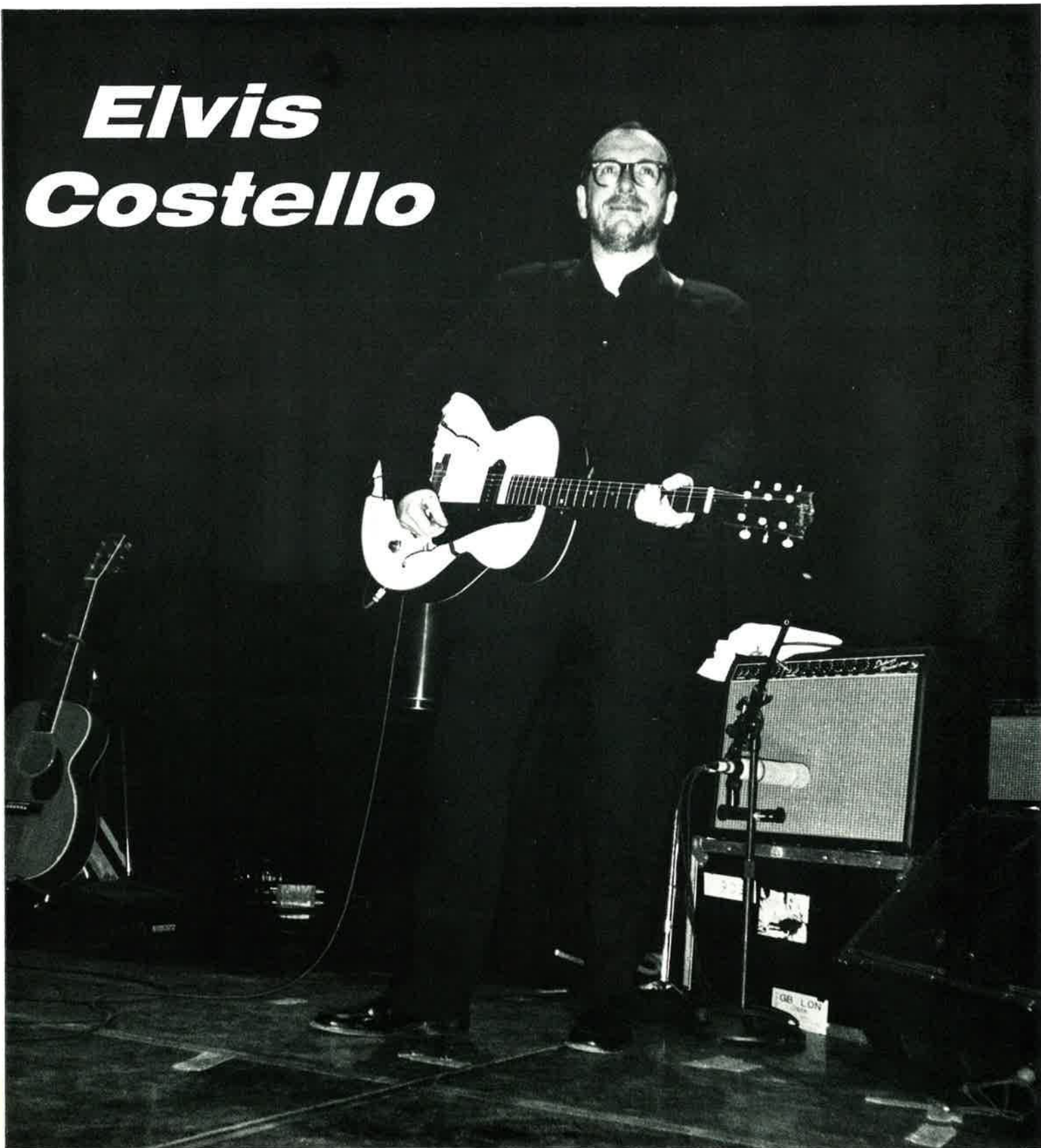


Elvis Costello





LIP SERVICE

From The Editor



<http://come.to/beyond-belief>

Mike Bodayle

115 McGavock Circle
Franklin, Tennessee 37064-2938
mbodayle@usautotn.com

Mark Perry

6 Hillside Grove
Taunton, Somerset TA1 4LA England
mark@perrys.prestel.co.uk

Dave Pannell

13 Banool Cres. Bayonet Head
Albany 6330 Australia
David.Pannell@uwa.edu.au

Subscriptions:

Beyond Belief is usually published 4 times a year with one double-issue each year. A five-issue subscription is US\$20, UK£15 or AU\$35. Please send cash, check or money order payable to the appropriate person above. In Japan, the cost is US\$25 payable through Mike. Please let us know which issue to start with.

Staff:

Mike Bodayle, Editor
Mark Perry, European Editor
Dave Farr, Contributing Editor
Christine Perry, Administration (UK)
Dave Pannell, Administration (Aust.)
Janet Wilson, Art Director
Lang Zimmerman, Copy Editor
Tony Sacchetti, Photography
Michel Laake, Card Designer

Correspondents:

Olivier Ridolphi, France
Paul Hosken & Dirk Peters, Germany
John Foyle, Ireland
Manfredi Buonomo, Italy
Masanori Saito, Japan
Sverre Ronny Saetrum, Norway
Graham Bowers, Sweden
Xavier Escutia, Spain

All contents are copyright © 2000 Beyond Belief.

I'VE SAID IT BEFORE AND I'LL SAY IT ONCE AGAIN. One of the great side benefits from being a serious fan of Elvis Costello is getting to meet, know and spend time with other fans. I really feel blessed to have made the many friendships that I have through my association with this magazine and in my travels to see Elvis live. Costello fans come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life. However, the one thing they all seem to have in common is that most seem to be great people. And sometimes when they get together - special things happen.

Insofar as these relationships go, one event stands out as a zenith for their fostering: the Attractions' live rehearsals for the *All This Useless Beauty* album that took place in the fall of 1995 at New York City's Beacon Theater. This unique and exciting event brought together fans from all over the USA for a series of concerts that have since gone down in history as one of EC's finest moments.

The stage was set for these shows in the spring of 1995 when a solo Elvis supported Bob Dylan for a handful of European dates. In these support gigs, he debuted, in their raw form, most of the songs that would ultimately make up *ATUB*. And thanks to the power of the portable DAT recorder, most fans got to hear these songs before the Beacon shows where their full band versions would be heard for the first time.

Still just a fledgling fanzine editor, I traveled from Texas back home to the New York area to see the shows that would serve as the main feature for *BB4*. I saw the first three shows (Wednesday through Friday) but had to travel back home Sunday morning to catch the company plane that night to Michigan for a business dinner. I therefore

missed the Sunday show. (Saturday was an off night.) But as luck would have it, I had business in NYC on Monday so I was also able to catch the final show that night.

As most of us concert-goers found ourselves with free time due to the multiple nights away from home, we had some memorable after-show dinners at night and did the requisite record shopping during the day. But what stands out most in my memory is the stage-door mingling out on 75th Street after the shows each night. While waiting for the band to exit each night (where they would courteously sign autographs) we all had much fun "talking Elvis." And if my memory serves me well, I can recall fans being there from Texas (me), Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Florida, California, Oregon, Michigan, Washington, Pennsylvania, Illinois, South Carolina and Virginia.

Well, this past October's Costello & Nieve shows at the Beacon served as a reunion of sorts. Many alumni from the 1995 shows again made their way to the Big Apple to see both shows. Before Monday's show, several of us met for dinner near the theater. As we looked around the table, there were three couples and myself. Would you believe that two of the couples had met for the first time at the 1995 shows; one was now married and the other was dating. The third couple had gotten reacquainted at the 1995 shows and were also now married as well. Surprising as this all was, we also realized that we even knew of another couple who had met at the 1995 shows and had also gotten married!

So there certainly was magic in the air around the Beacon Theater in the summer of 1995. And it somehow always seems to be the case when Costello fans get together.



Superfan Joyce Slavik with EC after one of her 16 *Lonely World* shows.

To The Editor

ELVIS IN YOUR FRONT ROOM

I was at the Colston Hall, Bristol concert with an old University friend and we were right in the middle of the front row. The intimacy was spellbinding and it was a bit like having Elvis play in your front room. It was a sellout and the audience was reverentially silent during the songs and burst into thunderous applause at the end of each song. The feeling was really great and reminded me of the Dylan *Don't Look Back* film. I've seen Elvis a number of times and this was in some ways the best.

It was quite a poignant vibe, possibly due to the upcoming Millennium. The great song "45" also appears to bookmark the first 22 years of his career. Gone was the aggression sometimes apparent to be replaced by good humour and contentment. I left with a realisation of how many great albums and songs Elvis has produced this century and the weight of expectation that we fans now heap upon him. His achievements are many but his next step appears uncertain. I loved "45" and "Alibi Factory" but was not blown away by *The Deliveryman* songs. They were intelligent and well-written but seemed to lack musical energy. The title reminds me of Paul Simon's *The Capeman* failed odyssey.

It was a long concert and it seemed to me that Elvis was contemplating his past (most songs were from his early albums, bizarrely none from *Brutal Youth* or *ATUB*) whilst looking uncertainly into the future. He was actually quite humble when introducing his new songs which I found quite touching. Hats off to Elvis for the past and good luck for the future.

Paul Clayden, Grays (England)

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

I'm just back from the C&N show at Bradford St George's Hall. It was a great concert with wonderful sound quality and a great atmosphere. If anyone had any doubt as to the brilliance of this duo's musicianship and professionalism, this concert would put them right. Only small gripe is that, as at Manchester earlier in the year, the concert was one encore or a part of one too long. Perhaps because Elvis and Steve are making a lot of dosh from each show (no drummer, bass player to pay for and nothing spent on light show or stage set/props to speak of) they feel an element of guilt and the only way they can give value for money is to play a particularly long set.

I have seen Elvis with the Attractions when THE highlight of the whole gig is "I Want You", but it sounded so tired and out of place this time. I also preferred the emphasis on

Painted From Memory at the Manchester concert, even though the sound quality was infinitely better at Bradford. Can you have too much of a good thing?

Keith Rhodes (via E-mail)

THE LEAVING OF LIVERPOOL

EC told beeb.com that the Royal Court (along with London) was his best UK gig last time around, so why no show at Liverpool on the latest tour? We should be told, I think. By my reckoning it's the first tour since *Get Happy!!* that he's missed out Liverpool - and even then he played Southport.

Colin Wilkinson, Liverpool (England)

Wot, no Royal Court?! At least Sexsmith has been given the boot...

Barry Orr, Solihull (England)

No Liverpool date this time. Contrary to reports in the last *BB*, the Liverpool concert on 14 April this year was not sold out. I bought a ticket (for the upper circle admittedly) two days beforehand, and two thirds of the seats in that area of the theatre were empty on the night. This may explain why they aren't going back there. Looking at the excellent EC Home Page on the Internet, I can count more than 120 concerts in the current calendar year. When (if ever) did that last happen?

We will have enjoyed not one, but two UK tours this year, the second the most comprehensive since ... you probably know better than I. I am not going to suggest that we should be grateful to the artist for condescending to appear and take our money, but it is good to hear songs live, some in new arrangements and new material too. Perhaps after all the touring EC will get into a studio and record all those albums we have been promised - one with SN, one with the Brodsky Quartet, and who knows what else!

Nick Ratcliffe, Evesham (England)

o Word is that EC did indeed ask for Liverpool to be included on the UK itinerary, only to return from the USA leg of the tour to find that the cloth-eared promoter had somehow arranged a date in Blackpool instead!

NIEVE FAN WRITES

Howdy! I attended both shows by the Steve Nieve Trio at the Knitting Factory last week - wonderful performances. And, like his solo piano performance that led to the release of *It's Raining Somewhere* (only a dozen of us loyal fans braved the NYC ice storm that night), the show was multi-track recorded. Hopefully for future release...

David M. Warren,

Staff Photographer

Philadelphia Inquirer (USA)

STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS!

Here is a photo of Elvis and me after the October 31 show in Ft. Lauderdale, FL - almost 22 years to the day when on his first day in America he came into the record store where I worked.



It was a crush of people and he wasn't making eye contact or really interacting with anyone - just signing stuff. But the photo from that day in 1977 (as shown in *BB4*) stopped him in his tracks. He was genuinely interested in the story of our first meeting and said he thought he looked like his son does now!

Bill Brown, Indiantown, FL (USA)

COVER TO COVER

I recently bought the Spring issue of the magazine and thought it was excellent. It was read from cover to cover. I would like to get hold of all of the back issues but can only afford to do this gradually. Congratulations on a terrific publication.

Colin Barrett, Carlisle (England)

MUGS WANTED

Another enjoyable evening spent perusing my new issue of *Beyond Belief*. The tour coverage is exhaustive; sorry I couldn't make the shows myself. Is there any possibility of the merchandising (mugs, shirts, etc.) being made available through you guys, or through EC's management? Find out, eh? Also, I'm starting to get the idea that I'm the only reader who enjoys both *Painted From Memory* and *Mighty Like a Rose*. Looking forward to the next issue!

Ward Whipple, Monroe, CT (USA)

o We've previously inquired with Costello's management about making tour merchandise available to fans and were unsuccessful in getting their interest. Sorry, but we tried.

PORING OVER THE REVIEWS

Got the new edition today - thanks very much. I was delighted that you had chosen my piece on the Albert Hall show. I'm looking

forward to really poring over the reviews of the whole tour and comparing people's perceptions of the other shows to my own recollections of that one. I see you "trailed" the piece about the Radio Merseyside special as well. I imagine it will be necessary for EC to stop working so bloody hard to free up some column inches for all the regular articles and features like that!

Adrian New, Southampton (England)

◦ *Adrian's piece on the Radio Merseyside special appears in this issue. Although this double issue has allowed us to do a bit of catching up, we still are looking for a break in the Costello activity to let us catch our breath a bit.*

FRIEND'S DAD HAS PUNCH THE CLOCK

I've always liked EC, but never realised quite what a genius he is until I saw him last Friday (October 25) at Park West. When my friend's dad once tried to tell me there was a bad Elvis Costello album, I objected on the basis that no matter what he put out, it couldn't be bad, purely because of his great voice. Now I realise there's much more to it than that. I will send in my order form for some *BB* issues tomorrow!

Margo Miller, Chicago, IL (USA)

HERE'S ONE WE MISSED

Thanks for the most recent issue, well up to the usual high standards. I thought I'd let you know of an interview EC gave in Belfast earlier this year. It featured on a BBC Northern Ireland TV arts programme (which is only broadcast on BBC Choice) and was a ten minute or so interview, covering the usual *PFM* questions, with a little bit about Elvis' Irish roots. The interview was intercut with a clip of EC & the As on *Top of The Pops* doing "Oliver's Army". I think the interview must have been recorded backstage during EC and Steve's visit to Belfast in April. At one point, there's a brief clip of them doing "American Without Tears" on what looks like the Waterfront Hall stage. He didn't do it at the show, so it must be from the sound check.

Joe Cassells, Saintfield (N Ireland)

TICKET LINE NOT SO HOT

I wonder if any other Elvis fans have had problems getting their tickets for the RFH show in December? I phoned the 24hr hotline as soon as I saw the ad in the *Evening Standard* on Friday 1st October. I went through a very peculiar computerised voice mail system which eventually confirmed I had ordered four of the lower price tickets (no top price tickets were offered!). The money was charged to my Visa card the very next day. Since then - almost a month ago - I have

heard nothing. Whenever I phone the number, I just get the same automated system; if I try to hold for a real human being, there is a message that no operators are available at this time but that they are available between 10 and 6, Monday to Sunday (even though that is when I am calling!) and then the line disconnects. I don't know if I'm just being paranoid or if there is a genuine problem here...

Kirk Annett (via E-mail)

◦ *Kirk wasn't the only one sweating on receiving tickets after dealing with this "hotline". He tells us that the matter was eventually resolved after a phone call to the promoter's office. "They admitted that they had had some problems, but that tickets would be going out as soon as they could. A week or so later an envelope dropped through the letter box and I was very pleased to find I had tickets in the centre of row G."*

A HAPPY MOMENT

I've enclosed a picture of Elvis and me after the October 2 show here in Los Angeles. Probably the happiest moment of my 23 years indeed. Seeing him perform at the three LA shows and also once on Leno has been such a thrill. After each performance I found myself feeling sheer awe; feeling lucky to have witnessed such beauty and feeling in some way changed. Discovering the man's music has been the greatest journey I've ever been on.



Thank you for putting out this wonderful newsletter. I look forward to many more issues.

Lori Riehle, Glendale, CA (USA)

CONGRATULATIONS to subscriber Martin White of Norwich, England who married Pam on 17th September 1999 to an unusual musical accompaniment. "We decided to ditch tradition," says Martin, "and played the opening track from *Jake's Progress* which was enjoyed by all. I wanted to play 'Miracle Man' but decided it was probably inappropriate!" (*Let's hope so - Ed.*) The first dance at the happy couple's evening "do" was to EC's version of "The Very Thought Of You"...

BOOTS & CDRs

Thanks for your comments (via E-mail) about including "boot" reviews in future editions of *BB*. I'm also looking forward to the next issue for the concert reviews from the conclusion of *Lonely World* tour.

I agree that some homemade CDRs are overpriced. However, I feel Doberman releases are worth the money. The shows they release are always the best for that tour (all artists), the sound quality is always "a couple of notches" better than the competition, the editing and compiling are very professional, and recent sets I've purchased of other artists have included printed artwork.

As it appears there are not many "official" boot labels producing "silver" CDs from EC's recent concerts (except radio broadcasts), because EC won't make these producers enough money, we collectors are stuck with CDR labels to keep up-to-date!

In addition, now that all serious collectors have their own domestic CD-recorder, it only needs one to buy the original set and run off copies for their friends. Also labels like Doberman aren't as important now that collectors release their recordings on domestic CDRs. From EC's recent tour, I've collected far more shows by trading; that the Doberman set is the only one that I'll buy.

Collecting "boots" has always been an expensive hobby - I'm sure you remember the days of vinyl, but we just can't help ourselves buying one more disc of one more show from "whatever" tour to add to our collection!

That's why I feel that "fanzines" like *BB* should review these discs to inform their readers and warn them of worthless products. Thanks for giving me the time to express my opinion.

Will Munro, Witney Oxon (England)

◦ *Boots return this issue featuring the latest from Doberman. We too find them to be a class operation. Sadly there are some pricks out there that simply recycle shows and sell them on CDRs at ridiculous prices. Let's all stay away from these folks if we can and like you say - trade on our own.*

THE LITTLE GIRLS UNDERSTAND

My husband and I have just been to two EC & SN concerts, at Nottingham and Leicester. Both were absolutely brilliant. This was much to the annoyance of my two-year-old daughter who was, for obvious reasons, unable to attend. She adores EC, loves his music, knows loads of song lyrics and looks through CD sleeves at pictures of him!

Vicki Robinson, Derby (England)

KICKING & SCREAMING

This is the first time I've sent a message on one of these bloody things (via E-mail!) so I'm not sure if I'm doing it right but, if I am, I would just like to say how much I appreciate the hard work you put in on the mag. I've been an EC fan for twenty-one years now and have always liked various types of music but as I get dragged kicking and screaming into middle age it's only a love for Dec's music that really stays. Also I'd like to thank you for the interview CD I won last year. As I said, I'm new to all this computer stuff so I hope it gets through...

Steve Tomlinson, Bromsgrove (England)

A POET WRITES

I am a poet at heart, and that is why Elvis Costello is in my humble opinion the best artist around. His songs have real emotion and are written in such a communicative way. Thanks for creating *Beyond Belief*, because Costello truly is...

Holly Viebranz (via E-mail)

WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT YOU...

Thanks to my girlfriend I'm totally addicted to Elvis Costello. We've been to a concert in Carre, Amsterdam, and I was totally impressed by the way this man can perform live! I still hope there will be a release of this live concert.

Michiel Dijkstra, Culemborg (Netherlands)

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

A fan of The King since first hearing him in 1977, I have each issue of *BB*, destined to become a family heirloom. One correction: at the June 26, 1999 Fleadh performance, EC closed the show; Hootie played before him, having seen from earlier shows that EC is The Beloved Entertainer! Long Live the King! And *BB*!

Harry McAleavy, Olathe, KS (USA)

MEANWHILE IN CLUBLAND...

Beyond Belief is the best fanzine about Elvis Costello since the great *Clubland*. Of course, I'm just incredibly biased. Go, Mike! And thanks for the Sunrise show heads up - row L, center, on Halloween! I dedicate my joy to *Beyond Belief*.

Ruben Betancourt, Plantation, FL (USA)

EC HITS 12-YEAR-OLD

I was 12 when I first heard "Alison" on a late night radio show in the deep south. It took me almost a year to track down the album and artist that went with the song. I went back to my room to play it, and EC hit me with "The Angels Wanna Wear ...". I've been a fan ever since.

Kip Soteres, Athens (Greece)

PLENTY MORE TO COME

I've just seen Elvis and Steve at Ipswich and it was the best performance I have seen him do. I've seen him ten times before but this show was outstanding: two and a half hours of sheer delight. All the faves, plus four new songs. Thanks for a great night Elvis. The great thing is you know there's plenty more to come...

Dave O'Keefe, Ipswich (England)

NO MUGS IN BRADFORD

I caught the EC show in Nottingham last week and I thought it was every bit as good as the shows I saw earlier in the year at Manchester and Liverpool. As I write this I am looking forward to the show in dear old Bradford. "Nobody" comes to Bradford! We only get Eagles tribute bands, Abba tribute bands and Elkie Brooks. I'm not sure how the merchandising stall will go down, as we Bradford folk are careful with our expenditure - or just bloody tight in other words. £12 for a baseball cap? £6 for a mug? He won't sell any here. I tell you that now...

Michael Halliday, Bradford (England)

BB ON EC ON BB

You were right to put the record straight ("Radio Radio" - *BB23*). We are fans, not spies. You do a great job and if I were Elvis I'd be delighted that people devoted a lot of time to me. Is it really impossible for him to show more respect for us and let us know (for instance) the dates of his concerts two or three months before they take place?

As for the McCartney demos - yes, these are on studio bootlegs. But would Elvis have covered "Leave My Kitten Alone" if he had not heard it on a Beatles' bootleg?

Olivier Ridolphi, Strassbourg (France)

o For the record, we have long since stopped making inquiries to Costello's office about upcoming concerts, etc. Again, if they have a change of heart they know where to find us.

OLD DOG

I first saw Elvis on the *Live Stiffs* tour at Leicester University in 1977. I've been a fan ever since. The bloke is determined to grow old gracefully! Still a lot of rockin' left in the old dog.

Paul Vipond, Leicester (England)

IT'S NICK AGAIN!

Greetings. You are not likely to be short of material for the next *BB*, but I mention this anyway for what it is worth. In the last issue you noted that a portrait of EC was hanging in the National Portrait Gallery in London. I visited the gallery last Friday to see for myself. I have to report that the picture is no longer on display.

Visitors can see two photos of the Spice Girls, one of Robbie Williams, an oil painting of EC collaborator Paul McCartney, a twee gold portrait of Sir Elton John, but no EC on the walls. Liz Taylor and Jagger have gone too (see your article).

Write your own headline here: "Painted From Memory," "I Want to Vanish," "Man Out of Time," etc. The NPG is undergoing some renovation with the top floor closed to visitors. This seems to have led to some reorganisation on the lower floors (for the millennium). Generally the gallery has a policy of rotating displays anyway. My only consolation is that the 20th century shop still has postcards of the EC portrait (as you reported) at 40 pence a time. You may like to warn would be visitors from afar, to check before traveling to the NPG that Elvis has not left the building!

Nick Ratcliffe, Evesham (England)

GLITTER

GULCH

Free Classifieds To Readers

COSTELLO CD RARITIES FOR SALE

CD singles and various artist contributions. Write for list. **L Lawrie, 8 Keelby Road, Scunthorpe, N Lincolnshire, DN17 2ND (UK)**

COSTELLO & NIEVE 5-CD BOX

Does anyone know where you can still get it? **Andrew Mace, 10 Shelley Close, Penistone, Sheffield, S36 6GT (UK)**

WANTED EC CD SINGLES

"Baby Plays Around" and "So Like Candy". Any advice on where I can buy them? Contact: **r.a.w.rhodes@ncl.ac.uk Professor R. A. W. Rhodes, Department of Politics, University of Newcastle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 7RU (UK)**

COSTELLO FOR SALE

Large collection of UK singles (7 and 12 inch) and LP's (both EC and related), paper goods, posters, photos and etc. is up for sale. Please write for list. **Steve Grafton, 40 Agale St., Beminster, Bristol BS3 3AG (UK)**

RARE ITEMS FOR SALE

AB signed promo LP, *El Mocambo* (genuine), *GH 2-45rpm* promo, *Costello/Lowe/Mink Columbia* promo (sealed), "I'm Your Toy" (both 12" and 7" white labels with Bruce Thomas's writing on plain sleeves), *Hits Greatest Stiffs* white label LP (with BT's writing on plain sleeve), *MAIT/TYM* pic. disc (sealed), *50,000 Elvis Fans* (double LP), "My Funny Valentine" promo 45, Nick Lowe *Bowi* EP white label (Nick's writing on disc & BT's writing on plain sleeve), Richard Hell *Another World* plug copy number 0001, Two live Grateful Dead white label promos (BT's writing on cover), *Bowie Speed Of Life* live '78 promo. Offers to **Gerry Slattery, 15 Valentines, Wickford, Essex, SS12 9DA (UK)**

End Of the Lonely World Tour

FOLLOWING THEIR SECOND SWEEP through the USA during October (see our extensive reports beginning on page 8 of this issue) Elvis and Steve Nieve wrapped up an exhaustive year of touring with another string of UK dates in November and December, a six-night stand at Rotterdam's *Heineken Night Live* (see page 26) and, finally, two shows in Japan.

The British itinerary included one or two surprise venues. The seaside trip to Blackpool was, apparently, a surprise even to Elvis himself as it appears to have been added to the list by mistake in response to his request for the promoter to include a Liverpool date. This mishap aside, it's clear that visits to long neglected places such as Plymouth, Ipswich and Brighton were part of a deliberate policy to reach fans beyond the increasingly familiar London-Liverpool-Glasgow axis. "I've tended the last couple of years to fall into a bit of a trap of just playing the major cities," Elvis acknowledged in an interview with the *Ipswich Evening Star*. "The last tour with The Attractions I maybe just went to Liverpool, Newcastle, places like that. This time a couple of the places we've been to - like Plymouth, I understand, it was nearly 20 years since we'd been there."

With his stock as high as it has been for many years following the *Notting Hill* and *Austin Powers* exposure, and with a hit album still shifting the units, attendances were generally good, with quite a number of new faces seemingly in evidence. Trooper that he is, Elvis duly obliged all those who had come along to hear "She" each night, but quite what these folks made of the eight or nine minutes of tortured anguish that is "I Want You" we can only guess. Scarborough was the only venue where tickets failed to shift in decent numbers and, since this date clashed with the much-hyped England v Scotland Euro 2000 football qualifier, it was decided to admit defeat and cancel rather than play to a near-empty Futurist Theatre.

The shows offered British fans the opportunity to hear the new songs (all but "Couldn't You Keep That to Yourself") which had been debuted in the US following Elvis's fruitful summer songwriting break from the road. Although no further surprises were sprung, the inclusion of such fresh material seemed to give these latest concerts the edge over the duo's earlier UK tour in most people's eyes. We'll be reporting in full on the British and Japanese shows next time but you can find a full set list chart on the next page.

As for the songs, 80 different numbers were heard over the 18 shows on this final segment of the *Lonely World* tour. While similar to the recent USA shows, the basic set list was changed somewhat to include UK favorites "Oliver's Army", "Shipbuilding", "Good Year for the Roses" and "She" on most nights. The biggest surprise was the C&N debut of "Big Boys" from *Armed Forces*, a song rarely done live with the Attractions.

Fans also got a special treat on December 10 at London's Royal Festival Hall as Elvis

made his first performance with the revamped Brodsky Quartet for "Pills and Soap", "The Birds Will Still Be Singing" and a stunning "Favorite Hour" which closed the night out. EC also finished strongly in Osaka with a near three-hour, 39-song show full of surprises.

In total from April 12 to December 18, Costello & Nieve gave 86 shows performing an amazing 97 different songs. And with the handful of new songs lurking - the future looks great for Costello fans.

Mark Perry

IN CONCERT

Elvis Costello WITH Steve Nieve

Nottingham Royal Centre Thursday 4th November
0870 523 2050* 0115 989 5555

Birmingham Symphony Hall Saturday 6th November
0870 523 2051* 0121 212 3333

Bristol Colston Hall Sunday 7th November
0870 523 2052* 0117 922 3686

Cardiff St. David's Hall Monday 8th November
0870 523 2053* 01222 878 444

Plymouth Pavilions Wednesday 10th November
0870 523 2054* 01752 229 922

Newcastle City Hall Friday 12th November
0870 523 2055* 0191 261 2606

Blackpool Opera House Saturday 13th November
0870 523 2056* 01253 292 029

Manchester Palace Theatre Monday 15th November
0870 523 2057* 0161 242 2503

Scarborough Futurist Theatre Wednesday 17th November
0870 523 2058* 01723 365 789

Oxford Apollo Theatre Friday 19th November
0870 523 2059* 0870 606 3500

Leicester De Montfort Hall Saturday 20th November
0870 523 2060* 0116 233 3111

Bradford St. George's Hall Sunday 21st November
0870 523 2061* 01274 752 000

Brighton The Centre Tuesday 23rd November
0870 523 2062* 0870 900 9100

Ipswich Regent Theatre Wednesday 24th November
0870 523 2063* 01473 433 100

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Tuesday 7th December
0870 523 2064* 0141 287 5511

London Royal Festival Hall Friday 10th December
0870 523 2065* 0171 960 4242



TICKETS £20 & £18.50 EXCEPT
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL - £25 & £20
Tickets also available to personal
callers at box offices.

