

Anne Sofie von Otter Meets Elvis Costello: For the Stars



New Songs from Elvis!

♪ "You Stole My Bell" ♪

♪ Five on *For the Stars* ♪

♪ Three live in Dublin ♪

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LIP SERVICE

From The Editor



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WE'VE BEAT THE DRUM PRETTY HARD about how Elvis Costello opens our ears to discover new musical artists. The list is endless, but the one for which I am most thankful is my fellow Tennessean, Ricky Skaggs; a man for whom I have great admiration, both on and off the stage.

While on a musical hiatus in Fall 1985, Elvis went on a busman's holiday and made guest appearances at London concerts by John Hiatt, Los Lobos and one with Skaggs that would also be captured on both record and video. While I bought it religiously, I was nonetheless surprised to see EC joining Skaggs (at the time, just a little "too country" for me) in a duet on a Flatt and Scruggs number "Don't Get Above Your Raising." (From *Ricky Skaggs Live in London* on Epic.)



Mr. Skaggs with the Editor & son at Tower Records.

Well, as the years passed, I opened up more to country music and Elvis and Ricky would again perform together. As I chronicled back in *BB11*, both Elvis and I made a return visit to Nashville and the historic Ryman Auditorium in February 1997 for a taping of *Monday Night Concerts*, a show hosted by Skaggs for The Nashville Network that would also feature one of EC's heroes, George Jones.

Television tapings are not always easy to attend; the hardest part's knowing simply when they are actually taking place. Well, chalk this one up to the Internet and Costello friends in Nashville. And as always, I was in the right place at the right time (well, almost) as I finished up a business meeting in Indianapolis and made the 6-hour journey down I-65 in a rented car on the day of the show. And although the free show (as most tapings are) had a few empty seats, it was quite a treat that the folks at TNN were willing to recognize *BB* as press and actually put me on the guest list!

The show of course was a real treat as you can go back and read in my account. Elvis performed "Indoor Fireworks" that night, a song that I had heard he wanted Ricky to record. While EC joked before singing the song at the Ryman previously in 1996 ("Perhaps cowboys don't drink martinis."), Ricky would later tell me in Nashville that he passed on the song taking objection to the "gin in my vermouth" lyrics as not being consistent with his Christian faith.

Just recently, I got to meet Skaggs again at an in-store and with bated breath got to ask him about his next planned project with EC as mentioned in *BB27*. It was reported that Ricky asked Elvis to participate in his next tribute LP to the late king of bluegrass, Bill Monroe. The wire story had said that EC would write lyrics to a Monroe instrumental and in our exclusive to you, we can now tell you that it is "Lonesome Moonlight Waltz." According to Ricky, the project is still tentative but if it happens, it could bring Costello back to Nashville to record.

If it happens, there's an invitation for dinner at the house in Franklin for both Elvis and Ricky. The biscuits are in the oven!



Bill McDermott with EC backstage at the 1997 *Letterman* show with the Fairfield Four.

To The Editor

I WANT MY BEYOND BELIEF!

I haven't received any issues of *Beyond Belief* since the Fall 2000 (No. 27) issue. I was wondering if my subscription has run out. I don't remember getting anything in with my last issue but I've had a hectic last couple of months. Could you E-mail me back with an answer please?

David Lock, Woodbridge, VA (USA)

○ And we have had a hectic last couple of months as well! As we have tried to let our readers know, this mag is a hobby for us. Sometimes our real lives get in the way and we slip a little behind our schedule. Also, as was the case with this issue, we held out to let some late-breaking news items develop.

THE VANITY FAIR 500

Just got a real chance to look over the Fall issue of *BB* and noticed the El list from *Vanity Fair*. Ok, so he doesn't like Steve Earle? No John Hiatt? No Graham Parker? No Doors? No Tom Petty? I know he's a supporter of Ron Sexsmith, but no Nilsson? Dave Bartholemew, but no Fats Domino? Son Volt, but no Sir Douglas Quintet? Otherwise, pretty impressive.

Ron Young, Nashville, TN (USA)

STOP DICKING ABOUT

Picked up a copy of your magazine in our local Tower recently and was duly impressed not to have to endure the usual slipshod fanzine crap. Your professionalism and attention to detail puts many of the more famous publications to shame - nice work!

Reading through all that stuff about ballets and TV shows and records with Anne Sofie von Otter etc it suddenly struck me how much I long for Elvis to just get himself into a studio with some great songs and bash out a "proper" *Elvis Costello* record again. I never thought I'd hear myself say this, as I'm not one of those who thinks he should be remaking *Armed Forces* or *This Year's Model* every year. In fact, I've enjoyed the various musical journeys Elvis has made immensely and have championed records like *The Juliet Letters* and *Painted From Memory* when others have scoffed.

