

## RELIGION

# Britney Spears Converts to Islam

## Icon of Western Decadence finds True Peace in the Koran



*MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA*

In a press release this Tuesday, Britney Spears confirmed rumors that she has indeed converted to Islam. According to friends, Spears became interested in spiritual matters after becoming pregnant with her baby boy. "I totally was getting fat, and it made me realize that so much of my identity was centered on having a flat stomach. I began to consider the epistemological

assumptions behind my actions." Unlike many Americans, Spears didn't discover Jesus — she discovered Karim, owner of the corner tanning salon. "All those late night conversations with Karim resolved so many of the ontological issues that were weighing so heavily upon my soul," says Spears. "Rock-solid abs come and go, but the word of Allah is eternal." Spears has already given a new name to her newborn son: Muhammed Abdul Federline (formerly Sean Preston).

The move shocked her Western fans, who associated Spears with everything they treasure about the American way of life. In the words of 14-year-old fan Katelynn Brooks, Britney stood for "freedom, flirtiness, and female promiscuity—the stuff that makes democracy worth fighting for!" Predictably, Spears' conversion also provoked harsh criticism from Christian leaders. Ashley Smith, editor of *Brio*, a Christian magazine for girls, has emerged as a prominent critic. Speaking on *The O'Reilly Factor*, Smith observed: "Britney showed how our Christian culture empowers women sexually. In our country, God-fearing girls can be a flirty little cock-tease in public and a prude in the sack. But in Muslim societies, women have to keep their virginity AND be modest in public. It's sick. By converting to Islam, Britney is sending our daughters mixed messages about True Godly Womanhood."

Surprisingly, many of her detractors in the Arab world also expressed distress. Says hard line Iranian traditionalist Omar al Sadr, "You would think we would be thrilled! But our whole movement centered on the OLD Britney Spears. She was the object lesson that proved the need for coercive controls on female sexuality. For crying out loud, we used to show her music videos to recruit mujaddin. You have no idea how many suicide bombers were inspired by her decadence! Now that she's veiled herself, we will have to redo all of our promotional material." Local Tehran Cleric, and vocal moderate Mustafa Wahabi added, "Now don't get me wrong.

Like 99 percent of the Islamic world, I abhor terrorism, and I despise the fundamentalist groups who are distorting traditional Islamic values for their own political purposes. But I still have to agree with Omar about this Britney thing. Who am I supposed to replace her with on my top five list of infidels? Allah, it would be nice if you could throw me a bone here...if it be your will, that is."

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera, Britney argued she has always felt the call of Muslim orthodoxy. "Even when I was recording those songs about having sex with men who weren't my husband, I was already being drawn to Allah. If you look back, you can see it in my music. For example, in hindsight my hit single "Oops, I did it again," was clearly about the proper penance that we celebrate at the festival of Ashura, to remember how Imam Husain bravely sacrificed himself to the Umayyad army."

Spears claims that many of her singles were, in fact, designed to send hidden messages to the Islamic community. "American audiences assumed that my song "I'm a Slave for You" is about deviant sexual practices, but it is truly about the mercy of Islam towards the peoples it conquers. You see, for infidels, it is a blessing to be enslaved by Muslim masters like myself. Or consider my smash dance hit "Toxic" — I am clearly denouncing the insidious effects of decadent Western civilization. And for other songs like my personal favorite, "E-mail my heart," the Islamic meaning clearly requires no explanation.

Al-Jazeera further inquired if converting to Islam has changed Britney's political beliefs. "No, of course not!" said Britney. "I still totally support President Bush."