Subject to booking fee and Promoters terms
and conditions details of which are available
on request. *24 hr LO CALL RATE

www.marshall-arts.co.uk

THE VERY BEST OF ELVIS COSTELLO OUT NOW



a Marshall Arts Ltd presentation

	November												December					
	4	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	17	19	20	21	23	24	7	10	15	18
	N O T T I N G H A M	B I R M I N G H A M	B R I S T O L	C A R D I F F	P L Y M O U T H	N E W C A S T L E	B L A C K P O L E	M A N C H E S T E R	S C A R B O R O U G H	O X F O R D	L E I C E S T E R	B R A D F O R D	B R I G H T O N	I P S W I C H	G L A S G O W	L O N D O N	T O K Y O	O S A K A
The Lonely World Tour																		
Part 2																		
United Kingdom / Japan																		
Alibi Factory	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Man Out of Time	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	C	2	2	5	5	2	2	2	2	2
Alison	3	19	18	18	19	19	20	20	A	16	17	17	18	17	19	19	18	20
Talking in the Dark	4		4	3	4	3	5	3	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Little Triggers	5	5	5	5	5	4		4	C		4			4	4	4		
Motel Matches	6		6						E									
What's Her Name Today?	7	7	7	8	8	6	9	7	L	6	7		7	7	8	8	7	8
Chelsea	8	9	9	9	12	8	11	9	L	7	9	9	9	9	10	10	9	10
Temptation	9			7	7	5	8	6	E	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	6	7
You Lie Sweetly	10		8	6	9	7	10		D	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	8	9
Girls Talk	11	12	11	12	13	12	18	13			11	11	11	11				
Indoor Fireworks	12										10			10			12	
45	13	11	13	11	15	14	15	15		12	13	13	13	13	14	14	13	15
Pads, Paws and Claws	14	15	14	15	16	15	16	16		14	14	14	14	14	15	15	14	16
Just About Glad	15					16												
I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night	16	17	15	16	17	17		17		15	15	15		15	16	16	15	17
Radio Sweetheart	17	18	17	17	18	18	19	19		18	16	16	17	16	18	18	17	19
Oliver's Army	18	32	33	31	30	31	29	33		30		29	32	30	34	35	33	35
Shipbuilding	19	33	23	23	24		25	25		24	23	22	26	22	25	27	25	29
Clubland	20	22	20	20	21	21	22	22		20	20	19	23	19	22	24	22	23
Everyday I Write the Book	21	20			6		3	26			18		20	23	26	28	24	25
Good Year for the Roses	22	13	12	13	14	13	14	14		11	12	12	12	12	13	13		13
God's Comic	23		22	22	23	23	24	24		19	22	21	25	21	24	26		
She	24	23	21	21	22	22	23	23			21	20	24	20	23	25	23	24
Suit of Lights	25																	
I Want You	26	25	31	25	33	30		32		17	33	28	22	18	21	21	20	28
Inch by Inch	27			24	25	24	26					24	28	25				
Green Shirt	28	14	27	14	10	10	12	11		21	28	23	27	24	29	31	28	30
Watching the Detectives	29	29	28	27	27	26	27	29		22	29	25	29	26	30	32	29	31
I Still Have That Other Girl	30	30	29	28	28	27	30	30		27	30	26	30	27	31	33	30	32
Red Shoes	31	31	24	29	29	28	31	31		28	31	27	31	29	32	34	31	33
Radio Radio	32			30	32								33				32	
God Give Me Strength	33	21	32	33	31	32	32	34		29		18	35	31	35	36	34	37
Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4	34	34	34	34	35	34	34	35		31	35	30	37	33	36	37	35	39
New Lace Sleeves		3	3									4	4		5	5		5
The Loved Ones		4																
Love Field		6													6			
Lesson in Cruelty		8						8										
Burnt Sugar is So Bitter		10						10		9					12	12	11	
After the Fall		16																
Veronica		24			20													
I'll Never Fall in Love Again		26																
Oh Well		27	25					27		25	26				27	29	26	
Soul For Hire		28	26					28		26	27				28	30	27	
Favourite Hour		35						36		32					37	38		40
Suspect My Tears			10			9									11	11		12
Heart-Shaped Bruise			16					18							17	17	16	
In the Darkest Place			19			20												
Blue Chair			30															
All This Useless Beauty				4							5							
Almost Blue				10		11		12		23	32	10			33		10	
Deep Dark Truthful Mirror				19														
Shallow Grave				26	26	25												
Accidents Will Happen				32	3	29	2				25			5				
Toledo					11		13						10					11
Pump It Up					34	33	33						36	32				38
Rocking Horse Road							4											
Less Than Zero							6											
Riot Act							7	5			34					6	5	
New Amsterdam							17											
The Birds Will Still Be Singing							21				19					23		22
I'll Wear It Proudly								21									4	
Poor Fractured Atlas										4								
Brilliant Mistake										10								
Baby Plays Around										13								14
King Horse												24						
Big Boys													2	2			21	
This House Is Empty Now													7					
Mystery Dance														15				
When I Was Cruel														16				18
Men Called Uncle														19		20	19	26
Party Girl														21				4
Beyond Belief														34				
Sulky Girl															28			
Pills and Soap																	22	
Clown Strike																		6
It Tears Me Up																		21
This Year's Girl																		27
Leave My Kitten Alone																		34
I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down																		36
	4	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	17	19	20	21	23	24	7	10	15	18
	November												December					



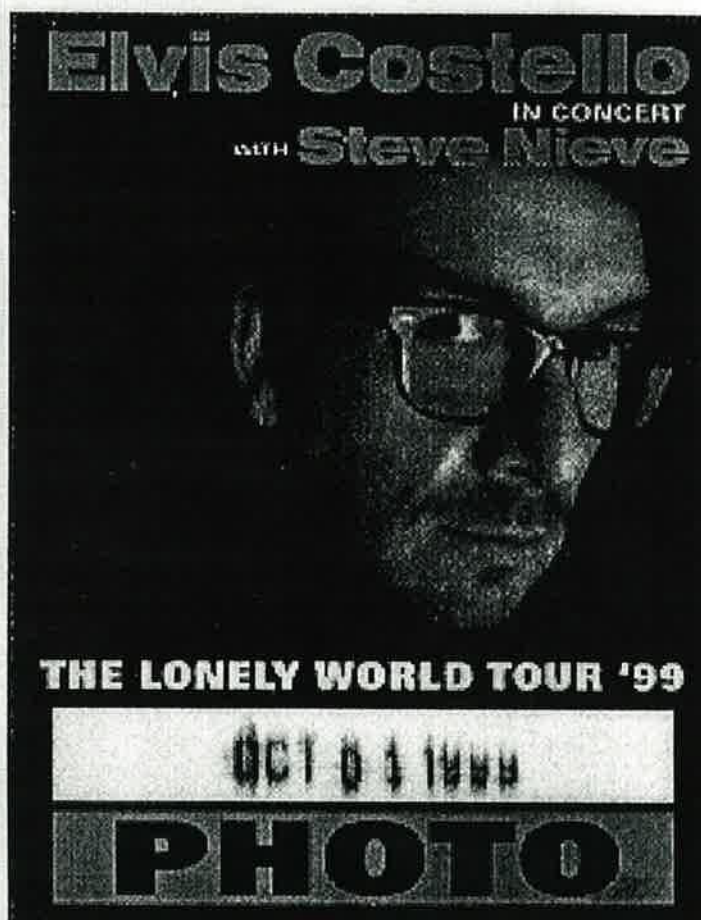
Costello & Nieve

The Lonely World Tour Part 2:

USA (September / October 1999)

Beyond Belief's coverage of the Lonely World Tour continues this issue with our readers' reports of the USA shows back in September and October of last year. Set lists for these shows were previously printed in BB23.

Thanks to all who helped and especially to Tony Sacchetti for the photos on this page and on our front cover.



It had been just a couple of months' rest for the dynamic duo since concluding the first part of the Lonely World tour at Woodstock. And after treating the world to a new song ("45") on Jay Leno's show the night before, the tour resumed in grand style at the Warfield, revitalized with world premieres of two more new songs ("Alibi Factory" and "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night"). Fans also received a nice "Bill Graham Presents" poster (below) celebrating the two Bay Area shows.

CG Parber reports:

I was quite hopeful for the possibilities that



this show presented, as it was the first night of the new tour. I had seen Costello & Nieve June 4 in Santa Rosa and June 5 at the Fleadh in San Francisco, and expected (given the format) that the new tour could be revamped

considerably without too much effort on the boys' part. The spectacular, if not stunning, beginning to this show and this tour, seemed to portend exactly what I'd hoped for, and to be truthful, expected. (You'd think after 22 years of trying and mostly failing to outguess this guy, I would give it up.)

The lights dimmed, the crowd responded, and I was immediately reunited with a vicious, but dear, old friend - Mr. Jazzmaster, set on loud and raunchy. "OK, this is a good sign," I think to myself. The stage lights don't come on, but Elvis has already hit the stage. With the first couple of words it's apparent that this is a NEW SONG. (Life is good.) With the first few lines it's apparent that this is a REALLY GOOD NEW SONG. (This is all still happening in the dark, mind you.)

Then the chorus hits. I now realize there's more going on than just guitar. There is obviously keyboard activity, but there's a LOW component - bass pedals! I repeat, then the chorus HITS. And it's now apparent that this is one of those moments where time stands still. It's all new, but it's all strangely familiar - even the melody I'm hearing for the first time. Then the lyric starts sinking in. The word "alibi" has been used what seems like ten times by the end of the first chorus, a chorus that ends with "I love you just as much as I hate your guts."

The song just seems to get stronger as it unfolds in front of me for the first time. By the

end of the first repeat of the chorus, I'm basically stunned by how good this is and by how quickly it has grabbed me. The "middle eight" is appropriately strong and then it's back to the verses and chorus, which are even more exciting this time around, given that they are somewhat known by now. I can't emphasize enough how exciting these moments were. I can only compare it to that almost surreal feeling of drama I'd get in the 1978-9 shows. I'm a fairly jaded Costello fan, having seen it all and such, but this kind of experience keeps my admiration for this artist at a still reasonably fervent level. God bless him. Such is my "Alibi Factory" experience. (The fact that this was the first public performance of this song makes this just too cool even for my too cool words.)

This adoring crowd was treated to a fairly typical EC/SN evening. That is to say it was very good. "Man Out of Time" was second up after a guitar switch to an acoustic. It was a nice effort but didn't really work for me in this format. "Talking in the Dark" was again nice to hear with its keyboard flurries. A very nice "ATUB" was next. There always seems to be at least one song in these performances that sneaks up on me and impresses, even after the initial cringing at the beginning notes caused by my pathological overplaying of perfectly pleasant compositions. On this night it was "ATUB" that filled that role for me. It was beautiful. (Go figure.) "Little Triggers" and "Motel Matches" were nice and fairly obscure throwbacks to the old days. "You Lie Sweetly" was the next "unknown" song. It's pleasant enough but not a world beater. "Shabby Doll" as well, didn't really work like this, I feel, but at least he's trying to mix it up.

"45" was familiar to much of the crowd from the Leno performance, but was new to me as, alas, your dear correspondent was unaware of that appearance. Great song, and it came across wonderfully upon first hearing. The next new one was "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night." I liked this one quite a bit, although it's probably not for everyone. A nice performance nonetheless.

A typical "Radio Sweetheart," a nice "Alison," and a slightly disappointing (for me, as this is one of my favorites) "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror" finished the main set. The house goes fruitcake as I wait for the customary parade of encores. I must admit that at this point I'm feeling a tad disappointed as I was really hoping for a wholesale overhaul of material for this tour. Call me spoiled, I suppose.

First batch of encores are "Inch by Inch," "Shallow Grave," and a decent "Detectives" which included an insane Nieve display. (Outside, after the show, I suggested to the piano rental workers that they might not want that particular piano back. They looked at me

strangely, of course, but I got a good chuckle from the assembled concert-goers, which additionally confused the piano movers.)

Back for four more: "EIWTB," "Accidents," "God's Comic" (minimalist version), and "I Want You." Nothing outstanding here, although "I Want You" continues to surprise in its impact. (I pretty much gave up on that song not long after its release, and here it is stirring me 13 years later. Again, go figure.)

Back again, starting with a tremendous "ISHTOG." I must admit I'm a little burned-out on the PFM stuff, but that song is a showstopper for me. "Red Shoes" was interesting in that there was piano included. "GGMS" was a little disappointing, but I could see that they were tinkering with the arrangement and expected that soon, down the road some, it would be quite substantial.

Finally came the "Couldn't Call It Unexpected" closer. I can't say enough about this song. Particularly in this arrangement, it's simply a beautiful piece of work. I fell in love with it the first time I heard it at its "Bridge Benefit" debut and I've always felt the MLAR rendition has been grossly ignored for the work that it is. It is still probably my favorite Costello composition and the wonderful rendition of it to close this show was truly a thing of beauty. I sat there mesmerized, brimming with pride, as Elvis held this entire theatre in the palm of his hand with a glorious performance of this beautiful song. What a wonderful experience.

All in all, a pretty nice show. The Warfield was the site of my first Costello solo experience in 1984, (revisited on the GCW reissue), so there was a nostalgic element to this show. Perhaps the remembrance of the immediacy and novelty of that 1984 solo show took some of the luster out of this one, but such are the pitfalls of overzealous fandom. A guy I work with hadn't seen Elvis since 1983 or so, and was absolutely bowled over by this show, so perhaps I've lost objectivity. Still I would have enjoyed a little more of a shake-up from the recent set lists.

I was more than willing to give the boys another shot at it the following evening in Oakland.

What the critics said:

"Now in his mid-40s, Costello still commands the kind of deification given few artists of this age. Probably second only to Bob Dylan, who hasn't done much for us lately. Perhaps it's because Costello has aged with his audience, and evolved from the angry young man into a master songwriter, an astute observer of the human condition. A guy in love and in turmoil. Maybe we're all tired of the brashness of youth and want insights. Costello serves them up like hot meals." Jane Ganahk, *San Francisco Examiner* (October 1)

"His voice has always been a blend of coarse midrange tones grasping at high notes, and on these sparse

arrangements, it proved fuller than it ever had with a full backing band. When the lights came up on his black suit and signature square-rimmed glasses, with Nieve stage left at a baby grand, the occasion felt more like a piano recital than a rock concert." Michael D. Clark, *San Jose Mercury News* (October 2)

October 1 Paramount Theatre Oakland, CA

Elvis travels over the Bay Bridge for his first-ever show in Oakland. "When I Was Cruel" receives its world premiere and the nightly ritual of fans crowding the stage for the encores (as encouraged by Elvis) becomes firmly established.

CG Parber reports again:

The Paramount is a beautiful old theater just across the bay from San Francisco. It's a little on the large side, but otherwise is the perfect setting for a Costello and Nieve show.

By mid-afternoon I was pretty excited about attending this show. I generally knew what to expect now, and thus had pretty much rid myself of my infantile, self-indulgent hints of disappointment that I had cultivated from the Warfield show.

In addition, I would be dragging my parents (who are in their seventies) along, so I had a certain vested interest that this be a good show. It turned out nicely for me, as I often found myself watching the show through their eyes, which presented a certain freshness to it all. I cringed at the sour moments and reveled in the highlights due to my folks being there. It was strange.

When they began "Little Triggers" I really tripped on the thought that this song was from an album that I had absolutely TORTURED my father with, and here we were seated next to each other 20 YEARS later watching Elvis perform a selection from the same album. Life is funny, ain't it?

Once again "Alibi Factory" was the opener. It was marred slightly by sound problems (more on that later) but I was pretty tickled to hear it again because it was such a great opener the night before. I really didn't even consider that this would be the opener again, so it was a nice surprise in a backwards way.

The first variance from the Warfield show (other than slight sequencing changes) was "Girl's Talk," nicely done. The next addition was "Long Honeymoon." As with "ATUB" the night before, this one hit me from out of left field. A truly great performance, with spectacular keyboard work, of a song I thought I really didn't want to hear. I was wrong. Happily.

This time around I noticed that "Indoor

Fireworks" interestingly incorporated keyboards, which I guess I had missed the night before. A repeat of "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night" was a slight surprise, but welcome. I really like this one. It's pretty simple, but very good. Very pretty. Up next was another new one, presented by Elvis as a "world premiere at the Oakland Paramount." "When I Was Cruel" is another great one. Very passionate, great lyrics, great melody. This one really grabbed me at the moment.

The same three songs as the night before finished the main set. And all the encores were the same as well. The Mersey "EIWTB" is fun, and "Shallow Grave" really presents itself well in this format: a deceptively good song. After a strong "I Still Have That Other Girl" my mom turned to me and said, "His wife must just slap him when he comes off stage." Cracked me up.

Before I finish up I've got to vent a little here. The sound was bad from the first number and got merely acceptable as the evening progressed. This was not because of the venue or the sound system, it was THE MIX. What the fuck? This is two damn instruments here! I've often been appalled by some of the mixing at EC's shows in the past but I also often gave the benefit of the doubt. But there is no excuse here. (It wasn't much better at the first show.) I don't understand.

Also, I don't know if it's the type of microphone, or the EQ, or what, but Elvis's amplified voice is often coming across shrill and harsh, and not properly displaying the actually rich and pleasant aspects of his voice. C'mon boys, give the guy some support for Heaven's sake. (Thank you for your time. I feel better.)

To end the show, "CCIU" was once again tremendous. This performance of this one song fully vindicated me with my parents for my many years of admiration for this strange and wonderful artist. You all may laugh at this sentimental story. But in time. Thanks Dec. *Star-spotting: Tom Waits.*

What the critics said:

"Elvis Costello hasn't made a decent record since 1986. This is a widely held belief among critics and fans who've followed his career closely since 1977, the same people who stayed away from his sold-out show Thursday night at the Warfield in San Francisco. Instead, the seats were filled with misguided souls who wrest meaning out of Costello's more recent work - and there are plenty of them, judging by the response to his '90s repertoire." Denise Sullivan, *Contra Costa Times* (October 2)

October 2 Wiltern Theatre Los Angeles, CA

The only repeat venue performance from the first leg of the tour includes a rare "Suit of Lights." Heard during the sound check were "Such Unlikely Lovers" and Elvis fine-tuning

the yet-to-be-premiered "Suspect My Tears." **Andrew Sandoval reports:**

Approaching the Wiltern on Saturday night I was ticketless. Although I had been to every performance EC had ever given at this venue, my rationale was that I could maybe miss this second visit of the year to Los Angeles. The last show was all right, but EC's ticket prices and somewhat predictable stage patter had left me cold of late. With little time to spare, I happened upon a man with two tickets. "We just want face value for these," he said. "Basically, for me and my buddy it's the first five rows or nothing. We're going to see the show in New York. Tonight, we may go have sushi or see Squeeze instead." Could these guys be less into it than me? Was this a bad omen? Well I didn't ask and I bought these great seats (not in the first five rows) for a low, low price. I am happy to say it was really their loss, and almost mine, for the show was among the best intimate shows I've ever seen Costello give. Playing with a vitality and fervor not witnessed since the 1996 Attractions retirement tour, EC literally stormed through a mesmerizing set. Gone were his annoying winks and nods at every clever lyric. Put away were his constant hand gestures and raised eyebrows. Tonight it was just pure music.

The show went off without a hitch (aside from some keyboard malfunctions in the first few numbers), and better yet, this time out the Wiltern managed to have the PA mains on throughout the set (aside from the closing "CCIU")! New songs sat excitingly next to the older repertoire. One even felt the *PFM* material had a real charge. When the lights came up there were satisfied smiles all around. Lorenzo commented that this was the first time he had seen EC do "Suit of Lights" (how could that be?) and many gushed over the new song titles on the set lists. My belief in Costello's commitment to his songwriting and performance future was not only confirmed but also revitalized. *Star-spotting: Michael Keaton (actor), Bob Saget (TV-host and comedian), Jim Carrey (actor), Jamie Lee Curtis (actress) and hubby Nigel Tufnel (actor Christopher Guest), Thomas Gibson (from TV's Dharma & Greg) and Mayim Bialik (actress and avid BB-reader).*

October 4 House of Blues New Orleans, LA

"Outside in New Orleans..." Elvis treats the Crescent City to this leg's only playing of "American Without Tears."

Rozy Stevens reports:

I could almost taste the red beans and rice and beignets in the hot, humid air of the French Quarter in New Orleans. But alas, no time for culinary indulgence as my flight

arrived just in time for me to drop off my gear at the hotel and run down Decatur Street to the House of Blues.

After passing through three separate security checkpoints to get into the bar, I staked out a good standing spot on the floor in front of the small stage. A quick check showed audience capacity of about 1,000, one of the smallest venues on this tour. By 7:45, the tiered seating areas above were already filled with noisy concert goers who were obviously in party mode and the floor space up front was quickly getting cozy.

Elvis took the darkened stage a little after 8:00 and began with a riveting performance of "Alibi Factory," one of many new songs he performed on this leg of the tour, and an instant Costello classic! Singing it in the dark was a great way to focus the listeners' attention on the music and lyrics. Elvis then took us on a roller coaster ride through his songbook as the set list continued, alternating between rockers like "Chelsea" and crooners like "What's Her Name Today?."

"American Without Tears" was one of the evening's highlights, and tonight's performance was its only appearance on this leg of the USA tour. "Indoor Fireworks," a personal favorite, was given a new vocal twist. Elvis sang it with an obvious snarl, giving it a completely different feel. Two other new songs, "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night" (a gorgeous ballad) and "45," were also played tonight and have already been added to my favorites list.

The seated part of the crowd had been quite noisy for most of the evening, and Elvis kept looking up with a furrowed brow in a vain attempt to quiet them down. During the third encore, as he played "Almost Blue," they finally got the message after a chorus of loud SSSHHHHs by a handful of annoyed listeners. Shortly after, Elvis proceeded to deliver a particularly incredible performance of "I Want You." Sung literally "from a whisper to a scream," he alternated between breathy whispers of "I want you" right up against the microphone and unamplified screams of other lyrics. He finally finished with an anguished cry as he staggered away from the mic. A chilling interpretation, certainly the best I've ever heard live.

As if that wasn't enough, he treated us to a fourth encore of five songs, with another astonishing rendition of "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4" to complete a nearly perfect evening. *Star-spotting: John Goodman (actor).*

What the critics said:

"His voice never faltered as he rasped as the anguished romantic or crooned like a Tony Bennett-style balladeer. He wielded acoustic and electric guitars with the style and grace of a matador with a cape. Such was his intensity that he seemed to have difficulty occupying his hands

when they weren't strumming a guitar; he generally kept his left hand thrust in his pocket, and clasped his right to the microphone stand." Keith Spera, *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (October 8)

October 5

**Aerial Theatre
Houston, TX**

The Texas tour starts at this new downtown indoor Houston venue where "Suspect My Tears" gets its world debut.

Tom Friedrich reports:

The first Texas stop on the *Lonely World* tour could not have been a better experience for myself or the other 2,000-plus fans at the Aerial Theater. This hall is part of a relatively new entertainment venue in the theater district in downtown Houston. It is composed of a multi-screen movie theater, concert hall, and several distinct restaurants, each with its own personality.

I arrived at 7pm and having a Texas-sized appetite proceeded to dine at Harlon's BBQ. I highly recommend eating there before a concert as it is directly next door to the venue, has a small bar with TV sets, and serves excellent brisket. A perfect way to start the evening.

The entrance to Aerial Theater is unusual in that it is long and narrow and is actually to the side of the venue, not the front. Inside are several bars serving light food items and plenty of mixed drinks. The whole place had an art deco feel to it, very modern and stylistic. The souvenir stand offered two T-shirts at \$25 each, a polo shirt at \$40, a cap at \$25, and a mug for \$12.

The theater itself is very small and intimate, with a somewhat boxy appearance. The main floor seating was elevated and there were roughly 10 rows of seats in an arena level above that. Video screens were on either side of the stage, which greatly helped to focus on Elvis and Steve's facial expressions. The crowd itself was mostly in their 30s and 40s and was predominantly white. What is interesting is that the majority of men there could have passed for Elvis: short, balding hair, glasses, white, slim, etc.

The show began at 8:15 p.m. as there was no opening act. It had a most unusual beginning as just Elvis came out, strapped on an electric guitar, and sang the first song entirely in the dark. It was the first of many new or unfamiliar songs that would be heard throughout the evening, called "Alibi Factory." A very interesting way to begin a show, but very effective.

Steve Nieve then came out and they performed "Man Out of Time" to a warm reception. Elvis switched to an acoustic guitar, which he played for the majority of the show. Performance wise, this was an absolutely amazing show. He was very animated throughout the evening and hitting notes

higher than I've ever heard him sing before. The focus is back on the lyric and the original melody and I feel it's the best way to enjoy his music. Each song sounded fresh and new. The new songs came across very well in concert and were warmly received. It really is an ideal way to hear a new song, as it is much easier to concentrate on the lyrics without a fully amplified band. I may have some of their titles incorrect, which is one of the interesting things about hearing new music live for the first time: trying to figure out the song title. When introducing one song he said that it was the first time it was performed in Texas, in the USA, and in North America.

During "Temptation" Elvis noted a lot of empty seats right up front by the stage. Joking that they must have been bought by oil barons, he invited others to move over and fill the seats, which a lot of people did. I was able to get a much better seat myself, from the outside to the inside of the right floor section, nine rows back from the stage.

One gesture during the show that I really enjoyed was when Elvis stepped away from the microphone to sing. He would place one hand on the side of his face and kind of "tell" the words to the mike. Other times he would sing from three to four feet from the mike, sort of his own fadeout.

Songs from *Painted From Memory* came across exceptionally well with just Elvis and Steve. Stripped away from their lush arrangements on that album, the emphasis was returned to the wonderful lyrics and Elvis' amazing vocal range. It was easy to see why a song from the album won a Grammy after hearing it in this new context.

After 1hr and 20 minutes they left the stage for the first time, and it did seem rather sudden. However with three encores of 13 songs still to come, they left no one unsatisfied. I was really glad to hear such hidden gems as "Talking in the Dark," which featured some very physical piano playing from Steve, "Shabby Doll" and "Motel Matches."

The crowd was very well behaved during the show, listening intently to the songs and not shouting out too often. Toward the end of the show, there was this one particular man who had the appearance of drunk biker: long hair and beard, old T-shirt, beer in hand, etc. He had this annoying habit of waving a white handkerchief in the air in a circular motion, as if he were waving a plane in for landing. He was dead center and about five rows back, so unfortunately you couldn't miss him or his actions when looking at the stage. He did this throughout the encores, even during "I Want You." I'm sure he was distracting to Elvis but he didn't let it show.

During the encores, when the show would seem to be over, Elvis would point one finger

in the air and ask if we wanted one more. This happened several times during the encores as the show stretched longer and longer.

I'm not sure how this show compares to other shows in terms of length or songs, as I held off on reading reviews of other shows. I think it's more enjoyable to go to a show not knowing what is coming up next, like the majority of the crowd. Still, Elvis changes his set-list up quite a bit so I'm sure multiple shows are rewarding.

The last song, "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No.4" was sung completely unplugged, with no amplification on Steve's piano or microphone. The crowd fell silent as Elvis sang the song on the stage, moving from side to side so all could hear. It was very non-traditional and book-ended the unusual beginning of the concert. A perfect way to end the evening.

All in all, it was a magical evening from Elvis and Steve. One guy leaving the venue summed it up well when he said "it doesn't get much better than this." Truer words have never been spoken.

What the critics said:

"In recent years, rock performers have experimented with a number of formats to breathe new life into their tired old careers. Costello and Nieve deserve tremendous credit for finding one that works. While every band worth its greatest-hits album has gone unplugged in the '90s, few would be so bold as to go on the road with merely a piano and a guitar or two in tow." Brenda Gunter, *Houston Chronicle* (October 6)

October 7 The Backyard Austin, TX

The first of two noisy Texas outdoor venues to come was also the site of '94 and '96 Attractions' shows.

Tom Friedrich reports again:

The second Texas stop on the *Lonely World* tour took place in a small outdoor amphitheater that holds approximately 3,000 people. Situated under numerous large oak trees, the Backyard is an ideal place to see concerts, as it is located outside under the stars and has a very cozy feeling. The stage is open at the back, allowing a backdrop of many beautiful trees that are illuminated during the show.

However, this venue does have its drawbacks. For one, it is located way on the outskirts of the city and does not have paved parking, which causes a very dusty experience. Secondly, the place is notorious for talkative people, as most shows I've seen there have included an audience more intent on carrying out their conversations than on listening to the music being played. Sometimes it isn't so obvious, such as when a full band is playing electrically. But for a duo of performers playing mostly quiet music on guitar and piano only, the noise of the crowd is greatly

magnified.

This was a reserved seating show and was mostly full, with only a few scattered open seats toward the back. Again the show began at 8:15 p.m. without an opening act, which was good as the Backyard has a 10:30 weeknight curfew due to noise ordinances imposed by nearby neighbors. Both Elvis and Steve came out and they opened again with a new song, "Alibi Factory," completely in the dark. Since I knew this was the norm, it didn't surprise me, however I could tell a lot of people were wondering what the song was and why he was "Talking in the Dark." When "Man Out of Time" began, the spotlights appeared and formal applause ensued.

The show itself was very solid, with each song getting a warm reception. Highlights were many, including "Talking in the Dark," which showcased wonderful piano playing by Steve, and "Indoor Fireworks," again elevated by Steve's playing, this time very softly caressing the song on keyboard. Again they played five new, unrecorded songs in concert, which I feel really added to the show. It's no point going out and doing a greatest hits show, as those tend to make musicians feel obligated to sing just those songs. I applaud artists who take risks by performing material that the crowd won't know, which also gives them the chance to try new songs on for size. Each time he asked if we wanted to hear a new song the crowd responded affirmatively. Each one was given due applause, especially "45," with its clever lyrics highlighting a life's experiences, and "You Lie Sweetly," a short but sweet love song with a twist.

One pleasant experience I've had from these shows that I wasn't expecting came with the material from *Painted From Memory*. I think that is a very nice record but does tend to get bogged down in over-singing and perhaps too much orchestration. In concert, with these songs stripped to their bare essence, they became the highlights of the shows. It was amazing to see and hear Elvis hit notes higher and longer than he's ever done before. They truly are beautiful songs, with "What's Her Name Today?" and "God Give Me Strength" being worth the price of admission alone.

Unfortunately, the crowd was very noisy throughout the show, with a particularly loud group of women right behind us. They screamed very loudly and very often, making me wonder if I was at an Elvis Costello or Ricky Martin concert. People constantly milled about as well, getting drinks and making restroom trips. I'm guilty of some of that myself, with occasional comments between songs about how great Elvis sounded. The trick is to not disturb others around you when you do that, which most people don't comprehend. It's quite astounding to think

someone would spend \$40 on tickets to a concert and then proceed to carry on conversations during the whole show, as if what they had to say was so important it couldn't wait. Again, this wouldn't have been so obvious had it been an Attractions show, but with just the two of them it requires more concentration and quietness, which a lot of people weren't prepared to give.

Having said that, it was still a great show. I didn't enjoy it as much as Houston, probably due to the surrounding circumstances and the fact that I had just seen a terrific show. People stood up front during all of the encores, which made for about an hour of standing at the end. The show was a few songs shorter than the other night, with "Shabby Doll" and "Pump It Up" being noticeably missing.

When it came time for the last song, Elvis decided to not turn his microphone off so that the people at the back would be able to hear. The microphone at the piano was turned off and Elvis' was just turned way down. At one point he stepped away from it for a line or two and the magic of the unplugged version of "Couldn't Call It Unexpected" reemerged. But then it was right back to the mike for the rest of the song. It was still great, but not nearly as stunning as it was in Houston.

As I was leaving I met some fans in the parking lot that I recognized from the Houston show. We discussed the shows so far and the one they had seen in Minneapolis earlier this year. They felt that while some shows are indeed better than others, each one is a worthwhile experience. I couldn't agree more.

What the critics said:

"While other aging performers including Neil Young and Pete Townshend lean on their unplugged alter-egos like hobbled horses - "Cinnamon Girl" and "My Generation" were never meant to be played in a sit-down theater - the style suits Costello's music just fine." Chris Riemenschneider, *Austin American-Statesman* (October 9)

October 8 Starplex Amphitheater Dallas, TX

Elvis adds five songs to the set for a show performed under the most bizarre of circumstances.

Darren Courtney reports:

A "disconcerting" venue providing a wealth of distractions did not stop EC/SN from entertaining the small audience at the Starplex on this muggy night in October. Many of the press reviews have mentioned the questionable booking choice of a large outdoor shed for a two-person performance (this is also where EC and the Attractions played for the *Brutal Youth* tour). I would like to underscore this by painting a mental picture for you.

Imagine yourself at any big summertime outdoor concert from your past; crowds, bad parking, lousy acoustics, a long walk to your seat etc. Then have all of the people from the soundboard to the back of the lawn disappear. Then, just for laughs, set up one of the largest state fairs in the country to fill the sky behind the lawn (complete with the 2nd largest Ferris wheel in the world looming overhead, plenty of amusement park screaming, and yes, even audible farm animals).

This is what both EC and the audience had to deal with. Instead of opening in darkness, "Alibi Factory" was provided a second hand light show similar to a highway patrol car pursuit. The distant screaming of fair attendees added a most strange background vocal to "Indoor Fireworks." I don't even want to mention the cattle noises present during "I Want You." By the time a giant Texas cricket bounced off EC's forehead during "Inch by Inch" (appropriately enough right after the "miss me by a mile" lyric), this concert became a question of the ability of one vocalist to surmount such obstacles.

EC mentioned the "Fun Fair" set up for his benefit early in the show and, although the timing of the early songs suffered – especially "The Loved Ones" – gradually he made the audience forget the distractions. New songs such as "Suspect My Tears" and "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night" went over extremely well. The pacing of the encores and the surmounting number of songs played lent the show a length and depth that truly spoke to EC's ability to still provide for an audience.

To this long time fan, he seemed to actually enjoy the vocal difficulty of projecting the Bacharach numbers in such a difficult environment. Although "CCIU No. 4" was slightly amplified, one has to wonder...what other performer playing today would even attempt such a performance in this environment?

This was a show that managed to surmount impossible odds solely due to the talent of the two people on stage. This performance would have been one of the best I've seen if I had been at the Caravan of Dreams in Fort Worth, or at the Bronco Bowl in Dallas. However, murderous thoughts about booking agents aside, I remain greatly impressed by the commitment.

What the critics said:

"And if Mr. Costello's subtle two-man show wasn't already badly suited for Starplex's crank-it-up-to-11 acoustics, noise from the State Fair of Texas made matters even worse. The screams of fair goers on carnival rides ruined several soft ballads, and occasional flashing lights from one of the rides made it look like Mr. Costello was playing on the shoulder of Central Expressway. It's a major testament to Mr. Costello's talents that even with all those obstacles, he still put on a fairly bold and convincing show." Thor Christensen, *Dallas Morning-News* (October 9)

October 9

Midland Theatre
Kansas City, MO

EC returns to this Midwest town for the first time since a GCW show 15 years ago. The electrified "spaced-out" version of "Green Shirt" is heard for the first time.

Samual Schimek reports:

My wife, friends and I had the great fortune of obtaining front row (orchestra pit) tickets. This was my second time seeing the Man live but the first to see Steve since I had only seen Elvis solo during his *Spike* tour with Nick Lowe. My wife had never seen him live and had put up with my obsession for years but now seemed quite excited by the proximity of the event. The Midland Theatre offered everything a fan could hope for in a concert setting. The theatre is an incredibly beautiful venue complete with ornate gilded decor, red velvet curtains, box seats for the well-connected, good acoustics and the fine atmosphere that only an old vaudeville hall can provide.