However, we've reached the point where it has to be said that he's overdone the renaissance man bit and that his own songwriting "voice" has lost focus as a result. He might not agree but my feeling is that Elvis now badly needs to regain his grip on the "short hairs of the public imagination".

Let's face it, if you exclude covers albums, collaborations with string quartets and kings

of easy listening and the like, the 90s were almost a complete wash out for Elvis Costello albums. We had the confusingly cluttered *Mighty Like a Rose* in '91 and the patchy not-quite-an-Attractions-record *Brutal Youth* in '94, and that's about it. Even *All This Useless Beauty* was cobbled together from songs mostly written for other purposes. And that was five years ago.

So, come on, Elvis mate. Stop dicking about with your pals in the movies and the opera and make another bloody Elvis Costello album, before one of us dies!

Trevor Smallwood, Birmingham (England)

ARTISTICALLY COASTING

Good luck with the new issue of *Beyond Belief*. Despite your best efforts it cannot now be disguised that Elvis' recent efforts are deeply disappointing. The ballet and US sitcom seem to be beneath his talents. Is there no prospect of a new album?

On a more positive note, have you read *Song & Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan*? It is 918 pages long and is a fantastic read. It goes into the blues influences of Dylan's work. If only someone could write a similar book about Elvis it would be fascinating. I particularly draw your attention to Chapter 8 ("Well I investigated all the books in the library...") which deals, amongst other things, with the role of the fanzine.

I've only ever bought one Costello bootleg (it was dreadful) but I think that now is the time for *BB* to cover: (1) the best available bootlegs, and (2) a bit more retrospective stuff. The simple fact is that some of Elvis' current activities are very dull and seem to confirm the impression that he is artistically coasting and bereft of any significant inspiration. That is not a crime because, as the Dylan book illustrates, even the best artists can have these periods.

Paul Clayden, Grays (England)

CHURCH-LIKE ATMOSPHERE

I was near the back of the hall at the Keaton's show at the RFH and that seemed to increase the church-like atmosphere. Everything seemed a bit distant and polite. I found all that deference and reverence shown on stage by the musicians a bit wearing. Still Ms Harry's 'Imitation of a Kiss' was good and EC finished strongly on the final number. I wish that they'd broken the show up with a section of 'non-Keaton's' songs 'Doncha Go 'way Mad', 'The Tide is High', 'Aubergine' to maybe illustrate what a normal Tuesday night at Keaton's might be like. I think that could have fitted into the overall scheme and given the audience a bit more value for money.

"Groucho" obviously plays well and EC seems to like working with him so I'm sure

we'll see more of this partnership. I'm disappointed that Elvis doesn't seem too bothered about recording those songs we heard on the tour last year. What's happened to the 'Deliveryman', 'Prison Song', 'Heart-Shaped Bruise' and 'Alibi Factory' songs that we got so excited about? Tuesday night did just make me wonder when we'd hear some new stuff.

Andrew Moorhouse, Rochdale (England)

CONFLICTING MESSAGE

Fire at Keaton's? I'm afraid free-form/improv Jazz goes slightly above my head. I feel that all six of the horn section playing a different tune gives a conflicting message. But Elvis' voice was great and the "opera" came across much better than on album.

Andy Anderson, Guildford (England)

STEADY ON, NOW...

Thank you, thank you, thank God for you, the wind beneath my wings. It's good to know there are other EC fans out there who appreciate the master as much as I. I've seen Elvis several times, but the last time I saw him I actually got to shake his hand and exchange a laugh or two. He was as lovely and gracious as I thought he would be and I only wish I had a camera to capture the moment. Thanks for keeping the fan base posted.

Sophia Belforte (via E-mail)

... AND ANOTHER SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Hi. Great Service! I sent a check on Wednesday, November 22nd and on Tuesday, November 28th I received my Deluxe Christmas Gift Set. Can't wait to sit down and read them. Thanks again.

Rob Sitler (via E-mail)

WE ROCK!

I just realized that I never wrote you to tell you that I received your fanzine. It was great and I really enjoyed it. All those shows... all those shows I was NEVER AT. Sigh... at any rate, I found it to be both tasteful and visually appealing. You rock!

Beth Wawerna, www.spin.com

○ Be sure to check out Beth's "Kool Thing" column at the Spin magazine web site. From time to time you will catch wind of her enthusiasm for the man we call Elvis.

FROM ELSIE

Hi Mike. Mark sent me some back copies of *BB*, and also the current issue. Congratulations, you guys obviously deserve some big praise from Mr Costello, but for what it's worth Elsie is well impressed.

