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## **Imperial Palace shakes it up with a little vintage Elvis Presley memorabilia**



Erik Kabik/Retna/[www.erikkabikphoto.com](http://www.erikkabikphoto.com)

Linda Thompson, Elvis' former girlfriend, at King's Ransom Museum's Elvis Presley exhibit at the Imperial Palace.

By [John Katsilometes](#) · October 21, 2009 · 3:52 PM

[Elvis Presley Exhibit @Imperial Palace](#)



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Joe Esposito, Elvis' tour manager, at King's Ransom Museum's Elvis Presley exhibit at the Imperial Palace.



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Rhonda Williams pictured with the necklace Elvis gave her at a concert in 1974 on display at King's Ransom Museum's Elvis Presley exhibit at the Imperial Palace.

### **Beyond the Sun**

- [Elvis Web site](#)
- [The King's Ransom Web site](#)
- [Joe Esposito Web site](#)
- [Sonny West Web site](#)

During a night rife with oddities, selecting the weirdest moment was a challenge. But it had to be at The King's Ransom exhibit at Imperial Palace, a new-to-Vegas display of Elvis Presley memorabilia, ranging from the mod, blue jacket he wore in "Spinout" to the mod, blue bottle of Mylanta plucked from one of his medication-laden medicine cabinets. I cut a corner to take a look at one of the more fascinating displays, a collection of framed photos of Elvis meeting President Nixon in December 1970.

You get lost in these photos as you observe a clearly confused, glazed-over, glassy-eyed, acutely paranoid hostage of his own success.

But Elvis, conversely, looks relatively OK.

As any Elvis fan (or Nixon fan, for that matter) knows, Elvis requested the legendary visit so he could gain status as a federal agent at-large for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Buffeted by fistfuls of prescription pills each day, Presley actually sought Nixon's support in his fight against drug abuse (see the National Archives account

[here](#).) A series of photos chronicles the famous session that took place in Nixon's Oval Office, and as I peered through the glass, the person next to me said, "Pretty ironic, huh?"

"Oh yeah," I said, turning to the person making the comment, who happened to be ... Linda Thompson. She's Elvis' beauty queen ex-girlfriend (and also ex-wife of Bruce Jenner and David Foster and mother of Brody Jenner), still gorgeous, and she was on hand for the VIP/media opening of the attraction. The display space is set just about next to the Imperial Theater, and you could even faintly hear the boys from Human Nature singing "You Keep Me Hangin' On" and other Motown favorites during last night's tour. Bumping into a Memphis Mafia member or former confidant of the King was not too uncommon during this event. Also adding some vintage Elvis-dom to the exhibit space were Memphis Mafia insiders and longtime Presley friends Joe Esposito, Sonny West and Jimmy Velvet. Even Pete "Big Elvis" Vallee turned out, as did Rhonda Williams, who until this year owned a cross Elvis presented to her at the stage during a show in 1974. She sold the piece to The King's Ransom proprietors Bud Glass and Russ Howe for the display.

Author of the authoritative "Remember Elvis" and "Elvis Straight Up," Esposito is no longer a host at Wynn Las Vegas, but says he is traveling the world making appearances and talking about the days of Elvis. West is, too, a noteworthy Presley scribe, author of "Elvis: Still Taking Care of Business."

Arranged by longtime Elvis historians Glass and Howe, The King's Ransom showcases several items that once belonged to Presley or were used in Presley films or personal appearances. The tour runs at least through April and costs \$10 a pop. Up for viewing are Presley's gold-plated .38 pistol encased in glass (which, sadly, is not the firearm he used to famously blow away a TV during an appearance by Robert Goulet on "The Mike Douglas Show"), a few of his karate gis, newspaper accounts of such memorable moments as the night he karate-chopped a drunken fan off the stage at the L.V. Hilton, and his red-velvet bedroom set from Graceland. It's not an overwhelming exhibit, not nearly as extensive as the attraction that filled the since-shuttered Elvis-A-Rama on Industrial Road for a few years. But it does provide an effective account of Presley's life and career.

As West noted during the walk-around, "When Elvis touched you, he just grabbed you, and he *never* let you go."

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