

Incognito (Quantum 5)

This Quantum 5 world diverged from Homeline's on March 28th, 1911, 7:00 PM Greenwich Mean Time. This date is not actually known to Infinity's researchers; they have at this point only narrowed the divergence point to somewhere in the spring of 1911. What appears to have happened was that some sort of global quantum effect (translation: "nobody knows") thoroughly randomized human conceptions across the planet: no one conceived past that point has a precise genetic match to the equivalent person in Homeline's history.

The effects of this were not immediately obvious until about the 1950s, and even today Incognito is a surprisingly close parallel to Homeline's (and our) 2006. The World Wars and Cold War still occurred; the United States still dominates the post-Cold War era; and the many of the same conflicts still simmer. But the population of Incognito is by now completely different... which includes its celebrities, entertainers, and politicians.

This fact appeals to a large segment of Homeline's ruling class.

Incognito, 2006

Current Affairs

Infinity wholesale exploits the high-range tourist trade, all the while waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Divergence Point

1911: Unknown factor randomizes human conceptions.

Major Civilizations

Western (Diffuse), Orthodox (empire), Chinese (Empire)

Great Powers

Great Britain (democratic republic, CR3), United States of America (democratic republic, CR3), Russian Republic (dictatorship, CR3), People's Republic of China (oligarchy, CR4)

Worldline Data

TL: 8

Quantum: 5

Mana Level: low

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Infinity Level: P7

The randomization of conceptions after 1911 took quite some time to produce significant changes in Incognito's history. World Wars I & II occurred more or less as scheduled; and while the Korean conflict was noticeably bloodier, the actual course of the war was essentially unchanged. The first real divergences took place in the 1960s, particularly in the United States of America. Thanks to a different generation of activists, entertainers, and politicians the Vietnam War never escalated, the Cuban Missile Crisis barely made the papers, the civil rights movement was considerably more violently confrontational, and popular music was uniformly awful.

The 1970s was remarkably similar in tone to Homeline's (although the causes for malaise had nothing to do with post-Vietnam or post-Watergate syndrome), but abruptly came to a halt with the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1976. The final collapse of the Warsaw Pact

in 1986 is widely considered to be his handiwork, and in the twenty years since then the planet has more or less been moving along in rough parallel to Homeline's history.

Currently, foreign news is dominated with escalating tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India, with South American and Balkan conflicts remaining perennial problems. The continuing occupation of Afghanistan by American and Arab League forces (that country being invaded after the destruction of the WTC on September 11, 2001) seems to have fallen off of the radar, much to the relief of the US government; there was some indication that the Republican Party was planning to use it against the current incumbent in 2008. The rest of Incognito is much like this: the major countries are all there, and the broad outlines are the same, but there is significant divergence in the details.

Outworld Involvement

The official reason for trade in this world is in the buying and selling of popular entertainment. While Incognito's arts are usually comparable in quality, the timeline's visual arts are *very* good and the timeline's popular music is *very*

bad. Infinity has found that this timeline's movies and television programs are quite accessible to Homeline audiences, and that Incognito audiences are apparently subconsciously desperate to hear anything even remotely decent. In the four years that Infinity has been selling in Incognito, it's reintroduced rock and roll, essentially invented hip-hop and grunge, and quintupled the market share of zydeco. The trick is to get the bands: much of Infinity's work in this field involves squashing the too-ambitious plans of Homeline's tour bookers. Although all of that may become moot, soon, thanks to a possible internal revolt. At least three of the seven Elvii working for I-SWAT, one of the Buddy Holleys, and four Clarissas (neo-folk singer who died tragically young; quite popular on timelines where the Nationalists won the Spanish Civil War) have indicated that they're interested in taking their retirement on Incognito.

Music isn't the only import -- comic books sell surprisingly well, and the major genres of print fiction are unchanged. Exports are complicated somewhat by divergences in the development of computers: this is after all a world where Alan Turing never truly existed, let alone Bill Gates or

Steve Wozniak. The basic details remain the same, but the specifications are completely different, including the computer languages. Infinity doesn't think that Incognito's hardware is particularly better or worse than the Homeline equivalent, but some of the software looks promising. An interesting quirk of the timeline is that while Incognito computer technology is well up to producing a handheld portable media player, nobody's really bothered; which is something that Infinity will be happy to rectify, once it figures out how.

However, all of this pales when compared to the *real* reason for Infinity's presence on this timeline; select tourism. **Very** select tourism. Incognito is a famous person's dream vacation spot: everybody speaks your language, you understand the underlying culture, the technological disparity is just noticeable enough to make you feel faintly rustic, the food is reliable, the bartender knows how to make a martini properly, and the money's even the same (except for the signature on the bill)... but nobody will interrupt your dinner to get an autograph. You can do embarrassing things in public and not make the gossip columns. You can go see a movie or take your kid

to the beach and not get mobbed. They even have a Disneyland here. In short, celebrities who come to Incognito generally get treated like what they are: people who are both unknown and possessed of large amounts of money to spend. This has a powerful appeal. This also unfortunately can cause no end of trouble, usually from rich and famous Homeliners who see no particular reason **not** to punch annoyances in the face, or who forget to switch out their paper money, or who don't really understand that being left alone is what the tourist tours are really selling, but that's why Time Tours is so well trained.

It is broadly assumed that Centrum has no access to Incognito: this is almost true. One of the echoes shifted away from Quantum 6 by Interworld was local year 1972 (now 1979), thus making it a part of the I-776 dimensional highway system. As Eisenhower was not only President in Incognito, but created the Interstate system more or less on schedule, that timeline is also linked to I-776. Centrum even has an automobile that can (barely) reliably find the necessary on-ramp (usually found somewhere around Amarillo) that can take its passengers to the timeline.

Interworld intends to send a world-jumper to Incognito this way, just as soon as the process is made more reliable. And as soon as the actual mechanics of dimensional highways are more properly understood. And, of course, they need to wait until the ongoing Texan rebellion on that timeline is snuffed out. Or even gotten under control. And as soon as Centrum can come up with a compelling reason to have regular visits to Incognito in the first place; there are easier places to set up meetings with their spies, and Centrum has an even lower opinion of this timeline's music than Homeline does.

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