Lou Dalgleish aka Elsie Costello (UK)



☆☆☆ Anne Sofie von Otter ☆☆☆☆☆

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆ Meets Elvis Costello

For the Stars ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

DUE OUT IN MID-MARCH IS THE LONG AWAITED album which Elvis produced for acclaimed Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter. Titled *Anne Sofie von Otter Meets Elvis Costello: For the Stars*, and issued by Universal's upmarket classical label Deutsche Grammophon, it features eighteen songs chosen, according to the publicity blurb, "to lie perfectly with the beauty of Anne Sofie's voice". Five of the compositions were written specifically for the project by Elvis, whilst the rest include four more from his own back catalogue alongside songs by the likes of Paul McCartney, Brian Wilson, Tom Waits, ABBA, Kate & Anna McGarrigle and Ron Sexsmith. The end result is a record which the label marketing folk were moved to describe as "modern easy-listening at its very best".

On the face of it, the Costello/von Otter combination is an unlikely one, even by EC's unpredictable standards. In fact, even Elvis thought that somebody was playing a practical joke on him when approached to perform two concerts with Anne Sofie – one of his very favourite singers – in Stockholm five years ago. These so-called "Meeting Of Masters" concerts at the Berwaldhallen were well-received and the artistic partnership was further strengthened at the end of 1996 when von Otter premiered EC's song cycle *Three Distracted Women* with the Brodsky Quartet. It was in June 1999 that reports first appeared indicating that the duo were considering material for an album which EC was to produce. "It's more like choosing songs from the last 50 or 60 years and finding connections that lay between them," EC told the Wall of Sound web site at the time. "That's what most pop records are based on. Seeing as it is music drawn from the pop idiom, it seems to make sense to program it like a pop record, to the strengths of the artist rather than the strengths of the music."

With both artistes having hectic schedules, it wasn't until February 2000 that Elvis was able to squeeze in a flying weekend visit to Stockholm to produce test recordings of ten songs for the project. A further eight

months elapsed before they were ready for the recording sessions proper which took place at Atlantis in Stockholm, one of the most renowned studios in Sweden (it was called Metronome back in the 60's and 70's when, among others, ABBA made their first recordings there). "It's a great room," noted Elvis, "and they still have the 'Dancing Queen' piano in there. Every day, it was a real pleasure to go to the studio."

Former ABBA maestro Benny Andersson even makes a guest appearance on the record playing piano and accordion and also helping mix the cover of his ex-band's 'Like an Angel Passing Through My Room'. Elvis recalled "I met him 20 years ago at a folk festival in Sweden. I was with the Attractions, and for a gag we sang 'Knowing Me, Knowing You.' Benny remembered and we had a laugh about it." As for his work on the track, EC noted "Benny treated the song to some of his amazing post-production techniques, adding layers of color. The result is that we have an amazing track."

As for other players, the Ensemble of celebrated local musicians was augmented by some of Costello's old mates. Steve Nieve contributed celesta and organ to "No Wonder" as well as playing the familiar piano part on "This House is Empty Now." Ex-Rockpile guitarist and Swedish resident Billy Bremner contributed on acoustic guitar and Michael Blair, former member of both Costello's Confederates and Rude 5, added percussion on several tracks.

Elvis also hooked up with some new collaborators for the record. "Green Song" was an instrumental by Svante Henryson, the Ensemble's cellist, to which EC provided a lyric. "Rope" and "Just a Curio" are two new songs that EC wrote with local string quartet, Fleshquartet, while in Sweden making the record. Admittedly, Costello said that the quartet was "a group that I had never come across before." This group of classically-trained string players with a knack for the avant garde, also supplied the new arrangement for Anne Sofie's cover of The Beatles' "For No One."

About the selection of material, Anne Sofie noted "We had maybe 30 songs on the list for the recordings. We sat down and had a couple of mutual listing sessions. Initially

Elvis would send me tapes and I would send him tapes of stuff that I had at home, and we would exchange ideas. I would explain why I didn't like that sound or that song, but he's wonderful at hearing what lies behind a particular sound. If I didn't like a singer or an arrangement, he would say 'Look, I think this song will suit you even if you don't like it now'. And he was right."

As we went to press, Universal were gearing up for an intensive promotional campaign set to feature both Anne Sofie and Elvis giving interviews and in-studio performances of the 'For the Stars' duet on TV and radio. A *South Bank Show* special on the making of the album was scheduled for screening in the UK by ITV on Sunday March 18, the day before the album went on sale in that country. Meanwhile, a date of April 9 has been set for the worldwide release (April 10 in the USA). A web site was also set up at www.forthestars.net.

