

# Celebrate Elvis this weekend at National Music Museum

**By Travis Gulbrandson**  
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A broken guitar might not be the first thing most people think of when they hear the National Music Museum (NMM) has made some new acquisitions.

But what if that guitar was owned by Elvis Presley? And played by him in the last year of his life? And, well, broken by him?

The guitar in question is one of six acquisitions to be featured at an open house at the NMM Friday (today) and Saturday.

"It's simply a chance to celebrate the new acquisitions and let the public know they're here, and have a little fun doing it," said NMM director Dr. Cleveland Johnson. "We took the Elvis theme and ran with it."

Not only will the museum be offering free admission on May 3-4, it will offer several other attractions, as well, including Presley's Harley-Davidson motorcycle, courtesy of Pioneer Auto Show of Murdo.

In addition, Heck's Dakota Style Barbecue will serve Memphis-style barbecue from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and from 11 a.m. until supplies last on Saturday.

The first 50 visitors on Friday who successfully complete a scavenger hunt in the NMM will receive a voucher for a free plate of food.

"We're just trying to have a good time and to give people an excuse to come here," Johnson said, noting he also hoped to take advantage of Vermillion's increased traffic over commencement weekend.

For many music fans, the biggest attraction may be Presley's guitar, a 1975 C.F. Martin that he used in 29 concerts during the last year of his life.

"This instrument ... was damaged in a freak accident onstage," Johnson said. "(Presley's) guitar strap broke, it slipped from his hands, a string broke, he was frustrated and he threw it up in the air."

The guitar now has two visible holes toward the bottom that resulted from its crashing to the stage.

"He couldn't use it for the rest of the concert, so he gave it away to a young lady at the front of the audience," Johnson said. "It passed through any number of hands on the way to landing here, where it will stay."

Along with the Presley guitar, the museum has acquired the following five "celebrity" instruments:

- A 1966 custom-made Grammer-branded Johnny Cash guitar;
- A 1961 electric guitar used and autographed by Muddy Waters;
- A 1958 Explorer model bass guitar once used by The Who bassist

John Entwistle;

• A 1954 electric guitar once owned by Chet Atkins; and

• An A-flat Hohner Marine Band 1896/20 model harmonica once owned by Bob Dylan.

Each item enters the museum's permanent collection, and comes from the same source.

"We were contacted years ago by an individual named Robert Johnson, who is an old rock 'n' roller," Cleveland Johnson said. "He's played with some of the greats in the early decades of rock and roll, and also I think morphed into a collector himself."

"He's been looking for good opportunities to share his collection, and he stumbled across us and knew we were perhaps the best place in the world to take care of something like this."

The instruments were officially unveiled to the museum trustees about two weeks ago.

"Since they were instrumental in making this happen, we decided it was fair enough to let them see it first, so we set it up privately," Johnson said. "We had a Friday evening event and invited Robert Johnson to talk about each instrument. He has tales galore about the history of each one."

The instruments have since been on display to all museum visitors.

Cleveland Johnson said he thinks they "expand the reach" of the

museum's collection.

"By and large, we tend to think of instruments here as objects, tools of making music," he said. "The celebrity nature of this special category just brings an added dimension to the instrument. It gives an added layer that we can share with the public. It helps us reach out to a broader demographic than we might otherwise successfully attract to our museum."

"Our goal is to move the traffic our way. We know from past experience if we can get people through our doors to see a particular item that they'll end up spending at least two or three hours here," he said. "It's just a matter of getting them to our doorstep, into our lobby and looking at our collections."

This weekend also marks the inauguration of the museum's new hours. On Thursdays and Fridays the museum will close at 8 p.m. through the end of the summer.

Johnson said he hopes this will give more people the opportunity to visit.

"Whether it's a rare violin, or whether it's a celebrity guitar, we are thrilled however a new visitor finds a way to us," he said.

For more information, visit <http://orgs.usd.edu/nm/>.



Vermillion High School students are putting their creativity to work in the upcoming production of the magical children's fantasy, "Wiley and the Hairy Man." The play is an adaptation of a Southern folk tale in which a child, with the help of a conjuring mammy and faithful dog, outwits the villain of the swamp and, as a result, finds inner strength. With the help of puppetry, lighting effects, and a cast of imaginative actors, the VHS stage is transformed into a swampy adventure land. Show times are 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 4, 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 5 and 7:30 p.m. on Monday, May 6. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and senior

citizens, and free to those with Vermillion School District activity cards. Tickets are available at the door.

- Cast:**  
**Hairy Man:** Dustin Fischer  
**Mammy:** Meghan Cameron  
**Wiley:** Savannah Kirsch  
**Dog:** Leah Geis  
**Chorus:** Rachel Axtell, Katie Zimmerman, Sam Pearson, Caitlin Britten, Rob McFall, Morgan Fuller, Allison Howe, Will Getzin, Genevieve Carey  
**Crew:** Autumn Berseth, Jessica Brady, Kelsey Meadows, Matt Szymonski, Jacob Ford, Will Card, Sara Marker, Alexis Reich, Adam Ahmed, Tristan Meadows, Chelsea Gilbertson

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*Thank You*  
 The Family of John Taylor wishes to thank all neighbors and friends for their kindness and prayers. A specific thank you to Dr. Dendinger and the wonderful staff of the Sanford Care Center for their loving care of our Dad, Grandfather and Great Grandfather. We will miss him forever.

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