We arrived and were the first to be escorted to our seats with plenty of time to view the road crew setting up and tuning guitars, placing Kleenex and hot tea, and even a brief appearance from Mr. Nieve to make sure his piano and keyboards were set correctly and working as he wanted. It was surprising to see the artist stroll out onto the stage. I think he expected that no one would recognize him and from the reaction of the crowd I think there was some merit to his supposition. While the temptations of a "Hey Steve!" lurked within me, I did not want to disturb his work/revelry/concentration/karma before the show. It seemed somewhat rude to do so.

The lights faded to black and out stepped Elvis and Steve in the dark. The only illumination was a red light on a backdrop shadowing and also outlining Elvis during his first offering, the new "Alibi Factory." The new song is a powerful opener and I expect to see it at the start of the next album. The crowd roared as the pair jumped into "Man Out of Time" at the conclusion of "Alibi Factory." It was perhaps a melodramatic start to an amazing night, but in keeping the audience in darkness they forced them to focus on the words of his new offering and listen.

The intimacy of the venue allowed the performers to shine and make use of many dramatic moments of pauses, looks to the audience, and each other as the duo played, but also played off of each other. Stand-out examples of this included "Little Triggers" and the Italian verse on "All this Useless Beauty."

Elvis came out for three encores and continued to dazzle the crowd with the simple playfulness of his *Austin Powers* rendition of "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" as well as

favorites like "Red Shoes," "Alison," "Almost Blue," "She," and "CCIU No. 4."

Elvis rarely paused to speak to the audience between numbers except to occasionally introduce a song or a little of the background of a song, but played a little bit with this during "God's Comic" by commenting on the recent Kansas School Board evolution decision. I won't spell it out but you can make your own connections to the monkeys. He seemed in a good mood, often commenting that it had been 15 years since he had last played Kansas City and that it shouldn't be that long before the next visit.

The crowd was also treated to new songs such as "45," "You Lie Sweetly," and "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night." They greeted the former with great enthusiasm while seeming reserved about the latter two. Elvis's voice was rich, powerful, and he was able to use it in ways that years of performance make possible - whispering softly some words, belting others, stepping away from the microphone to let his voice carry throughout the hall unamplified on the close of "I Want You." The naked voice at these times had an undescrivable quality that made it more vulnerable and emotive. The crowd loved every minute and was brought to its feet often.

Critics of Mr. Costello have written that his style has softened, but I would argue that he has become a more diverse, well-rounded performer, and by experiencing all kinds of music, he has opened himself up to many possibilities and directions for his career. Besides the words are still the iron fist in the velvet glove, packing the same punch that was always there, just refusing to announce themselves.

At the same time, even though his songs were stripped of a bass player and drummer (ala the Attractions), the songs and the performances were strong and offered another way of looking and listening to the music. Elvis should follow Joe Jackson's model and release a live album of only different arrangements of his songs instead of sounding "like the original records, sped up at bit, with a lot of echo added." To add to the debate over the final line of "CCIU No.4," Elvis quite clearly sang "I can't believe I'll EVER believe in anything again." which quite clearly closed the discussion over the meaning that night.

After the show Elvis and Steve met a crowd at the stage door and took the time to see everyone and sign anything that people offered from ticket stubs, hand bags, guitar straps, CD sleeves, etc. Elvis held a baby, hugged women, and posed for photographs. We loved the show so much, my wife and I bought tickets to drive to Chicago the next week to see him at the Arie Crown the following Friday night. Elvis and Steve are

consummate performers and it is likely that we won't be treated to anything of that caliber, until of course, they decide to visit us again. Hopefully it won't take 15 years to come back next time.

What the critics said:

"Saturday night, he and his brilliant accompanist, Steve Nieve, took on Costello's prodigious body of work with but a grand piano, keyboards and a few guitars at their disposal - a big risk, when you consider the post-punk nature of his greatest tunes. But a good song is a good song, whether there's a drummer in the house or not, so the pair had no trouble spinning most of Costello's material into lush chamber pop tunes." Timothy Finn, *Kansas City Star* (October 10)

October 11 American Theatre St. Louis, MO

As he would remark to the crowds in cities he had not visited in over a decade, Costello told the St. Louis audience that "there must have been an unfortunate crease in our road map."

Mark Easter reports:

The King of America Returns to the Heartland: After a fifteen-year absence, Elvis Costello made a rapturously received return to St. Louis, Missouri and the intimate confines of the American Theatre. While this may not seem like a huge deal (St. Louis is generally a concert tour staple), when one knows a bit more about the history of EC and St. Louis, it helps explain why the reaction was as ecstatic as it was.

The semi-short form of the explanation is that in 1979, while EC was touring behind *Armed Forces*, a local St. Louis radio station, KSHE, sponsored the show. This was despite the fact that the station never played an Elvis Costello record! Elvis got wind of this, was furious, and publicly denounced KSHE and declared that KADI (another station that was playing Costello, however infrequently) was the station to listen to. This infuriated the KSHE brass, who made it quite plain that there would no longer be a Costello record on the playlist; not that it mattered, since he was a nonentity on the station anyway! This was only the first salvo fired.

St. Louis has also not been known for attentive audiences, so the amount of chattering and getting up at most shows is excessive in general through the years. On future shows in St. Louis, Elvis got more and more fed up with the lack of attentiveness, and played his last show here on the *Goodbye Cruel World* tour in 1984. He cemented his hatred of the town on *Late Night with David Letterman* by stating without missing a beat that he couldn't stand playing there. I watched that night and thought, well, that's it! Imagine my (and many others') surprise when it was announced Elvis and Steve Nieve would at long last appear in St. Louis.

Well, it may sound hackneyed, but this was

truly a gift worth waiting for. EC was in fine spirits, even buoyant, making light of the fifteen-year hiatus, and playing a set which was among the best received I've seen in almost thirty years of attending concerts. Even the new, unfamiliar tunes were accepted warmly, which is truly an unusual occurrence in St. Louis! It was a brilliantly paced show, and I was quite surprised when Elvis did six encores (I expected him to do none, since that was his way back in the old days).

Some of the personal highlights of the set included an incredibly dynamic "Man Out of Time," an acoustic "Beyond Belief," and "I Still Have That Other Girl," which cut the *Painted From Memory* version to shreds. He promised he'd be back before another fifteen years passed; I hope he's not joking.

What the critics said:

"Nieve's playing was percussive and full of neoclassical flourishes, but some songs, like 'Pump It Up' and 'Watching the Detectives' lacked the power and volume a full band could provide. Costello seized the opportunity to enunciate, though, making plain the many subtleties of his acid-dipped lyrics." Daniel Durchholz, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (October 14)

October 12 Palace Theatre Louisville, KY



Photo by Mike Bodayle

Louisville falls into the 20-year category as EC's only prior gig here was a 1979 Armed Funk show. The surprising debut of "Burnt Sugar Is So Bitter" nearly knocks your editor out of his seat!

Rozy Stevens reports again:

I hadn't originally planned to go to Louisville, but I changed my mind pretty quickly when I checked Ticketmaster Online and found a front row seat available!

The Palace is another one of many old theaters that has been lovingly restored to its former glory. The ceiling is like a starlit sky just after sunset, and white birds suspended in flight look like they could glide down to perch on the edge of the stage at any moment. Spanish-style building facades along the walls added to the feeling of sitting in a courtyard on a warm summer night.

The 2,700-seat theater was apparently not a sellout. The back half of the balcony was all but empty. That didn't seem to bother Elvis

and Steve though, as they put on a fabulous show for the 2,000-plus fans in attendance. "Alibi Factory" opened the set once again from a darkened stage. This song showcases his voice quite well, but in a different sort of way than the *PFM* or *Juliet* songs do.

Early in the set, Elvis reminisced about how long it had been since he'd visited Louisville and broke into a verse of "Getting to Know You." Steve's piano work on "Talking in the Dark" was noticeably more subdued than it had been at a few of the earlier shows, but no less exciting. Tonight's set list was fairly similar to earlier shows, but the biggest surprise from the back catalog was "Blue Chair." I'd almost given up hope of ever hearing it live again. We were also treated to an increasingly rare (and lovely) performance of "All This Useless Beauty."

The highlight of the show had to be the world premiere of "Burnt Sugar Is So Bitter," a song Elvis introduced as "a King-Costello collaboration - Carole King, that is." The song is about a single mom and how her life has changed since the divorce. One of the memorable lines tells how "a woman can advance from a pretty picture hat to a supermarket trance."

An eerie, smoldering performance of "I Want You" was punctuated by several repetitions of the line "he pleases you" sung with chilling desperation. Those of us in the front row were given a great opportunity during "CCIU" to hear just how powerful his voice has become. Listening to him sing unamplified, literally an arms-length away, is an amazing and unforgettable experience.

For you trainspotters out there, two items at this show are worth mentioning. The first was an ad on the theater marquee for a future production called *Be Careful What You Pray For* (reminiscent of "Almost Ideal Eyes") and the second was a street musician outside after the show playing "My Favorite Things" (not by Julie Andrews!). Elvis was everywhere that day!

Editor's Note: *This was the first show I attended on this leg of the tour and was perhaps my favorite. The Palace was such a lovely venue and I guess that there is always something special about the first show you see on a tour.*

A funny anecdote: I made the 2½ hour drive up from Nashville on no set time schedule. I happened to get there about 6pm or so and found the parking garage right across the street from the theater. I walked out of the door of the garage, first seeing the theater in front of me and then noticing that my timing was such that as I opened the door I nearly walked right into Elvis! Lost for words I jokingly said "Are you playing here tonight?"

What the critics said:

"Without a band to hide mistakes, the pressure was on. Costello has become a fine guitarist and Nieve, who has been with Costello off and on for more than 20 years, was a joy, adding quiet support in some places and dropping bombs in others. At times you forgot he was there, a tribute to his taste and restraint." Jeffrey Lee Puckett, *Louisville Courier-Journal* (October 13)

October 13

**Park West
Chicago, IL**

Perhaps as an apology for "Fleadhing" his Chicago fans in June, Elvis offers up two shows this time, including this special club date. Without a doubt, this was the toughest ticket to come by on this leg of the tour.

Joyce Slavik reports:

When word first started coming out about Elvis playing the Park West in Chicago, excitement doesn't begin to explain my feelings. Panic over getting tickets was more like it. All year long, every time I stepped into the Park West, one of my first comments was, "I'd love to see Elvis play here." I missed the '96 show in this venue so this time I wanted to be ready! The venue is as intimate as it gets - a crowd of 700, tables literally butted up against the stage and the stage maybe 3-1/2' from the floor. Although the show did sell out, getting tickets didn't prove to be quite as difficult as I feared fortunately.

As it was a general admission show, I arrived at 1:30pm and was first in line. After a really fun (and cold!) time visiting with friends in line, we were let inside at about 6pm and I ended up within feet of EC's mike stand. I received my first taste of "Alibi Factory" as Elvis came out into darkness with the soon to be standard electric opener. Absolute chills. This song is still a favourite of mine. Elvis seemed to be very loose for the show and the crowd was appropriately respectful and participatory.

The set list wasn't overly unique for the tour but it was my first show of this leg and it was thoroughly enjoyable. *Spike* being a favourite album of mine, it was great to get great versions of "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror" and "Veronica." I've even come to love "Pads, Paws and Claws" in its live acoustic format. I'd heard about the new techno arrangement for "Green Shirt" and it was as outstanding as I'd been told.

And Steve seemed to be continually inventing sounds along the way with his "toys" as the tour progressed.

"I Want You" was especially phenomenal. It was wonderfully dead silent in the hall except for the annoying clinking of bottles by the wait staff. Stunning nonetheless. He could have done this one all night if you ask me! "Burnt Sugar Is So Bitter," the new song written with Carole King and debuted the night before showed up in the show as well. A harsh track and wonderfully effective. A couple other tracks that were real stand outs included "Beyond Belief" and "I Still Have That Other Girl."

After some encouragement by Elvis, we were standing by the last of the encores. The whole show was absolutely fantastic but the highlight had to be "CCIU No. 4." It was as perfect as I've heard it. I looked around at the faces of my friends nearby with the reddish light radiating their smiles. It was an incredible treat to hear nothing but EC's unamplified voice a few feet in front of me and the squeak of his shoes as he walked from side to side of the stage singing this now signature closer. Thirty-four songs, two hours 25 minutes and two broken guitar strings and it was over.

As soon as the show ended, I reached around and snatched up Elvis' set list. A priceless souvenir. After the show, the usual meet and greet took place in front of the venue. The street is within 10 or 11 feet of the front door so it was getting mighty crowded in front by the time Elvis and Steve came out.

Barriers were put up to try and give Elvis a bit of breathing space. Elvis and Steve were both completely gracious about posing for pictures, signing autographs and chatting.

I asked Elvis to pose for a picture with me and he sweetly grabbed hold of me and I ended up with the perfect shot (*see page 2*). I also had a nice little chat with Steve and got a terrific picture with him as well, even after a few technical difficulties with my camera! One young woman approached Elvis in tears because she had been unable to buy tickets. I was terribly impressed that he asked her to write down her name so that he could get her seats for the Arie Crown show a few nights later. (And, in fact, I did see her and a friend in the orchestra pit at Arie Crown, far from tears this time.) He even suspended all other chatting and autographing until the woman had completed writing her information down.

All in all, a truly memorable day! At the end of the show, he had promised many different songs for the upcoming Arie Crown as well as "surprises." And a different show it would be. *Star-spotting: Sammy Llanas (The Bodeans).*

What the critics said:

"Costello, who as usual has multiple projects in the works, offered a sampling of new material. None of these songs stood out - though it must be said it was difficult to make out the lyrics, even in this fan-friendly venue. Once celebrated for his wordplay (he may have been the first singer-songwriter to be tagged "the next Cole Porter"), he seems to have relaxed his fierce wit in the interest of telling character stories, including one about a housewife fancying a deliveryman. A collaboration with Carole King was disappointingly bland. Another new song,



Park West

Photo by Joyce Slavik

"45," which is about turning that age, was all thrust and parry." Lloyd Sachs, *Chicago Sun-Times* (October 14)

"In a way, Costello's voice is perfect for brooding, conversational ballads. His voice is brooding and conversational. It also trembles and breaks octaves if notes are held too long. So he was a natural. The vulnerability shadowed in songs like "What's Her Name Today?" was undeniably true." Mark Guarino, *Daily Herald* (October 14)

October 15 Arie Crown Theater Chicago, IL



Photo by Mike Bodayle

Lagging ticket sales create a "buy one get one free" offer in addition to a radio appearance by Elvis to promote the show. While on the air, he makes a boastful promise to not repeat any songs from the Park West show. The amazing set list includes the US premiere of "Lesson in Cruelty" (not heard since 1995's Meltdown), the world debut of "Couldn't You Keep That to Yourself" and an acoustic "Alibi Factory." A real show for the "diehards," this is perhaps the best show on this leg of the tour. However, EC does make a promise never to return to this cold, hollow, cavernous venue. In the weeks to come, Elton John would say the same.

Joyce Slavik reports again:

In spite of the horrible venue and a last ditch effort by the promoters to sell the show out by offering seats "two for one" the day of the show, Arie Crown turned out to be The Show of the tour in many ways if not the Elvis concert going year.

On the drive into the city, I listened to the interview on WXRT-FM. It turned out to be fairly interesting despite the deejay's obvious irritation that Elvis showed up well over an hour late and Elvis' own irritation at some of the initial questions. Elvis promised in the interview a much different show than the Park West appearance two nights earlier.

After I arrived and sussed out the venue, determining that there really was no convenient back stage door for the usual meet and greet, I somehow managed to end up backstage to hear most of the sound check. Elvis sounded great but was taking more time than normal it seemed. I was sure that none of the tracks we were being treated to ("Party Girl," "Baby Plays Around," "Blue Chair," "Brilliant Mistake") would make it into the show. As things turned out, this was more than

a sound check. It was a rehearsal!

The hall itself is inside McCormick Place, a big convention center. The balconies are well above the main floor and nowhere near the stage. A large pit orchestra with a wall separated the pit from the "first" row. The hall is larger and far less intimate than many of the venues EC had been playing. Despite the venue, this show felt very special right from the opening track, "The Loved Ones," instead of the regular opener, "Alibi Factory." Next up was a rousing version of "King Horse" complete with a delightfully frantic screamed out "Stop!" in the last verse.

After that, the track list continued to be more and more unusual. "Blue Chair," "Rocking Horse Road," an absolutely stunning and sympathetic "Party Girl" and a very slowed down "New Lace Sleeves." Finally after the seventh song, "This House Is Empty Now," Elvis chatted asking if anyone had been to the Park West show that week or Arie Crown 15 years ago during his first solo tour. He didn't seem particularly pleased with the venue itself and stated, "If it gets any colder in here, we'll all need thermal underwear . . . It's almost like the David Letterman show. I'm going to sing another song before it gets much colder."

He went through 13 songs before we finally had a repeat from the fantastic Park West show and then that was the new track, "45," which had been debuted rather unexpectedly on the *Tonight Show* on September 29. By my count, there were only 12 songs that were repeated between the two shows!

One highlight was hearing "Lesson in Cruelty" in its North American debut. "It's about a woman tearing up pictures that used to be precious to her and there's a man standing in the doorway looking at this who knows it's come the time where she's going to leave. It's up to you whether you think if that man is her father or her husband." A beautiful, slow

song marred only by a brief moment in which Elvis had to clear his throat.

Before launching into "Baby Plays Around," Elvis riled the crowd up by saying, "We've got all night, haven't we?" He then explained the song's genesis by amusingly saying, "I went out to buy a paper one day and

when I got back my wife had written this song. I just had to work out the accompaniment. Well, you know. What can you do?" He followed up "Baby Plays Around" with another new one being debuted for the first time, "Couldn't You Keep That to Yourself," explaining that it was a sort of answer song to "Baby Plays Around."

While introducing another new song, "When I Was Cruel," Elvis made an amusing and snide comment about the lazy reporting done following the Park West show and his joke that this song is about a woman fancying the deliveryman. This song being part of a story in progress, *The Deliveryman*. "Alibi Factory," normally done as the opener on the tour with reverb electric guitar, appeared midway and this time on acoustic. Still just as wonderfully biting and vicious.

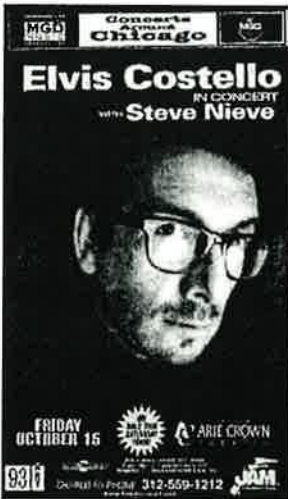
There was good audience participation throughout the evening but also many noisy and unruly moments in the middle of quiet spots unfortunately. Steve was outstanding as well on this show including the ragtime piano parts on "Mystery Dance," the techno/funked out "Green Shirt" and the piano abuse during "Detectives."

Elvis appeared to get distracted however as the crowd began getting jostled by the overly zealous security staff as they moved up toward the front of the venue. The security staff were shouting and using their flashlights to check tickets and direct people out of the aisles. Finally, at the end of a lovely version of "Shipbuilding," Elvis snarled, "I see we got rid of the alternative light show out there have we. Do what the fuck you want. We're not coming back here anyway" and then launched immediately into an "Accidents Will Happen." Ouch.

And then in the last encore, a surprise gem as we were treated to "O mistress mine." Just stunning and then finally the always mesmerizing, "CCIU No.4." Not quite sure how he sounded up high in the balcony but from the front row, he seemed to be filling up the room quite nicely.

An amazing memorable evening including meeting so many great people before and after the show (including BB's very own Mike Bodayle!). One regret after grabbing his set list - "Just About Glad" was listed but he didn't play it. I let him know before the next night's show in Indy to which he said "We played that last night." "Uh, no you didn't," I politely reminded him and was beyond thrilled when he included it in the solo set that night.

After the Arie Crown show, many of us hung out in the lobby waiting for the meet and greet. The stage door has no easy access and we were told that he might come out to the lobby. It didn't happen but that didn't dampen the high that we were all on from this great show!



October 16

**Murat Center
Indianapolis, IN**



Farr, Wilson & Bodayle

Well, I must admit that the pre-concert music of Donald Fagan's Kamakiriad was a surprise to us too! (I'll bet Bruce Thomas is smiling somewhere.) Twenty-one years in waiting, Indy is the chosen spot for the debut of EC's two songs for the Prison Song movie.

Bob Scheckenfelder reports:

Got a poster in our family room: Elvis Presley, 1956. The picture was taken in Miami. It's a classic. The guy is practically levitating on his tiptoes, guitar slung over the shoulder, he's clearly in a zone. The Elvis that came to Indiana on a sunny October day had to be seen to be believed. Maybe a poor choice of words since the first song is done with the singer in the dark. A new song, "Alibi Factory," to boot. It has a bit of an edge to it. It's going to be a great night!

The man just seemed happy to be here. He admitted that it had been since 1978 since he came to Indy. I walked pigeon-toed for days. At first, the attraction (excuse the expression) was the attitude. A generation later, I realize the man can write a song better than anyone alive now.

With a stage as bare as the Waltons' kitchen, Elvis's song writing and chemistry with Steve Nieve have no place to hide. "Girls Talk" sounds right in place with "Toledo." It went that way for 150 minutes of pure Napoleon Dynamite.

The recently revamped Shriner palace was the site of a Costello premiere. He's working on a movie soundtrack, as well as appearing in a role. The movie is called *Prison Song*. Anyhoo, he did two songs from it - first time ever in concert. He also mentioned a new music project involving lonely ladies and the fantasies they have spurred by a delivery man. He did one of the songs from that project as well. Although the ballads and new songs were politely received, there's nothing like "Watching the Detectives" or "Red Shoes" for getting the crowd on their feet.

Steve Nieve was hell on keyboards tonight. He can add flourish when the dynamics require or can be transparent for the quieter stuff. The version of "Green Shirt" was especially memorable. He and Elvis really

have the chemistry. The chemistry of Elvis extends to his audience. He had people singing along in the gaps, holding their breath in the quiet parts, and on their feet for most of the encores. I have seen several shows in the past years, this is about as good as it gets. Hope he comes back sooner than 20 years.

What the critics said:

"The 2,000 attendees of Elvis Costello's performance Saturday night were in the presence of greatness, unclouded by hype of oversaturated celebrity," David Lindquist, *The Indianapolis Star* (October 17)

October 17

**State Theater
Detroit, MI**

Along with LA and Philly, the Motor City area was also visited on the first part of the tour. Set list includes six of the new songs.

Matthew Cunningham reports:

The dramatic opening of the State Theater concert by Elvis Costello and Steve Nieve set the tone for the evening's performance. Appearing in a spotlight on an otherwise-darkened stage, Mr. Costello opened this show, as he had at the other venues he has visited on the *Lonely World* tour - Part II, with an electrifying performance of "Alibi Factory," an up-tempo (and as yet unpublished) tune whose disparate lyrics are unified by an exculpatory theme, with alibis for every sort of situation rolling forth as though on an assembly line.

No excuses were offered beyond the intro,

and none were needed, as Costello & Nieve turned in efforts that were nothing short of superb. Parading with minimal patter through a host of catalogue classics from the late 1970s / early 1980s, the current renditions of "Man Out of Time" (furious fingerwork by Steve), "Talking in The Dark" (ditto), "King Horse," "Little Triggers," and "Party Girl" underscored the length of their relationship while highlighting the performance skills this duo has mastered.

The trip down memory lane ended abruptly with a fast forward to "What's Her Name Today?," a selection from Costello's collaborative opus with Burt Bacharach. Foregoing the guitar for this passionate ballad, and backed by subdued chords from Steve Nieve, Elvis displayed a tremendous vocal range that has improved noticeably with every tour dating back to the limited appearances with the Brodsky Quartet in 1993.

From there, Our Beloved Entertainer kept the crowd guessing, skipping from the old tried-and-true tunes like "(I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea" which was delivered in a swift and minimalist fashion, "Shabby Doll" and "Temptation," to new songs that included two ("Oh Well" and "Soul for Hire") from an upcoming cinematic project with the rapper, Q-Tip, a nod to the interwoven histories of The Imposter and rock'n'roll ("45"), a song from a musical in the works known only as *The Deliveryman* ("I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night"), and the "just-for-Detroit-

Union Federal Bank **star** series

THE MURAT CENTRE

an intimate evening with

Elvis Costello

IN CONCERT

WITH **Steve Nieve**

Exclusive Indiana appearance!

THE LONELY WORLD TOUR

in stores now

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 16 • 8PM
MURAT THEATRE

ON SALE NOW!

only debut" of "Burnt Sugar is So Bitter."

Costello's comfort with his profession is quite apparent these days, in contrast with the days when he refused to perform longer than 45 minutes, modestly offering (heh-heh) that he was not worthy. The Man is a maestro, whether he is interrupting himself to explain a curious phrase to the crowd (as with "God's Comic"), restarting a tune because of lighting ineptitude (as with "Oh Well"), evoking emotional responses of longing (as with "Almost Blue" and "I Want You"), giving the people what they want (i.e., "Alison," "Red Shoes," "Pump It Up," "Everyday I Write the Book," "Veronica," etc.), or just plain leading a sing-along (as with "Radio Sweetheart/Jackie Wilson Said" and "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No.4").

Not to be outdone by the showmanship of their stage performance last night, both Mr. Costello and Mr. Nieve proved that they know how to satisfy fans after the show as well. Lined up post-show with approximately 20 other devotees, my wife, Linda, and I had the utter pleasure of greeting and meeting both musicians by the stage door. Armed with autographables and a 35-mm camera, we were able to query Steve as to the progress of *Parasite* ("It's coming along nicely."), and Elvis with respect to his appreciation of Costello caricatures ("Depends."), before Paddy swept them into the wagon ('er, limo). All in all, a fantastic show (except for that guy in front of us who insisted on singing along - horribly- with "Almost Blue")!

October 19

**Tilles Center
Brookville, NY**



Photo by Tony Sacchetti

A return to CW Post College, the site of a famous 1978 FM broadcast and a 1989 Spike solo show. Many empty seats as for some reason the show was not well-publicized. The "techno" version of "Clubland" is played for the first time.

John Ottaviano reports:

With great anticipation, my wife, Marjie, and I headed to tony Brookville, smack in the middle of Long Island's Gold Coast. We were on our way to the CW Post (as in Post cereals) campus, home of the marvelous Tilles Center concert hall. More likely to host the

Philharmonic than an old pub singer, it was a wonderful, low-key atmosphere in which to see EC. The crowd seemed pretty mature, even by the usual standards, but there was a great sense of pre-show anticipation. This was surprising considering that this show was one of the best kept secrets on Long Island, with little or no promotion.

We had great seats (4th row) in the 2/3 full hall, with about 1,500 in attendance. It felt very cozy, with a small, warm stage, and subtle lighting to help with the atmosphere. The crowd, which started the evening very appreciative and reverential, would change substantially as the night progressed. It was like a special performance for the EC fan club, as the broad-ranging set was uniformly well received and the crowd grew more and more joyous and spontaneous.

The night started dark and loud, with Elvis playing electric guitar in the dark on the new song "Alibi Factory." He and Steve rocked the house with their little two-man band. This segued into a beautifully melodic "Man Out of Time," a personal fave and a show highlight as well, with an orchestral piano turn by Steve Nieve. They also played "Beyond Belief," somewhat rare on this tour and my ultimate EC song (my daughter's name Geneva comes from this tune). It had a Sergio Leone spaghetti-western feel, with a dark, rolling acoustic guitar. It finished up not rolling but rollicking.

Other highlights: a rare, honky-tonk version of "Motel Matches," a peppy "Blue Chair" (which sounded like it could have been co-written by McCartney) with special blue lighting effects, a rave-up "Girls Talk" which turned into a sing-a-long, a touching and aching "Indoor Fireworks" which truly validated the 2-man format; and my first live exposure to "45," a soon-to-be-classic.

When he played "Radio Sweetheart/Jackie Wilson" with its call and response choruses, I realized how closely the audience resembled a crowd at a *Rocky Horror* screening, as they answered on cue to all his familiar tunes and gestures. "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror" was easily his most heartfelt vocal, and a curiously popular sing-along.

His first (of five) encores was surprisingly "Clubland," not the first song you think of in an acoustic vein. It was the first time it was played on the current tour. Steve gave it a bossa nova beat, with the help of a synthesized drum machine background (new toys for Steve?). It featured a flubbed line (intentional?), a false ending, and a screaming Fender guitar solo. Easily the best live version of this classic I have ever heard.

EC called the audience forward for the second encore and the seats went unused after that. Even more surprising is the 4th encore's techno version of "Green Shirt" featuring

Steve's synth, and a stirring solo from EC, with a very German-industrial vibe. Easily the best jam of the night.

As the fifth encore came and Elvis sang "God Give Me Strength" I truly saw how much FUN he was having on this evening and how much he enjoyed the adoration and adulation from the crowd as well as his ability to play us like a violin. He rewarded our raucous and reverent behavior by keeping the patter minimal (except when introducing the six new songs he played) and performing a whopping 39 songs in all (a tour record!). He was extremely theatrical and yet thoroughly engrossed in the music.

As the show ended with the expected "CCIU," I saw a man in stronger voice than ever putting the finishing touches on the best show I have ever seen him perform. The crowd must have felt the same, as you could hear a pin-drop while he sang this sans amplification. Before he and Steve disembarked, Elvis exchanged hand shakes and high fives with the entire first row, like a triumphant athlete. It was a beautiful performance by both artist and audience, surely one of the finest nights of the *Lonely World* tour.

October 21

**Orpheum Theatre
Boston, MA**



Photo by Tony Sacchetti

Pre-show music includes Macca's new Run, Devil Run. The site of several great Costello shows in the past dating back to 1978.

Steve Gatchell reports:

You don't fall asleep on the subway, nor under any circumstances, do you pee into the wind. Transversely, you have to read *The Old Man and The Sea* once a year, watch a baby sleep, and see Elvis Costello and Steve Nieve in concert.

The duo played to a nearly sold-out flock at Boston's cherished Orpheum Theatre, playing five fresh songs, and bringing the crowd to its feet several times with beloved favorites. Elvis validated his versatility and enduring aptitude throughout the 30-song-set as he teased the crowd with fancied ditties like "Man Out of Time," "Veronica," and "Red Shoes." He goaded his audience like a child retaining a spider as the magnifying glass

burns the sunlight hotter and more intensely upon his prey.

As the gathering begged for more, Elvis returned for four encores to needle the crowd into a heightened furor. Let us not forget the ivory tickling Steve Nieve, his energetic keyboard playing on the "Talking in The Dark" - "Little Triggers" - "Motel Matches" combination was worth the cost of entry. For this was not solely Elvis, but joined by an accompanist who can turn a quiet, sun-drenched day into a thundering, torrential downpour within seconds.

The new songs, "Alibi Factory," "You Lie Sweetly," "Suspect My Tears," "45," and "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night" once again confirmed that this chap is not out of time, but he continues to compose meritorious melodies for as long as time will allow. Although the crowd was terribly immature and infantile at times, Elvis and Steve rose above the chaos and distractions, and performed with raw vigor and force, for they possess the genius to put on the greatest display pop music can generate.

What the critics said:

"That Costello ultimately performed 30 of his classic, lyrically dense, beautifully crafted pop rock songs in a two and a half hour set without flubbing a line, proved that memory is clearly not a problem for him. And even if it was, the adoring crowd was there to help him along with every word, from every facet of his 22-year career from angry young man to mature cocktail crooner." Sarah Rodman, *Boston Herald* (October 22)

October 22 Sony/Blockbuster Music Entertainment Center Camden, NJ

Philly area show is on the eve of Elvis filming for Prison Song the next morning. "After the Fall" gets its first C&N treatment and "Favourite Hour" ends the night in place of "CCIU."

Peter Fey reports:

Is He Not the Man? He is Di-va: Toward the end of his five encores, Elvis Costello took a moment to gather three bunches of flowers left for him at the edge of the stage. Cradling the offerings in both arms, he grinned and asked "Who's a Diva now, then?" The question earned a good laugh and a raucous response. Not one of those '90s ladies claiming that appellation even approach this man's virtuosity.

A shadowy Elvis immediately commanded the crowd's attention with a dramatic entrance. His darkened-stage performance of "Alibi Factory" evolved into an energetic, bright reading of "Man Out of Time," and the stage was literally set for one of those anything-can-happen EC shows. Sure enough, the set list would be more of a guideline than a rule.