Full track listing:

- No Wonder (Costello)
- Baby Plays Around (O'Riordan & MacManus)
- Go Leave (Anna McGarrigle)
- Rope (Music: Fleshquartet / Words: Costello)
- Dont Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder) (Brian Wilson & Tony Asher)
- Broken Bicycles (Tom Waits) / Junk (Paul McCartney)
- The Other Woman (Jessie Mae Robinson)
- Like An Angel Passing Through My Room (Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)
- Green Song (Music: Svante Henryson / Words: Costello)
- April After All (Ron Sexsmith)
- You Still Believe In Me (Brian Wilson & Tony Asher)
- I Want To Vanish (Costello)
- For No One (Lennon / McCartney)
- Shamed Into Love (MacManus & Rubén Blades)
- Just A Curio (Music: Fleshquartet / Words: Costello)
- This House Is Empty Now (Music: Burt Bacharach / Words: Elvis Costello)
- Take It With Me (Tom Waits & Kathleen Brennan)
- For the Stars (Costello)

"I Can Wait 10 Years" **Label Chaos Likely to Delay** **next EC Album**

"Y2K" CAME AND WENT WITH NO NEW Costello album appearing, despite the man himself having written a clutch of new songs and hinted at the back end of 1999 that he would be venturing into the studio "within the next six months". So why the long silence in 2000? "I was sort of waiting this year," EC confessed to *Uncut* in October. "I didn't really want to talk and I didn't really want to make a record. I have made one nearly every year for 20 years. The next record I will make has got to be special. I have made a lot and there's no point in making a record just because the clock says it is time to make one."

Although projects such as the Anne Sofie von Otter album, the *Arc Angels* TV show and his Italian ballet score have clearly taken up a lot of time, it's plain from the tone of the *Uncut* interview that the major reason for not hurrying back into the studio has been the unsettled state of the record industry. "I am a little suspicious of all the record labels buying one another," he admitted. "I don't want to sacrifice any more releases. I have had two or three releases getting caught in the middle of the corporate nonsense." Particularly upsetting to him, apparently, was the fate of *Painted From Memory*: "I knew it wasn't going to outsell Mariah Carey, because it is not that kind of record, but it should have done much better, particularly in America - and it would have done better if we had not had a company that was falling apart. Everyone was getting fired and everyone was afraid they were going to get fired."

With no end to the corporate manoeuvring and realignment seemingly in

sight - witness the recent Time Warner / AOL deal - it could be some time before we see another Costello album in the racks, given his current mood. "I can wait 10 years, it doesn't make any difference to me. I'm not 'young' so it makes no difference if I make a record when I am 46 or even when I am 50. Bob Dylan took nine years off and he made a great record when he came back. I am not saying I will take nine years off, because I am too anxious to do things..."

EC's apparent dissatisfaction with the commercial performance of *Painted From Memory* and the current situation at Universal

"I don't want to sacrifice any more releases. I have had two or three releases getting caught in the middle of the corporate nonsense."

has clear parallels with his acrimonious departures from the Columbia and Warner rosters in the past. It's all a far cry from the triumphant announcement of his multi-label deal with PolyGram (since swallowed up by Universal) and its promise of a flood of exciting and different Costello projects. For the moment, he feels his record company "haven't decided who they are yet" and challenges that "when they have decided they can ring me up and tell me they are ready and then I'll make a record." What they have told him, he confirmed to John Kelly in March, is that they don't want another Costello album until 2002.

That's the bad news for fans then. The good news is that there's no shortage of material for when the time comes. Although Elvis sees *The Deliveryman* as a more long-term project ("you can work on it for 10 years, try to get the right people") he volunteered the following thoughts on what his next move might be:

"I have quite a lot of unfinished songs ... I never like to finish fast songs unless I know that they are going to come out right away. I wrote nearly all of *Brutal Youth* in one day and I wrote all of the Wendy James record with my wife over a weekend. Fast songs are better when they are written quickly and then recorded and released right away. I don't want to have all of that corporate nonsense standing in the way. When I have decided to 'go', they'd better be ready, because I am not gonna do it twice. The next time that I wanna make a rock 'n' roll record ... if I get in the mood then they'd better be ready!"



LIVE

**Gorta Fields of Hope
Charity Concert
Vicar Street, Dublin
Tuesday 13 February 2001**



• *Elvis's first concert appearance of 2001 took place at Dublin's acclaimed new 900-seater Vicar Street venue where he joined a number of traditional musicians on the bill for a charity bash organised by his old friend Donal Lunny. Our Dublin cultural correspondent might have been forgiven for blanching at the likely prospect of an evening's "diddly music" punctuated by a brief Costello performance. Nonetheless, he went along anyway and was rewarded for his bravery in the line of duty when Elvis not only played for almost a full hour, but chose the occasion to showcase two previously unheard songs and a revised version of 'Daddy Can I Turn This?' in a set which was anything but routine.*

John Foyle reports:

Donal Lunny gave us all a scare. Introducing a performer midway through this charity show, he commented that one of the evening's special guests had dropped out due to illness just a few days beforehand. Before he had time to draw breath, we were gripped by a mixture of emotions: a small dose of pity for the sick person; the thought that this was essentially a fund raiser, so it didn't really matter who appeared; and, charity or not, a moment's blind panic in case he was referring to Elvis...

