

The ClerkenwellPost

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ZOEY GOTO

A fashion and design journalist, Zoey Goto is also an Elvis Presley obsessive who's written a book celebrating the style of The King. She talks about the enduring legacy of Elvis, sleeping in his bedroom and the EC1 impersonator

How did you become such an Elvis fan?
Despite sharing my birthday with Elvis, I knew very little about The King until my early twenties, when I saw a photo of him in a magazine and thought he was the most visually stunning person I'd ever seen. I soon became hooked and travelled to Memphis to write my university dissertation on his Graceland home.

What is it about his style that made you write the book?

I wanted to look at Elvis's legacy across the board, from the way men still style their hair to the influence that he had in Britain - which spans from the teddy boys to performers such as David Bowie, and beyond. I'd say Elvis's most enduring style is the 1950s rockabilly image - the slick pompadour, sharp suits, crepe-soled shoes and a healthy dose of denim continues to offer a template for street style and contemporary musicians.

How much research did you do?

Writing *Elvis Style* took me to many weird and wonderful places, including visiting his birthplace shack in Tupelo and staying overnight in the apartment that Elvis lived in as a teenager in Memphis. It was really

surreal to go to sleep in Elvis's bedroom and wake up and make a cup of tea in his kitchen! I also went to Denmark to visit a replica of Graceland that has been made by an Elvis super-fan and turned into a really intriguing Elvis museum.

Do you have any favourite outfits?

I love the black leather suit that he wore for the '68 Comeback Special. Seeing Elvis striding out on stage dressed head to toe in his provocative black leather outfit is a defining moment in rock and roll history - he really did prove to the world that evening that he still had it. I saw and photographed the leather outfit both at Graceland and when it came to London last year for the O2 exhibition.



Where do you live in Clerkenwell?

I live just off St John Street with my husband Craig and my daughter Summer. We've been in the area for about five years.

What do you enjoy about living here?

I like that so much of London is within walking distance. There are great architectural landmarks such as the Barbican on your doorstep and the galleries and shops of the West End are just a brisk walk away. It is also really quiet at the weekends, which provides a little breathing space.

Where do you like to relax in Clerkenwell?

I love the day spa at Ironmonger Row Baths and we'll often go to Pizza Pilgrims on Exmouth Market for a weekend treat and a spot of people watching. I've recently given up caffeine but I used to hang out in Briki and MacIntyre Coffee. On a sunny day, it's nice to get lunch from the Moro stand on Exmouth Market and eat alfresco in the nearby park.



Have you come across much of a local following for Elvis?

I went to the Clerkenwell Festival in Spa Green over the August bank holiday weekend, which had a really cool rockabilly vibe. There was a band playing called The Bad Breed and the lead singer, Colbert Hamilton, is quite a well known Elvis impersonator, so we do have at least one in our midst.

Do you ever attempt to sing Elvis songs?

Yes, very badly! I'm currently learning the banjo and love playing old country songs, but I'm not at a stage where I would inflict it on others yet. My favourite Elvis song is "Mystery Train", which is one of his early recordings at Sun Records. There's a real youthful urgency that comes through in his voice on this track and it takes me back to Memphis every time I hear it.

What do friends and family think about your obsession?

My family are used to it and my daughter often draws family portraits that include Elvis, complete with a huge quiff. I think perhaps when people first meet me they are a little bemused by my love of Elvis, as I was born after he died so I'm not from a generation where this is the norm.



Whose style are you working on next?

The next book was a bit of a dilemma as I've set the bar so high - very few performers have the style legacy of Elvis Presley. I do however see *Elvis Style* as the first of a series of style books that focus not only on the wardrobes, but also the interior design, hair, cars and accessories of style icons. Who next? I'm thinking the Queen of Country herself - Dolly Parton.

"Elvis Style: From Zoot Suits to Jumpsuits" (Redshank Books) by Zoey Goto is out now