Perhaps inspired by a knowledgeable and

responsive audience, the show at the cavernous E-Center ended up being a two-and-a-half-hour tour-de-force of favorites, five new songs, and even a couple of tunes that haven't often been held up to the footlights. The set was 19 songs; the five encores brought another 14. Notable surprises included the long-buried "After the Fall," which he delivered as if it were released yesterday, and a wild, electric Napoleonic Beatbox rendition of "Clubland." Nothing was as surprising, however, or as moving, as the grand finale...

Early on, Elvis' voice sounded slightly the worse for wear, but only slightly. And when he announced that he had to be on the set at 7am the next morning for his dual roles in the upcoming film *Prison Song*, we wondered if we were in for what would have been an understandably abbreviated show. But this was not to be. The crowd was invited to come closer and fill in the 15-foot gap between the first row and the stage, and from then Elvis's voice strengthened as the night progressed. I've experienced this before, most notably at one of the 1994 Shepherd's Bush shows. Elvis' vocal resilience never ceases to amaze.

The two new film songs, "Oh Well" and "Soul for Hire," were also well-received although decidedly more somber than the usual melancholy fare. Elvis had introduced but not identified the songs; when he had finished someone in the crowd called out for their names. The audience was at times quite vocal but always respectful. And when a small group held up a sign saying "Please Write the Book," he obliged them.



Camden

Photo by Mitch Weinstein

Elvis asked if anyone had been present at his June 25 concert at Upper Darby's venerable Tower Theater. Many had, of course. He then offered an elaborate toast of thanks "to all my friends in Philadelphia and Camden County." To show his appreciation, Elvis made sure the set list was significantly different from that momentous three-hour summer tour finale.

The Camden venue is akin to summer sheds such as the Merriwether Post Pavilion. This was the first visit there for EC, and, this night, the lawn section was sealed off by ugly retractable doors, and the right third of the hall was rendered unusable by black drapes. Hardly inspiring by a performer's - or an audience's - standards. Even Elvis made an "airport hangar" remark at one point, echoing sentiments that many in attendance voiced prior to the show.

As encore after encore brought the duo back to even greater audience appreciation, Mr. Nieve's amused looks into the wings seemed to ask the crew "what's he doing?"

Steve, too, was having a good time and, as usual, delivering an equally spectacular performance.

Departing from the "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4" show-closer, Elvis leaned over and whispered to Steve, who had already gathered up his voluminous chart book. He quickly put it back down and flipped through it, searching desperately. "We're gonna do one I don't think we've ended with before," said Elvis as he began "Favourite Hour." Singing most of the song on mike, he stepped around from behind it and sang the last verse and chorus without amplification to a spellbound hall. More impressive even than the only other time I'd heard that song live: at the Royal Albert Hall, with Steve playing the magnificent organ there.

October 24

**Beacon Theatre
New York, NY**



Photo by Tony Sacchetti

Back to the Beacon for the only two-night stand on this part of the tour. "Dirty Rotten Shame" was heard at the sound check.

Jeffrey Cohn reports:

In one of New York City's classiest concert theaters, Elvis gave a passionate but ultimately unsatisfying show which showcased his tremendous breadth as a songwriter. On a night where the typical New York Elvis fan's attention was divided between the Imposter and the Yankees-Braves World Series Game Two (a television tuned to the game played in the lobby throughout the show), Elvis performed each song well but the show never built any momentum and merely left the concertgoer impressed by the several gems in the vast mine of songs Elvis performed (a generous 35 songs).

Elvis took the stage shrouded in darkness at 8:30 p.m. and played the first song, a new one called "Alibi Factory," without any spotlight. The song kicked like a rocker with Elvis wailing on guitar. It would prove to be one of the highlights of the show. Then the spotlight came on to show Elvis nattily attired in dark button-down shirt open at the neck with dark suit or sport-jacket and slacks and highly-shined leather shoes. Steve Nieve was all shaggy hair and glasses, sitting at a bank of several keyboard instruments.

The strong opening was consolidated by the rapid-fire succession of "Talking in the Dark," complete with crowd singalong, "Little Triggers" and "Motel Matches." All the latter were faithfully performed and Elvis was in fine, powerful voice. Things slowed down however, with the keyboard and guitar version of "What's Her Name Today?" from *Painted From Memory*. Although a fine song, the spare guitar and piano arrangement felt turgid compared to the album version and the sterling live version Elvis delivered almost exactly one year ago in New York's Radio City Music Hall backed by Burt Bacharach and his orchestra. The lyric of the song, which like the rest of *Painted From Memory* is the ultimate evolution of the Cole Porter-George Gershwin sophisticated lounge-singer style lyric, felt soft in the middle of all that bile which came before.

The bile was back as Elvis strummed "Temptation," but he slowed the tempo of the song and demonstrated his crooner style of singing, loud and true, which was at odds with the melody of the tune. It's not that Elvis obliterated the melody of the song Dylan-style. It's just that the bouncy bass-line from the original is difficult to forget or better. A forgettable new one, "You Lie Sweetly," followed and the concert hit its low-point with a disappointing, "(I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea," with Naive playing the distinctive lead melody on keyboard and the whole thing coming off like a bad Elvis covers duo.

Things picked up again with the faithfully performed beauty "Suit of Lights" and two new ones from a movie in which Elvis plays two characters: a teacher and a lawyer. The latter two songs, Elvis explained, were written with lyrics which seem to serve as the characters' dialogue in the movie, almost Broadway-play style. The songs were strong, and showed off yet another talent of this song writing machine. Elvis also explained that he had spent the two days prior to this show filming the movie in New York and Philadelphia and that the plot concerns a boy (taught by Elvis) who gets into trouble with the law and is later sent to jail for 15 years (represented by Elvis as an ineffective lawyer).

Entertaining-but-unremarkable versions of "Girls Talk" and "Indoor Fireworks" led into another strong new one, "45," which Elvis introduced by stating it was "about numbers, and one particular number seems to keep coming up." A serviceable "Pads, Paws and Claws" gave way to the evening's shocking highlight, a stunning, deeply-felt crooning of "After the Fall" from the reviled *Mighty Like a Rose*. This was one tune where Elvis' Sinatra-style crooning turned a song which had heretofore been pathetic goop into a heart-wrencher.

After that high, the momentum tapered off, slowly though, with fine versions of: 1) another new one; 2) Radio Sweetheart with by-now-familiar quotes from "Reet Petite" and "Jackie Wilson Said"; 3) "Alison"; and 4) "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror." The new song in the latter sequence came from a new song-cycle Elvis stated he was constructing, perhaps for someone else to sing, about three women's life experiences. "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror" sent Elvis out on a down note, as Nieve's keyboards were no match for other live versions of the song featuring the glorious pounding of Larry Knechtel. However, Nieve was excellent throughout the rest of the show save for the occasional overelaborate fill.

The encores began with Elvis plugging in the Jazzmaster for the first time since the show opener for a reggae-inflected "Clubland." This song also featured the first obviously taped bits of the night. There were other encores to come but by this time David Cone of the Yankees was in the sixth inning of a no-hitter and this writer could not help joining the growing trickle of people who exited the show to watch the end of the game. One final note, this writer's mixed feelings about the show did not seem to be shared by Elvis' rabid New York faithful, who, as with previous Elvis appearances in New York, indiscriminately cheered their Sherpa's every gesture. *Star-spotting: Ruben Blades.*

October 25

**Beacon Theatre
New York, NY**

The second night in NYC includes a guest spot by bassist Greg Cohen for four songs. Contrary to what fans expected, not a full-fledged "B-show" as in Chicago.

Chip Rollinson reports:

Living in the New York area, it seems that my cravings to see live Elvis are satisfied about every six months in one form or another. Perhaps I've been spoiled. Don't get me wrong, Monday's show at the Beacon was excellent. Elvis delivered each song with tremendous emotion and the audience was very into it. However, I was disappointed after the show. How could this be?

Well, because I saw almost the same show the night before. Like many other fans at Monday's show, I was expecting a "B-show" much like the one played in Chicago earlier this month. In Chicago, only 12 songs were played both nights. Of the 35 songs played Monday, 20 were repeats from the night before.

Was it worth the \$85 orchestra ticket? Yes, indeed. However, I would like to warn people about buying tickets from Ticketmaster online. I bought a single ticket for this Monday show five minutes after tickets went

on sale and I ended up in the very last row of the floor whereas tickets bought from outlets hours later were much better. I'd also like to thank BB's Dave Farr who had an extra ticket and upgraded me to Row N. I digress . . .

From the opening "Alibi Factory" performed without lights to the closing "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4" performed without mikes, every song was played with tremendous emotion. I'm always amazed how Elvis can make even his staple songs sound fresh. For this reason, "Watching the Detectives" and even "Alison" never fail to disappoint me.

One highlight was having Greg Cohen join Elvis and Steve on a stand up bass for four numbers, "Almost Blue," "Toledo," "Painted From Memory," and "45" (which keeps getting better each time Elvis plays it. Greg's bass gave the song much more dimension and a lot more kick). Greg, who had just arrived in from Frankfurt, played bass on the *Painted From Memory* album (and on "My Mood Swings"). Another highlight was hearing one of my favorites "The Loved Ones," a song that was pulled from the forgotten bin at the Beacon in 1996. Halfway through the song, Elvis broke a string and switched guitars without missing a beat. Great stuff.

After the show, many fans waited by the stage door for a chance to meet Elvis and maybe get one or two things signed. Elvis, once again, did not disappoint. He climbed into the limo only after everyone had gotten their photo and signature requests satisfied. One woman told Elvis, "Someone was grabbing my ass" during the show. Elvis responded by saying, "That's what happens at shows like mine . . . it wasn't during that 'Clubland' was it?" Don't forget, Elvis did play Woodstock 99 this summer. *Star-spotting: Steven Buscemi (actor).*

What the critics said:

"Always fond of tricky melodies, Costello has recently become downright divalike, favoring tunes that force him to emulate Tom Jones, if not Luciano Pavarotti. These endeavors have sometimes strained him, but he was in top form at the Beacon, easily scaling the expressive heights of songs like 'God Give Me Strength.'" Ann Powers, *New York Times* (October 27)

"It was a sign of the singer's vibrancy that over a dozen songs came from the last three years - and yet the show had the feeling of a big crowd pleaser, with nary a hit left unsung." Jim Windolf, *The New York Observer* (November 11)

October 27 Ryman Auditorium Nashville, TN

The "Mother Church of Country Music" is the site of some of the tour's biggest surprises: the debut of another song from The Deliveryman ("Heart-Shaped Bruise") as well as Elvis taking a few moments to read some of the

related story he is writing. Yes, he actually pulled out a scrap of paper and read to us! Also, two songs with a Nashville connection are heard for the only time on the tour ("Stranger in the House" and "That Day Is Done"). "Hidden Shame" was on the set list but was not played.

Dave Weil reports:

There are cities that Elvis Costello seems to favor with his song selection - Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia come to mind. Well, you can add Nashville to that list.

In 1979, he debuted on the Nashville stage with a Hank Williams Sr. song. In 1981, he played Langford Auditorium at Vanderbilt and performed a 30-minute straight country set with John McFee as special guest on pedal steel. In 1981, he returned to grace Nashville with one of only three of the *Almost Blue* shows in the States. In 1996, he opened the *ATUB* tour at the Ryman Auditorium (the original Grand Ole Opry, recently restored) and had The Fairfield Four open for him, at the end of which he came out and sang "That Day Is Done" with them. In February 1997, Ricky Skaggs invited him on the stage of the Ryman to perform on a tribute to George Jones for television. And in October 1997, he returned to perform at Caffè Milano for a tribute to The Fairfield Four, where he performed four songs in addition to joining all of the other performers for the encore.

Well, the recent show at the Ryman was no exception. Nashville was blessed with four unique "events." The most unique of those was a dramatic reading from his current project *The Deliveryman* which he followed with the world premiere of a song that he had finished during sound check that very afternoon called "Heart-Shaped Bruise," the melody of which reminds one of "Cold Cold Heart" by Hank Sr. In addition, the rumor was that The Fairfield Four was going to join him for "That Day Is Done," but unfortunately, James Hill, the mentor of the group, had recently lost his wife and was in ill health. So, we were treated to an emotional reading of the song, the last verse of which was sung off-mike stage right. The other unique event was a rendition of "Stranger in The House."

Elvis was obviously inspired to once again sing on the hallowed stage of the Ryman, and used the hall to great effect. He sang off mike more often than usual and he was treated with a respectful (and sometimes a bit too reticent) crowd. The energy level of several songs was amplified over other versions elsewhere. "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror" was done at a sprightly pace for instance.

I would be remiss not to mention the new opener, "Alibi Factory." This song, with its urgency and cutting lyrics, signals a return to the incisive Elvis of old. Played on his

trademark Jazzmaster and performed with minimal lighting, the effect was electrifying.

Here's a little bit of advice. If you want to assure yourself of a show above and beyond the ordinary, you'll catch Elvis whenever he plays Nashville. Even if it is on a Wednesday, as it was this time. Those who were able to juggle their schedules were treated to one of the top three shows of this leg of the tour. No question.

What the critics said:

"If the Ryman Auditorium called to report that Elvis Costello was still on stage when the newspapers hit lawns this morning, it would almost be believable. Weaving a large amount of humor and self-deprecation into his banter, Costello threaded more than 30 songs across a set last night that stretched more than two hours and 20 minutes, with no intermissions. Relying only on his voice, a guitar and the talents of keyboard player Steve Nieve, he still managed to grace that set with an amazing amount of variety, some of it inherent in the songs, some by reinventing the original versions." Tom Roland, *The Tennessean* (October 28)

"Elvis Costello has left the Ryman, but at his astonishing show he gave the city a gift: a stunning new song he'd finished that afternoon, which he played for the very first time on the Ryman's stage. Called "Heart-Shaped Bruise," it's apparently part of a song cycle called *The Delivery Man*, but it stands alone - no exaggeration, it's the prettiest country ballad we've heard in Nashville all year, maybe longer." Jim Ridley, *Nashville Scene* (November 11)

October 28 The Tabernacle Atlanta, GA

Here's what one local resident had to say in a letter to the local newspaper: "Why do bonehead Atlanta yuppies pay \$30 for a concert ticket and then talk loudly to each other and into their cell phones all night? Stay home and do that, and let us real music fans enjoy Elvis Costello." EC's crowd-combative version of "I Want You" at this show is already legendary.

Bruce White reports:

The crowd assembled at Atlanta's Tabernacle venue was hungry for an Elvis show. His last performance in the area was in 1994 with the Attractions at Chastain Park, Atlanta's subscription series outdoor amphitheater, known for its inattentive, chattering audiences. At that time, Chastain Park's suburban setting required the band to play at low volume, generating even lower energy as Elvis and the Attractions tried in vain to generate excitement in an audience that primarily consisted of yuppies on cell phones cutting real estate deals.

Not so at the three-story Tabernacle, a historic Baptist church in the middle of downtown Atlanta, renovated initially into a House of Blues during the '96 Olympics, only to close and reopen a few years later as The Tabernacle. On October 28, The Tabernacle served as the site of Atlanta's redemption in

the Church of Elvis as an Elvis-hungry crowd roared approval at every occasion the concert offered - and there were many.

No lights came up as Elvis strode on stage at 8:20 p.m.. Amid a wild ovation from the sold out crowd, distorted electric guitar erupted out of the darkness as Elvis aggressively spat out the new tune "Alibi Factory." He proceeded to take the crowd through a dizzying combination of new tunes and old favorites, all well received by the mixed crowd of pierced young and gray-haired older fans alike.

Introduced playfully as "Il Maestro," Steve Nieve kept one eye on Elvis most of the evening like a cat stalking a play toy, poised to react in whichever direction Elvis felt like going. New songs like "45," "You Lie Sweetly," "Suspect My Tears" and "I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night," were well received by the crowd. Warm applause welcomed more obscure concert selections from EC's canon, like "Shabby Doll," "Pads, Paws and Claws," "Just About Glad" and "Radio Sweetheart."

Elvis seemed restrained most of the evening, offering little commentary between songs, creating the impression that perhaps the audience connected with him more than he connected with the audience. But that stern visage would often break into an occasional grin, most often when Elvis turned to Steve to offer direction with the flip of his hand or the stamp of his foot, in recognition of a loud ovation. A playful point to a guitar, holding up an index finger to suggest he'll play one more song, and the occasional grin to those lining the front of the stage lent an air of intimacy to the proceedings.

The duo created a surprisingly full sound despite the limitations of their numbers. Steve added color to the songs with several new instruments, alternating loud, resonant chords with delicate runs up and down the keyboard. Many of Elvis' more recent works like "What's Her Name Today?" and his cover of his buddy Burt's "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" were well received, but the crowd was clearly reserving its enthusiasm for the hits from his angry-young-man days. Many times the audience joined in the proceedings, spontaneously supplying rhythmic clapping where the rat-a-tat-tat snare would have been in a pulsating and vaguely menacing rework of "Green Shirt," or providing backing vocals to "Red Shoes" and EC's dynamic cover of "Jackie Wilson Said."

All too soon, the opening hour-and-a-half set was followed by a series of five encores spread over 45 minutes. The first encore consisted solely of a blazing version of "Clubland" reinforced with a Latin-tinged rhythmic backing track that, for the first time that evening, recalled the energy of Costello's

performances with the Attractions. Other encore highlights included a fiery and distorted "Shallow Grave," and a stark and moody "Watching the Detectives."

The crowd was caught off guard by unexpected delights like an intimate reading of "Almost Blue" and darkly passionate "I Want You," the latter's quiet intervals marred by drunken calls from the crowd. Elvis reacted by stalking off stage as soon as the song was over, seemingly dismissing the crowd with one hand as if to say, "That's it." But he returned minutes later to catch fire with a one-two-three-four nonstop assault of "Radio Radio," "Beyond Belief," "Accidents Will Happen," and a rousing "Pump It Up." Elvis closed the show with an unamplified "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No.4", walking the length of the stage so all could hear and miming the instruments that were missing in the original's instrumental passages. As the audience hummed the song's outro, Elvis and Steve offered a joined-hands bow at center stage and a hearty "Good night!" brought the evening to a close.

What the critics said:

"The evening could have been more of a treat. There was something out of place in herding together on the venue's sticky main floor, with a crowd that was talky enough for Chastain Park Amphitheater. And while he generously performed for 2 1/2 hours, Costello milked applause through multiple encores that could as easily been accommodated in the regular set. That seemed too needy, as though he really did have to play a lot of older hits because no one's been paying him enough attention lately." Steve Dollar, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (November 7)

October 30

**Hard Rock Live
Orlando, FL**

"Elvis invited me to sit in with him and I was happy to do it!" That's what Roger McGuinn said when we asked the Florida resident how he came to play with Elvis. The show also ended a 15-year drought in playing the Sunshine State.

Flee reports:

I've seen Elvis in a lot of different places, but this was a first - a theme park in Orlando.



"The Costello Family" in Orlando.

Everyone who goes to the Hard Rock Live has to park in the huge Universal Studios parking lot. It's like going to Disney, they give you cute little parking space reminders. We parked in E.T. On the long walk to the show we had to follow signs to the theme park and it was almost like they had decorated just for us, since the signs we had to follow read: Attractions, this way. The signs prompted a few people in the crowd to wonder out loud if Elvis was playing with the Attractions. Certainly understandable since Elvis Costello by his own admission hadn't played Orlando for over 15 years. The last time he was in Orlando he probably had the Attractions with him.

The Hard Rock Live was right next to the Hard Rock Café and since there was no line, a lot of excited Elvis fans gathered there before the show. Speaking to a lot of the fans, and being used to going to see Elvis in NY and Boston, I was surprised at how many Elvis live virgins there were at this show. The sense of anticipation and excitement was higher than usual since most had not already seen any shows on the tour or visited one of the many Elvis web sites.

The theater was fairly small, according to one seating chart I saw it held about 1,700 people. There was a balcony with tables of

four and seating on the ground floor consisted of folding chairs. Elvis walked out onto a dark stage at 8:20. He launched into one of his new songs, "Alibi Factory," on a dark, barely lit stage. The audience loved it and I think everyone knew at this point that they were in for something special. Elvis' voice was in as fine a form as I've seen in a while. Clear and crisp and not a hint of gruffness or scratchiness. I guess the hot Florida air does much better for his voice than the cooler climes of the Northeast.

As has been usual of his tours with Steve, Elvis took turns singing alone with guitar, on guitar with Steve on piano and with just Steve on piano. I found the lighting interesting, as most of the time, the majority of the light came from behind Elvis, giving him the look of an angel (distorted?) in the fog, coming on down from above to deliver these songs like they were inscribed on stone tablets.

Steve Nieve was playing what seemed to be even stronger piano arrangements of old Elvis material than I had heard before. The two of them seemed to have perfected this duo thing. Even to the point of not only were they complementing each other, but finishing each other's musical sentences. It was incredible how the guitar would play the first few notes of a familiar phrase and the piano would finish it. And again the crowd was amazed, most of them not having seen this version of Elvis and Steve before.

Elvis played and played until 9:30 when he ended the first part of the show with "God's Comic." It was the first time I recall that he didn't go into the whole God on the waterbed routine, or any routine for that matter. I think he may have sensed that his voice was in great shape and decided to skip most of the between song remarks and just sing as many songs as he could. By the end of the night, not including medleys or snippets, he sang 40 songs, more than any other show on the USA leg of this tour.



His first encore was a drum machine and keyboard-aided version of "Clubland" that reminded me of the remixes he did with DJ Food a few years ago. Almost an industrial/trip

hop sound. Then he left the stage and another mike stand was being set up. Hmm. Then, out he comes for his second encore with Roger McGuinn! Now I, along with the rest of the audience, was convinced this was a show to be ranked among the best he's ever done. Together they played "So You Wanna be a Rock and Roll Star," "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" and "Mr. Tambourine Man." At this point Elvis remarked how when he recorded his first album with Clover, they referred to "Red Shoes" as the "Byrds" song. Then they finished the second encore with "Drugstore Truck Drivin' Man."

The crowd was in an Elvis frenzy at this point. One female fan jumped on stage and kissed Elvis. It had been over 15 years since the last time Elvis played in Orlando and this audience was enjoying every minute. By this time about a third of the crowd had moved down in front for the end of the show. Little did they know that there was still an hour of music in three encores left. Before he left the stage, Elvis played 15 more songs. A mix of old and new, acoustic and electric.

Among the highlights were a real reverb version of "Green Shirt" and an amazing no microphone version of "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4." Unexpected it was, who would have thought, Elvis Costello, in a theme park with the only attractions in attendance the kind you can ride on, would have played for almost three hours and put on one his best performances ever. Now where did I park my car? In E.T.? The Lost Ark? The Starship Enterprise?

October 31 Sunrise Musical Theater Sunrise, FL

Elvis & Steve played their last USA show of the millennium just outside of Ft. Lauderdale.
Mario Artecona reports:

Sunrise, Florida was the site for Elvis's sunset North American performance of the millennium. After a 17-year absence, Elvis treated the half-capacity, yet appreciative Halloween night crowd to a solid yet uninspiring performance. Perhaps it was the small crowd, perhaps fatigue from the many previous tour stops, but the show seemed to lack the passion and heart that Elvis had put into the four prior shows which I was lucky to attend.

As late as the morning of the show, the performance at Sunrise was in danger of being cancelled due to poor ticket sales. However, Elvis and Steve took the high road and went through with the long-awaited concert. Included in the show were all the standards, "Accidents," "Alison," "Detectives," "Red Shoes" as well as the obligatory "Pump It Up." Sprinkled in, however, were some gems, such as a moving rendition of "Suit of Lights"

and above average versions of "Motel Matches" and "Little Triggers."

Perhaps in anticipation of the upcoming British dates, Elvis dusted off the *Notting Hill* track "She," which he had not performed in 20 dates. The rust showed as Elvis seemed to forget the second verse, treating us to an endearing hodgepodge of the song's lyrics. Elvis was visibly amused at this gaffe and it no doubt prompted some rehearsals of the song before playing Britain.

The closing four songs of the show, in which he followed a rocking "Beyond Belief" with a trifecta of "God Give Me Strength," "Pump It Up" and the unamplified "CCIU No. 4," left fans in a wonderful and appreciative mood. Here's hoping that Elvis doesn't wait another 17 years for a South Florida performance. Sadly, given the number of tickets sold and the general lack of support for the show, it may have been the sunset performance not only of his 1999 North American tour, but of visits to South Florida in general. Here's hoping I'm wrong. *Star-spotting: Dion DiMucci (Dion & the Belmonts)*

What the critics said:

"Age has put some pounds on Costello, who once looked too anxiety-wracked to ever gain weight. But he still wears those owlish eyeglasses - the fashion world is only catching up - and his songwriting remains wry and flexible. To the business of interpreting his own songs, Costello brought agility, a mastery bred by experience and the confidence to further meddle with already perfect works." Sean Piccoli, *Sun-Sentinel* (November 2)

In addition to our reviewers, thanks go out to: Roger McGuinn, Woody Taylor, Wes Vokes, Craig Danuloff, Kristina Engberg, Byron Wilson and Andrew Neumeyer.

Tour2000?

Elvis has now hinted more than once in radio interviews about taking a break from Costello & Nieve and touring again with a band. Well, this has sure got us folks at Beyond Belief excited and has everyone speculating about the possible make-up of the band.

So here's your challenge for next issue: let's give Elvis some help and put together your dream line-up for his next touring band. The rules are simple: suggest the players and their instruments and let's respect EC's desire not to reform the Attractions again. (It'll also be more interesting that way.) Write us or E-mail us and watch for the results in our next issue.

UTE LEMPER'S PUNISHING KISS

BY MARK PERRY

AS WE'VE HAD OCCASION TO OBSERVE BEFORE IN THESE PAGES, the artistic fallout from EC's stewardship of the 1995 Meltdown festival has been quite extraordinary. His subsequent involvement in projects with the likes of the Jazz Passengers, Bill Frisell, the Fairfield Four and even Steve Nieve can be linked directly to that memorable summer week on London's South Bank.

Almost five years have elapsed since the festival, but still the ripples continue to spread. The latest example is the inclusion of Elvis among an impressive array of song-writing talent assembled by Meltdown director David Sefton for *Punishing Kiss*, the remarkable new album by German chanteuse Ute Lemper which features no less than three Costello compositions (two of them are actually co-compositions) alongside works by Nick Cave, The Divine Comedy, Philip Glass, Tom Waits, Scott Walker and Kurt Weill.

Anyone who has followed Ute Lemper's astonishing career closely (singer, actress, dancer, writer, painter – even a glance at her CV is an exhausting experience) will be unsurprised by this latest venture. Her musical range has always been broad. As well as the cabaret and contemporary classical work for which she is best known, she has recorded a pop album (1989's *Crimes of The Heart*), appeared on Roger Waters's *The Wall - Live in Berlin*, played Velma Kelly in the hit stage musical *Chicago*, and even, in her early days, dipped a toe into the murky waters of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (well, everyone has to start somewhere...).

Some years ago I recall reading an interview in which she confessed her desire to record an album of songs by contemporary writers but expressed frustration at the difficulty in finding suitable material. David Sefton, thankfully, has proved to be the man with enough connections to make Ute's long-cherished ambition into a reality.

"A friend of mine, who I've had some great experiences with, told me about the project and asked if I'd write a song," says EC of Sefton's initial approach to him. "I suggested that I had better than that. I had a couple of songs that I thought were ideally suited, maybe with some adaptation. One song I had lying around my workshop in bits and I really hadn't focussed on how it would work yet. Another I'd only recorded in part; and the final song I had written words for. I felt that

one of those three songs might be suited to Ute. And it turns out that she recorded all three, so I must have been right."

Full tracklisting:

LITTLE WATER SONG (Cave;
Cave / Pisek)
THE CASE CONTINUES (Neil Hannon /
Joby Talbot)
PASSIONATE FIGHT (Lyon / Costello)
TANGO BALLAD (Weill / Brecht
arr Talbot)
COULDN'T YOU KEEP THAT TO
YOURSELF (Costello)
STREETS OF BERLIN (Philip Glass /
Martin Sherman)
THE PART YOU THROW AWAY
(Waits / Brennan)
SPLIT (Neil Hannon / Joby Talbot)
PUNISHING KISS (MacManus /
O'Riordan / Costello)
PURPLE AVENUE (Tom Waits)
YOU WERE MEANT FOR ME (Neil
Hannon / Joby Talbot)
SCOPE J (N.S. Engel)

Strangely, the US edition features the same songs in a different running order.

As well as Elvis's contributions (more of which further) *Punishing Kiss* boasts two hidden gems from the Tom Waits catalogue (produced by Hal Willner), a terrific, Bowie-esque version of Philip Glass's cabaret song "Streets of Berlin" (written originally for the film *Bent* and a transvestite Mick Jagger) and the 11-minute white knuckle ride that is Scott Walker's "Scope J". Best of all though is Nick Cave's "Little Water Song", a modern classic of such dark poetic beauty that it comes close to dwarfing everything else on the record (no mean feat on a collection of this quality).

More or less standing their ground in such heavyweight company are three titles penned by Neil Hannon and Joby Talbot of The Divine Comedy, the group which served as Ute's studio band throughout the Jon Jacobs-produced sessions which included the Costello numbers and which make up the bulk of the record. Hannon also contributed duet vocals to "Split" and a provocative update of the Brecht/Weill "Tango Ballad" (with full-on "James Bond" orchestral treatment courtesy of the multi-talented Talbot). "We were in the studio for three weeks, figuring out the songs," says Ute. "Each of the musicians from

The Divine Comedy came up with suggestions, and it was a collective creative process, which was great. Obviously I had a little bit of say about which direction I wanted to go in..."

It remained only for Ms Lemper to pop down to a disused warehouse with some dodgy leatherwear for the sleeve photo shoot and *Punishing Kiss*, an early contender for best album of 2000, was complete.

ELVIS & UTE:

Ute on Elvis:

"It was quite peculiar and a fragile act of balance for us to arrange the Elvis Costello songs which are so specific and theatrical and work so well when he sings them himself. Besides being a real Costello admirer, I just love pulling them into my world. His poetry and composition are unbelievably sophisticated and complex. He writes like the French intellectuals and poets of the 60s, uncompromising, passionate and emotionally disturbed; lost, conversational like Stephen Sondheim, he's a wicked portraitist and satirist. I hope this was just the beginning of a collaboration with him."

Elvis on Ute:

"I hadn't seen her perform but I was familiar with her recordings. I had also enjoyed when she had recorded the Nyman music, so I knew that she had the range. It wasn't exclusively the German cabaret that she could cover, and I was aware of the fact that she'd also been in a Broadway piece. So I knew that she was well able for those songs."

RELEASE DETAILS:

Punishing Kiss

Decca CD: 466 473-2
MC: 466 473-4

27 March 2000 - international
4 April 2000 - USA

"The Case Continues"
Decca promo 4-track CD
(includes 'Passionate Fight'):
466 980-2

Feb 2000



THE COSTELLO SONGS:

Elvis Costello: "The songs were all story songs, so that's what I mean when I say they're very suited to the theatrical idiom that she's inhabited in the past."

Ute Lemper: "Elvis's songs are very theatrical, but beautiful. They all have a little bit of a Burt Bacharach element in there too. I think he must have written them right after working with Burt. I think Elvis writes like Jacques Prévert, with the poetry of this kind of existentialist world. He's not frightened to speak about really disturbing things in his songs."

"PUNISHING KISS"

Elvis Costello: "'Punishing Kiss' was originally written at the request of Robert Altman and Hal Willner. Hal was providing the music for Robert Altman's movie *Short Cuts*. In it, there's a character played by Annie Ross the great jazz singer. She plays an alcoholic nightclub singer who's having a very difficult relationship with her daughter. I wanted to conjure up an image in the song of the exact opposite in detail. So if you can imagine a woman of the night inhabiting a character of a belligerent, slightly sozzled woman who sits in front of the television every day, shouting at day time soap operas and really living through them, that's pretty much the story of 'Punishing Kiss'. 'Punishing Kiss' is that moment when the bullying, big haired, macho hero of the drama or melo-drama presses his kiss onto the helpless girl. It's a brutal kiss - that's where the title came from. The second part of the story where she really explodes into a jealous rant about the heroine, is all done in double the time of the first half which, as I said, is a

boozy sort of ballad. The song only exists for a brief time in the drama of *Short Cuts*, in fact only a verse is sung. Not really enough time for the song itself to evolve its composed story. So I'm really glad that now there's an opportunity for it to be heard in full because I always thought it had possibilities."

Ute Lemper: "Well 'Punishing Kiss' is a very interesting song. There's basically two parts, there are two songs in one. It's a very ironic song. It's sung by the woman watching the television, and she's completely helpless, doing the channel hopping. She's engrossed in the whole artificial, decadent world with neurotic and sick values. And she's having strange ideas about this, and these perceptions."