A variety of accents could be heard in the venue's bar beforehand as we sought shelter from a freezing wind, waiting out the hour's delay to the scheduled 7pm opening of the auditorium ("sound-checking," said the bouncer). One clearly audible American was regaling his companion with the story of how a seven-year-old Elvis had "made a soft drinks commercial with his (EC's) Dad". As you can imagine, it came as some relief when, finally, we were allowed to take our seats. Attending alone, I found myself at a four-person table, a mere two tables away from the stage. The people who joined me were there for Elvis. Firstly, a couple who hadn't seen him live since witnessing all three Dublin dates of the 'Spinning Songbook' tour in 1986 (the priorities of married life had interceded - now she had got him a ticket for tonight's gig as a birthday present). The other seat at our table was occupied by a New York girl in Dublin for a year's studies. She was clearly bonkers about Elvis, too.



This was going to be primarily an evening of Irish folk music. Like a lot of urban Irish people, I associate such music with Irish college, a summer camp kind of thing that school children here "experience" in their early teens. Monotonous reels of the same notes over and over just never really worked for me

and this boring music soon assumed a secondary role to the more interesting teenage pursuits of girls and alcoholic drink - or something like that. Thus, perching on one of the fixed stools around a tiny circular table, I assumed a tolerant expression as Donal Lunny, the evening's main organiser (and many-a-time collaborator with Elvis) took the stage at 8.20. Smiling a lot, he welcomed us and introduced



many stalwarts (I'm told) of the Irish traditional music scene, with tales of late night drink and music sessions on places like the Aran Islands. A lot of fiddling and banjoing ensued. On one level I *did* enjoy it, in that it would take a heart of stone not to be enthused by the joy with which the performers did their thing. However, after a while it all started to sound very, very similar.

It was at around nine that Lunny started to make the announcement I mentioned earlier. "Not Elvis," our concerned glances conveyed to each other instantly. I started thinking back to the minimal publicity the show had been getting. Tickets had still been available days beforehand, but the box office had been talking about a sell out as I arrived. Perhaps the organisers knew of a problem with Elvis' availability and thought we could be lured in and made to feel hopelessly guilty about demanding a refund, seeing as how the whole thing was for charity and all that. [*Hey, John - just relax. Nobody's out to get you, right? - Ed.*] Our concerns were somewhat allayed as Lunny welcomed the replacement for the unfortunate (and unnamed) guest, an accordion player named Mary Staunton (who I really and truly had never heard of). Surely they could never have the cheek to expect us to accept this as a stand in for Elvis?

So the evening progressed. It came to 10.20 and various persons were clearing the stage. Donal came on and spoke of the charity the evening was for. Gorta primarily concerns itself with Third World Aid. The evening's takings were being specially tagged for use in aiding homeless children in Zimbabwe. Then he brought back on what was, for me, the evening's discovery. Roisin Elsafty sings acapella, 'sean nos' as the Irish call it. This slightly built girl with long black hair gave a truly mesmerising performance. The word "ethereal" only begins to describe it. After stunning us all, she bowed off the stage as Donal reappeared. At the same time from stage left a sort of oversized toast rack was wheeled on, laden down with something like six guitars, acoustic and electric...

Donal was thanking various personnel involved with the show - truly the finale was on the way. He concluded by thanking "Milo", who was, apparently, the denim-shirted man who had brought on the guitars and was now dashing around the stage doing things with flexes and a white teapot, cup and saucer. Donal then truly put any fears we had to rest by introducing the evening's "main guest". With comments about how he had "started in the punk movement but was now involved in all types of music," he concluded by saying how delighted he had been when the guest had accepted an invitation to appear. Then with a sideways shout of "Milo - is he ready?" we were asked to give a big welcome to ... Elvis Costello.

Striding on, Elvis was all smiles and looking good in brown thigh-length leather jacket over black shirt and pants. Beneath the black hat with a red feather in the side, the stubbly chin only reinforced his resemblance to an extra from a Guy Ritchie movie. I can't remember if he said anything beyond a brief "howya" - it was just so great to see him back on stage doing his own thing. This, mixed with relief from our recent anxiety, meant that we were going to be one very euphoric and rapt audience. Starting out with an electric guitar, he launched into 'Daddy, Can I Turn This?', an account of seeming childish curiosity, somewhat similar to the Bobby Timmons/Oscar Brown Jr. ditty 'Dat Dere' (check out Rickie Lee Jones' version on her *Pop Life* album). The voice sounded good and clear, even off-microphone (a technique which Elvis used regularly throughout the show).

