

# Canadian Mint strikes four Elvis coins

By Phillip Day  
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OTTAWA — Elvis is in the building.

And you can take that to the bank, little darlin'.

The Royal Canadian Mint, that bastion of conservative money-makers, has tossed years of caution aside for the realm of black velvet paintings and Elvis salt and pepper shakers.

Yes, the mint is striking commemorative Elvis coins. In four poses, no less.

There's the early Elvis in a pose from Jailhouse Rock. "Rock and roll reign begins," reads the inscription.

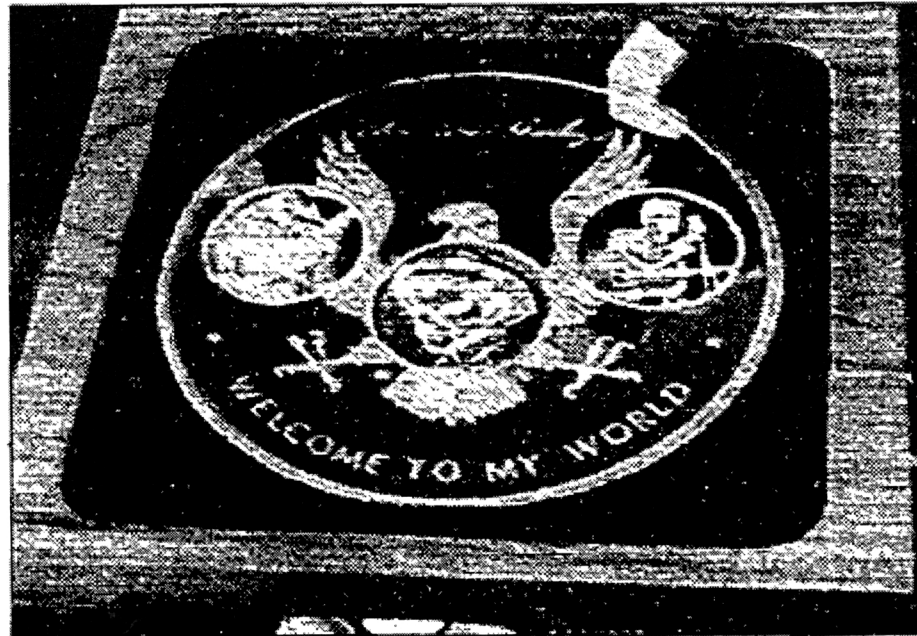
Next is Elvis in Hawaii. "Elvis: today, tomorrow and forever," says the inscription on the second one-ounce silver coin.

Third in the series is a gold record commemoration — Elvis on a coin designed to look like a miniature record.

And the piece de resistance, the largest coin ever struck by the mint, is a massive 10-ounce silver commemoration with three likenesses of The King surrounded by an American Eagle with its wings spread. "Elvis, welcome to my world," it reads in classic simplicity.

An engraving of Graceland, Elvis's Memphis, Tenn., home until his death in 1977, adorns the flip side of all four coins.

Each of the one-ounce coins



CP PHOTO

**PIECE DE RESISTANCE:** Largest coin ever struck by the mint is a massive 10-ounce silver commemoration with three likenesses of The King.

sells for \$69 while the giant 10-ounce Elvis, complete with velvet-lined wooden box produced by the mint, goes for \$325.

Mike Makri, owner of Toronto's Legendary Coins, came up with the idea.

"I've always been a bit of a coin collector and a lot of my friends are Elvis fans.

"They told me they couldn't get Elvis coins anywhere, no one sells them, so I contacted the mint, got the rights from Grace-

land and that was it."

Makri had a U.S. designer come up with the likeness for the giant Elvis coin while artists for the mint did the other designs.

Murray Church, communications director of the mint, says workers like the Elvis coins.

"It's been a very fun project for the people who work here," he said in an interview yesterday.

"It's great — it's pop culture." Church will take more of an active role himself in the story

Aug. 16 when he heads down to Graceland for the anniversary of Elvis' death.

"There's no truth to the rumor I've been shopping for tight sequined pants," he says, laughing.

Church will present a set of the Elvis coins to the winner of a raffle for the Memphis Trauma Centre.

As well as helping the hospital, Church says it will be an opportunity to generate publicity among the 30,000 Elvis fans expected to flock to the city for the week-long festivities surrounding the anniversary of the tragic day.

"The more coins (Makri) sells, the more we sell."

The coins are available at Graceland and through Makri's Toronto company.

The mint has produced 4,426 Elvis coins since Makri first approached it with the idea in 1987. Some were bronze, others were gold, but the mint now only produces the four silver versions.

Church says the traditional minting of coins for use in Canada made up about only \$33 million of the more than \$606 million earned by the mint last year.

Specialty coins, like the Elvis edition, accounted for about \$47 million.

The biggest money-makers for the mint were precious metal coins like the one bearing the gold maple leaf.