

Elvis Fans Say It Rocks; Unquestionably, It Rolls

Mobile Graceland Plays Manhattan

By MICHAEL WILSON

There is black, like the night sky or a dark hole, and there is black, like what the desk clerk wears down at the end of Lonely Street. This room is the second black.

All you can see, walking in from the bright sunshine, is something big and white on the wall. In the split second it takes the human eye to adjust, comprehend and transmit to a shocked brain, it could almost be an angel, but for its adorned pelvis.

The jumpsuit.

Elvis Presley is touring again. Mobile Graceland rolled into Midtown Manhattan yesterday, like some kind of rock 'n' roll bookmobile in a big, black 18-wheeler. The jumpsuit is one of several Elvis artifacts in the exhibit.

Yesterday, it was outside a record store on West 51st Street. Today it plays Broadway, in Times Square. It is free, and is expected to draw a large crowd, larger than its well-received swing through the South this summer, larger even than the crowd that gathers round an angry young man, face down in the street with a gun in his hand, in the ghetto.

Just inside the door, there is one of Elvis's first guitars, a 1956 Gibson. There is a shirt from "Jailhouse Rock." There is his third-grade report card from East Tupelo School in Mississippi. There is a comb, its teeth seeming to still glisten with hair oil and hutch wax.

Towering over it all is the jumpsuit. "The Spectrum Suit," says a reverent Shawn Fahy, a guide on the truck who seems to materialize out of the darkness. "One time, this woman came in and dropped to her knees and just started crying, right in front of it."

In the jumpsuit bandwidth, the Spectrum is a relatively minimalist ensemble. No floor-length cape, no big sunglasses, it was modeled after Mr. Presley's desire for something "simple, easy and masculine," according to the literature. All the sweaty scarves went to the screaming women that night, Nov. 8, 1971, when Elvis played before 16,601 fans at the Spectrum in Philadelphia. The fabric looks surprisingly comfortable, tailored to give a little for the karate moves.



Photographs by Omer Muhammad/The New York Times

Mobile Graceland, which arrived in New York City yesterday, includes artifacts like Elvis's Army jacket and an early guitar. It moves on after tonight, making its way, like the King himself, toward Las Vegas.

wooden chest."

The Mobile Graceland tour is part of an orchestrated barrage of all things Elvis this year, 25 years after his death. Yesterday's arrival in Manhattan coincided with the release of a compact disc featuring remastered versions of classics like "Heartbreak Hotel," "Return to Sender," "A Big Hunk O' Love," "In the Ghetto," and a modern, ramped-up version of "A Little Less Conversation."

Mr. Fahy, 37, of Albany, walks visitors through the 53-foot trailer, pausing to share a gun story or a jumpsuit tidbit with the air of one who has just heard it himself. A marketing manager by trade, his enthusiasm for Elvis began last month, when he got this assignment through the record store chain FYE, a sponsor of the tour.

"I went to Elvis school," he said of the training at Graceland. "It was pretty intense. I didn't really become a fan until I learned about his life and his effect on people."

"When people hear you're with Elvis, casinos treat you like rock stars. 'Oh, you're with Elvis,' and doors open up," Mr. Fahy said.

"They don't talk about him in the past tense. It's insane." He paused to invite two women to an Elvis party at the Hard Rock Cafe later.

There is a small gift shop area in the corner, but loitering is discouraged. Mr. Fahy gently keeps things moving, especially on busy days. A little less conversation, a little more action, please.

Barbara Mazor Bart, director of the Walt Whitman museum in Huntington Station, N.Y., dropped by the West 51st Street location to see.

"The curator must have had a very difficult decision as to what artifacts to put here," she said, standing near a briefcase version of a car phone, one of Mr. Presley's prized gadgets. "I think it's a brilliant idea, to put Graceland on the road to attract a younger audience. It's pure genius."

The tour will continue into December and perhaps beyond. "We close up and leave town and go to another place," Mr. Fahy said. "We bring a little bit of Memphis to everybody." Mobile Graceland closes its New York showing at 10 tonight. Tomorrow will be too late. It's now or never, the truck won't wait.

Columbia U. Head Apologizes To Fordham Over Public Gibe

By DANIEL J. WAKIN

The president of Columbia University apologized to his counterpart at Fordham University yesterday for a public gibe by a Columbia marching band announcer during halftime at the Columbia-Fordham football game on Saturday. The remark alluded to the sexual abuse scandal in the priesthood.

Anger about the remark among some Fordham officials, students and alumni lingered over what they perceived as a lukewarm reaction by the Columbia administration. A Fordham spokeswoman, Elizabeth Schmalz, said she was particularly disturbed that the remark — a double entendre about altar boys — was approved by a Columbia official before it was broadcast through loudspeakers at the game.

Ms. Schmalz said that the president of Columbia, Lee C. Bollinger, called Fordham's president, the Rev. Joseph A. O'Hare, to express his "personal regret" and to say that he was "searching for the appropriate institutional response."

By the end of the day, a Columbia spokeswoman repeated the university's official disavowal of the comment and again apologized for any offense given. "The university sincerely regrets that the remarks of any religious group or individual victim of child abuse," said the spokeswoman, Lauren Marshall. Fordham officials expressed disappointment. "If this is the resolution of the matter, we find the entire incident disappointing on all fronts," Ms. Schmalz said, but added that it was now "time to move on."

Yesterday, members of the Columbia band said they stood by the whip. "The band regrets that people were offended by our script, but the claim we are some anti-Catholics or bigots is false," said the band's leader, Thomas Bertram.

The script was written by Andy Hao, a Columbia sophomore. "They're not going to get an apology from me," Mr. Hao said. "You should blame the priests that molest kids and degrade the name of the church rather than blaming some college kid who wrote a football script." He said some people just could not take a joke.

But the Fordham University chaplain, the Rev. Jerry Blaszcak, said that the issue went deeper than that.

Ivy League remark is taken as anti-Catholic by Jesuit staff and students.

being unable to get into Columbia. Ms. Schmalz of Fordham said, "It's just incomprehensible to me that the value judgment was behind that decision," referring to the remark's being left in the script. She said it was "outrageous" that the comment remained posted on the Columbia band's Web site, cumborg.org.

The Columbia band censor, Catherine Webster, is a former dean of first-year students who is working part time in the Barnard College dean's office, said Suzanne Trimel, a Columbia spokeswoman. Ms. Webster, a former Columbia band member, was unavailable yesterday, Ms. Trimel said.

Ms. Trimel said it was important to note that the remark came in the context of a student satirical show. "We do allow some latitude," she said. But the matter is a lesson to the band. She said, on the impact of free speech: "People may be traumatized, saddened, suffer by something they said."

Mr. Bertram was more philosophical. "We get in trouble for something like this every five years," he said.