Vicar Street is so small and acoustically perfect a venue that he was audible to all. Keeping it electric for '45' - sounding so catchy and clever yet again, truly a generation defining hit single when it comes



out (soon please!) - he changed to acoustic, joking that he always does everything backwards, an obvious but ironic enough comment on the whole folkie "acoustic good/electric bad" vibe. As he continued with **'I Dreamed of My Old Lover Last Night'** and (guessed title) **'That Girl Is Gone'** the excitement level started to dip a bit as it became obvious that this was not going to be a Fleadh type "greatest hits" crowd

pleaser. That was fine with me - a bonus really since I had an expectation that Elvis' contribution to the evening might be to join Lunny for a few songs from *Spike* and the like.

However, Elvis, showman that he is, perhaps realised that he had better "grit" the evening up a bit at this point, regaling us with one of the most provocative songs I've ever heard him do. **'Spooky Girlfirend'** (guessed title) is loaded with images regarding a need for submissive and downright kinky female companionship. Accepting it in the vein of the pop theatrics of (it's inspiration?) Eminem, it's a hoot, showing that Elvis can be as vicious as ever if he pleases. I can certainly see this lyric raising an eyebrow or two if it gets hyped effectively when it turns up on disc (again, soon please!). The song features a "doo-doo-doo" refrain which Elvis got us to join in with, commenting that we had passed the audition (a reference to the recent much-hyped *Popstars* thing on the telly).

Some people started shouting for songs and a particularly loud request for **'I Want You'** was met with a grimace and a comment that this evening was for new songs. However, after evocative performances of **'Heart-Shaped Bruise'** and **'Alibi Factory'** he relented somewhat. Saying he'd like to do a song of his that "someone from this town" did a great version of (a reference to Christy Moore) he did a beautiful reading of **'Deportee'**. Hearing this paean to enforced economic emigration in the prosperous city that Dublin has become, and from its composer, was a nostalgic and thought-provoking moment. After a "goodnight" at 11 - what is it about Elvis and these fake show "endings"? - he came back for a delightful reading of the Beatles B-side **'Yes It Is'**, a fond reminder of the great Coward Bros. version from the 1980s. After much bowing he went into **'Good Year for The Roses'**, by now succumbing entirely to the crowd's wishes and giving way repeatedly to the massed singing along.



Another fake ending. Lunny came on and urged us to demand more. We did. Surprise, surprise - he came back on, with Milo behind him holding up three fingers to the sound desk at the back of the venue. People were shouting song titles again. A request for **'Tramp the Dirt Down'** was greeted with the comment

"haven't we got rid of her already?" getting a big cheer from those still not minded to forget Mrs Thatcher. From the back someone shouted "Iron Maiden" - which got a big laugh. "There's always one!" observed Elvis. He ploughed on with the less familiar stuff. **'When I Was Cruel'** was followed by two songs "... I recorded for a movie which never came out", a comment on the troubled distribution of the *Prison Song* project. He spoke of the songs - **'The Teacher's Tale'** and **'The Public Defender's Tale'** - being about two of the more put upon professions. Mention of the former got a big cheer - Irish teachers were on strike as he spoke - while the reference to lawyers drew a slightly less enthusiastic response.

Finally, Elvis decided to send us off home with a real crowd pleaser. The simple, unaffected reading of **'Alison'** featured another mass sing-along, returning us, appropriately, to the evening's folk

theme. After witnessing this hour-long show, I can safely report that Elvis is still "keeping it real" or whatever phrase you choose to indicate that his music is as powerful and relevant as ever. His parting line was even better to hear: "Maybe I'll see you all here again later on in the year..." You betcha, Elvis. You betcha. ■

THE SETLIST:

1. DADDY CAN I TURN THIS?
2. 45
3. I DREAMED OF MY OLD LOVER LAST NIGHT
4. THAT GIRL IS GONE *
5. SPOOKY GIRLFRIEND *
6. HEART-SHAPED BRUISE
7. ALIBI FACTORY
8. DEPORTEE
9. YES IT IS
10. GOOD YEAR FOR THE ROSES
11. WHEN I WAS CRUEL
12. THE TEACHER'S TALE (aka OH WELL)
13. THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S TALE (aka SOUL FOR HIRE)
14. ALISON

* new songs - correct titles not known for certain

Historic Live Costello Moments



Chemistry Class

Warner Theater
Washington, D.C. (USA)
February 28, 1978

This was my first EC concert ever and still is indelibly etched on my brain. The whole show was amazing, as the bootleg will show you. It was really stunning to be hit with a set list that was at least half unreleased and the new stuff was even better than the old. Plus, the band was unbelievable. But this third encore was the topper. Several folks had already left, the house lights might even have come up, and I had managed to get up to the stage from my 4th row seat. Elvis comes out and plugs his guitar into an amp on stage right, stands over in that corner, and does this song (which I thought was about a "Camera," didn't hear "Chemistry" at the time), just standing there in his jacket and tie and jeans rolled up at the cuffs... then walks off. I was never the same after that show.