As well as acknowledging some help from the missus, the writing credit also lists both "MacManus" and "Costello" indicating that EC worked on this one over a number of years, possibly combining two songs from different periods. The original recording by Annie Ross & The Low Note Quintet appeared on the soundtrack album for Short Cuts (Imago, 1993) and on the Bespoke Songs collection of Costello covers (Rhino, 1998); EC unveiled his own "complete" version with the "Punishing Kiss Band" (a mini orchestra which included the Brodsky Quartet) at Meltdown 95.

"PASSIONATE FIGHT"

Elvis Costello: "The second is a song - music by Steven Lyon, words by myself - called 'Passionate Fight'. Steven has been living and working in Paris over the last few years and I get the feeling - at least in the original composition - that the music of 'Passionate Fight' has absorbed a certain amount of the style of a French melody. It has the feeling of a French art song that's somehow managed to be translated into English.

It's the story of a man who keeps having the same fight with the woman he loves, to the point that she becomes exasperated and leaves. He's left in a hotel room, pacing up and down, sniffing moth-balls and smoking cigarettes. And he hangs a suit of her clothes on the back of a door that he'll dress another woman up in, sort of a *Vertigo* theme. You know the movie *Vertigo* where the man buys a set of clothes that reminds him of the woman he lost? So there's something of that sort of idea in it. It's a fairly common thing for someone to try and imagine someone as a replica of someone they once loved. Again it has a theatrical element in the song. He keeps having the same fight, keeps provoking the same kind of argument with each woman he invites into his life, and eventually repels till they run away in terror."

Despite EC's comments regarding the contribution of Paris-based Steven Lyon, BB's review copy of the album credits "Passionate Fight" to Costello alone, presumably an oversight by Decca (who also contrive to omit Bertolt Brecht from the rear cover credits, so it's nothing personal, Steve!). Elvis first performed the song in public in 1996 during his tour with another Steven - Steve Nieve - who, strangely enough, also lives in Paris.

"COULDN'T YOU KEEP THAT TO YOURSELF"

Elvis Costello: "The final song is definitely written for a woman to sing. As I said, I had it lying unfinished in my workshop. I sent two versions of it to Ute, different kinds of variations on the available verses and left it for her choose which final lyrics she sang. It's about a woman whose lover is constantly asking for forgiveness for the things that he's done. He's a real reprobate. He turns up in the small hours with evidence of various indiscretions and still wants her forgiveness. And little by little she loses her patience with him as the song unwinds. But it has a very romantic bridge where for a moment she wants to consider forgiving him; otherwise there would only be a relentless destruction of this guy."

Neil Hannon: "That song's been through many different changes and has evolved into a lovely pumping beast. It's great."

The most recent of the three songs used on the album, "Couldn't You Keep That to Yourself" was first added to the EC live repertoire during the latter part of 1999's Lonely World tour with Steve Nieve. It remains to be seen whether or not Elvis intends to record this one himself.

UTE LEMPER'S PUNISHING KISS TOUR

USA

07 Apr - Royce Hall, Los Angeles
13 Apr - Davies Symphony Hall, San Fran.
15 Apr - Chicago Theatre, Chicago
16 Apr - Lisner Auditorium, Washington
28 Apr - Town Hall, New York

UK

01 May - Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham
02 May - Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow
03 May - Royal Festival Hall, London
05 May - Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

As we went to press there were unconfirmed reports that EC might possibly make guest appearances in New York & London.

Thanks to Fawzia Pirbhai at Decca and Randy Dry at Universal Classics for assistance with this article.



Photo by Chris Wright

LIVE

Heineken Night Live
Ahoy Rotterdam, Netherlands
30 Nov – 5 Dec 1999

Elvis & Steve interrupted their never-ending tour to visit the Netherlands for a strange event in Rotterdam. Heineken Night Live featured a number of artists performing "Movies in Concert" over six consecutive nights with the New Symphonics orchestra, the whole shebang being filmed for Dutch TV. If our reviewers are to be believed, you'll be glad you missed this one...

I suppose for every up there has to be a down. Don't get me wrong, the Internet is a great invention, but sometimes too little information too quickly is not a good thing. When I read on the net that Elvis Costello would be playing six nights in Rotterdam and you could book tickets just by clicking here, my pulse was set racing immediately. Six nights in one venue! I thought of the residency with the Attractions at New York's Beacon Theater a few years ago, or the longer stops on the *Costello Sings Again* tour in 1986. Before I knew what I was doing, I had the tickets booked and was almost trembling with excitement at the prospect of finally being present at one of the big moments in Costello's career.

I didn't have long to savour it. Within a few days it emerged that these were not to be full Costello shows after all. He would be sharing the stage with the likes of Toni Braxton (?) and would only be playing a few "movie-related" songs each night. I tried to

Songs Performed:

I'll Never Fall In Love Again
 Alison / Accidents Will Happen (Dec. 1)
 She
 God Give Me Strength

kid myself that it didn't matter. Hey, it will probably be great anyway if Elvis is involved, right? Wrong.

This was my worst nightmare come true, a "cheese-fest" of the highest order. A giant, soulless venue ... over-slick, inane presentation ... a disinterested "stadium rock" crowd doing the Mexican wave ... giant screens distracting you from the action with often puzzlingly irrelevant images (you think they'd have at least bothered to match the film shots with the music!) ... and Elvis and Steve limited to four songs each night.

To be fair, the sound was pretty good, the hall was packed, and Elvis was in fine voice, fronting the orchestral arrangements impressively – but, to be honest, by the time he came on I was too busy wondering what the fuck I was doing there to really enjoy it in any way. Maybe it was just me, but it seemed to me that Elvis's heart wasn't really in it either. Perhaps he's as sick of "She" as I am after the summer publicity bonanza, but at least he – presumably – had a nice fat pay cheque to console him.

As for me, after the first night, I knew I had made a big and expensive mistake but I gritted my teeth through the next two nights anyway. After that, I could take no more and headed for the flesh pots of Amsterdam to make the most of what remained of my stay in Holland. I'll never fall in love again!

Bobby Peru

Rotterdam, Ahoy! A great big barn of a venue which held several thousand – and there seemed to be several hundred on stage. I had great sinking feelings when the orchestra conductor was flown around the stage on a wire during the opening *Star Wars* medley. Then when repeated close-ups of John Travolta's skivvies were being shown, I was very nearly physically ill.

To explain a bit: they had blocks of medleys of different types of movie music, performed by the 76-piece New Symphonics orchestra (all the adverts and reviews were VERY precise about the number of instruments involved!) which were accompanied by footage from the relevant films shown on a massive screen behind the stage.

They had a wonderful system of people walking round with barrels of beer on their backs, selling it, thus saving a trip to the bar. However, each time I got to the front of the queue, they ran out! Elvis came on just after a Hitchcock section and he seemed to be pretty jolly (I put it down to getting a nice big paycheck for 20 minutes work each night). He kept his hat on and did a nice enough job on the songs. Very little stage patter and not much of interest to regular fans, but maybe one or two of those present might have been tempted to check out more of his work (the *Best Of* album was quite prominently displayed around Amsterdam).

I managed to miss Toni Braxton because I had to take a phone call (that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it!). A lot of people were leaving early muttering darkly in their odd guttural language. Back at my base in Amsterdam, I decided that the 2½ hour round trip to Rotterdam for probably exactly the same thing again the next night was not going to be worthwhile, so instead I concentrated my efforts on clearing that fascinating city of both beer and CDs.

Chris Wright

Thanks for Your Help This

Issue: Ulf Gotthardson, Alan Ramsey, Andrew Moorhouse, Tommy Murray, Jennifer Senft, Wouter Pronk, Karl Buhler, Bill Aho, Alfonso Cardenas, Steve Horan, Richard Arthur, Robert Sabat, Mike Hernandez, Peter Gale, Eddie Thornley, Martin White, Tony Luscombe and Andy Anderson.

Special Thanks: Randy Dry at Universal Classics, Tim Thompson at Sony Music, Bob Appel at Six Degrees Records, Phillip Burke and John Everingham whose great web page helps keep us in order.

ELVIS COSTELLO

A to Z by Dave Farr

BEING an idiosyncratic journey through the recorded output of Elvis Costello, bounded only by the order of the alphabet, forming a perpetual circle, with allowance for personal opinion, healthy irreverence, and always a request for further information or correction . . .



DEEP DEAD BLUE

The Meltdown Festival, hosted and programmed by Elvis in London in June 1995, offered a series of firsts for Costello (see BB3). Among these was a set pairing Elvis with American guitarist Bill Frisell, with whom he had previously worked on "Weird Nightmare" in 1990. The set consisted almost entirely of Costello songs rearranged by Frisell, but also included an old standard ("Gigi") and this tune, written by EC and Frisell for the occasion.

The entire Costello/Frisell collaboration (with the unexplained exception of "Poisoned Rose") was released on an import-only live CD a few months after the concert, and this song became the title track. It was the only time to date that a live version of a Costello composition became the only released version of the song.

The track is quite mesmerizing, not least because the structure never quite remains the same. The song is nearly a cappella, with Frisell's guitar mostly following the vocal closely. EC's vocal is very old fashioned, the very strong melody deliberate and solid like a 40s or 50s ballad. (One can imagine Sinatra singing this tune on his chamber music album *Close to You*.) Frisell strums the electric instrument almost like a lyre in the first verse, repetitively, allowing Elvis to roam the high and low notes, with the guitar then echoing him. Then there is a strange line which simply states the title again, slowly and deliberately, while Frisell cleverly plays the main refrain's doubled notes on each single beat, and what at first sounds like a live mistake is instead revealed as a clever coloration. The song's second verse is nearly a bridge, as the melody line is abandoned for a while (especially on the "as the light . . ." line), and the strummed backbeat vanishes, granting a more jazzy feel. The vocal then weaves into a final verse which is styled almost like the first, but incorporates the end of the second. Frisell's playing is looser here, playing like a bass. A very clever arrangement, and a fine performance for the very first time live.

Elvis has never performed the song since. The Irish vocal group Anúna (who also performed at Meltdown) did release a lovely version of "Deep Dead Blue" in 1997, and their a cappella style lends itself beautifully to the tune.

DIFFERENT FINGER

This song from *Trust*, like "Watch Your Step" and "New Lace Sleeves," was apparently written a while before its recording. Unlike those great songs, however, this is a fairly disposable number. Unlike,

say, "Stranger in the House," a real classic that takes the country genre and wraps it around a brilliant lyric to create a hybrid, this one seems more of a pastiche. Another a cappella start for this one, with the band coming in at a muted country tempo, with a hollow, echoing drum sound that at first sounds interesting but soon becomes irritating (and brings to mind Pete and Bruce's description of country as "horse music"). Elvis is beginning to evolve the vocal style he'll use on the *Almost Blue* LP here, using a kind of hoarse croak to convey emotion but sounding affected instead. The guitar plays some nice little fills in combination with Steve's piano (particularly after "see what you got to lose") but the bridge never rises above a kind of Tennessee Two-into-Floyd Cramer sample. The song is interesting in the contrast it presents to the rest of *Trust* (a rather eclectic LP anyway), but on its own, it's not one of the great moments.

One sign that Elvis did not value the song that highly himself is the fact that it was only performed live once, when Elvis was touring in support of *Trust* in March 1981. At Bradford, Elvis told the audience that he had been specially requested by an audience member to play the song, and therefore obliged. It has not been played since.

DISTORTED ANGEL

This song was premiered live during EC's solo stint as Bob Dylan's opening act in March and April 1995. This rendition was much faster, running only about two and one-half minutes, and was mostly sung to a simple, strummed guitar. The signature guitar riff had really not coalesced yet, so there was really no hook. The final version's languid feel was absent. Apparently, "Distorted Angel" was attempted by the band during the *Brutal Youth* sessions, so it may have had a more up tempo feel at first.

By the time Elvis and the Attractions took the stage at the Beacon Theater in New York in August 1995, essentially rehearsing the new material live, the arrangement was very close to what would be recorded. The riff of the song, introduced on bass and then played on guitar, came to the fore. This hook is nearly as strong a riff as that on "Watching the Detectives" or "Chelsea," but it is played less forcefully, in the more laid-back style of the song. The tempo had slowed considerably, with the bass and drums setting up a slow groove over which Elvis sang smooth, elongated vocals. What was most noticeable was Steve's keyboard riff, a kind of whirring sound on the choruses that was a bit distracting. Sometimes it sounded like a sampled cat wail. More welcome were the piano notes Steve sprinkled in the background. By the end of the Beacon stand, Elvis was beginning to sing the final refrain off-mike, the first of his attempts at this type of projection.

The recorded version was put on tape not long after the Beacon shows, and it is very close to those renditions. Steve's keyboard sounds still have an irritating pitch to them, although the interplay between the main riff and Steve's response is entertaining. There is a lot of secondary atmosphere provided by tinkling ivories and organ flourishes, while the rhythm section percolates smoothly below. Elvis' vocals are at a slightly higher pitch than might be best, but the vocal performance is quite interesting, as his melody line starts high, and slides down low before ending on an elongated note. This song calls for some of the better singing Elvis had done up to that point. On the other hand, the vocals are mixed so much louder than the rest of the track, that they tend to overwhelm the groove. A treated vocal on "where I fell" takes us to the final refrain, as Elvis switches to a soul falsetto, with Steve changing the sprinkled piano notes to more jarring splashes at the end. Unfortunately the track and the mood are abruptly ended by the album's gimmick of running tracks into one another, and the start of "Shallow Graves" takes over. All in all, the components for a very memorable song are present, but the pieces never quite cohere.

The tour with Steve, which followed hard on the release of

the album, featured a two-man rendition of "Distorted Angel," captured for posterity on the Boston portion of the Costello/Nieve box set. Elvis starts the song off more slowly, playing unaccompanied. Steve's playing is restrained (this is true of most of his accompaniment on the 1996 tour, particularly in comparison to 1999). Elvis extends the coda much further this time, singing the "Angel . . ." refrain over and over, mostly off-mike, as Steve plays a series of arpeggios. This version again makes you admire the sturdy melody and the singing but the mood is not set, it's played too simply.

It took the full band on the last Attractions tour in 1996 to really bring the song to life. Bass and drums were heavier, Elvis' guitar fuller and more present, and Steve was all over the place, with piano and organ phrases in every space. A real groove was established. Best of all, Steve tweaked his synth part on the main riff just a little, and made it much better. By simply adding three to six notes at the end of the riff he had played on the record, and by varying those notes, so that each response was different, he made his part an integral portion of the riff. The vocals were stretched out even further, and made more subtle. The high point, however, was the creation of a medley: after Elvis sang the "angel . . ." refrain several times, he returned to his guitar, and the song gradually mutated into "Chelsea," with Bruce and Pete keeping the same backbeat, and Steve even keeping his part the same for most of the song. The great riff from "Chelsea" was slowed and bent to the new tempo, and the effect was fabulous. The medley then concluded with a few lines from the Isleys' "Who's That Lady?", sealing the package in Philly Soul. This version finally found the promise in the song.

"Distorted Angel" was released as one of the four July singles from the *All This Useless Beauty* album, and a remix by Tricky was included on the CD single of the title track. The remix retained the vocal track, buried much deeper in the mix, but dropped the music all together in favor of a monotonous electronic mix.

The song has not been played live since the 1996 tour, perhaps an admission that a full band is needed to get that groove going!

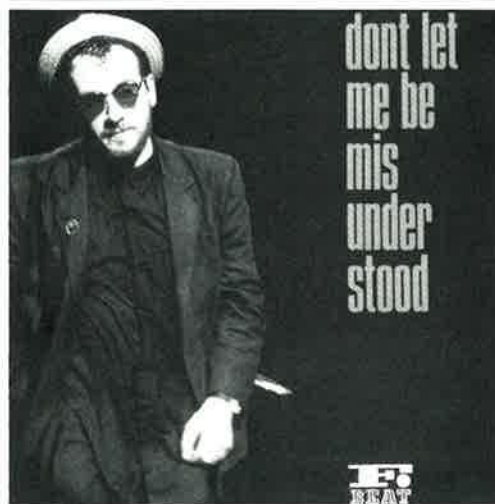
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING?

This is perhaps the best of the songs written for Wendy James and released on her 1993 album of EC songs. Elvis' demo version, with Elvis on acoustic guitar, bass, piano, and perhaps even drums, was released in 1994, as a UK 7-inch vinyl B-side to "13 Steps Lead Down" and on the hard-to-find US promo CD for "Clown Strike." EC's version is wonderful, a subdued and simple performance that packs a world of weariness. He sings in a low register, with just a hint of hoarseness in his voice. Dramatic piano chords accent the verse before the choruses. A musical hook repeats after each chorus, as the guitar, bass, and piano join in a five note signature, played twice. The bass is played at the high end (in true Bruce Thomas style) and the piano and guitar dovetail beautifully. The drums sound initially like brushes and then gain volume as the verses progress. All of this lends just the right variety to what is essentially a repetitive melody. The vocal is delivered perfectly, with an air of mockery, insouciance, desperation, and weariness all conveyed at once. Listen to the shudder in the way he sings the word "wilt," for example. It's one of EC's best lyrics, and it's a shame he has not played this song live.

Prior to the release of the demo, we only had James' version to hear, and while it is delivered competently, and is a standout track on the record, it suffers by comparison to the demo. The tempo is slowed a bit, as part of an apparent overall effort to make the song a bit more ponderous. Worse yet, the riff after the choruses is downplayed to such an extent that it's barely heard. Too much orchestration drowns out the song, and James tries too hard to sound hoarse and to punch up every word, making for a stilted vocal that is too measured to sound true. A Costello-Nieve performance of this

tune would be a real treat.

DON'T LET ME BE MISUNDERSTOOD



UK single for "Misunderstood."

In January 1986, a very strange 7-inch and 12-inch single was released by Elvis Costello. It caused a rather hilarious uproar in certain segments of the UK music press. EC had taken a sabbatical from constant touring and record releases, and this relative abstinence was read by some as a sign of burnout or writer's

block (at least among those who had missed all of the new songs played at shows in March and April of 1985 in London). The new single, the first official Costello single since the fall of 1984, featured a cover version as its A-side, and a blurred concert shot, taken the previous summer, of a rather shabby, bearded Elvis in a straw hat. The single itself featured a Costello whose voice sounded weary and raspy. The reviews for the single were horrified, and speculated that Elvis was on his last legs. This required a lot of humble pie consumption upon the release of the album a few weeks later. But it was a strange choice for a single.

Although Elvis has revised history recently and blamed the choice of single on his record company, at the time he enthusiastically promoted the single as a way for his audience to adjust to the new sound of the Costello Show on his then-upcoming album, by hearing a familiar old song played by the Confederates. He even played a solo electric version live on the air at one of the radio appearances promoting the album (preserved on a rare 12-inch promo released by Columbia). A promo video was also filmed, featuring an interesting quick-cut video of EC and Cait playing in a dark studio setting, with graphics reminiscent of the punk era (while Elvis proclaimed in interviews that *King of America* was "a punk record!")

The song is not a great introduction to the album. Although it does preview the different sound provided by the new sidemen, the vocal is atypical of the record and it does not hint at the craftsmanship in the new songs. "Brilliant Mistake" (see *BB16*) provides a much better introduction to the record and its themes. Still, on its own this is a very interesting track. The instrumentation is brilliant. Elvis' vocal, the result of a hoarse throat, has a compelling quality to it that makes the words more desperate and heartfelt. This track was the last recorded for the album, after EC's vocal distress made it impossible to record anything else. The result is compelling.

The song opens with a crash, as a tremendously heavy bass (played by Jerry Scheff), an organ (Mitchell Froom) and marimbas (overdubbed by Michael Blair later) set the melody. The marimbas carry the melody, as the organ pulls back from it like a bandage from a wound. Here Elvis comes in and from word one, "Baby . . ." you know his voice is in sad shape. When he screams out "always" in the third line, it's painful to hear. But it fits the lyric and the narrator. It's a brilliant vocal for the song. Cymbals and a high organ join on the chorus as Elvis sings "I'm," and sharp drums (Jim Keltner) pound into the lines followed by a rusty gasp over the "Oh, Lord" that

sounds like one of Blair's contraptions, but is uncredited and could be anything from guitar feedback to the organ to drums. T-Bone Burnett provides fine, reverbed guitar support on the bridge, as the marimbas dance about. Froom's organ lingers over the first line of each new verse, especially after the dramatic stop at "Cause I love ya/Oh . . ." There's more torn vocal cords heard in words like "lonnnnnngg regretting" and the almost spat "sinful thing I've done." The track fades after the repeated chorus, with the guitar echoing off the beat. It's a highly effective performance.

The song was played often in 1986, sometimes with the Attractions, mainly with the Confederates, and also in solo sets. The Confederates version was particularly noteworthy, especially when Blair was part of the band, and also for James Burton's searing guitar lines on the choruses. EC's fondness for the record (which did not do very well as a single, although it skirted the bottom of the Top 30 in the UK) shows in the fact that he performed it so often, even picking it as one of the three songs played at the Clapham Common free concert in June 1986 (recorded for the *Freedom Beat* video). Live, Elvis used the refrain sections to encourage audience singalongs, a bit that would often outlast the actual playing of the song. Elvis continued to play the number solo in 1987, though strangely it was not part of the Confederates set later that year. In 1989, he played it on the solo tour and at least once with the Rude 5. It was not until the latter part of the 1991 tour with the Rudes that the song was given a regular hearing again; Elvis sat at the piano and belted out the song with the band.

Since then, aside from a one off at the Fairfield Four tribute in 1997, the song has not figured into the live set.

DR. LUTHER'S ASSISTANT

This song was actually written way back in 1977, and performed live at least once that year (in an arrangement very close to the record). EC's liner notes for *Get Happy!!* state that the song was considered for *This Year's Model* (and it shares the early albums' themes of obsession and voyeurism). However, the song was rejected and did not see the light of day until June 1980, when a curious 45 and EP materialized without warning on the shelves. A surprise third single from *Get Happy!!*, "New Amsterdam" was released with this song on the 45 B-side and two more songs on an EP. The three new tracks were all mostly Elvis playing the instruments alone (hence the record being billed as Elvis Costello only, as the A-side was also a solo effort).

As with most of the solo Elvis recordings from the 1980s, this one is a lot of fun to listen to. It's no classic, but the production (by Elvis himself) is a hoot. Elvis plays all of the instruments except the drums, which were overdubbed later by Pete Thomas. The song starts off with chiming guitars and a drum roll, leading into the lurching verses. Something about the tempo of this march makes one think more of Dr. Frankenstein than Dr. Luther. EC's sneering vocals are treated and a very high overdubbed harmony vocal makes it sound almost delirious, as he hits those high long notes on "so" and "no." The organ sounds are squeaky and squeezed out in bleeps and bloops. The sound is a bit hissy overall, adding to the mid-60s flavor that will only get stronger as the song goes on. The electric guitar crackles underneath in the style EC was using then (see the "Black and White World" demo or "Hoover Factory").

The bridge treats us to a great little 60s-style Shadows guitar part, while the organ coughs up notes. As we hit the last chorus, the drum pattern is suddenly turned way up, and Elvis sings the last chorus, leading to a backwards guitar loop straight out of *Revolver*. It's a very peculiar song, but a fun one to listen to. It hasn't been played live since its brief appearance in 1977.



EISENHOWER BLUES

Truly the only disposable track on *King of America*, and a rare case of Elvis releasing something because he enjoyed recording it, rather than for its musical quality. This song was recorded with legends Ray Brown (bass) and Earle Palmer (drums), in the same session as "Poisoned Rose." Having overcome his trepidation at performing with these session giants, and having accomplished a fine take of that song, Elvis then relaxed

with some spirits and a swing through this obscure 1950s song by J.B. Lenoir. His voice is very hoarse, and the delivery very loose . . . even dissolving into laughter in some of the lines. Brown plays a fine, thumping bass line, but the piano (Tom Canning) and the organ (Mitchell Froom) are more dominant. Overwhelming all the instrumentation, though, is an over the top vocal from Elvis, which is sometimes unintelligible, and then goes into throat-tearing screams (ala "Man Out of Time") and yelps. Yes, the track does "give the album a kick" between ballads, as Elvis writes in the liner notes. But when that fade out becomes a fade into another few bars of the track, as two takes are edited together, one can't help but sigh and hope the next ballad comes soon. This is an outtake, a "12 Bar Original" or "Get Back" rehearsal that's a lot of fun for the players and interesting for the listener once or twice, but doesn't really belong on an album as finely crafted as this one. This song has never been played live by Elvis, the only *King of America* song with this distinction.

EVERYBODY'S CRYING MERCY

This Mose Allison song was recorded in 1990 in Barbados for what would eventually be released as *Kojak Variety*. This version was not officially released until 1995, so in the meantime we were introduced to the song onstage, as it was played nearly every night of the 1991 tour with the Rude 5. The song contains a lot of rage and indignation behind a tightly wound facade, a kind of church blues. Live, both Marc Ribot and Larry Knechtel (who also play stellar parts on the record) were the stars. Ribot's guitar solos, if you can call them that, were not quite like any guitar solos I'd heard before. He had an ability to play dissonant notes and seemingly off-



Mose Allison

key or flat notes, and somehow make them work as a whole. They were the most beautiful ugly playing I'd seen, and all very thought out. The slow blues guitar solo was turned inside out here. Knechtel was given a fine organ solo on the other of the two instrumental breaks in the live version, and always played it perfectly. Elvis' vocal ranged from a kind of clenched-teeth slow burn to a screaming on "hypocrite," which was repeated three or four times. As the 1991 tour was mounted in the wake of the Gulf War, Elvis' intent with the song (though of course it was recorded for the album a year earlier) was clear.

The album version is a bit cooler to the touch, but very well done. Ribot opens the song almost unaccompanied, playing those strange pinched metal notes, then a thumping drum (Keltner) joins him. Elvis and the bass (Scheff) follow. EC's vocals are cool and controlled, almost deadpan. Knechtel's keyboards enter on verse two and simmer over in the right channel throughout. The guitar drops more into the background and the bass becomes more dominant. The

record moves faster than the live versions; there are no instrumental breaks. In the last verse, Knechtel's playing becomes more rhythmic, and it is largely him and Elvis we hear, with the bass churning below them. For the coda, Ribot's part becomes louder, sliding to higher notes, and the organ continues to pulse. Ribot squeezes in a brilliant little guitar figure twice before Elvis comes in for one last chorus, then it all fades out.

After the release of *Kojak Variety* in 1995, "Everybody's Crying Mercy" was performed again at the May 1995 concert in London celebrating the release. Since then, it has not been played.

EVERYDAY I WRITE THE BOOK

One of the more well-known and universally loved songs in the catalog, a simple pop song that Elvis has called a "ten-minute song," meaning one that took about that long to write. It gave him his first Top 40 hit in the US ever and his only one for the first 12 years of his career, led to an appearance on "Solid Gold," and gained him a much wider audience, at least temporarily. At the same time, Elvis has had a love-hate relationship with the song, perhaps ruing the fact that such a facile effort was his claim to fame in the US, and has toyed with the song ever since it came out.

As can be heard on the live version released on the Ryko version of *Punch the Clock*, the song was originally quite different. Written toward the end of the September 1982 tour of England in support of *Imperial Bedroom*, it was first performed at Leicester on September 24, 1982, and on most nights through the rest of the tour. The live version that has been released is from the December 1982 shows at the Albert Hall (December 24, specifically). This is what has been called the "Mersey Beat" version of the song. Elvis refers to it as a "spoof Merseybeat number"; he could be referring to the genre or the group; think of this as a slower "Really Mystified." Although the version released on Ryko is hissy and overloaded with guitar, this is an almost perfect piece of pop writing and performance. The power chords at start and finish, the simple, repetitive chorus, the clever pauses. Missing from this recording is the way the band would sometimes halt for a split second prior to the final verse, allowing Elvis to sing the beginning word "Don't" in the open space with a shudder or a toss.

I recall hearing a tape of the December 27 performance and writing my brother to tell him that this was sure to be a hit single from Elvis in 1983. Turns out I was right, but for the wrong reasons. By the time the song came out as the first official single from *Punch the Clock*, it had been totally rearranged. I recall my shock at hearing the album version when it came out, as I was very anxious to hear my favorite new song in its official recording. As soon as the first thumping, dance-mix bass notes and the echoed piano chords bounced around my headphones, and Elvis went into a falsetto "whoooooo," followed by a long "yeahhhh," with no trace of the Merseyside tempo, I knew I was not going to hear what I had expected.

Punch the Clock also featured female backing vocalists long before any thought of a Bacharach collaboration. For the most part they are used well (on the "Chapter Two!" line, or at "four, five and six!"), and their voices are always solid and never squeaky. Steve's organ provides a cushion as Elvis sings in a very mannered, playful way. The vocal seems to be straining to be delicate, with a breathiness that seems a bit forced. Watch the promo video and you'll see the expression that goes with this, a kind of self-mocking satisfaction. It's as if he is trying to be a smooth soul singer but laughing at the conceit at the same time. The bass is massive, and it provides the musical hooks, along with a very nervous keyboard figure that is a bit too electronic on the record but sounded warmer onstage. The drum sound is also somewhat artificial, almost the clapping drum sound Elvis had disdained in the past. As he says in his *Punch the Clock* liner notes,

EVERYDAY
I WROTE
THE BOOK

FROM
THE
ALBUM
PUNCH
THE
CLOCK

and the
ATTRactions

7" XX32
12" XX52T

NEW SINGLE
RELEASED ON JULY 1st

BEAT IS NOW AVAILABLE FROM RCA

UK advert for "Everyday I Write the Book."

some of the trendy devices of early 80's pop are present here, thanks to producers Langer and Winstanley. The production is overly busy, particularly in the coda. But the charm of the lyric and the spirit of the performance win out.

The last verse is the highlight, as the trappings drop back a bit to spotlight a whirring organ, Bruce's supple bass figure, and Elvis' nearly too cloying vocal. The keyboards rise over the "film rights" line and then rise yet higher, as the chorus resumes. The simplicity of the "everyday, everyday, everyday" hook has an undeniable charm, in either arrangement. Elvis hits a long falsetto note on the last "book" and it echoes into the finish, as he and Afrodisiak trade lines. Foreign though it may be to the original version, it's a solid pop song, if a bit sugar coated by the production.



Langer & Winstanley

"Everyday . . ." was released as the single from the LP in both the UK and the US. It went top 30 in the UK quickly, spurring *TOTP* appearances. On tour, the album version was duly reproduced live, with the added ingredient of the TKO Horns, who replaced the backing vocals with a sharp horn chart playing the same bit. On later shows, Afrodisiak were also part of the show, and sang along with the horns. As the US tour progressed, the single began to climb the charts, and Elvis would announce to the audience its chart position. Finally it cracked the Top 40 (barely - it made it to number 36). It was a kick

to hear Casey Kasem introduce Elvis on "American Top 40" for the first time. At the same time, Elvis was beginning to mock the song a bit, introducing it as having been written by "Harold Robbins and Jackie Collins," a reference not only to the theme of book writing but probably to writing by hacks for popular consumption. Still, the live performances were energetic and sharp, although by the very nature of live performance, particularly a tour which strained EC's voice as much as this one did, the song lost its smooth curves and got a bit sloppier. Falsettos were out of the question, and the vocals became more Wilson Pickett than Smokey Robinson.

As mentioned, a promo video was shot for the song and widely played, although it's Charles and Diana spoof had rendered it obsolete by the time the Royals split up, never mind Diana's death later on. Elvis also appeared on the US syndicated chart show *Solid Gold* for the first time (and probably the last), lip-syncing and doing a bizarre dance, with no guitar or microphone to hold.

The success of the song spawned a series of 12-inch "remixes," a mid 1980s phenomenon that thankfully only surfaces briefly in the Costello canon. Three different remixes popped up in the US and UK, the UK remix by Langer and Winstanley being the

most interesting, with its isolation of the vocal tracks for Afrodiziak and its bass and drum gimmicks. The US remix by the then "hot" Jellybean Benitez shows little imagination, but is preferable to the karaoke version also featured on the US 12-inch.

In February 1984, EC and the Attractions played the song several times in France, but reverted largely to the 1982 version. For the solo tour that spring, Elvis crafted a rendition that was somewhere in between: without the rhythm section, it was a quicker, more melodic version but retained the punchiness of the 1983 song. Touring again with the band in the fall of 1984, Elvis brought Gary Barnacle along on electric sax to play the horn chart, in a version that was very close to 1983



Gary Barnacle pictured here as a member of British band Level 42.

again, if a bit slower. And so it went for several years, with the song relegated to solo performances and played with the Attractions mainly as a crowd-pleasing encore or a selection from the Spinning Songbook. (And joining songs like "Pump It Up" and "Alison" as songs that would inevitably be requested if EC let the audience members who came onstage do the choosing.) Occasionally, Elvis would hit the opening chords of the Beatles' "Do You Want to Know a Secret" and sing that song's first line, to intro the song and give a clue as to its roots.

