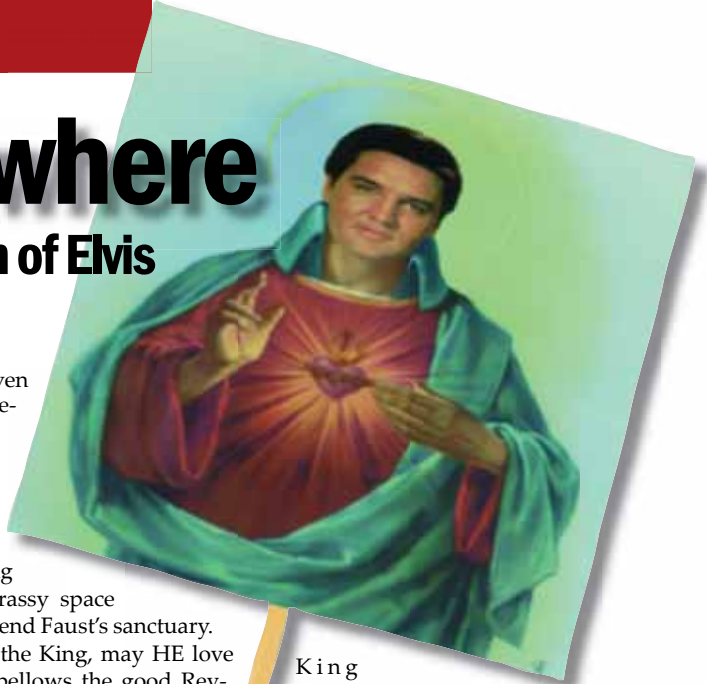


Elvis is Everywhere

The First Second Life Church of Elvis

by Surfdaddy Orca



thou shalt not take us seriously
 thou shalt take care of business
 thou shalt not be cruel
 thou shalt not step on my blue
 suede shoes
 thou shalt not kill
 thou shalt love me tender
 it's now or never - not o sole mio!
 thou shalt not build thine dreams
 on suspicious minds
 viva Las Vegas!
 thou canst do anything but
 lay off of my blue suede shoes!

IRON FIST — The King is... IN! So says my Sacred Elvis Detector, a small colorful piece of construction paper art with a picture of the famous guitar-slinging kid from Tupelo, Mississippi. The detector itself dangles from a string with "IN" on one side and "OUT" on the other. And today, the King is... IN!



The Reverend Elvis Faust,
 First Second Life Church of Elvis

I first met the pantless, cigar-smoking Right Reverend Elvis Faust at his 512 square meters of First Land in the sim of Nampo. He has since relocated his First Second Life Church of Elvis to Iron Fist and lost the cigar. And he now walks around in what one writer describes as "blue suede ooze," with odiferous-appearing particles emanating from his crotch. This is only fitting, since the Reverend Faust gives his hilarious, yet strangely moving sermons from a golden toilet seat ("throne") located in front of the pews of a humble gable-roofed rural church.

On any given Sunday at precisely noon SLT, a small but devoted congregation can be found waiting on a small grassy space outside Reverend Faust's sanctuary. "Praise be to the King, may HE love you tender" bellows the good Reverend from his throne. "Thou shalt not build thine dreams On Suspicious Minds," continues Faust, as several of his avatar flock stand up at the front of the pews and trigger animations to wave their arms as if possessed by the Holy Spirit.

Not building dreams on suspicious minds turns out to be one of the Ten Commandments etched in the stone tablets that stand at the entryway to the church:

I find myself suddenly seized by the Spirit and remember that it is one for the money and two for the show, that I ain't nothin' but a hound dog, and that everybody in the whole cell block was dancin' to the jailhouse rock. In fact, "Jailhouse Rock" is playing as I stand up and wave the colorful placard that somebody gave me when I walked in. The sign shows a peaceful

King standing in sacramental robes with his heart radiating goodness and love. I start to feel a funny sense of well being as I laugh at the riotous interactive chat streaming from Reverend Faust and the congregation. This is stuff right out of Comedy Central.

"Big Elvis: Peace be unto you, Surfdaddy Orca" greets me after I teleport to Iron Fist to have a chat with the good Reverend. Big Elvis is always watching from his golden throne in the sky, so it would seem. The picture on the front of the church shows a grinning Richard Nixon shaking hands with a pudgy 70's Elvis, no doubt hatching some covert CIA surveillance plot. While an eerie reminder of the Watergate days for those of us old enough to remember, it is pure shtick. Reverend Faust's scripted peacock squawks a plaintive cry as it rubs against my crotch.

So, my Sacred Elvis Detector was right. The King is... IN. Elvis Faust, it turns out, is a funny, highly articulate