Dave Farr

Have you got a favorite live Costello moment? Send it to us for use in a future issue. All printed entries will receive a special treat for their efforts.

Jazz Night at the Festival Hall

Roy Nathanson's
Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill
 Royal Festival Hall - London
 Tuesday 14 November 2000

WITH THINGS-CAN-ONLY-GET-STEADILY-WORSE "Cool Britannia" in the grip of utter transport chaos, I have long since begun to question the wisdom of a rail journey across the flooded countryside from Somerset to London - especially with a truckers' fuel price protest scheduled to end up just a couple of hundred yards down the road from our Paddington hotel. Thankfully, the day's travelling turns out to be less troublesome than anticipated, but it's still a huge relief to emerge from Embankment underground station and see the welcoming lights of the South Bank Centre spread out before us across the Thames. True to form in this land where nothing bloody well works properly, the electrics outside the station are on the blink, obliging us to pick our way gingerly up the dingy, unlit steps towards Hungerford Bridge. As we cross over the water towards the Festival Hall in almost complete gloom, it's sobering to recall that some three and a half years have now passed since New Labour's election victory rally there in 1997. A "new dawn" has indeed broken in that we now have the giant Ferris wheel known as the "British Airways London Eye" to watch over the ever-present beggars on the South Bank side of the bridge. What more could we possibly ask?

As we enter the cavernous hall there's jazz music playing on the PA and the stage is a curious jumble of instruments, dominated by an antique Hammond B3 organ cabinet. The seats to the sides and rear of the performance area have been curtained off to enhance the intimacy factor and an image of smoke - cigarette or fire? - wisps enigmatically across a giant screen suspended to the rear of the stage. Our tickets are for front row centre - last refuge of the fanatical and the short-sighted. Shortly after we take our seats, though, my heart sinks when a team of sweaty-looking blokes arrives to set up some weird lighting rig slap bang in front of the stage. Are we going to have to watch the show through *that*? Thankfully not, as it turns out they're just testing the light for a film of the concert being shot for "broadcast and videogram release". As we wait for the hall to fill, there's time to relax and scan the flimsy programme in search of dodgy substitutes



(advance information on who will be performing has been minimal). No Ribot or Richard Butler, I note with some disappointment. With tickets still on sale right up to the day of the show, I had half expected a sparse turn-out, but as showtime approaches there are few empty seats in evidence.

Like the members of a bar band reluctantly returning to their stations after a hard-earned break, the musicians file on to the stage chatting amongst themselves not long after the appointed hour. So casual are they that there's only a smattering of applause and you can almost picture an impatient club owner shooting them dark glances and tapping meaningfully at his wristwatch as he makes a mental note to dock their wages. Resplendent in her coat of many colours, pianist Deidre Rodman kicks things off with some pleasant enough noodling which eventually resolves itself into the '**Fire Suite 1**' intro. A portly figure, dapper in dark suit and hat, strolls out from the wings and takes up position behind a microphone to the left of the stage. It's Elvis, of course, resembling an oversize Sinatra and grinning as he acknowledges the enthusiastic reception.

The good news is that he's in fine, soaring voice from the off but, unfortunately, the opening number is marred by a sudden and fearsome burst of feedback from guitarist Adam Rogers' Marshall amp across the stage. The poor chap looks mortified as he fiddles with his volume switches to kill the offending sound, but it's too late and the mood has been broken. As EC shoots a startled glance in the direction of the offending racket, I think for a moment that they are going to have to start the whole thing again. However, the laid-back Nathanson merely half raises a quizzical eyebrow, and Elvis, unfazed by the momentary distraction, gets on with the show.

(Sadly, this will prove not to be the only equipment foul-up of the evening. The screen projection featuring a live video feed of the performance intercut with pre-shot ambient bar-room footage disappears after a few numbers and is only restored much later in the performance. While this clearly spoils the intended "multimedia" effect, it doesn't really bother me as I find the big screen activity a little distracting anyway.)

After remaining onstage during the disquieting instrumental '**Fire Suite 2**', Elvis moves to stage centre for '**Fire Suite 3**' and he's standing directly in front of me as the "big band" kicks in with a thunderously powerful sound behind him. It's a breathtaking experience to hear him in full voice at such close proximity, effortlessly fronting such a swinging ensemble. He really sounds like he was born to do it (which, considering his father's occupation, I suppose he was) and I find myself wondering how closely this sort of line up might resemble the instrumentation Elvis has in mind for his next album.

