



The female Elvis

Eloping to Las Vegas is becoming cool for a new generation of sweethearts thanks to alternative officiants like Victoria Hogan

In the mid-1900s, drive-through chapels in Las Vegas turned elopements into lightning-fast affairs. Thanks to Nevada's relaxed licensing laws, the city became the capital of weddings, issuing more certificates than anywhere else in the US. But by the late 2000s, the romance had cooled, slowed by the recession and pop culture portrayals that cast getting hitched in Vegas as a B-rate punchline.

More recently, there's been a rekindling, fuelled in part by a sense of nostalgia. Leading the trend is Sure Thing, a chapel that opened in 2019 with neon signs, gilded cherubs — and feathered showgirls. It's co-owned by Victoria Hogan, who officiates ceremonies dressed as Lady Elvis, bejewelled jumpsuit and all.

How did you become Lady Elvis?

This line of work brought my performance art background to life — and I love love! I started doing pop-up desert weddings in Nevada, with a teardrop caravan as a mobile chapel. Then, myself and co-owner Amy Lee opened our first chapel, Sure Thing. We saw an opportunity to celebrate the vintage Vegas aesthetic with an experience that felt less conveyor belt and more bespoke. In 2024, we opened a second one, Sure Thing Too.

What's your character like? I'm one of four 'Lady Elvises', and we've all interpreted the style differently. I wear a baby-blue jumpsuit with gold and silver rhinestones, which took our designer about six months to create, and sing *Burning Love*. We also have 'Hellvis', the singer's evil twin, who's brought a goth clientele to the chapels.

What's the wedding scene in Las Vegas like today?

Chapel culture is having a moment, helped by celebrities like Sabrina Carpenter emulating a vintage style. We're part of a larger scene, including places like Dafna Beauty, a salon that specialises in pin-up hair and makeup. We also arrange classic cars for wedding photoshoots. Everyone in the community acts as a cheerleader.

How's the process of getting married here?

Incredibly easy. You obtain a wedding licence from the downtown marriage bureau, open until midnight 365 days a year. In some chapels, you can get married on the same day [in the UK, by contrast, you have to wait a minimum of 29 days]. Our chapels are by appointment only; couples book in advance online and just show up on time.

What do you enjoy about Las Vegas?

When I think about Vegas, I think of glitz and glamour. Relics of the past still exist, like the vintage Lucky Motel just opposite us. The city's glory days haven't been bulldozed, which feels unique.

Where would you recommend visiting?

Circus Circus Hotel and Casino. Head to the Midway, an area inside the casino that has carnival-style games and a free circus show. Next door is Slots-A-Fun, with coin-operated machines. Opposite, the Peppermill diner serves up big portions and is home to the Fireside Lounge, featured in Martin Scorsese's 1995 film *Casino*. It's all velvet couches, mirrored ceilings and neon lights.

surethingchapel.com

INTERVIEW BY ZOIE GOTO

THREE MORE: QUIRKY VENUES

1 TIL DEATH DO US PART CHAPEL AT THE PALMS CASINO RESORT

If pop artist Andy Warhol had tied the knot, this chapel, with interiors that look like a two-dimensional, black-and-white illustration, would have surely been his location of choice. It opened in 2019 as an installation but went viral, so the casino committed to a long-term relationship. It's a match for micro-weddings, with space for just 25 of your nearest and dearest. palms.com



2 11TH STREET RECORDS

Owned by a female officiant, wedding company Hellbent Hitchings organises offbeat, intimate ceremonies at this outrageously hip record store and recording studio. Say "I do" surrounded by walls lined with vinyl records, then celebrate with a browse. It's all very rock 'n' roll. hellbenthitchings.com



3 THE NEON MUSEUM

Share your vows beneath the glow of the original Lady Luck Casino sign, a Vegas icon since the 1960s. This open-air museum is packed with retired signage from Sin City's heyday, and its hour-long sweetheart package welcomes up to 50 guests in the North Gallery, home to 115 of the city's most razzle-dazzle signs. neonmuseum.org