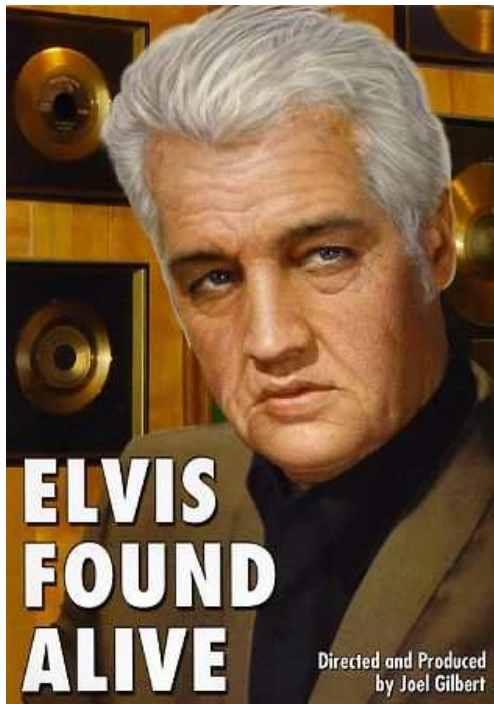


FAME Review: Joel Gilbert, Producer/Director - Elvis Found Alive! (DVD)

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Elvis Found Alive!

[Joel Gilbert](#), Producer/Director

[MVD Visual](#) - MVD5294D (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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Okay, you know from the very title, a Nat'l. Inquirer type blurt, that this is coolio sensationalist hoaxery, and the movie goes to great pains to make that clear (though never quite explicitly saying so) right from the start as an office secretary handles what should be 40-pound box of alleged FBI FOIA files on Elvis Presley as though it were no more than a single letter. Hmmmmmm, not TOO much lack of verisimilitude! Opening the box up, a great to-do is raised as it's discovered the documents have been redacted to hell and gone...but the ink is still wet and slopping everywhere! WOW! Hey, the FBI may be, as the *Dexter* show would have it, a Fucking Bunch of Idiots, but, cah-mon!, they ain't **that** bad! The point, of course, putting a ground plot to the film, is for the intrepid Joel Gilbert & Co. to "get the ink off [the documents] before it dries". Riiiiiiight! Thus, this mid-fi "documentary" is a grand send-up with tongue firmly in cheek.

Everyone, me most definitely included, loves a good conspiracy theory that's either gigantically outlandish or amusingly quasi-realistic in its perversions of linear fact arriving at a grin-inducing conclusion. *Elvis Found Alive!* is both, and I'm a little surprised no one's done it before, what with The King's enduring fan mania and all. No matter, the subject is in good hands here, as it's soon discovered—I mean, these guys are obviously GENIUSES 'cause it takes 'em only about 5 minutes to suss everything out—that (*GASP!!!*) Elvis had faked his death, assumed the cover name of Jon Burrows, and continued life as an undercover investigator/informant for the Feds. In fact, he's breathing yet and living in Simi Valley about 5 miles from Gilbert's offices (damn! I'm in Manhattan Beach, about 30 miles further down the road and obviously, despite being a crit-sleuth of intergalactic proportions, missed the scoop of the century! Oh, the shame!!!), and we're off to the races.

Yep, it turns out Burrows is indeed Presley, as it takes all of about two minutes for him to cave in to Gilbert's almost total lack of pressure tactics. Then, while speaking through a facial video blackout, Elvis' history is re-encanted for the benefit of a new generation and the memory of older fans. Slowly, fantasy elements creep in, and everything starts warping as clips are run. If you've forgotten what a performer Presley was, you'll soon find it all rushing back in the B&W flashes of his early displays. The DVD plays heavily on Elvis' Boy Scout demeanor then roughs it up, which only pushes the narrative looseness even further but in amusingly credible fashion. The weaving of exaggeration and reality form the woof and warp of a parallel reality, and it turns out, as the chronicle hits Presley's induction into the Army as penance for wrecking American youth, that just about everything about the Elvis legend isn't quite what we've been told.

For over two hours, everything gets woolier and woolier in the best B-movie spoof formula with a Buster Keaton face. A little over the 30-minute mark, I was hooked. Kicking against the Rat Pack, Charlie Heston, and a bevy of Hollywooders, cussing and growing irate, Burrows/Elvis grows ever more pissed, lashing out at everyone in memory. In a lot of ways, this is a cynical critic's delight, 'cause a lot of what's occurring is a shoot from the hip reappraisal of the times by way of an increasingly eccentric conservative pop idol. Whoever it is playing the part of The King has his voice down dead nuts, and there's a companion CD ([here](#)) that plays on the line as well. Along the way here, you'll learn about Elvis and the Black Panthers, Elvis and the Mafia, Elvis and the Weather Underground, and a raft of other historical incidents, though in a way that only Joel Gilbert is presenting for the first time, straight from the horse's mouth. I say grab a gaggle of buds, purchase a couple fifths of tequila, and have a shot party, downing a jigger every time some fact is fudged, warped, mangled, and cajoled.

On second thought, better make that a half- or third-shot 'cause there are so many way cool distortions here (and a load of facts that **seem** like distortions) that you're gonna be drunker 'n a skunk by the end of the first 45 minutes if'n ya don't pace yerself, Josiah. No matter what, though, *Elvis Found Alive!* is a hoot and a half. If it doesn't become a cult item, it'll only be because the times are forcing Americans to lose their sense of irony.

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