ma'am, yes, sir, never forgetting where you came from... That kind of shines through with Justin Timberlake. He seems like he's the kind of guy that you could walk up to and just go, "Hey, Justin!" And he's going to sit there and take pictures with you and sign autographs, similar to things that Elvis would have done, and that's the Southern hospitality that he grew up with. But yes, he's so much... His career so much mimics Elvis, as far as being influenced by the South, and about growing up in Tennessee and in Memphis and being influenced by the sounds of the area.

00:50:57:09 00:51:01:14

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm. Okay, next artist. Er... Justin Bieber.

00:51:01:14 00:51:34:16

JOHN JACKSON: Justin Bieber, I think similarly, he had a talent. Y'know, he knew that he was talented, his parents obviously knew that he was talented, and y'know, somebody like that that's gonna rise from obscurity just on the strength of their... their musical talent, that's straight out of Elvis' playbook. Y'know, and he... Justin Bieber was from Canada, y'know, which is even a harder place to break out of and to become somebody that is a fashion icon, a... y'know, basically a model from time to time.

00:51:34:16 00:51:35:07

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:51:35:07 00:51:51:05

JOHN JACKSON: And has had sustainable hit records all this time, when people haven't been kind to him from time to time. Y'know, people... He's had his detractors, for sure. But to maintain that kind of fame status and quality music is definitely something out of Elvis' playbook.

00:51:51:05 00:51:52:17

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah, absolutely.

00:51:52:17 00:52:21:20

ANGIE MARCHESE: I think, at a point in his career, y'know, he was trying to mimic Elvis' style, again. There is something that he wore a gold lamé jacket to, and when you see it, you're like, "Oh, that's a nod to Elvis." I think that he's a little bit more... I don't know, sheltered, I guess? Not as much out there as Elvis was. So, I don't see a direct connection, y'know, kind of like I do with Harry Styles and One Direction, that they're just out there being themselves.

00:52:21:20 00:52:22:04

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:52:22:04 00:52:24:21

ANGIE MARCHESE: I think Justin grew up too quickly. I think that's the connection.

00:52:24:21 00:52:25:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:52:25:08 00:52:38:02

ANGIE MARCHESE: Justin had the shot of fame kind of like Elvis did, and y'know, then he had to take a step back and realise what all this meant to him and how he was going to deal with it. And it's similar to something that Elvis had done.

00:52:38:02 00:52:40:09

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm. What about Miley Cyrus?

00:52:40:09 00:52:43:09

JOHN JACKSON: Oh, Miley's just... she's wild, she goes for it all the time.

00:52:43:09 00:52:43:24

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:52:43:24 00:52:48:21

JOHN JACKSON: I mean, obviously, she... Again, she's another one who was famous as a very young person...

00:52:48:21 00:52:49:11

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:52:49:11 00:53:18:21

JOHN JACKSON: ...and understood that things like television, things like movies, things like TV appearances, stuff like that, can further your career in a way that some people just don't understand. And she understands the camera and how to speak and how to get her, sort of, Miley-ness across to people in a way that's actually really difficult. People don't... You're either born with that, or you're not. People can't really learn that. And she was definitely born with it the way that Elvis was.

00:53:18:21 00:53:20:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Janie?

00:53:20:16 00:53:33:21

JANIE BRYANT: Well, I know that Miley Cyrus is truly inspired by Elvis, and that she has worn her own Elvis-inspired outfit on stage, and I've seen that and I love it. It's... it's amazing. Yeah.

00:53:33:21 00:53:55:22

ANGIE MARCHESE: Oh, Miley's a good old Tennessee girl. <laughs> Miley, again, is being authentic to who she is, and, erm, being able to adapt, y'know, kind of like what Elvis did with his career. Elvis' music changed. There's the '50s Elvis, then you have the movies Elvis, then you have the '70s Elvis, and he was always able to adapt to what was going on around him.

00:53:55:22 00:53:56:16

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:53:56:16 00:54:22:24

ANGIE MARCHESE: Miley's the same way. She's been able to adapt her career and then able to adapt her music to what's going on around her, and as things change in her life, she's able to make that quick pivot to express herself through her music, similar to what Elvis did when he wanted to go gospel, or he wanted to do Christmas. And even if the studios weren't 100 percent behind it, he was. That's what he felt he needed to do, and that's kind of what Miley's doing now.

00:54:22:24 00:54:27:01

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm. Yeah, you're right. Bruno Mars, the incredible Bruno Mars.

00:54:27:01 00:54:31:06

JOHN JACKSON: I mean, Bruno Mars, he was an Elvis tribute artist when he was six years old.

00:54:31:06 00:54:32:23

ANDREA COLLINS: Get out! That's so funny.

00:54:32:23 00:54:46:19

JOHN JACKSON: If you see the movie called Honeymoon in Vegas, erm, with Sarah Jessica Parker, James Kahn... Bruno Mars is in that film as a six- or seven-year-old Elvis tribute artist.

00:54:46:19 00:54:47:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Hmm!

00:54:47:13 00:55:00:21

JOHN JACKSON: Again, same thing, like... It's just the undeniable talent of somebody like him. And he brings in dancing, he brings in singing, he's a true showman in the way that Elvis was...

00:55:00:21 00:55:01:02

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:55:01:02 00:55:26:01

JOHN JACKSON: ...I think. And plus fashion, and plus charisma, and plus just collaborations and... He may be the most direct line to Elvis, erm... you know, that exists today, I think, and... because he studied it. He knew exactly as a child, through his father, what to go for in your career, and, like, the pinnacle, obviously, is Elvis.

00:55:27:15 00:55:28:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Bravo.

