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One Man Show: A Unique Video celebrating 25 years

By Keith Lawrence Messenger-Inquirer

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Michael Hicks stands in his studio at A Unique Video on Tuesday in Owensboro. Hicks is celebrating 25 years in business this year.

Photo by Greg Eans, Messenger-Inquirer | geans@messenger-inquirer.com

Michael Hicks has one thing in common with Elvis Presley.

Both of their careers began with gifts for their mothers.

In 1953, Elvis went to Sun Records to record two songs for his mother — “My Happiness” and “That’s When Your Heartaches Begin.”

Hicks’ A Unique Video is celebrating 25 years in business this year.

“The first thing I did was a video with pictures set to music that was a birthday present to my mom,” he recalled last week. “Then, my dad asked me about doing one for a class reunion and I sold a bunch of tapes from that. I was just starting at Owensboro Community & Technical College then.”

Hicks went on to major in broadcasting and minor in philosophy at Western Kentucky University.

But he was coming home on weekends to work on his blossoming video business.

“I was doing videos for class reunions and then videos of the class reunions,” Hicks said.

When he graduated in 1995, he worked for a Bowling Green television station for two weeks.

“But the business was doing so well in Owensboro, I decided to come home and pursue it,” Hicks said.

“You’ve got to be a little crazy to go into business for yourself,” he said, “and I’ve got that covered.”

Back then, he said, “It was all on S-VHS — it was called Super VHS — tape. It had a higher quality than regular VHS. DVDs didn’t come out till 2005-2007.”

In 2006, Terry Woodward’s WaxWorks/VideoWorks created Team Marketing to produce and distribute college sports and NASCAR DVDs.

“Terry Woodward has been a big help,” Hicks said. “When he started Team Marketing, he asked me to do game footage to make a master for the game videos. I did that for two or three years.”

He’s seen VHS give way to DVD and now DVD is giving way to online storage.

“DVDs are still big for people, but corporations want things on ‘the cloud.’ ” Hicks said. “I’m putting a lot on flash drives these days.”

He helps people preserve their memories by transferring photos, reel-to-reel recordings, camcorder tapes and other older forms to digital.

“I’ve started doing target marketing on Facebook and I have new customers in Knoxville, Tennessee, and St. Louis,” Hicks said. “They send me the film or tapes and I transfer it for them.”

He shoots weddings and other special events and has even hidden with an attorney to film someone involved in a lawsuit.

But documentaries are what Hicks enjoys most.

In 2015, he edited “The Noble Heirs,” a 15-minute documentary about the French underground in World War II.

It was accepted into the Cannes Short Film Corner that year.

“When I started, I wanted to be Steven Spielberg, but I got into the business side of it and really enjoy it,” Hicks said. “It’s a whole different planet now.”

He said, “I’ve worked with the Owensboro Dance Theatre for 15 years or so, recording their spring recital. I use four cameras for that.”

His success, Hicks said, was a case of being in the right place at the right time — and knowing what to do.

In 2011, the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce named A Unique Video its small business of the year in the one to 10 employee category.

You don’t get smaller than A Unique Video.

It’s a one-person operation.

But Hicks brings in others when he needs them.

Rollie Rhodes does a lot of camera work for him and Matt Gray does audio.

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