In 1989, Elvis would play "Everyday..." solo (on both solo and Rude 5 tours) and insert the new collaboration with Paul McCartney, "My Brave Face," into the middle, for a great medley. In 1994, the song was back in many of the shows with the Attractions, but again Elvis reverted to the original version, and even more so than in 1984. This version was right out of 1982, and what a treat it was to hear it done with the band again this way.

As Elvis began touring with Steve Nieve in 1998, the song returned to the set at times, but it took awhile to work out the kinks. Elvis was playing it much like his solo version, with Steve adding piano parts not far removed from 1983. Still, the song had a kind of rote quality to it. However, opening act Ron Sexsmith had been covering the song in his set and Elvis apparently took some cues from Sexsmith's lighter version. Around the beginning of the US tour in late May 1999, a warmer, popper version began to emerge. Heavy on

acoustic strumming, with Steve bringing a modified version of his piano signature from the recorded version, this rendition finally infused the 1983 version with enough of the charm of the simpler version to produce a really enjoyable acoustic number.

EXPERT RITES

A lovely piece from *The Juliet Letters*, and the only one written directly about the inspiration behind the cycle's theme. This song is written in the voice of the professor who answered the letters to Juliet, in response to one of the letters he has received. It's one of the most distinctive pieces in the cycle. Although *The Juliet Letters* is music for string quartet and voice, the song structures are largely very straightforward and accessible, they are simply arranged for classical instrumentation. "Expert Rites," with words and music entirely by EC, is a bit more esoteric.



Elvis & the Brodsky Quartet 1996 in Copenhagen.

Photo by John Everingham

The interplay of violins and cello is beautiful as the song opens, with the two instruments circling around each other like leaves caught in the wind. Next they dovetail together for a few lines, producing a truly heartbreaking sound. The intro fades as the violin adopts a sort of piano sonata backing as Elvis comes in with a first phrase that seems curiously unstructured, till you realize the entire vocal is written that way; there is no verse/chorus/verse here, even the lines within stanzas don't relate much to each other, beyond the rhyming. This is more of a tone poem. The strings sometimes echo the vocal line. Other times they slide off into accenting phrases. The cello moans beneath it all, sometimes nearly playing a walking bassline. A yearning keen from the strings arches up under the lines about the "romantic ideal." This takes us to the climax, as Elvis pushes his vocal up to the limit and the strings strain, then all drops off on EC's low "Don't," and he winds his way through the last line (all strings swelling behind him again), with a lovely staggered drop on the final "Juliet." It was fascinating to watch this recreated onstage during the 1993 *Juliet* tour, to see if Elvis could reach that last note in one breath (and he often did). As soon as he finishes that word, we are listening to the next piece, the instrumental "Dead Letter," but the music flows so well from the preceding song that it is nearly impossible not to hear them as one entity (and when listening to an advance of the record in 1992, without a cue sheet, I was certain this was all one piece). The instrumental is another beautiful work, full of sadness, hope, and despair.

"Expert Rites" was of course played each night during the *Juliet Letters* tour in 1993 but has not been played live since.



The Latest EC News

Elvis Part of Nathanson LP and Concerts

As first mentioned back in June 1998 in *BB16*, Elvis Costello is a participant in the upcoming solo effort by songwriter/sax player extraordinaire Roy Nathanson. This solo



effort from the leader of the Jazz Passengers is entitled *Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill* and was released on March 14 in the USA on Six Degrees Records. EC will

also take part in two live performances from the concept record on May 5-6 at St. Anne's Theater in Brooklyn, NY where he will join the project's other guest vocalists, Deborah Harry and Richard Butler (ex-Psychedelic Furs and current Love Spit Love front man).

In this tale of "a bar and the people who inhabit it," Elvis portrays the storyteller, Harry is the bartender, and Butler is the suspected arsonist. A fusion of jazz and pop, Elvis sings three songs, the first two of which open the record. "Fire Suite One" features Cyrus Chestnut on piano and "Fire Suite Three," features Marc Ribot, an old friend of both EC and the JP's on guitar. The third song closes the record and is called "Fire Suite Reprise" to which Elvis contributed lyrics. Watch for a full report on the LP and shows in our next issue.

Awards Time Again

Once again it's music awards time in the USA and UK. While Costello's only recorded output in 1999 came in the form of two movie soundtracks, surprisingly enough, both efforts managed to eke out nominations of sorts. In the USA, the soundtrack to *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (which included Costello & Bacharach on "I'll Never Fall in Love Again") garnered a nod for Best Soundtrack Recording but lost to Phil Collins' *Tarzan*. Over in the UK, both the same LP and the soundtrack to *Notting Hill* (with EC's "She") were nominated for Best Soundtrack / Cast Recording in the Brit Awards. And with those odds, Elvis managed to be part of the winner - *Notting Hill*.

Anne Sofie Von Otter

Also in the pipeline of upcoming Costello projects is his long-awaited record involving

a c c l a i m e d
S w e d i s h
mezzo soprano
Anne Sofie
Von Otter.
Recently, Ms.
Von Otter told
the UK's
Telegraph:
"We don't
quite know
what's going
to be on the
disc. Mostly
there'll be his



Picture: DPG

songs. I admire him a lot - he works harder than anyone I know."

On the weekend of February 19-20, EC made a low-key visit to Stockholm where he supervised test recordings of ten songs with Anne Sofie. Last year, EC told *Wall of Sound* that the pair were "choosing songs from the last 50 or 60 years and finding connections that lay between them" for an album which he is producing. The recording sessions proper are now scheduled for October this year, with Anne Sofie informing Swedish newspaper *Kvallsporten* (February) that she expects the record to be in the shops for Christmas, or possibly spring 2001.

One possible inclusion on the disc could be the *Three Distracted Women* song trilogy written by Elvis that Anne Sofie performed with the Brodsky Quartet back in December 1996 as part of a brief 5-night European tour (see *BB10*).

It's Austin Powers Cards Baby!

Trying to cash in on the collectible card game craze ala *Pokémon*, an *Austin Powers Collectible Card Game* has been issued which



features a card dubbed "Mr. Elvis Costello - R a d i o Sweetheart." Labeled an "uncommon card," the Costello card is not that easy to come by. Not part of the basic

starter set, it is found only in the "booster" card sets that in the USA cost \$2.99 for a 10-card pack. *BB* splurged for ten packs and came up with only one EC card. Good luck in your search!

Recently Departed

Some artists with Costello connections that are gone but not forgotten: **Rick Danko:** (December 10) singer and bass player for The Band whose vocal style was an inspiration to Elvis back in his Flip City days. EC also had performed "Stage Fright" (one of Rick's great vocal performances) live. ■ **Doug Sahm:** (November 18) legendary Texan whose Sir Douglas Quintet's Farfisa sound provided a strong influence to the live sound of the early Attractions. ■ **Screamin' Jay Hawkins:** (February 12) best known for "I Put a Spell on You," whose song "Strange" was covered by Costello on *Kojak Variety*.

Bye to Bennett and Demon?

Although nothing has been reported in the music trades, *BB* has learned that Elvis Costello may have discontinued his representation by Danny Bennett's RPM Music Productions. This certainly explains why Bennett was nowhere to be seen on the recent *Lonely World* tour. EC engaged Tony's son in late 1998 about the time of *Painted From Memory's* release. For the time being it may be that Elvis is once again handling his own affairs under the By Eleven moniker.

Likewise, based on the closing of its web site and the changing of its telephone greeting, it seems that Demon Records as we knew it is officially no more. The label which was started by Elvis and Jake Riviera, his former manager, was sold back in April 1998 to UK retail group Kingfisher. In addition to housing EC's pre-Warner's UK catalog, Demon will long be remembered for its outstanding reissue efforts and mail order service.

Juliet Letters Delivered in Sweden

The Royal Musical College in Stockholm staged a concert featuring an almost complete version of *The Juliet Letters* on January 26. The performance was given by The CRAM Quartet - Cecilia Gustavsson (violin), Rebecca Debrecini (violin), Anna Edmark (viola), Madeleine Johansson (cello) - with singer Daniel Moller. The musicians, all students at the RMC, performed the following: "Deliver Us", "For Other Eyes", "Swine", "Expert Rites", "Dead Letter", "I Almost Had a Weakness", "Taking My Life in Your Hands", "Who Do You Think You Are?", "Jacksons, Monk and Rowe", "Romeo's Séance", "I Thought I'd Write to Juliet", "Damnation's Cellar" and "The First to Leave".

Ric Henriksson reports for *BB*: "The string quartet was seemingly nervous and occasionally hesitant to start with, but after a few numbers they gradually shifted towards full concert gear, sounding better and better as the performance wore on. Unfortunately the

singer was a bit 'too good' (he's probably more accustomed to singing opera) and seemed overanxious to maintain his vibrato at all times. Singing 'Swine', for instance, with too much vibrato and in a high register doesn't really help deliver the original emotions in the lyrics. But all in all it was an enjoyable evening." This was not the first time that *The Juliet Letters* has featured in a Swedish concert hall. Back in 1995, the Gothenburg Opera mounted an opera-like musical play based upon excerpts of *The Juliet Letters* and Janáček's *Intimate Letters*.

High Fidelity

EC's "Shipbuilding" graces the soundtrack LP (due March 28 on Hollywood Records) to the movie version (opens March 31) of Nick Hornby's great 1995 novel *High Fidelity*. This tale of three music-obsessive record store employees moves its setting from London to Chicago and stars actor John Cusack. It's no surprise that Elvis would appear on the soundtrack as he is frequently mentioned with great respect by the book's characters. Now if someone could only explain why EC didn't merit the title track with his classic song from 1980's *Get Happy!!* LP.

Prison Song

Also on the movie front, news regarding the release of *Prison Song* featuring Elvis and his two new songs ("Oh Well" and "Soul for Hire") has been sparse. The *Los Angeles Times* did however mention that the film would be out during the "fall-holiday" release season. The big surprise thus far however was on March 10 when Elvis premiered his recording of "Oh Well" on John Kelly's *Mystery Train* radio program (see page 37). EC also commented that the track was recorded in Dublin and he mentioned that the movie's star, rapper Q-Tip, had helped contribute to the song's lyrics.



Q-Tip

Kelly's *Mystery Train* radio program (see page

Dan Hicks LP

According to its Internet site, Surfdog Records claims that Elvis Costello, along with Rickie Lee Jones and Tom Waits, will be a special guest on the upcoming LP by Dan Hicks. *Beatin' The Heat* will be released on June 27 by the legendary San Francisco musician. Hicks achieved modest success in the late 60's and early 70's with his band Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks and has since continued to perform and record as a solo act.

Tiny Steps

Quotables: Counting Crows singer Adam Duritz picked his favourite "Saturday night record" for *Mojo* (December): "When we have people over on a Saturday night, we listen to *Armed Forces* by Elvis Costello. I love every song on that album." □ In the February 13 *Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger*, former MTV VJ Matt Pinfield (the bald guy) chose EC's version of "My Funny Valentine" as his Most Romantic Song for Valentine's Day. "His delivery kills me because it's very simple and dark and sparse. The minute the first note hits and you hear his voice, I stop dead in my tracks." □ **Elvis Sightings:** Last September, while en route to kick off his tour in California, EC was spotted at both Tom Waits shows at NYC's Beacon Theater. □ In February Elvis sat in a box and was sighted backstage at Randy Newman's show at London's Royal Festival Hall. □ **Attractions:** Pete Thomas plays on the upcoming album by acclaimed singer-songwriter Elliot Smith as well as on *Zooma*, the instrumental rock solo album by former Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones. □ Steve Nieve is among the session musicians credited in *Still Crazy*, a "Spinal Tap"-like film for which Clive Langer produced the music. □ **This & That:** In August, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ran an article entitled "The Elvis Costello Problem in Teaching Popular Culture." The author's thesis was that today's teachers can't communicate using cultural references unfamiliar to today's students. □ Back in December, the *Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger* ran its list of the 50 greatest songwriters of the century. In its December 26 paper, a feature about reader responses to the list cited Elvis as getting the most mentions about not making the list. □ Ken Tucker of *Entertainment Weekly* and NPR's *Fresh Air* listed "High Fidelity" among his ten best songs of the millennium. □ **Best Concerts of 1999:** Geoffrey Himes of the *Washington Post* chose C&N at Pier Six in Baltimore as his best. □ Jim Ridley of the *Nashville Scene* had C&N at the Ryman in his list of ten: "His 37-song, four-encore concert was the year's richest and most generous - in humour, in emotion, in connection to the audience." □

Jim Sullivan of the *Boston Globe* had C&N at the Orpheum as his No. 3 pick. □ Kansas City's *Pitch Weekly* had the C&N Midland Theater gig as one of the top large venue shows of the year. □ At his web site, Ron Sexsmith listed EC's Cologne, Germany concert among the best five shows he attended during the year. □ **Television:** In December, NBC-TV sitcom *Will & Grace* used a night out at an Elvis Costello concert

in its storyline. □ On VH-1's *The List*, where celebs get together to compile "best" lists, actress Kelli Williams (*The Practice*) chose EC as her top pick for "Best Live Performer." Back in June, she told *In Style* magazine that her fave LP was *PFM* calling Elvis and Burt "The best odd couple since Penn & Teller." □ USA cable TV network A&E labeled its week of shows on famous snoops "Watching the Detectives" week. □ **Royalties Check:** In recent months the Max Weinberg Seven, house band for *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* (NBC-TV - USA), have been heard playing both "No Action" and "Oliver's Army." □ A fairly lengthy excerpt from the *Live Stiffs* version of "I Just Don't Know What to Do With Myself" accompanied the ghastly sight of Martin Clunes accessing an Internet porn site in the BBC2 black comedy drama *Sex 'n' Death* broadcast last December 14. □ EC's version of "She" cropped up unexpectedly on a "birthing tape" during the Christmas special of BBC1 TV's *The Royle Family*. (It segued rather movingly out of "Pie Jesu" as "our Denise", her waters having broken, sat propped up against the bath awaiting a taxi to the hospital.) □ On the UPN television network in the USA, "Alison" was heard during a commercial for a hockey game with the "my aim is true" line sung as a goal was being scored. □ **And Finally:** Hats off to Sir Cliff Richard who confirmed, once again, just how completely bonkers he is during a Talk Radio discussion about the lack of airtime given to his wretched "Millennium Prayer" Christmas single. The "Peter Pan of Pop" commented to the effect that every radio station in Britain would have been glad to play it had Elvis Costello been singing it. The point is, Harry, he wouldn't have been caught dead singing it in the first place. □



A Beach Boy for the Nineties by Phillip Burke was published in the New York Observer in May 1996. The title is a reference to the accompanying article on EC's *Long Island, New York* show in the *Hamptons* for all the upper crusties.



Spotlight On New Releases

KFOG: On December 7, great San Francisco radio station KFOG-FM released (and sold out) *Live From the Archives 6*, an annual for-charity CD compilation of tracks from live radio broadcasts. Included was EC's "Ship of Fools" from the 1996 Costello & Nieve show at the Fillmore. As was the case with the inclusion of "Just About Glad" on *Live From the Archives 3*, both tracks unfortunately also appeared on the C&N box set. When we contacted KFOG about why they couldn't offer a unique track, Jude Heller replied: "It was a major feat to get that Costello track from the Grateful Dead and Elvis. For the average music lover, our listeners are thrilled to have this included on the disc, and quite honestly, we were too!" Maybe next year we'll get a unique track.

Sopranos: As expected, on December 14, Play-tone / Columbia / Sony Music Soundtrax released *The Sopranos: Music from the HBO Original Series* (Cat. No. CK 63911) which includes "Complicated Shadows" by Elvis Costello & the Attractions (taken from the *All This Useless Beauty* LP).

Brodskys Best: Along with Gershwin, Ravel and Japanese folk songs, the *Best of Brodsky Quartet* also includes tracks recorded with Björk and Elvis Costello ("I Almost Had a Weakness" and "Jacksons, Monk and Rowe" from 1993's *The Juliet Letters*). The set was released in a single worldwide

pressing by Teldec in the USA on January 18 and in the UK on February 21 (Cat. No. 3984-28404-2).

Orbison Again: After undergoing several audio and video repackagings, Roy Orbison's *Black & White Night* was given an incredible sonic enhancement with last year's release on DVD (including some bonus tracks). Now a fully remastered Dolby Digital 2.0 version of the 1987 concert will be released on CD. In addition to Elvis being a member of the all-star band, Roy performs

Costello's "The Comedians" in the set which was produced by T Bone Burnett. No release date has been given.

Tidbits: ☐ On February 15, Epic issued *Woodstock '99: The Blue Album* containing EC's "Alison." The original 2-CD set was bifurcated into separate disks. ☐ *Twelve Sounds of December Volume Two* (Jazziz on Disc) included "The Sweetest Punch" from the Bill Frisell LP. The enhanced CD was sent to subscribers and could also be purchased by mail for \$5. (Info is at www.jazziz.com.) ☐ The movie *I Want You*, which is named after and incorporates the EC classic in its storyline, has been released in the USA on VHS video, currently priced at \$106.99 for the rental market. ☐ *Q Country* (Hit Label / Chrysalis AHLCD16), a UK 1994 2-CD set includes "Tonight the Bottle Let Me Down" taken from *Almost Blue*. ☐ *Celtic Wave 1998* is a US promo CD (RCA Victor / BMG Classical RCDJ 63160-2 that includes "Long Journey Home" by The Chieftains w/ EC. ☐ A new site from Columbia House called www.musicmaker.com lets you make a custom CD at the not so reasonable price of \$14.95 (before shipping and handling) for 12 songs. A search of the "over 100,000" songs finds EC represented by only the live "God Give Me Strength" from *One Amazing Night* and June Tabor's version of "All This Useless Beauty" ☐ *The Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* DVD includes a brief segment with EC & Burt as they filmed their scene.

UK Compilations: Here's a round up of some 1999 UK releases:

☐ *Roots: 20 Years of Essential Folk, Roots & World Music: Britain, Ireland and North America* (Nascente) 2-CD compilation celebrating the 20th anniversary of *Folk Roots* magazine compiled by editor Ian Anderson includes "Tramp the Dirt Down". (June 14)

☐ *Now That's What I Call Music 1981 - The Millennium Series* (EMI/Virgin/Universal) Part of a series of 20 2-CD compilations covering the years 1980-99, this one includes "Good Year for The Roses". (June 21)

☐ *Now That's What I Call Music 1980 - The Millennium Series* (EMI/Virgin/Universal) 2-CD compilation includes "I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down". (June 21)

☐ *Easy Listening: Music Inspired by 'Big Bad World'* (Virgin) 2-CD TV tie-in compilation including "Alison" which was used to great effect in a key scene from the 1999 ITV series. (July 5)

☐ *Ten Years of Rock: FLEADH* (RCA) Compilation celebrating the 10th anniversary of the London Fleadh includes "Oliver's Army". (September 6)

I Want My MP3 !

On February 28, Elvis Costello was in the press with the announcement that his entire pre-Warners catalog (which he owns) has been made available for digital download on the Internet through Emusic.com. Twelve LP's (*MAIT* through *B&C* and the 1985 *Very Best Of*) can be had in their Ryko/Demon bonus track-versions in MP3 format for a mere \$8.99 a pop.

"This is a huge endorsement for downloadable music - to have a major artist like Elvis Costello choose to release such a large, quality catalog for sale in MP3," said Gene Hoffman, EMusic.com president and CEO." It is a significant step forward for the millions of music fans that want the convenience of managing and listening to their music digitally."

"If only I had been paying attention back in the 70s, I could be writing this greeting in FORTRAN," said Costello. "As it is, mere words cannot express . . . so see you in cyberspace. The future lies ahead."

However futuristic this may sound, in our humble opinion, this move amounts to a big nothing, although it hopefully could be a sign of future things to come. It seems odd that anyone would pay just to get the songs on the hard drive of their computer when these days they could just as easily get the same results (in better quality) by burning a copy of a friend's CD! Said one record executive to BB: "I think he's lucky if he gets 100 hits on that site. I just don't see his fans wanting an MP3 file of his music. But maybe I'm wrong." Now, Elvis - how about putting some live stuff out there for us - like *Meltdown* for example?

NEW

BOOTLEGS

"Live bootlegs can be funny;
studio bootlegs are the work
of gangsters and thieves."

Elvis Costello

A Class Act (Doberman) Unbelievable 3-CDR set featuring a superb quality audience recording of the Royal Festival Hall show in London on December 10, 1999, rounded out by well chosen cuts from the dates in Nottingham, Oxford, Leicester and Ipswich. With the label's new professional artwork parodying the C&N box set, this is as good a souvenir of Elvis & Steve's late 99 UK shows as you could possibly hope for. Hats off!

Covers Corner

BB subscriber Trevor Tall of **Collins & Tall** wrote back in October of last year to inform us that the duo have recorded covers of "Tiny Steps" and "Possession." "We had just completed demos for our next album," he says, "and we decided to record them using the best technology available - a 25-year-old 4 track!" The version of "Tiny Steps" on Trevor's tape - with a great, unhinged falsetto chorus - particularly appealed to our European Editor so let's hope that the pair decides to include it on some future release.

USA reader Dan Felsenheld caught an old cover for us while listening to New Jersey radio station WFMU over the Internet. North



Carolina punk rocker quartet **Pipe** do a fairly straight but crude rendering of "No Action" on their 1997 LP *Slowboy* (Merge Records). Interestingly, the infamous "hold that bakelite in

my hands" line becomes "hold that baby till it hurts my head." Well, maybe that's how they heard it.

Loose Recordings has issued a fabulous UK compilation entitled *New Sounds of the Old West - Volume Two* (VJCD 111) that features **Lambchop** covering "Beyond Belief." As reported back in BB23/24, the band backed up singer-songwriter Vic Chestnutt when he also sang the song on his last tour. According to the CD notes, the song is a "regular free for all set closer" for the Nashville-based band. Highly recommended!

Bjork and the Brodsky Quartet once again performed live, this time at the Union Chapel in London, on December 9 and 11. Apart from her own songs, they also again performed "Why?" and "Who Do You Think You Are?" from *The Juliet Letters*.

And finally, this column just wouldn't seem right with mentioning **Aimee Mann** for the third issue in a row. Even on the heels of the success of her contributions to the *Magnolia* soundtrack, her *Bachelor No. 2* is still set for self-distribution through www.aimeemann.com. On tour with her husband Michael Penn, Aimee has started selling copies of the full LP at her shows and the title of her song written with Elvis has again changed back to "The Fall of the World's Own Optimist." The advance EP has used "Great" instead of "Own."

My Science Fiction Twin by Flee

SO WHAT DO YOU LISTEN TO WHEN you're not listening to Elvis Costello? Joe Jackson, Graham Parker, Split Enz, The Jags? Are you looking for more music like Elvis? Pop songs with great hooks, twisted lyrics, and powerful vocals - you know like Elvis. Well my friends, look no further. I hope in this regular column to introduce you to bands/artists that embody all that you like about Elvis. New bands, unheard of bands, underrated bands, any bands that have that sound, that spirit that you love in Elvis Costello. This issue I've selected two artists, one that's been around a while but has never gotten the recognition he deserves and another artist that is new and struggling due to record label problems to get their first full length release out. Both artists I discovered while attending last year's *South by Southwest* music conference in Austin, TX. And if you haven't been yet to see 900 bands in five days, you are missing the music industry's version of a multiple orgasm.

Hard to believe, knowing what I know now, that I wasn't interested in seeing Alejandro Escovedo. I was at SXSW to see new pop bands not Latin music. (Not that there's anything wrong with that.) But, Alejandro Escovedo is about as Latin as Elvis Declan MacManus is Celtic (not that there's anything wrong with that). The other artist is The Candy Butchers, a band recommended to me by a writer for the *Dallas Morning News'* guidelive.com. It was a late show and it conflicted with another band I wanted to see - but she said the magic words: "He reminds me a bit of Elvis Costello."

Mike Viola and the Candy Butchers *Falling into Place*

The Candy Butchers are one of those bands in record company limbo. They recorded their first CD and the record company folded. All they managed to get out was a promo only EP called *Live at the Candy Store*. Their new CD called *Falling into Place* came out in June of 1999 and a promo-only EP was released with six songs from the full-length. The songs are pure pop. The band includes the usual bass and drums with the lead singer, Mike Viola, handling guitar duties—an arrangement much like EC and A. The results are similar too. A tight rocking three piece led by the underappreciated vocals talents of Mike Viola. Maybe the best way to describe the band is to imagine Graham Parker singing EC covers with the Attractions. Favorite songs include "Killing Floor," a pop gem, "What Will You Do With Your Hands," an R & B/pop number and "Happy Birthday

Risbee," a song with a hook that won't quit.

But where The Candy Butchers really stand out and show their Costello influence is in their live show. Mike Viola stands, plays and moves his head and guitar just like Costello. They put on an energetic show punctuated by between song banter much like - yes, Costello. Catch them live if you get the chance.

Alejandro Escovedo *Bourbonitis Blues*



Elvis Costello may not be the first person you think of when you hear Alejandro Escovedo, but there are many

parallels in their music and careers. Both started out in punk, (Escovedo with the Nuns) and moved into some country, Costello with *Almost Blue*, Escovedo with the ground breaking cow-punk band Rank and File. (Who also supported EC & the A's on their *Clocking In Across the UK* tour in 1983.) They both have been unhappy with their record companies' promotion of their work and although Costello has at least had some mainstream success, they both maintain a small but dedicated audience. Musically, both have great voices that sometimes go unappreciated by the critics, both have dabbled with orchestras, both have had the urge to stretch out and play with different groups of musicians and they both have an intensity and passion in their songs. Costello is a more prolific writer who draws on many musical influences. While Escovedo does the same, he tends to draw more directly by covering songs from his influences.

His latest CD, *Bourbonitis Blues*, is one of those CDs on which you enjoy listening to every song. The first track, "I Was Drunk," like Costello's "I Want You," is a stark and chilling song of desire that cuts right through your breast bone and grabs your heart. Escovedo pays homage to one of the often forgotten greats, T-Rex on "California Blues" and to one of the more well known, Keith Richards on "Guilty." Check the liner notes, but as much as it sounds like a great Rolling Stones song, it's all Alejandro Escovedo. Much like Costello gets pegged as a punk rocker, you'll probably find this CD filed in the Americana section. Don't be fooled, this is a masterpiece of styles that will stand proudly next to any CD in your EC section.

Flee is none other than Lee Courtney, DJ for Tampa radio station WMNF and author of the Costello Pledge of Allegiance (see BB8/9).

Television

Midnight Kingdom (December 16 - NHK-BS2 - Japan) Featured an "Entertainment News" segment which featured snippets of EC and Steve singing "Man Out of Time," "Talking in the Dark," and "She." These were from the same source as the clip shown on "Music Factory" (see below).

Heineken Night Live (December 24-25 - SBS6 - Holland) From EC's appearance in Rotterdam (see page 26) "Alison" and "God Give Me Strength" are broadcast the first night followed by "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" and "She" the next.

Music Factory Hyper 2000 (January 22 - Japan) This DJ-hosted show included footage of Elvis and Steve performing "She," but it was not clear if this was concert footage or shot in a studio. Elvis also did a short interview (unfortunately right over most of the footage of the song).

Music Fair (January 23 - CXTV - Japan) Music oriented talk show featured EC and Japanese singer/songwriter Motoharu Sano who were both briefly interviewed and then played live across the sound stage from one another, back and forth. Shown were a quicker version of "Alison" (played in a "brand-new style," according to Elvis) and "She" (backed by a full string section). Sano, a big fan of Costello's work, played a song he had written also called "She" to which EC remarked "It's a theme!" "Green Shirt" and "Clubland" were also played but unfortunately not broadcast.

Upcoming: Elvis Costello, Prefab Sprout's Paddy MacAloon, and Mos Def are



Green back in 1984.

the initial artists confirmed to participate in a documentary film on Scritti Politti, which may possibly air on the BBC next year. You may recall that head SP, Green Gartside provided backing vocals on EC's 1984 *Goodbye Cruel World* recording of "I Wanna Be Loved." ■ A segment on Elvis is being prepared for a new VH-1 (USA) entertainment news series that premieres this fall. BB was asked for and provided comments made by EC about his 1977 *Saturday Night Live* appearance. ■

Radio Radio

Here are track listings for three 1999 FM broadcasts of Costello & Nieve that we failed to list:

Stockholm, Sweden (Cirkus - May 1) As broadcast June 25 by P4:

Why Can't a Man Stand Alone? / Accidents Will Happen / Toledo / The Sweetest Punch / Little Triggers / Girls Talk / Painted from Memory / All This Useless Beauty / Veronica / In the Darkest Place / Inch by Inch / Shallow Grave / Watching the Detectives

Berlin, Germany (Sendessal - May 10) As broadcast May 12 by Radio Eins:

Pads, Paws and Claws / Indoor Fireworks / Radio Sweetheart / God's Comic / All This Useless Beauty / Deep Dark Truthful Mirror / Alison / In the Darkest Place / Inch by Inch / Shallow Grave / Watching the Detectives / Everyday I Write the Book (with Ron Sexsmith) / I Want You / I Still Have that Other Girl / Red Shoes / God Give Me Strength / Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4

Toronto, Canada (Massey Hall - June 16) As broadcast September 12 on Radiosonic by CBC Radio:

Temptation / Man Out of Time / Toledo / What's Her Name Today? / Girls Talk / Everyday I Write the Book / This House is Empty Now / Radio Sweetheart / Accidents Will Happen / Alison / In the Darkest Place / God Give Me Strength

And here's the latest broadcast:

In Concert (February 5 - BBC Radio 2 - UK) Second hour-long excerpt from C&N's concert at Newcastle City Hall on November 12. Tracks broadcast are:

Alibi Factory / Temptation / What's Her Name Today? / Chelsea / Good Year for the Roses / Radio Sweetheart / She / God's Comic / Shipbuilding / Red Shoes / Oliver's Army / I Want You / Pump It Up

And in other radio:

Cucamonga (December 6, 13, 20, 27 - Radio 1 - Belgium) This four-part Costello special was based around an interview which journalist Christophe Verbiest conducted with Costello when he played in Oostende last July.

Elvis Costello: A Good Year for The Roses (February 5 - BBC Radio 2 UK) Old gits' station Radio 2 does Elvis proud, not only honouring its promise to air a second excerpt from the Newcastle show but preceding it with this hour-long documentary based largely around an interview which DJ Pete Curran conducted in Ireland this January.

As well as some illustrative musical interludes there are comments from Paul

McCartney, Burt Bacharach, Roger McGuinn, Jackie Thomas and Paul Cassidy. For the dedicated Costello watcher the programme begins, unpromisingly, with the usual blather about family background, working with Macca and Burt, etc., etc. However, once this is dispensed with, Curran succeeds in coaxing an unusually interesting analysis of his career from Elvis. Here are a few choice cuts:

"I'm not in show business to get a girlfriend. I've got a wife and I like the idea that I can sing for anybody that is prepared to listen ... I never wrote very young-minded songs, even when I was 22. I didn't consciously try to write lets-go-dancing or carry-your-books-home kind of songs. I always wanted to write songs that, hopefully, people hadn't already written."

"I had every intention of just existing as a songwriter and never being a performer, initially. I never had the real ambition to be a performer. My real ambition was to be in a band where the band identity was everything. My role model was really Robbie Robertson and I thought that if I could be as anonymous as he apparently was inside The Band that would be fine for me. I wouldn't have to deal with the personality aspect of being a pop singer and I could just write songs. What I forgot in taking my cue from him was that he didn't sing the songs. So the minute I started to sing, then your identity comes to the fore. It was a naive idea."

"The way of writing where words sort of demanded music's existence served me very well ... I worked almost exclusively that way until 1980. Around that time I bought a piano - which is an instrument I can't play - and I found that having all of the possibilities of music laid out diagrammatically in front of me led me down different roads immediately ... it would be different than me strumming on a guitar and I would drop out of certain rhythms. Songs could be both slower and more reflective - or they were kind of neutral rhythmically and they could have an outside rhythmic idea imposed upon a harmonic development. I wrote most of the songs, from that time on, on the piano, with a couple of conscious decisions to go back to the guitar for the immediacy that was there..."