00:55:28:13 00:55:29:24

ANGIE MARCHESE: <laughs>

00:55:29:24 00:55:32:06

ANDREA COLLINS: Knocked that category out of the park.

00:55:36:21 00:55:41:00

ANDREA COLLINS: So, why do you think he's still so relevant today?

00:55:41:00 00:56:19:05

KITT KOSSMAN: First of all, he's an icon. Like, he's in a special league of his own. At least in my mind, like, he's the personification of the American Dream. Like, he went for it, and he lived his dream and became a very popular musician. I had the pleasure of visiting Graceland myself when I was about 25 years old, and, erm, Graceland was definitely on my bucket list. It was just one of the things that I needed to see. And I remember coming to the house, and... I wouldn't say that I was disappointed, but I was surprised that the house wasn't bigger than it was. Like, to me, he was the King, like, I had imagined a castle.

00:56:19:05 00:56:19:17

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:56:19:17 00:57:01:02

KITT KOSSMAN: So, there... So, seeing this house, that was a surprise to me, and a good thing was that I also had a ticket to go inside to see the rooms in there. And that, like, really blew my mind, because every room had its own feel and soul to it. Every room was decorated in different ways. Like, I had my own apartment home in Denmark when

I was over there, and of course, the flat was small, so every room was kind of connected and had kind of the same look to it. So, just seeing this kind of interior where you went all-in for each room and it had a purpose, it had a look... That was, like, crazy for me, I was super inspired by it. And I would say my house today doesn't look like my apartment. I'm much more like Elvis now than... <laughs>

00:57:01:02 00:57:02:00

ANDREA COLLINS: <laughs>

00:57:02:00 00:57:03:07

KITT KOSSMAN: ...I was then. <laughs>

00:57:03:07 00:57:04:05

ANDREA COLLINS: Got a jungle room?

00:57:04:05 00:57:07:03

KITT KOSSMAN: I, er... I at least have a lot of plants...

00:57:07:03 00:57:07:21

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah. <laughs>

00:57:07:21 00:57:09:20

KITT KOSSMAN: So... <laughs>

00:57:09:20 00:57:17:08

ANDREA COLLINS: So, still a lot of, erm, interest in Elvis even though he's been gone for almost 45 years. Janie, why do you think that is?

00:57:17:08 00:58:02:06

JANIE BRYANT: I know, isn't that incredible? I think because, you know, with his music, he still continues to touch people's lives and hearts, and, erm... I know, it's such an interesting thing that really, like, his songs continue on even though he's gone. And for people that, y'know, started listening to him after he had passed, erm, I think the music still really connects with so many people. Because he had, like, such his own personal style, I think when people see him and see him throughout the decades, y'know, that... His style is still inspirational today.

00:58:02:06 00:58:03:03

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:58:03:03 00:58:10:21

JANIE BRYANT: But I think it's the combination of, like I said, that quadruple threat... I mean, that is still inspirational today, because that is a rare thing.

00:58:10:21 00:58:11:15

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:58:11:15 00:58:21:17

JANIE BRYANT: And most people don't have that, or they haven't tapped into, like, all those talents, but Elvis was someone who really tapped into all of those talents.

00:58:21:17 00:58:22:11

ANGIE MARCHESE: Mm-hmm.

00:58:22:11 00:58:24:18

JANIE BRYANT: Anyway, it's still inspirational to me today.

00:58:24:18 00:58:25:13

ANDREA COLLINS: Yeah.

00:58:25:13 00:59:01:20

ANGIE MARCHESE: It just... He transcends generations. He actually has gone from being this pop culture '50s, y'know, rock 'n' roll legend to part of American pop culture. He's, like, the bedrock of what our pop culture is. And it's not even dated bedrock. It's kind of like, you could hear an Elvis song in a commercial that they've revamped because of the beat or something like that. It just... Everyone is still fascinated with Elvis, and that he actually lived the American Dream.

00:59:01:20 00:59:02:07

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:59:02:07 00:59:31:24

ANGIE MARCHESE: Coming from nothing and changing the world in such a short period of time, it's just such a phenomenal story that people are fascinated with. And even today, it's not even about the gossip or anything like that. Elvis is kind of this aspirational kind of figure, erm, where people aspire to be like him. And not dressing like him and things like that, but figuratively...

00:59:31:24 00:59:32:15

ANDREA COLLINS: Mm-hmm.

00:59:32:15 00:59:33:03

ANGIE MARCHESE: ...like him.

00:59:33:03 00:59:34:00

ANDREA COLLINS: Change-makers.

00:59:34:00 01:00:07:03

ANGIE MARCHESE: Yeah, basically. And it's so funny, because Elvis is everywhere, erm, in pop culture. Even if someone just goes, like, you mention "Elvis has left the building," you know, if someone else says, "I left the building," automatically, people think of "Elvis has left the building." It's kind of, you know, a no-brainer. Or, you know, Elvis' motto was "TCB", so when you hear "Taking Care of Business", like, yep, that's Elvis' logo. You know? There's just these very subtle things that are part of our pop culture day in and day out that you can't help but think about Elvis when you see them or hear them.

01:00:10:23 01:00:53:08

ANDREA COLLINS: Thank you for listening to the story behind the LEGO Art Elvis Presley set. We hope you enjoyed listening to our conversations with four incredible experts in each of their fields: costume designer and fashion designer Janie Bryant, music expert and Elvis historian John Jackson, director of Graceland Archives and overall Elvis expert Angie Marchese, and of course, our own LEGO designer, Kitt Kossman. How's your piece of LEGO art coming along? You ready to hang it on the wall, or maybe break it apart and build one of the other versions? My name is Andrea Collins. Thanks to our guests, and thank you for listening. This has been an original soundtrack from LEGO Art.