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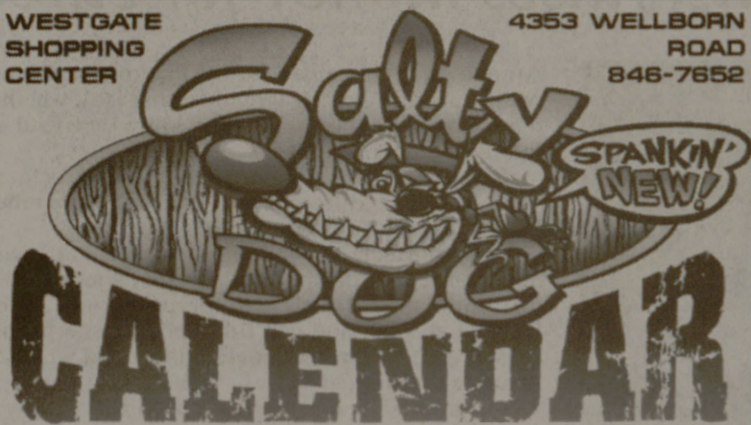
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4A

Thursday, April 18, 2002

Vaughan-Bassett to introduce Elvis Presley bedroom pieces at furniture trade show

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The King has been gone for 25 years, but Elvis Presley's phenomenal marketing power has everyone all shook up at the world's largest furniture trade show.

Vaughan-Bassett Furniture Co., based in Galax, Va., plans to introduce two new lines of Elvis Presley bedroom pieces at the International Home Furnishings Market, which gets under way on Thursday.

Company officials insist no green shag or red velvet will be used in the new "Graceland" and "Elvis Presley's Hollywood" bedroom lines.

Still, they did try to have some fun with furniture that ranges from refined to downright ostentatious.

Two of the signature pieces are the "Love Me Tender" bed and the "Burning Love" heart-shaped mirror, said Doug Bassett, the company's vice president of sales and marketing.

A sleek bed with padded headboard and

matching armoire merely hints at Presley with silver doorknobs in the shape of an "E" and a "P." Then there's the suite with a platinum-record mirror and more initial-shaped drawer knobs.

There is also a more traditional style armoire — except for the frosted glass insert inscribed with Elvis' signature and musical notes.

The idea for an Elvis furniture line took seed when Bassett went to visit one of the company's plants in Tupelo, Miss., which is famous for being Presley's birthplace. Bassett's flight was delayed in Memphis, Tenn., and he could not find a rental car or a hotel room.

"I realized it was Elvis Week and there were thousands of fans in town to go to Graceland," he said.

When he finally got home to Galax, he shared his story with some of his colleagues. That is when the light bulb went on.

The company put in a call to Elvis

Presley Enterprises and began negotiating a licensing agreement.

"We learned very quickly that the fan and the Vaughan-Bassett customer are one and the same," said Bassett. "Twenty percent of them are women under 30 old. The same people who go to Graceland are the ones who buy furniture."

Industry analyst Britt Beemer's prediction was piqued by the idea of a new furniture line.

"I wouldn't think of Elvis Presley's name if I were thinking about the quality of good taste," said Beemer. "But I do very well."

Bob Slotnick, a branding expert with Global Licensing & Trademark, said the idea of Elvis furniture is a "lasting appeal to a generation after his death."

Dealers may also want to stock up on Presley stuff will get you in the door."

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Benjamin Bratt marries Pinero co-star

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Benjamin Bratt has married his *Pinero* co-star Talisa Soto.

The ceremony took place Saturday in San Francisco, where Bratt was raised and owns a home, publicist Ina Treციokas said Tuesday.

Bratt, 38, and Soto, 35, were wed "at an intimate family gathering, a day that perfectly celebrated their love and happiness," Treციokas said in a statement. She offered no details.

They co-starred in the 2001 film about hard-living Puerto Rican poet-playwright Miguel Pinero, who died of cirrhosis at 41 in 1988.

It is the first marriage for Bratt, who dated Julia Roberts for nearly four years until their breakup last year.

He co-starred on the NBC legal

drama "Law & Order." His films include *The River Wild*, *Traffic* and *Miss Congeniality*.

Soto has appeared in *The Mambo Kings*, *Spy Hard* and the *Mortal Kombat* movies.

Kelsey Grammer lends voice to rat

NEW YORK (AP) — Kelsey Grammer is taking a second job in television — as an animated rat.

The "Frasier" star's production company is making a new cartoon, "Gary the Rat," that will debut on TNN next year. Grammer will provide the voice of the lead character.

Gary is described as a New York attorney so evil that one day he wakes up and he is no longer human.

"He becomes the most sought-after lawyer once it is discovered he is actually a rat," Grammer said Tuesday.

The cable network is hoping to

launch a prime-time night of cartoons next year. It has acquired the rights to "The Ren & Stimpy Show" and hopes to persuade its creator to make more episodes. Also in production is "Stripperella," a cartoon from "Spider-Man" creator Stan Lee that features Pamela Anderson as a stripper who moonlights as a superhero.

TNN is the former Nashville Network that, since its purchase by Viacom, has repositioned itself as a network for young men.

Sharon Stone to judge at Cannes Film Festival

PARIS (AP) — Sharon Stone and Michelle Yeoh will take part in the nine-member jury awarding the Palme d'Or at Cannes next month.

David Lynch, the famously quirky director of *Blue Velvet*, *The Straight Story* and *Mulholland Drive*, heads the Cannes Film

Festival's jury of three actors and six directors. His announcement was announced earlier.

Along with Stone, co-star of *Basic Instinct* and *Casino*, and Yeoh, the ex-Bond girl and Malaysian-born star of *Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the jury features Indonesian actress Christine Hakim and French directors Claude Miller and Regis Wargnier.

Also judging this year's festival, which runs from May 15-25, are Danish director Bille August, who directed the 1988 Palme d'Or winner *Pelle the Conqueror*, Chilean-born director Raoul Ruiz (*Time Regained*) and Brazilian director Walter Salles, director of *Central Station*.



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