"Obviously a record like King of America was written largely on the acoustic guitar and the record Blood & Chocolate was made by hitting bits of wood together - like banging on tables and then trying to create an electric guitar sound that went with that ... I've got the demos of those songs with just me coming in and I'm not even wanting to commit to the key. I'm just slapping my hand on the counter in the kitchen for something that reverberates, stick the tape recorder on and just scat the song out against the rhythm and then later pick up the guitar and find as few chords as make that work. I still like the idiot form of just banging - here's a rhythm, the rhythm goes like this [bangs on table] and this is the chord - CHANNNGG! - and can you play it like this record, can you steal the sound off this record."

"Around the end of the 80s I started to experiment, using the recording studio as a way of juxtaposing different musical textures. I would have groups of musicians that brought with them a sound - like the Dirty Dozen Brass Band or Irish musicians playing traditional instruments - but sort of arrange them in my head and then juxtapose them on tape to achieve effects. It was an add-and-subtract, trial-and-error sort of thing. I had a pretty good idea of how it should fit together, but because there was no musical training in this, my sense of orchestration was instinctive and, sometimes, it didn't work. I would have to unpick the mix and go back to it. It was a sort of 'dubby' way of working, like a reggae dub thing."

"I reached a point around the time of the next record [Mighty Like a Rose] - where I attempted to do the same thing, but with a conventional band foundation - that I

realised I was getting sometimes too dense a picture. It's because I had too many things playing chordally, simultaneously. Maybe if I'd seen it written down I could have seen where the denseness lay that I didn't need.

The fact that I'm not a trained musician in any way - I can't sight read, I've never taken any formal lessons, I really can't play an instrument in a conventional sense - means that I've kept a sort of amateur idiot part of myself while being able to hear and understand things that are much more complicated ... I haven't tried to improve my dexterity as a guitar player. For why? I have no intention of becoming Segovia or Jimi Hendrix. I like the fact that my playing is awkward because it suits certain aspects of the musical personality I'm trying to get over. If I want to hear fluid playing, I can hire a player that can do it for me better than I could do it, quicker than I could do it ... for me to waste time doing that when I should be writing songs - I mean, in the time that I could have learned to play those instruments I've written over 300 songs. I answered the vocation of songwriting, not the vocation of being an instrumentalist.

['Couldn't Call It Unexpected'] is a melody that just doesn't like the microphone. The recorded version compared with what is heard in concert will tell you that the melody just doesn't want to be recorded - it's like a vampire or something, you can't photograph it! It seems to work best in a theatre and the sentiment of the song is one of wanting to believe in something and never really being certain that there is something there to believe in. As much as I ever say 'that's what that song is about' that, in a simple sense, is what the song proposes."



The NPR 100

(February 14 - National Public Radio - USA) Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's "My Funny Valentine" is

featured on this Valentine's Day as part of NPR's look at the "100 most important American musical works of the 20th century." Among the versions played is EC's 1979 recording of the song written for the 1937 musical *Babes in Arms*. The brief segment also included the following comments from Elvis:

"It's fair to say that "My Funny Valentine" is actually a woman's song and yet I associate it with male versions, obviously my own included. In the original female version, the woman is talking of the imperfections of her lover. And when a man sings these same images it has some strange dreamlike quality. That's what I get from it anyway. I don't know why that should be. Maybe because some of the observations are completely inappropriate: 'Is your figure less than Greek? Is your mouth a little weak? When you open it to speak, are you smart?' It sounds a little bit more patronizing coming from a man and a lot more withering coming from a woman. But nevertheless if it's sung with tenderness it creates a great sense of mystery.

After all these imperfections have been cataloged, it says 'Don't change a hair for me, not if you care for me. Stay little valentine, stay.' That passage of music is so strong. It has such a lot of longing in it, that when the lyrics conclude "Each day is Valentine's Day, you don't even notice it ... the fact that it really might be handled different musically seemed like a really trite payoff. But it just seems absolutely perfect."

Dave Fanning (February 27 - 2FM - Ireland) Unilluminating natter which sounds like it was recorded during rush hour at the local bus station and which leaves your humble Euro Editor feeling he should get out more. How Elvis finds the patience to keep going over his family background, working with Macca, Burt's obsessiveness ("You will never meet anybody who will become so tortured over the placement of a semiquaver"), 90-foot pictures of Julia Roberts, etc., etc., is beyond me. The only truly entertaining moments come when EC takes his customary pops at the English ("You know what their philosophy is? It's 'who does he think he is?'") and Oasis ("We've got some cellos on it so we've made 'I Am the Walrus'. That only happens in Manchester..."). And he's still taunting us about those tapes: "I found tapes recently that have been in a plastic bag since 1976 - I don't know if they're worth people's time..." Tell you what, El. Pop 'em in the post to us and we'll let you know.

Mystery Train (March 10 - RTE Radio 1 - Ireland) When John Kelly's regular 2-hour Friday show opens with a Raymond Scott advert for the Bendix Corporation fading into Capt. Beefheart's "Big Eyed Beans From Venus" it can mean only one thing. Yes folks, Elvis is back in the RTE building, promising us another "musical and, in some cases, geographical trip" aboard the *Mystery Train*. As during previous visits (see page 42) a relaxed EC takes to his occasional DJ role like a duck to water, so we get informative intros to the eclectic musical offerings, professional-sounding links (a rarity on this show!), enthusiastic ravings over Randy Newman's recent Dublin gig, *Fast Show* impersonations, and even a special dedication to wife Cait who, we are informed, has broken her toe on a carelessly-placed case in the couple's spare room (this after returning unscathed from a perilous arctic trip to see the Northern Lights!). The box of goodies brought along to tonight's show includes a "world premiere" of "Oh Well" - the song featuring lyrics co-written with rapper Q-Tip which EC recorded in Dublin for the forthcoming film *Prison Song* - and an advance copy of "Fire Suite One" from Roy Nathanson's *Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill* in which we get to hear Elvis singing the memorable phrase "pissed as a fart". (We'll have the full run down on EC's musical selections in our next issue.) Confining himself mainly to sitting back and enjoying the musical feast with the rest of us, host Kelly does manage to squeeze in an enquiry about what Elvis is up to at the moment: "I was 42 weeks on the road last year," comes the reply, "so I'm taking a little time writing some new songs, working on a few different things at once. I'm trying to

finish off a group of songs that I wrote in the middle of last year that'll hang together and be another sound, and maybe I'll have some sort of group to play [them]."



Magazines:

Jazziz (December - USA) Costello & Frisell are interviewed about *The Sweetest Punch* in a three-way long distance conference call with Josef Woodard. (The title track is also found on the magazine's monthly compilation CD - see *Add to Your Collection*).

Frisell: "One thing I did fairly early in the process was to take all the music and just play it all on the guitar. I made a tape for myself. I tried to internalize it that way, to think of it as if these were my own tunes. Somehow, by putting it on the guitar, it took a little step more into my own world. Then, by hearing the guitar, that generated whatever my instincts are for orchestrating things."

Costello: "Wow, that really surprises me. I didn't know you did that. In some ways, that shouldn't surprise me, but it sort of does because the writing - particularly when you're playing as part of the ensemble - sounds completely as if you conceived it without it being, as it were, contracted into one instrument. You were exploding it out from one instrument. Piano is a bit more orchestral, I suppose."

Oor (December - Netherlands) Interview with EC by Geert Henderickx printed in Dutch and accompanied by some great colour photos taken on stage before the show in Blackpool. (Including one of EC napping on an equipment case!)

"Believe it or not, but I never performed in Blackpool as Elvis Costello. I was allowed to play here one time when I was sixteen with the orchestra of Joe Loss, where my father was earning his living as a singer. It was in the Central Club, a name I will never forget in my whole life. A few minutes before the curtains were raised, I asked the keyboard player for a note, so that I could tune my guitar. While he switched on the keyboard, he hit an E without realizing that the thing first had to get heated for a while. That's why I got a half tone, and I was way too low. I could only turn the volume to zero and playback the whole evening. A good preparation for the future, as became evident when I later had to come to Top of The Pops to do my trick" (Translation by Wouter Pronk)

The Performing Songwriter (December) After discussing how Jon Brion had given her a "road map" in co-writing "That's Just What You Are," Aimee Mann had this to say about writing with Elvis Costello:

"It's actually just the opposite with me and Elvis - that's a case where I'll have to come up with the initial framework. Like on "The Fall of the World's Own Optimist," I had a verse and a chorus, but I couldn't come up with any words for the verses. So then he came along and wrote this whole B-section to the chorus, which was really great, it takes the song in this whole

other direction. And then he added in the verse lyrics, which I then had to tailor to get back to the original topic."

Uncut (January - UK) There are three EC entries (an incredible showing, only equaled by The Beatles) in the chronologically listed "Apocalypse Wow! 100 moments that shook music, movies . . . and the world. A personal chronicle of a century of genius, madness, murder, riots and war." by Nick Hasted:

64. **The Falklands War and Elvis Costello's "Shipbuilding" (1982)** The Falklands conflict was Britain's only competitive war since Korea, a time-warped imperialist contest whose pomp dimmed as the Belgrano then the Sheffield sank into the Atlantic, with government control of televised carnage adding to the distanced mood of worry, and hated first-term Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Churchillian rhetoric setting new standards for mindless jingoism.

Almost uniquely in an Eighties of much clumsy political songwriting, Costello found a poetic language to communicate his sorrow and implacable opposition - "With all the will in the world / diving for dear life / when we could be diving for pearls." "Is it worth it?" he began at a Liverpool concert this year, playing to his generation. "Yes!" somebody shouted, then remembered the song's subject, and everyone stood as if at prayer."

71. **Elvis Costello's "I Want You" (1986)** "I'm afraid I won't know when to stop . . ." Costello had split with his wife, would soon disband The Attractions and - on this sparse, savage song on his second album in a matter of months, *Blood and Chocolate* following quickly on the heels of *King of America*, a dilated eye at the centre of his storm - wrestled with resentment and vengeance. It starts like a hillbilly lament, keeps The Attractions brutality bottled up, guitar and drums like faint scrapes on the door, by someone you shouldn't let in. He threatens, taunts, begs, cries, pictures her dead, or him, her with her lover, and her body, undressing, unreachable, and he repeats over and over, "I Want You." In concerts this year, it seemed like it might never end. It was a love song.

78. **The Brighton Bombing and Costello's "Tramp the Dirt Down" (1985/89)** When news of the IRA bomb at the Tory conference broke in 1985, cabinet casualties unknown, everyone in my class at school instinctively cheered. Four years later, in this spine-chilling, tear-springing vengeance song, Costello shared the sentiment. In the cathartic climax of his decades work, he listed the lives she'd destroyed, the dripping cynicism of her visits to the sick in hospitals, the beatings and bloodshed in her name, the individuals, the adults, the children, squeezed of dreams, of imagination, by her grip. "And the cynical ones say that it all ends the same in the long run," he spits. This song is the emotional evidence of that lie, the repository of all she destroyed. "Well I hope you live long now, I pray the Lord your soul to keep/ I think I'll be going before we fold our arms and start to weep/I never thought for a moment that human life could be so cheap/Cos when they finally put you in the ground/They'll stand there laughing and tramp the dirt down".

Downbeat (February - USA) Bill & Elvis again talking about *The Sweetest Punch*, this time with separate phone interviews with Dan Ouellette. ("I'd be afraid if we were together I'd do all the talking, and Bill wouldn't be able to get a word in edgewise," said EC.) We here learn that Elvis caught Bill at one of his shows at NYC's Village Vanguard and there invited him to perform at 1995's *Meltdown*.

Frisell: "I love working with Elvis because he's so encyclopedic with his knowledge of all kinds of music and he's so spontaneous. I've been a big fan of his music since his second or third Attractions album. A friend played me one of his albums in the early '80s and it hit me how different he was from everyone else doing pop music then."

Costello: "I'm hoping Decca will be a new place to put music without using that dreadful C-word. You know, that word that begins with C-R-O-S . . . But this record isn't crossover . . . oops, there I said it."

Q (March - UK) *Imperial Bedroom* is listed among 12 choices for "Best Relationship Albums of All Time."

Only the bravest archaeologist claims to know what any Costello album is about, but his follow-up to *Almost Blue* is seen as his big confessional. His private life was certainly in tatters (married to Mary in 1974, the union was in trouble and he was seeing Bebe Buell - Liv Tyler's superchick mum - again). His first set conceived in the studio, these 15 songs have a doomed, inward looking quality. He even printed the lyrics! "Tears before bedtime/There'll be trouble tonight/I don't want to talk about it any more."

Newspapers:

Clarín (November 8 - Argentina) Interview found on web site of the South American newspaper. Also includes some funky shots of EC on the grounds of his Miami, FL hotel. Here's what our favorite musicologist has to say about Argentine music:

"I know Fito Paez. Fito and I ran into each other in New York a couple of years ago, but our schedules did not allow us to spend more time together. I've heard a couple of his recordings. I especially like the one he did that was on the same lines as the one I did with the Brodsky Quartet. There is a rich musical heritage in your country. In its history there are artists that have garnered an international reputation, starting with Carlos Gardel



and going into the modern era with Astor Piazzolla. But there are hundreds of musicians that we don't know about. Perhaps our ideas of Argentine music are not that clear since your country is so far away. It is the same way as most people think that all Irish music is Riverdance. It gives one a superficial look of the music. We should not allow that. Lucid, intelligent, and passionate music and their grand interpreter, be it Burt Bacharach, Johann Sebastian Bach or the Benedictine Monks may not really get understood because the public only remembers what it heard today.

The public refers to what was heard in the 60s, 70s, and 80s and they think that prior to that there was nothing. To them rock began with the Beatles and they search for those recordings in those time periods they feel properly document the history of rock. That is why people say that rock is in its decline. Many people refuse to hear new music and there are hundreds of recordings released that have relevance."

(Translation by Jesse Oronoz)

Ipswich Evening Star (November 16 - UK) Carnival time in East Anglia as the local rag's

Ipswich Live supplement ("Suffolk's Ultimate What's On Guide") goes to town on EC's forthcoming concert with a cover shot and 6-page colour illustrated spread in which one Aiden Semmens surveys the Costello career to date.

Ipswich Evening Star (November 23 - UK) Semmens follows up last week's veritable EC-fest with another article in *Ipswich Live*, this time based around a telephone interview with the man himself, looking to plug his show to good folk of Suffolk:

"It's certainly not a recital - we're not looking for reverent silence or anything, but we really don't mind. If people just want to sit and listen and be very still the theatre can offer you that. We have experienced both things on this tour: in Nottingham people were really appreciative at the end of numbers but the silence was almost eerie during numbers. In another place they were more boisterous and the atmosphere was a little bit like we were a rock n roll band."

The News and Observer (Raleigh, NC)

(February 13 - USA) David Menconi talks with Burt Bacharach in a preview piece before his local pops concert appearance with the North Carolina Symphony. We learn that *PFM* has sold 227,000 units and Burt had this to say about working with Elvis:

"We really gave a maximum shot with that album. Worked very hard, put a lot of blood and feelings into it. The tour we did together was great; people loved it. But it was very marginal financially, an expensive show to keep on the road. There's some talk of concerts in Italy this summer, but it's a very expensive package to put on the road. You do one-nighters and don't carry an orchestra, pick up strings wherever you go, and you've got to rehearse. That's too tough for me now. It was even too tough 30 years ago, you've got to be nuts to do it."

Internet:

www.eveningstar.co.uk (November 1999) Still more from Ipswich's *Evening Star* in the form of a full transcript of Aiden Semmens' interview with Elvis (see Newspapers), speaking from his hotel in Newcastle on November 12.

"I think if you have something different to say you should say it when you want to say it: equally, if you want to take a couple of years, as I did just after that, to explore other things and not feel obliged to record, what's worse than putting out to the public a record that you had to record because it said so in the calendar?"

Right now I'm in a situation where, having had a big success with the *Best Of* recently, I'm getting the encouragement to record very quickly. Well, I've got a lot of good songs right now, but they're all from different sources. There's some I've written with Steve that perhaps belong a little more in the recital hall - very intricate songs that have the complexity of The Juliet Letters, though they're very different material. Then I've written some songs for a story that I'm working on, that I haven't really worked out in my own mind how I want to present it. It's called *The Deliveryman*. The songs are mostly in the voices of characters, and it might be that when I come to it I want other people to be my guests and sing parts, or I might decide to sing it all myself. I don't know. I haven't made up my mind because I haven't finished writing it. What's good is to have a willing enough group of listeners in

the audience that I can come on stage and sing a brand new song and they'll listen to it.

When people ask me after the show 'When can I get that on record?' I say I don't know, I might scrap all of these songs and write ten more. I don't feel obliged that the next ten songs will necessarily make the next record: what should happen is that the next ten songs that hang coherently together will be the next record and the others will emerge later in the right context. I learned from the records that I made in the early Nineties that making records so diverse that I understand the logic but others find it hard to listen through because there's so much diversity - one minute it's rock and the next minute it's something else, one minute it's in quite understood musical barriers and the next it's on Mars - is asking a lot beyond that trust that you do require in your audience. They're paying you by buying your record or your concert ticket - they're paying for your view, for how you order your music."

I saw David Bowie on television the other day and someone asked what his favourite song was and he said "Shipbuilding." I never knew he liked that song! Somebody who's had all the ambition he's had in his career, of all the songs he could have picked, he picked "Shipbuilding"? It's amazing! He chose Robert Wyatt's version, rightly, as the definitive version."

Books:

No Sleep Till Canvey Island – The Great Pub Rock Revolution

Will Birch

(Virgin Books ISBN 0-7535-0411-1)

Publication date: April 6, 2000

Although the musical climate which the

movement helped bring about was to prove crucial to his career, Declan MacManus was, in truth, something of a fringe player on the pub rock circuit. As such, although his protruding

tongue graces the front cover, you'll find him flitting only briefly in and out of this riveting yarn, at least that is until the story reaches its latter stages with the emergence of Stiff Records and the creation of *Elvis Costello*.

In many ways, though, that's the least interesting part of this immaculately-researched book (especially if you've already read the author's superb account of the *Stiffs Live* tour – largely reproduced here – in *Mojo*). While whole forests have been pulped in the cause of its bastard younger brother "punk", a proper unravelling of the oft misunderstood pub rock tale is long overdue. We are indeed fortunate to have Mr Birch around to tell it. Not only was the former Kursaal Flyers drummer up to his filthy neck in the caper himself, affording him key access even to the more reticent of the main players,

but, more importantly, he's a bloody good writer.

Devoting a hundred or so of the central narrative's 260 pages to the tangled business affairs leading up to the infamous Famepushers publicity scam might be considered excessive, but it's done with such consummate skill and authority that I just couldn't put the book down. And so it goes. The rest of the tale unfolds with the same winning combination of dry wit and painstaking investigation. What's more, with a couple of noted exceptions, all of the quotes are taken from interviews conducted by the author himself, so *No Sleep Till Canvey Island* can be confidently filed under "horse's mouth" as opposed to "cut and paste".

Naturally, a certain Mr Costello has a number of interesting observations to make along the way and, for the EC trainspotter, there are a few nuggets of information to be filed away, particularly concerning the actual sequence of events on the trail from Flip City to the Attractions. But it would be a crime to buy this book just to look up the entries for Costello in the slightly unreliable index. There's just so much more to enjoy.

Mark Perry

Thanks to the extraordinarily helpful Helen West at Virgin Books, we've got a few copies of *No Sleep Till Canvey Island* to give away. All you have to do to win one is write and tell us Nick Lowe's full name. As usual, it's first come, first served, so get those entries in right now...



BB-Binders

Designed exclusively for *Beyond Belief* by the Jesse Jones Box Corporation, this attractive slip-case binder is embossed with the BB-logo and will hold up to 7-years worth of your favorite Costello fanzine. Please send your payment as per the subscription instructions on page 2. Kindly allow time for surface delivery to Europe and the Far East.

	Cost	Postage
USA	US\$15	\$3
Canada	US\$15	\$4
UK/Europe	£10	£3.50
Australia	AUS\$20	AUS\$7
Japan	US\$15	\$5

Back Issues

Issues 1 to 23 are all available although some quantities are getting limited. Back issues can be purchased at the regular issue price: USA and Canada \$4, UK/Europe £3, Australia AUS \$7 and Japan US \$5. Note: Issues 8/9, 13/14, 18/19 and 20/21 are double issues and cost twice the single issue price.



Here's an interesting item we missed from last year. The poet, musician and songwriter Martin Newell (ex-Cleaners From Venus, for those

who have read Giles Smith's excellent *Lost In Music*) contributes a staggering three poems per week to the UK national newspaper, *The Independent*. He has kindly given us permission to reprint the following, his tribute to *Elvis Costello* which appeared in print on April 23:

"Sainted From Memory" by Martin Newell

ThethingaboutCostello
Ishewentfromsongtoepic
Spittinglyricsatahundred
Milesperhour
Crammedwithpunsand
Syllablesandvitriolandvice
Liketartnovellasspewing
Fromashower

Withanadenoidalvoice
ABeatles'nastyteenagebrother
Didthismothermakehimgargle
Drawingpins?
Andawayofsoundingjealous
WhichyerGeldofsandPaulWellers
Andtheothersnevermanaged
Fortheirsins

InthetimeittookabandlikeTears
ForFearstodotheirdrumtracks
"concretefingers"coulddeliver
threeLPs
whichweremostlypackedwithkillers
-veryrarelyanyfillers
Atapacewhichbroughtreveiwiers
Totheirknees

Ifacriticismsurfaced
Itwouldonlybethenigglethat
Histendencytodabble
Candistract
Butforgivethecountrymaudlin
AndtheBrodskysandthedawdling
OverBacharachinfact

Hehaditcracked
Andthinkaboutyourexes
(thisappliestoallthesexes)
helambastedinhislyrics
andadmit
Heshouldgetsomekindofmedal
Asaspokesmanforthejilted
Onbehalfofallthecouples
Whohavesplit

Anyone interested in finding out more about Martin Newell could do worse than visit the excellent web site maintained on his behalf at <http://www.btinternet.com/~martinnewell/>



Radio Merseyside Elvis Costello Special

By Adrian New

was the Remploy club in Wallasey, the British Legion on the North side of the park in Birkenhead and all these little venues that popped up. God knows what I was like then, probably terrible. But they are all part of learning how to play. And at the end of it Alan and I did a residency in a club called the Crows Nest out in Widnes on a

WE'VE ALL HAD THAT CONVERSATION. Your mate or your mother-in-law is on the phone and says: "Elvis was on the radio the other night, did you hear it?"

"NO! Did you tape it for me?"

"No - I thought you'd know about it."

"WHY DIDN'T YOU PHONE ME?"

I thought I was having exactly that conversation when my wife's grandmother told me about two one-hour specials devoted to Elvis which were aired by BBC Radio Merseyside on 1 and 2 June 1999. But she HAD taped it for me so I am able to share with you some of the 35 minutes of interview with Spencer Leigh. The interview was taped before the Liverpool Royal Court concert on 14 April 1999 and was broadcast interspersed with a wide range of records by and associated with EC. Much of the interview sprang from the local Liverpool connection, including his early years in Liverpool, Rusty, his affinity with Merseybeat and his work with that other great son of Liverpool, Paul McCartney.

SL: Do you consider yourself a Liverpool artist?

EC: I was born in London, but I was christened in Birkenhead. So I don't know what that makes me. My mother's from Liverpool and my father's from Birkenhead. I grew up and went to school in London for most of my life, and just my last two years of schooling were up here in Liverpool. And all my holidays were on Merseyside, so I've got a sort of mixture. I've always said that whenever I'm doing anything good I'm always appropriated as one of the Liverpool artists, and whenever I'm bad I tend to get the opposite. Same in Ireland with my dad's family being from Ireland, I'm an honorary Irishman when I'm doing well, but when I'm doing badly I'm a Brit.

SL: How big an influence was your father on your musical tastes?

EC: I think both my parents were a very big influence on me. Perhaps the example of seeing my father go to work and the discipline of going to work. It's not always the most glamorous occupation - a lot of hanging around, a lot of time in dressing rooms and draughty theatres. I used to go with him to the

Hammersmith Palais on a Saturday afternoon while I guess my Ma was getting a little bit of peace and quiet in the house, see the band perform for quite a sparse crowd. People used to go and practice ballroom dancing in the afternoon, it was a very weird glimpse into another world. And my mother's interest in music, she worked here in Liverpool for several music stores, Rushworth's among them. There was a lot of responsibility in those days to know the catalogue and to be able to be informed, you couldn't look it up on a computer, you had to know the catalogue, you had to have an opinion. She has a very broad taste in music, perhaps even broader than my father's, embracing the bebop that they grew up listening too, a lot of the ballad singers that I've loved all my life: Sinatra, Mel Torme, Peggy Lee, and classical music as well, so I got this aural education before I ever thought to put a note on a page.

SL: The first time I ever came across you was as part of a duo called Rusty, with a guy called Allan Mayes and from what I remember, he seemed to have the dominant role in that partnership which was in some Liverpool club.

EC: Yeah, I think you're probably right, because when I first came up to Liverpool, he'd been part of a couple of different groups, and I joined the group which was at that point a four piece. I don't know if it tells you anything about me, but within six months we were down to a duo. He had more contacts and everything, and he drove the car. We played quite a bit, at various places like the Yankee Club and Temple Bar where they were quite happy to let you put on music because they thought it might attract a few more drinkers. A friend of mine, Vin Finn, ran a couple of clubs around town that were based more around people writing their own music than on the traditional scene. They didn't really want to hear from people who wrote their own songs in the traditional clubs in town so that was completely separate. There was a divide that you may recall between traditional and contemporary folk even, and if you played guitar, whatever music you listened to privately, you were essentially called traditional or contemporary folk. There was a songwriters club in Bowles Street, there

Friday night and that was proper playing in a pub, so you had to make a bit of a noise, and that was definitely a good introduction, more to rock and roll. I never really played in a rock and roll band. I didn't start really to do that until I went to live in London, I'd always played just an acoustic guitar. I've always had a loud voice. I don't know if Allan was older than me, he might have been a year or so older. But he was certainly more familiar with the way things worked because he'd played in other bands where I'd just come up from London in 1970 - I'd only just started playing in public.

SL: You've covered songs by the Escorts and the Merseybeats - were these all songs you loved in the past?

EC: Yes, some of them I remember from the 60s, some of them when I was involved in Demon Records. We were gradually reissuing all the best stuff from the 60s and 70s and, I might have heard one or two singles by the groups, but then we put out the whole albums and discovered there were some fantastic tracks. The Escorts were a great group and I always loved the Merseybeats; I saw the Merseybeats play. They were guests on the Joe Loss pop show when I was on school holidays and I saw them up close. I saw them coming in carrying their amplifiers in at 9 o'clock in the morning to the BBC.

SL: I know Paddy Chambers of the Escorts was very down on his luck at one stage, and he couldn't believe you had recorded "Night Time".

EC: That's a great song. And they also cut "From Head to Toe", the Smokey song which I think they did a better version of than Smokey. And we paid tribute to the Escorts version. It's a music I liked growing up, and then I rediscovered it when I was recording myself and it was another little avenue to pursue for a while.

SL: You knew all the Bacharach/David songs from the 1960s.

EC: I think people in England had an advantage because some of those songs were hits twice. They were hits for local artists like Zoot Money and the Merseybeats, and Cilla and Dusty Springfield and then you'd hear the

Dionne Warwick version later and that would sometimes be a hit as well. So we had the benefit of really getting steeped in those songs. That's why I was always amazed when people thought it was extraordinary that I would like Burt Bacharach - I think that's only in the minds of people who know Burt Bacharach more through the Carpenters and things like that in the 70s. If you grew up in the 60s his music was very intertwined with beat music because a lot of the beat groups played his songs even though they probably struggled to play them credibly because they didn't have the same orchestration as his records. His songs always had an R&B thing about them. The Beatles recorded "Baby It's You".

SL: When you did the album with Bacharach you didn't write any modern "Baby It's You"s.

EC: You can't go back in time, I think. Burt was very anxious that we were looking forward. I think there are some R&B tinged songs on the record but I think its very difficult to go back to those rhythms - they sound a little arcane now - a bit like playing Dixieland music or something would be to bebop players in the 50s. If you said "Let's play like Jelly Roll Morton," they'd have said, "Are you kidding?" Now we are 60 or 70 years away from Jelly Roll Morton we can listen to it and say "Wasn't that hip?" but it's much harder when you are just that bit away from it - to have the same affection for it. You always want to move on and create new sounds.

SL: Hal David wrote nervous, edgy lyrics, and that's something you have in common.

EC: I think people tend to miss that Hal David's words are very torrid sometimes and Burt's melodies, the little jumps that are made rhythmically, really mirror that. I cannot understand the description of Burt Bacharach music being easy listening. Just because it's rhythmically gentle in its expression - I think that it's very dramatic. I learnt from the example of Hal David without ever wishing to copy him that I should never take away from the music by having the words draw attention to themselves and the drama of the actual text. Just really reflect what was going on in the music - some of my own songs are quite elaborate lyrically, I didn't feel I needed to do that with these songs as the music was already telling such a story - I just had to underline it.

SL: Was Burt hard on you in the studio?

EC: I think we were both very demanding of the circumstances. I think we very rarely went past six takes on this album. We were trying to cut live vocals with the track. Sometimes we would recut the track because we were

unhappy with what was going on with the playing not the singing, so two songs were recut on other days. I may have gone back and done some vocals again, but some of the best vocals are live, and a couple of them are first takes. I'm not suggesting Burt has lowered his standards, but I'm a different kind of singer to many of the people who sang with him before. I have an edgier voice and I'm going for emotion, not affection, and there are some flaws in all my records, technically speaking but comparing it to what? I sing like me, I don't sing like other people and I was trying to represent what I think is the truth of these songs and I think I achieved it.

Now I'm on the road with Steve Nieve I have the opportunity to give people a second look at the album - central to our repertoire are the numbers from *Painted From Memory*. [Burt and I] did about six concerts and a TV show. It was great, with a 30-piece orchestra, but it's a very risky proposition, taking that out on the road. You have to be certain there is going to be an audience that'll fill the hall to the rafters in every town. And it's a very demanding thing for Burt, who will not delegate, which means he rehearses up to five hours a day and then does a two-hour show. I'd love to do more, because it's great fun. But the songs were originally written at the piano, and a different light is shone on them when you hear them in piano and voice performance, you hear the raw composition. Steve played a very understated role on the record, he played second keyboard on it so hearing him interpret the songs is another pleasure for me. I'm feeding off that.

SL: A few years ago you wrote some songs with Paul McCartney, and it seemed to me you were trying to get him back to his Beatle-ish roots.

EC: I think there were certain cadences in the songs that appealed to me and he didn't object to them - he'd give me a sideways look sometimes because I can't sing above him, his voice is so high, so I'd end up singing below him which is the relationship he was familiar with from the Beatles. But I just thought the direct way of writing was a good way, and it sort of came out that way, and we wrote a bunch of really good songs. "Veronica" was a big hit for me, and "My Brave Face" was a big hit for Paul, and there are a couple of songs that have stayed around in my repertoire, "So Like Candy" and "That Day Is Done" which is a song I'm very fond of. It was great working with him, he was tremendous to write with and to record with.

SL: Did you know Linda McCartney well?

EC: We did the *Concert for Kampuchea* in 1980. Later we were working in the same studios, around the time of *Tug of War*, we

were recording *Imperial Bedroom* and we'd run into them all the time. And they were always really friendly people to be around. The most important time was when I was working with Paul on songs for *Flowers in The Dirt* and the subsequent record, and the other songs that came out of those sessions - and Linda was tremendously welcoming and put both myself and my wife very much at ease, which isn't a trivial thing when you are dealing with somebody who, no matter how much self confidence you've got is still the person that he is. That's bound to be intimidating and she was very full of affection and good spirit and always encouraged the collaboration and was just a lovely person. I admired the fact that she stood up for what she believed in and often got a lot of flak for it. Not to mention her beautiful artistic eye as a photographer.

SL: How did you choose your songs for the Linda McCartney tribute concert?

EC: I wanted to sing songs that would resonate in the evening. I sang one of Paul's songs, a very beautiful ballad, "Warm and Beautiful", in an arrangement by Mike Thomas from the Brodsky Quartet using piano and the Duke Quartet. Then I did "That Day Is Done" from *Flowers in The Dirt* which Paul and I wrote together, which is a kind of a spiritual you might say, just with piano. And then I did the Nick Lowe song "Peace, Love and Understanding", using the Pretenders as the band for a little rock and roll in the evening. And then later on in the finale I played rhythm guitar and sang harmony with Paul on his two songs, "Lonesome Town", the Ricky Nelson song and "All My Loving". That was a gas, to do "All My Loving" with him. It was a very big moment, he went on stage to acknowledge the audience, that they had attended in honour of Linda. And nobody was certain he would perform until that moment because it must have been a very difficult moment, and he did it with a tremendous grace and composure, no matter what they put in the paper about him being tearful. He was full of emotion, of course, but I didn't see that, I saw somebody speaking with a lot of love about somebody he adored with a great deal of affection, in return for the affection and respect that had been shown on the night by the musicians and the audience. It was a very uplifting and rather exhausting evening, not just because it was physically long, but because events with that deal of sentiment and emotion are very draining on you. I felt like I'd done a three-hour show and I'd only sung five songs!