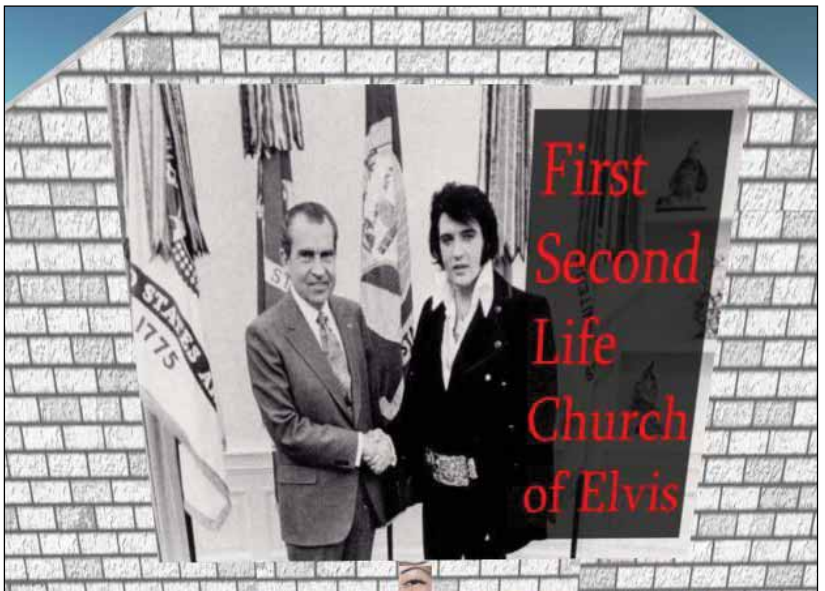


Photo op with The King on the gabled roof of the First Second Life Church of Elvis.

pizza delivery man in Real Life with a love for the Faustian legend (hence his Second Life name). "I always liked the Elvis story from a Faustian perspective," he told me. "Elvis basically came into it because I signed up with the name Elvis."

And how does the story of a man selling his soul to the devil fit his choice of Second Life first name? Says Elvis Faust, "Elvis as Faust, the Col [Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis' manager] as Mephisto—selling his soul for the Rock and Roll..."

Faust's church is not really the "First" First Church of Elvis (although it is the First Second Life Church of Elvis—please bear with me a minute). The original "mother" church, the 24 Hour Church of Elvis, was an exhibit at a museum and gallery called "Where's The Art?" in Portland, Oregon, run by artist Stephanie G. Pierce. Faust readily acknowledges this inadvertent link, "I actually heard about it... from a co-worker who had been there after I mentioned I built a Church of Elvis in SL." Faust continues, "I've wondered if the mother church knew about its meta-verbal missionary."

As it turns out, my Sacred Elvis Detector is a remnant of the mother church, one of a number of trinkets, pamphlets, fortunes, and so forth that sold for prices ranging from 25 cents to a dollar. The 24 Hour Church of Elvis has had three separate locations in Portland, with wildly creative and outrageous art including a coin-operated

fortune-telling machine accessible from the street, elaborate window displays, and art available for purchase inside.



As reported by Jonathan Walters in 2000: "Not a lot of praying goes on at the Church of Elvis in downtown Portland, even though the walls are covered with semi-religious velvet images of the King, and an altar sits in the center of the cluttered room. The altar is on wheels, adorned with body parts of old Barbie dolls and stickers of famous people from the 1970s, painted in a storm of unmatched colors. No worshippers pray at this altar because it actually is the Loveseat Chariot for newlyweds. People come from all over the world to get married in it."

The church offered legal weddings for \$25 and "cheap, not legal" weddings for \$5.

The third incarnation of the 24 Hour Church was not open 24 hours. A sign on the door read: "24 Hour Church of Elvis:

Usually open Noon to 5, 8–11 a lot. Call (503) 226-3671 for reassurance."

The 24 Hour Church is mostly homeless now, not unlike the street performer called "Elvis" who used to play a few songs on a cardboard guitar in his sequined jumpsuit and superman cape, framed in his thick, dark-rimmed glasses. This Elvis was a regular fixture at the Portland Saturday Market until recent years.

The last remnant of the 24 Hour Church appears on a sign in a building now occupied by an architecture firm:

24 HOUR CHURCH OF ELVIS
Weddings!! Sermons!! Confessions!! Photo
Opportunity With the King!!
24 HOURS 25¢

BIOSPHERE 6000

Not just a biosphere but a diet center and breast enlargement clinic as well!!

Artist Pierce is still around and hoping to find a new home for her unique art. Her website is:

www.24hourchurchofelvis.com

Is the Church of Elvis a cult or a tongue-in-cheek medium for art and comedy? The answer is maybe a little of both. Certainly Elvis Presley continues to this day to have cult followers. His untimely drug-overdosed heart attack at age 42 in 1977 sparked an all-night vigil that began right after his death when 100 or so fans gathered outside Graceland. This year's vigil was webcast live on America Online, and became a very public expression of the cult of Elvis. Elvis Faust comments: "When I first got to SL I had trouble finding cults, so I decided to start one..."

Where does the good Reverend see his church going? He is building a second branch of the church on a mainland parcel that someone donated in Jindalrae. It will become the Church of Elvis Drive-Thru, "I'd like to do some automated services there (if I ever get around to scripting them)."

Like Pierce, Reverend Faust performs marriages (albeit of the Second Life variety)... and divorces.

Faust has recently taken to hilarious mud wrestling competitions as part of his sermons. With the reality-transforming ease of Second Life, he removes the roof to his chapel to reveal blue sky and a pit full of sloshy, gooey mud. Looking like a sumo wrestler in heat, he entices mostly female avatars to try to take him down, "Dunno if it'll be making a comeback- lotta people seemed to like it..." I can imagine that the good Reverend most certainly did.

And Faust would most definitely appreciate something that Pierce once said, "You will ride my bicycle with the vibrating seat around the new Church of Elvis, it will be wonderful."

I check my Sacred Elvis Detector, and I notice that it now says... OUT. At least until next week. Yes, Elvis is Everywhere. ☿



The former 24 Hour Church of Elvis in Portland, Oregon.