With thanks to Teresa Grant and Malcolm Hughes for being handy with the C60s.

Train I Ride Elvis Back On Board with DJ Kelly

Since the start of last year, John Kelly (quite possibly the world's most Costello-friendly DJ) has been broadcasting his unique brand of non-format radio on Ireland's RTE Radio 1. Elvis, who guested a couple of times on previous commercial station incarnations of Kelly's show (see *BB13/14* and *BB16*), made his first visit to the DJ's new *Mystery Train* programme on March 31, 1999; this was swiftly followed by a prerecorded "return visit" which was aired on April 12. The format was as before: EC just rolled into the studio with a big box of CDs and LPs and the two men proceeded to chat and spin his choice of discs for an hour. Anyone lucky enough to have been able to join in the fun will have heard the following selections:

Mystery Train – RTE Radio 1 8-9pm, March 31, 1999

✓ 'Se Mi Compri Un Gelato' - Mina
E Adesso Sono Tua (Replay 1998 CD reissue of 1966 LP)

✓ 'It Takes Time' - Otis Rush
1956-58 - His Cobra Recordings (Paula 1992 CD compilation)
• EC: "Some of the stuff Eric Clapton wakes up in the middle of the night dreaming about."

✓ 'Drunken Angel' - Lucinda Williams
Car Wheels on A Gravel Road (Mercury 1998 CD)
• EC: "That's something else. Sounds like it was going into 'Maggie May' there. It's tremendous."

✓ 'Her and The Car and The Mobile Home' - Dolly Parton & Porter Wagoner
Right Combination: Burning Midnight Oil (RCA 1972 LP)
• EC: "I love that bit at the end. *Remember that suit that she used to say I looked like Tom Jones in? That's it hanging on the tree...*"

✓ 'Toledo' - Elvis Costello with Burt Bacharach
Painted From Memory (Mercury 1998 CD)
• EC: "I've always wanted to say this: and *this* is my new single..."

✓ 'I Don't Want to Hear It Any More' - Dusty Springfield
Dusty in Memphis (Rhino 1999 CD reissue of 1969 LP)
• EC: "I've got to be honest, it was this song that got me when it was played [at Dusty's funeral]. This is my favourite."

✓ 'Looking for That City Called Heaven' - The Mello-Tones
There Will Be No Sweeter Sound: The Columbia Okeh Post War Gospel Story
1947-1962 (Okeh 1998 2-CD compilation)
• EC: "Is it just me, or is that Elvis Presley in a former life?"

✓ 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' - Bill Monroe & The Bluegrass Boys
Live Recordings (1956-1969): Off the Record, Volume 1 (Smithsonian Folkways 1993 CD compilation)
• EC: "That's Bill Monroe actually speeding it up and trying to do it like Elvis did. So the whole thing came

around in a big circle."

✓ 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' - Elvis Presley
Sunrise (RCA 1999 2-CD compilation)
• JK: "The other Elvis!"

✓ 'Daria' - Chicks
Little Monkeys With Lots of Money EP (Supremo Recordings 1999 CD)
• EC: "Dublin's very own Chicks. The mighty Chicks, I think ... I don't know what records they're listening to, but they're making a great sound. They sound like they're making it up all over again, which is the way it should sound."

✓ 'Too Young to Know' - Muddy Waters
The Real Folk Blues/More Real Folk Blues (Beat Goes On 1999 CD reissue of 1965/1966 compilation LPs)
• EC: "From '51 or something. Still sounds supernaturally like music from the future. Absolutely amazing!"

✓ 'O Infanta' - Dulce Pontes
Caminhos (Movieplay 1996 CD)
• EC: "One of the great voices in the world today, I think. I don't think she's quite been caught on record yet. She's actually down in a studio in the south of England at the moment that I'm involved in - making a record with people that play tuned bricks! People are flying in from all over the world to make music with this woman."

✓ 'No Reason to Quit' - Merle Haggard
The Best of The Best of Merle Haggard (Liberty 1991 CD reissue of 1972 LP)
• EC: "I've been looking for this on CD for ages."

✓ 'Tickle Me' - Randy Newman
Guilty: 30 Years of Randy Newman (Rhino 1998 4-CD box set)
• EC: "That was for Caitlin. 'Tickle Me'. Please!"

✓ 'Searsey's Blues' - Johnny Hodges All-Stars
Caravan (Fantasy/Prestige 1991 CD compilation)

Mystery Train – RTE Radio 1 8-9pm, April 12, 1999

✓ 'Gone Dead Train' - Randy Newman
Guilty: 30 Years of Randy Newman (Rhino 1998 4-CD)
• EC: "That's Randy Newman rocking out. It's a great new box if you can get hold of it. It's got everything you could ever want to know about Randy Newman. Well worth checking out."

✓ 'I'm Mad' - Willie Mabon
Chess Golden Decade (Chess LP compilation)
• EC: "People don't know this record. It's one of the great old Chess compilations I picked up when I was a teenager. I love that when he says 'I'm gonna throw the clothes and run out and catch them before they fall'. That's like the ultimate proof that he's mad!"

✓ 'I'm Still in Love With You' - Steve Earle & The Del McCoury Band
The Mountain (E Squared 1999 CD)
• EC: "Wasn't that mighty?"

✓ 'High Fashion Queen' - Flying Burrito Brothers
Burrito Deluxe (Demon 1986 CD reissue of 1970 LP)
• EC: "Country folk-punk. The originators there."

✓ 'Sleepless Nights' - Elvis Costello
Sleepless Nights - A Tribute to Gram Parsons (Almo Sounds forthcoming CD)
• EC: "I had a conversation with Emmylou about how, having cut two of Gram Parsons's songs, there wasn't another one of his that I felt so strongly about. She said, 'You know, he often took songs and made them his own - you could cut one of those.' So this is it. It's a Felix &

Boudeleaux Bryant song originally done by the Everly Brothers."

✓ 'Greenville' - Lucinda Williams
Car Wheels on A Gravel Road (Mercury 1998 CD)
• EC: "I first got [this record] when we were making *Painted From Memory* last summer and I didn't get it at first - maybe because I was listening to a lot of very different kind of harmony. The title track didn't do it for me and I didn't persevere at first. Then I started listening and when I heard 'Drunken Angel' and 'Greenville'..."

✓ 'Mambo Miam Miam' - Serge Gainsbourg
Couleur Café (PGD/Polygram Pop/Jazz 1997 CD compilation)
• JK: "Another wonderful call from Elvis Costello."

✓ 'Happy' - Nancy Sinatra
How Does It Feel? (DCC Compact Classics 1999 CD)
• EC: "Can you not hear Catatonia covering this and having a mega-smash with it?"

✓ 'When Your Lover Has Gone' - Frank Sinatra
'57 In Concert (Artanis 1999 CD)
• EC: "From some strange kind of dubious-looking record that I picked up in America. I suspect maybe he had taken a drink during this thing. He was cutting up a lot at the beginning of the song and he's having throat problems - he keeps talking about it during the record. It's very unedited. Not a polished performance but some singing on that. Once he drops into it, once he stops fooling around, it's some performance isn't it?"

✓ 'Paper Wings' - Gillian Welch
Revival (UNI/Almo Sounds 1996 CD)
• EC: "Some amazing playing. A deep groove from her first album. That's something else."

✓ 'Expecting to Fly' - Buffalo Springfield
Buffalo Springfield Again (WEA/Atlantic 1997 CD reissue of 1967 LP)
• EC: "It's the lizards - they're coming for me! That was a psychedelic ten minutes, wasn't it? Neil Young obviously to the fore of that Jack Nitzsche arrangement. Unbelievable."

✓ 'Dawn Yawn' - Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames
Sound Venture (Columbia 1966 LP)
• EC: "Here's a guy I learned a tremendous amount from. His records have taught me so many things I never heard before. Mose Allison ... all this stuff that I would never have heard without this guy."

✓ 'Down River' - David Ackles
David Ackles (Elektra 1968 LP)
• EC: "It's a little sad to say of this gentleman here that you may not have heard of him before. It's a passion of mine since I was about thirteen years old that I've loved this record. It's from the great days of Elektra Records. He was one of those singer-songwriters like Tom Rush and Tim Buckley that were on that label. He never got the breaks and he passed away just a few weeks ago. You've got to hear this song. He made four albums and then retired. What music! Really something else. One night maybe I'll come in and just do a David Ackles show. He really deserves it. He should be famous."

✓ 'Tight Like This' - Louis Armstrong
The Masters (Cleopatra 1998 2-CD compilation)

John Kelly's Mystery Train is broadcast at 8pm Monday to Friday every week on RTE Radio 1. The station can be accessed by those living outside Ireland on the internet at www.rte.ie (using RealPlayer) or via the European Astra 1B satellite on transponder 22 (which carries the VH-1 television service) at an audio frequency of 7.56MHz.

Interview

Brian Hinton

All Talk?

Mary P Kerr Meets The Man Behind The Latest Elvis Costello Book.



FOR YEARS NOW, fans have bemoaned the lack of a decent book about Elvis Costello. Indeed, until they suddenly started coming along like buses during the last year or so, there had been a distinct

lack of any book about Elvis, decent or not, for almost a decade. Instead of just grumbling about this pitiful state of affairs like the rest of us, Dr. Brian Hinton decided to do something about it. In May 1999 the fruit of his labours, *Let Them All Talk: The Music of Elvis Costello*, was finally published in the UK by Sanctuary Press.

Written, as might be expected, without so much as a hint of cooperation from Mr. Costello himself, *Let Them All Talk* attempts to offer its readers something more than just another scissors-and-paste hack pop/rock pamphlet, aspiring instead to the role of critical guide to Elvis's career. The story of Elvis Costello's life and work is succinctly stitched together utilising the most salient extracts from previously-published sources (Dr. Hinton, thankfully, possesses a keen eye for précis) and set against a backdrop of the author's often highly personalised landscape of late 20th century culture. Books, cinema, art, theatre, poetry, politics - all is grist to the Hinton mill and he's never afraid to introduce some dodgy old hippy band or obscure pub rock outfit into the proceedings if he thinks it will help illustrate a point.

OK, so from time to time the author might stray further from the beaten track than is strictly necessary, but stick with him. More often than not, he will return bloodied and bruised from such foraging in the cultural undergrowth clutching something of value with which to shed new light or challenge preconceptions. For those of us already familiar with Elvis's story, this is the stuff which breathes life into the pages. The

beginning of the opening chapter, for instance, should be required reading for anyone still labouring under the misapprehension that the whole Riviera/Stiff/Costello phenomenon was rooted closer to the fury of the punk rock street urchin than the won't-get-fooled-again cynicism of the disillusioned hippy. Hinton makes this point very deftly (and economically) simply by pulling the hoary 1972 'Glastonbury Fayre' triple album from his shelves, dusting it off, and convincingly tracing the early twitchings of the Stiff embryo in the music, sleeve notes and artwork of this most obscure of LPs.

A similar result could probably have been achieved by slogging around the country listening to the incoherent ramblings of various grizzled pub rock casualties, but, as this book proves, there is more than one way to skin a cat. Sure, there are problems with relying on the accuracy of second hand reportage, and Hinton even tosses a few errors of his own into the brew for good measure, but for all that you sense somebody with their heart in the right place at work here. Imagine Tony Clayton-Lea's arid trawl through the cuttings library (*Elvis Costello: A Biography*, 1998) irrigated by a healthy injection of wit and imagination and you are close. The definitive word on EC? Perhaps not. But this is surely as thought-provoking and entertaining a study of the Costello Years as has yet appeared in print.

Music historian, poet, expert on Victorian literature, Brian Hinton moved to the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England, to research the island's famous pop festival and has remained there ever since. These days he divides much of his time between sitting at home waiting for that knock on the door from Van the Man's hit men (only joking, Brian!) and wandering down to Dimbola, the former home of photographer Julia Margaret Cameron which he was instrumental in saving from closure and preserving as a gallery and study centre (an achievement of which he can feel justly proud in these increasingly philistine times). BB's resident literary critic Mary P Kerr tracked the irrepressible author down to his island hideaway and put to him a number of gently impertinent questions to which he responded with characteristic grace and good humour...

Dr. Hinton, thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. Could you please introduce yourself for the benefit of our readers? Who the hell are you and what on earth qualifies you to write a book about Elvis Costello?

I'm certainly not a journalist. The main thing that qualifies me is that I'm a long-term fan. I bought all his albums and concert tickets with

hard cash. If I was really enthused by his latest work, I would badger friends about it - so in some ways I'm still doing just the same in print. Elvis Costello - the case for the Defence! As to me, apart from being a character in a novel - a twisted parody appears under my name in Iain Sinclair's occult novel *Radon Daughters* - God knows. A man out of time? I still feel a huge nostalgia for the late 60s, which probably explains why I now live in a cliff top garret in the West Wight. Goodbye, cruel world! I think 'cultural critic' fills the bill best, which explains why everyone moans that I keep on dragging in books and movies and politics when I'm discussing Elvis Costello, say. One of my best mates is the painter Julian Bell, and for both of us great rock music gives you as much as any art form, plus you can dance to it. So, what else qualifies me? Well, I read English at Oxford, then took a PhD in contemporary poetry. More to the point, I've published lots of poetry myself - with a political edge - as well as studies in Victorian art and literature, plus rock biographies for Sanctuary, and I do a fair bit of broadcasting. The other side of the coin is that I can read music, and studied classical piano up to grade eight and could have gone on to music college. I spent a few months in a pop group called the Chocolate Doorhandle (well, it was 1966) and still jam regularly at musical nights at Dimbola.

In the past, you've written biographies of Van Morrison and Joni Mitchell for Sanctuary. Now it's the turn of Elvis Costello. You don't exactly get landed with the easy or cooperative ones, do you?

As a writer, what I really like is finding a good puzzle, and then unravelling it. So working out the exact order in which bands played at the 1970 Isle of Wight Pop Festival, or the ever-changing line-up of Van Morrison's backing bands gives me something to think about as I gaze at the sun setting over the Solent. I really like a challenge. To see the work of someone like Elvis whole - historically, spiritually, emotionally - is like scaling the Matterhorn. I'm certainly interested in the music, not the personal details of the man or woman who made it, except when that influences the words and musical moods that result. Anything else is an impertinence.

So was a book on Elvis your idea or your publisher's? Costello's career was at a pretty low ebb when you started the project so I can't imagine anyone expected to get a bestseller out of it...

Unlike the other Sanctuary titles, this one was my idea. I saw the BBC *Later* TV special and

thought, bloody hell, what a varied career he's had -what makes him tick?

The cover blurb on *Let Them All Talk* pointedly avoids using the word "biography", I assume deliberately. Were you consciously aiming for something more than a straight retelling of the Costello story?

Firstly, I wanted to get to grips with Costello's career – reviews, live tapes, friends' comments, fanzines like *Beyond Belief* – and look at the public perception of what he's produced. Then I sought to add my own viewpoint – which only claims to be *a* view, not *the* view. The only point in writing such a book is to drive the reader back to the music. Criticism is a parasitic activity, to my mind, which is why I jumped off the academic treadmill. Since the adoption of literary theory wholesale, the critic is king (or queen) and the poor subject just a laboratory rat to be dissected. The original Parisian theorists, though, did open up all kinds of fascinating questions. Principally, "How is art received and "consumed" by its audience?". I've tried to deal with such matters in terms of Costello, and in plain language, not jargon. Anything but Simon Frith...

How long did it take you to write the book?

The whole project took a couple of years. I ponder each sentence, and write and rewrite – though, occasionally, I get inspired and the words dance. Of course, I'd been thinking about Costello's music since I bought *My Aim Is True*, soon after it was released, so in a sense the book has had an even longer gestation period.

How do you go about assembling and marshalling your resources for a project like this? You once told me that you blew your publisher's advance on CDs, bootlegs and the like almost at once – before they'd even stumped it up, in fact, if I remember rightly!

First I listen to everything I can get my hands on, and get it in chronological order, hoping to have at least a couple of live tapes for each year – as the concert stage is often the laboratory where ideas are first tried out in public. Ditto all the stuff in print, though that's secondary, and Elvis's own comments on his music, which are pretty extensive if you take the trouble to track them down. Throw all these things into a large pot, think long and hard (on the beach, half asleep on the M1, etc.), garnish with perceptions and bon mots, bring to the boil and serve. Wait for the complaints!

Did you make any attempt to obtain "official" cooperation from Elvis or his management?

I wrote to his office asking for an interview – face to face, e-mail or telephone – and permission to approach musicians who had worked with him. I stressed that I was interested in his career, not his private life. No reply.

Surprise, surprise...

So I stayed true to my part of the bargain, except when a certain lady phoned me from New York, unsolicited...

More of which later! Was it a big problem operating without Elvis's personal assistance?

The trouble with some "authorised" biographies is that the artist has got his or her answers down pat, and simply trots them out when required. In the biography I'm now working on, we've got round that by interviewing our subject in places special to his life and work, and having determined in advance that nothing – politics, religion, sex, band politics, money (the touchiest of all) – is off the agenda. One feels that for Elvis, they would be.

I remember talking to you just as you were starting work on the Costello project - it seems a long time ago! - and you mentioned that your publisher was quite keen for you to get off your behind and round up a few of Elvis's associates for interview. Ms. Buell's interjections apart, the finished book contains no new input from main protagonists...

I think we've covered this already. The money I got from Sanctuary all went on CDs and press cuttings, so I didn't have the time or money to approach people who probably wouldn't talk to me anyway. I did talk to various friends whose paths had crossed that of the great man, most of whom are acknowledged in the preface. I'd love to update the book sometime, with just that kind of access, but who knows?

With no way of checking the "official" version of events – not that this would necessarily prove reliable! – were you conscious of the fact that retreading old press articles could easily end up in a pointless game of "Chinese Whispers"? I mean, rock journalists aren't exactly renowned for being scrupulous with the facts. Is it realistic to think that you can sort the wheat from the chaff regarding the

events of 20 years ago or more?

I'm aware of the pitfalls, of course, but I didn't take such articles to be the absolute truth. They're more an indication of how the albums and concerts were perceived at the time. I tended to give an overview of critical reaction, which the reader deserves, and then use it as a jumping off point for my own ravings.

Bebe Buell's contribution to the book came as something of a surprise as it wasn't in the original draft which you showed me. How did her involvement come about?

Completely unexpectedly. I'm still not quite sure how she got my number, and I was "beaten to the punch" to be suddenly confronted by her on the phone, out of the blue. My girlfriend, also a McManus by the way, was in bed next door – it was quite late at night – and I went in afterwards to say, "you'll never guess who that was..." "Who's that then?" was her response!

Was she – Bebe, that is, not your girlfriend – difficult to deal with?

It wasn't so much an interview as a monologue. When she'd finished – two hours or so later – I immediately wrote down the gist of what she'd said, and sent it off to Sanctuary. They later sent it on to her for comment, and she phoned me back asking if I'd been taping her, and why I was quoting words spoken "in confidence". By now, I was completely flummoxed. My reply was that if someone I don't know phones me – a professional author – concerning a subject on which they know I am writing a book, then it can hardly be considered "off the record". She was actually very nice, if a little obsessive on the subject. I did take issue about the *Mojo* interview, and said that if an ex-partner suddenly announced that she'd aborted a child by me, I'd be pretty devastated – especially if the first time I heard about it was through a magazine. In fact, much the same thing *had* happened to me a few years before, so my sympathies were entirely with Elvis.

Did you have any reservations about raking over this touchy subject again in too much detail?

Her conjectures about secret coded messages were so fascinating, if bizarre, that I felt my duty to the reader was to print them. After all, what she said was actually very complimentary to Elvis. Being neither an arse licker or arse kicker, I used her comments wherever they seemed relevant. As to Bebe, I haven't heard from her since.

Although he reportedly devours music literature like there's no tomorrow, Elvis has offered the (borrowed) opinion that writing about music is "like dancing about architecture". Does he have a point? Wouldn't anyone seeking to find out about the music of Elvis Costello be better off spending their thirteen quid on a CD?

Well ... firstly, the only way to discuss any art form, verbal or nonverbal, is through words – though perhaps a more fruitful response is for it to spark off your own music, painting, dancing... Contemporary art criticism is a good example of total bollocks, words used as disguise and pretension. The best rock criticism is dependent on the song in question, but gives the reader added insight. After all, speech – which words are, written down – is communication, human being to human being. Hence the title of the book. This is particularly important with Costello, who is such a craftsman with words, and whose musical influences are so fascinating. He also writes some pretty devastating tunes, but that is far more difficult to write about, other than with an appropriate adjective – 'plangent', 'jaunty', 'funereal', etc. As to the financial question you pose, well hopefully my book will persuade any reader of it to buy more than one Elvis album. Better to buy this book than to spend £13 on a CD by Barry Manilow, anyway.

I understand that the actual publication of your book was delayed for quite a long time while Sanctuary were changing their distribution arrangements. I'd imagine that this was quite frustrating for you, especially when Tony Clayton-Lea nipped in to publish while your manuscript was gathering dust?

Yes and no. I honestly think that my book is better in every way than the Clayton-Lea tome – I don't know the rest of his work, but it reads like something thrown together over a couple of weeks. On the other hand, the first draft of my book had ended on a downbeat note, with Elvis in temporary eclipse. I was so bowled over by the Burt Bacharach collaboration that I was really glad of the chance to write it up. I feel that my book has a more satisfying shape as a result, like a circle closing. Not that I think the Costello story is over yet. Anything but.

One or two Elvis-heads claim to have detected a cooling of interest on your part during the book's coverage of the latter part of Costello's career. The period up to the mid-1980s accounts for nearly 300 pages, while the rest of the tale – incorporating a larger chunk of Elvis's professional career – whizzes by in

approximately half that. Does this indicate that you were under pressure to get the book finished, or does the EC story just get less interesting in the later years?

I'm a bit surprised by this question (*I say, steady on, old chap – Ed.*). The book turned out longer than I'd thought, but I didn't rush anything, and Sanctuary – to their great credit – didn't cut anything. Costello's release programme has slowed down with the years (not due to him, more to corporate release schedules) and the live shows and tour plans have been less frenetic. Equally, the early years of anyone's career are always the most fascinating. The future "star" is most like us at that point, still struggling, still everyday. With regard to Costello, if anything I find the later work richer and more complex.

Another complaint I've seen raised by hardcore fans is the fact that the book contains a number of factual errors such as wrongly titled songs. Does this bother you unduly – or is it more important to try to evoke the spirit of the times without worrying about dotting every I and crossing every T?

If there are errors, then I'm sorry. I like to produce a quality product. That said, every book has some factual errors, even some copies of the Bible. The book was carefully edited by Jeff at Sanctuary, but in such a big tome inevitably errors do get through. Even so, it's down to me for not checking the proofs properly. If anyone wants to send me a list of typos, I'll gladly correct them in any future edition. Over to you, Elvis-heads!

One other comment I've heard bandied about is the complaint that there's too much Brian Hinton and not enough Elvis Costello. Personally, I found the often highly personal musical and artistic trails which you follow, and the sometimes contentious opinions offered, to be the most interesting parts of the book. Should people seeking "just the facts, ma'am" simply be directed to buy another book?

Well, I've got to keep myself amused. It's a lonely job, writing a book. Maybe I'm an egomaniac, and so too, possibly, is Elvis. I would prefer the term "enthusiast" to "egomaniac". For "just the facts" read Clayton-Lea. Any book that I write is going to be coloured by my own views. In fact, that's all I can really offer as a kind of add-on service. My critical method is actually very unfashionable, in that I subordinate myself to the subject, and I only write about figures whom I admire. How many 'I's were there in that last sentence?

Reading the book, I get the impression that, although you clearly admire Elvis's work, you aren't really a big fan of the man himself. Is this fair comment?

Very astute comment. Of course, I don't know Elvis personally – don't claim to, and don't really want to, though I'm sure he's kind to animals and children, buys the *Big Issue*... What I'm responding to is the public persona which he and his management have created, and that is *not* a cuddly or user-friendly one, the bitterly ironic "beloved entertainer". He doesn't come over as 'nice', never has, though his recent media appearances have been affable and relaxed, as compared to the original angry young sod. On the other hand, what Barney Hoskyns would call the "grain" of his voice, stage appearance and songs inspires respect and fear, rather than affection. We're not talking about Bing Crosby. As the stage act usually compensates for, or reacts against, the 'real' persona offstage, Declan MacManus should be warm and under-assertive. I haven't met him offstage, so I wouldn't know.

So, after a big thumbs down for the Costello public persona, where does he actually figure in the pantheon of your musical heroes?

For me, there are only six or seven rock musicians who satisfy everything – intellect, heart, guts, etc. – and Elvis is certainly one of them. However, if we're talking about musical heroes, then *everyone* comes second to Richard Thompson, as far as I'm concerned.

What's your view on the other books about Elvis which have appeared over the years? Do any of them have anything worthwhile to say?

I liked the snappiness of the Mick St Michael book, but the best criticism is in individual reviews and articles by the likes of Greil Marcus and Nick Kent.

Speaking of which, how have the reviews for your book been so far? Your old friend Patrick Humphries was quite kind in *Mojo*...

I thought he was amazingly generous, given my own stinking review of his book on Richard Thompson – and, of course, I agree with every word! In general, the critical reaction seems to depend on whether or not the reviewer likes Costello's music. Of the "posh" press, *The Guardian* liked the way I teased out the political implications of his lyrics. *The Observer* was much more sniffy – "desperate to persuade us of Costello's

political credentials, Hinton over-eggs it wildly, intimating that the little songster in specs brought down Thatcherism single-handedly". Ouch. The *New Musical Express* gave me 7 out of 10, but concluded that the sheer weight of research made the book worthwhile. So I didn't waste two years then. The book topped the "Helter Skelter" bestseller charts for a week, so it can't have been all bad. I've even had some fan mail. *Q* took me to task for jibes at other music writers but I thought this was a little unfair. At least they published the letter I wrote defending myself.

"I'm just a fan with a word processor and time on his hands..."?

That's it. And I hope you noted my reference to the Costello fanzines being so much better than most self-regarding rock "reviews"?

Stop it, you're making me blush. While we're on the subject, though, I was particularly struck by the fact that, unlike many authors, you seem happy to include the views of fans and fanzines in your book alongside the observations of professional critics. Is this something which you feel strongly about?

I value fanzines – the good ones, that is – far above the cynical, seen-it-all, 'let me in free and I'll still slag you off' attitude of the rock weeklies, and the worthy but bland overviews of the monthlies. One of the aims of my various biographies is to introduce the general reader to the semi-secret world of bootleg concert CDs and fanzines. Apart from anything else, in an increasingly corporate world, such things are highly subversive, samizdat literature. Keep up the good work!

Pete Thomas himself was summoned from his luxury Hollywood lifestyle by the BBC to say his piece on your book for Radio 2. What was your reaction to his comments?

As one would expect, it was bang on the nose. Pete reckoned that I got my facts right – apart from transposing his and Bruce Thomas's birth dates – but failed to appreciate the inter-band dynamics. Though the roles I gave each of them were 80-90% true, they would often turn around so that, for instance, Bruce became the angry young man, and Elvis the mad intellectual. I'm honoured to have had such a fine man read my book.

Has there been any reaction from Elvis or his management since you published the book?

Not that I've heard of, and I wouldn't expect it. Elvis has planned out each nuance of the

words and music of his every song, so I'm hardly likely to be telling him anything he doesn't already know.

What are you up to now that the Costello book is finally done and dusted? Are there any more awkward bastards left for you to write about?

Well, you *did* ask! I tend to be working on all kinds of things at once, to keep me from getting stale. Published in time for Christmas will be a huge and obsessive survey of how poets and novelists have been inspired – or not – by what Jane Austen called "The Island". I don't know if Elvis has ever been over: Robyn Hitchcock is the nearest thing we have to a local musical hero. I've also just begun a history of the mad human menagerie which gathered around Julia Margaret Cameron and Alfred Tennyson here in the 1860s. It was my equally unhinged idea to turn Julia's former home Dimbola into a museum and gallery, and it worked!

We had David Bailey here a few weeks ago, but I neglected to ask him if he remembered photographing Elvis for *Imperial Bedroom*! There's also the authorised biography of Ashley Hutchings, the folk visionary, which I'm co-writing with another Costello nut, Geoff Wall of *Folk on Tap* magazine. It's so much more fulfilling to get the story from the horse's mouth! A TV company is filming the way that we and Ashley are putting the book together. It's going to be conceptual!

Yet another project is a weird, shapeless thing about how folk tunes went across to the Appalachians and somehow got turned into country music, which in turn snuggled up to the blues, got even weirder, and has influenced everyone from Dylan to Nick Cave. Harry Smith's anthology looms large here. And which esteemed musical critic really got me interested in that project? Some bloke called Elvis Costello. You see, you just can't get away from him. Apart from everything else, he's a world class DJ – he should do more of it.

Indeed he should. Thanks for your time, Brian, and as Father Ted would say, "good luck with the book". Now get back down to Dimbola and have yourself a nice cup of tea!

Thanks to Michelle at Sanctuary, *Beyond Belief* has a few copies of *Let Them All Talk* to give away. All you have to do to win a copy is to be one of the first to answer the following :

What is the most likely inspiration for Now Ain't the Time for Your Tears, the title of the Wendy James LP for which EC penned the songs?

Competition Results!

Here's the question we posed last issue:

Name as many Elvis Costello songs as you can that include a specific reference to another famous song title. Please include the EC song and both the song title and artist of the song he mentions in his lyrics.

Well, the question got only a few responses and also created some confusion. While some had fun extracting lines from Costello's lyrics to create song titles, we were really looking for specific references to actual song titles (i.e., his intention was to mention the song). We have also excluded references to characters from song (e.g., Danny Boy and Delilah in "The Great Unknown") and where lyrics were available, we checked to see that the reference was made in quotes (or caps).

The following is a compilation of all the correct answers we can think of. The artist listed is the one most associated with the song.

"A Fool Such As I" (Sammy Davis, Jr) - "American Without Tears No. 2"

"America the Beautiful" - "My Dark Life"

"Ave Maria" (traditional) - "Heathen Town"

"Heart(s) of Oak" (William Boyce/David Garrick) - "The Great Unknown"

"It's Too Late" (Carole King) - "American Without Tears"

"My Favorite Things" (Julie Andrews/John Coltrane) - "This Is Hell"

"Requiem" (Andrew Lloyd Webber) - "God's Comic"

"The Leaving of Liverpool" (traditional) - "Kid About It"

"Welcome to My World" (Nat King Cole) - "Suit of Lights"

"Who Shot Sam?" (George Jones) - "Motel Matches"

"Wooden Heart" (Elvis Presley) - "The Great Unknown"

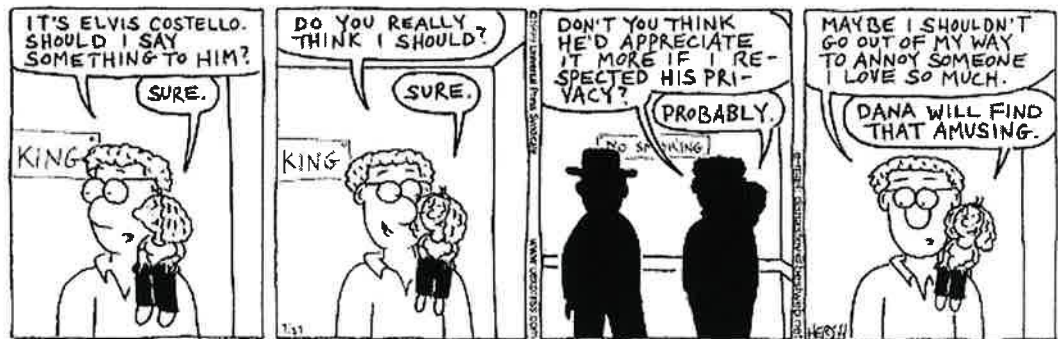
"Working Man's Blues" (Louis Armstrong) - "Suit of Lights"

Congrats to the following who will receive *The Sweetest Punch* promo goodies courtesy of Universal Classics: Phil Berliner, Jeff Wong, Richard Arthur, Michael Halliday, Phil Mason, Richard Panter, Alfonso Navarro Hurtado and Dan Driscoll.

Bliss

by Stephen
Hersh

© 1999 Stephen Hersh.
Reprinted with permission of
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE.
All rights reserved.



BLACK & WHITE WORLD

A photo of unknown origin found at a record fair. Most likely from Texas in 1978.