Next up from the scrum of singers gathered in the wings are Nancy King and Kenny Washington for '**Bar Stool Paradise**'. A more mismatched pair in terms of size you couldn't wish to see, Ms King towering over the pocket-sized Washington who, despite having his sweater tucked into his high-waisted trousers in a manner which I associate with dodgy *Seaside Special* dance troupes, proves to be a funny and captivating performer. King's vocals, on the other hand, sound a little muffled and she seems to have drawn a short straw in the sound mix. In any case, I don't really speak scat so, although the understated guitar, organ and trumpet solos are fabulous, I find my attention wandering for perhaps the only time during the evening...

Just offstage to my left, two lights appear to be hovering above one of the amps. In the darkness, it takes a while to work out that what I'm actually seeing is a reflection of the stage lighting from a pair of spectacle lenses. The owner of said specs is none other than Elvis himself who, instead of disappearing through the black curtain - as the other singers will do after making their vocal contributions - has stayed to enjoy the proceedings from the wings. It's a position he will occupy throughout the evening when not on stage, and my occasional glances catch him bopping enthusiastically, throwing his hat around and backslapping the singers as they troop off, like a coach encouraging a football team.

As we wait for the next number, some slaphead in a sleeveless orange flak jacket strolls out on to the stage, his appearance suggesting that he'd possibly be better suited to arranging the traffic cones on a motorway. Reaching centre stage, he picks over the sheet

music on a music stand and I assume that he's a roadie, making sure that everything is in place. It's a little unnerving, therefore, when he suddenly starts to sing. Once again my ignorance of the fashions de rigueur in the world of jazz funk has been exposed as the "roadie" turns out to be Ashley Slater (aka Dr. Bone, apparently) who is tonight filling the "not real popular" role occupied so memorably by Richard Butler on the album. Slater is a fine singer and he does a more than capable job, if not quite capturing the rough-edged world-weariness which Butler brings to 'Last Call'.

Next up is the highlight of the evening for me. After a beautifully played reed intro, David Driver and Darius De Haas, stationed at opposite ends of the stage, perform an immaculate reading of 'Bend in The Night'. They begin by singing their individual verses facing the audience, but as the duet sequence progresses, gradually turn until finally they're facing one another across a crowded stage. It's an electrifying moment when their eyes meet. In fact, you could probably have heard a pin drop, were it not for the RFH's antiquated ventilation system roaring away remorselessly in the background.

The applause is laced with additional salacious whooping and whistling (presumably from those who always held their Blondie album covers in one hand) as Deborah Harry appears to introduce an extended 'Jazz Night at Keaton's'. Naturally enough, this is the one serious jazz wig-out of the evening, and the guys in the band get to show off their chops (in particular "Reuben Wilson over there on his B3" in the 'Mighty Burner' band leader role sadly vacated by the late Charles Earland). Harry milks the part of 'Cups' for all it's worth and it has to be said that she's certainly got the walk for it. There's a slight concession to her star status with the inclusion of 'Imitation of A Kiss' - as at the New York performances, the only addition to the album repertoire - in order to beef up her part a little. She sings it superbly, but even better is her virtuoso vocal contribution later in the show to the quirky Van Dyke Parks style arrangement of 'Cups'. This slightly off-kilter number is probably the toughest in the show to sing, but it clearly holds no fears for the versatile Ms. Harry, who throws herself into the song with gusto.

Surprise show-stopper of the evening is 'Carol Ann'. Surprising to me, anyway, because it's far and away my least favourite track on the album. On disc it all seems a little too smooth and the special effects are distracting. Tonight, however, the performers are unaided by studio trickery and a supernatural vocal from Cleveland Watkiss combined with raw, punchy harmonies from the soul-style backing chorus (including ace

trombonist Curtis Fowlkes) produced a memorable rendition. It's followed by another stand-out, 'Sax Quartet' (a souped-up and extended version of the album track 'Toast Quartet'). A more dubious and disparate-looking quartet I've yet to see (one looks like a refugee from Beefheart's Magic Band, and another strongly resembles a night club bouncer) but Messrs. Nathanson, Ehrlich, Furnace and Parran are certainly together musically as they resolve the apparent chaos which four saxophones are more than capable of producing into moments of sheer melodic tranquility. It's quite possibly the most remarkable piece of music in the show. Meanwhile, the Busman's song 'Loss' begins with a nice duet between Nathanson's sax and Adam Rogers's guitar, before Bosco D'Oliveira rises up from his percussion stool and wanders forward to relieve me of my disappointment that Juan "Coco" de Jesus is not part of the cast with a suitably plaintive performance.

Elvis the narrator troops back out for the Shakespearian epilogue and it's a thrill to watch him and Nathanson silhouetted in profile as they weave their intricate vocal and instrumental paths through the 'Reprise'. Nathanson is, of course, the true star of the evening (though he probably wouldn't thank me for saying this, so self-effacing is his manner). To the chagrin of our beloved Editor, I'm finishing off this review many months after the event, yet even now I can clearly picture the slightly mad-looking professorial figure stepping forward to take one of those astonishing solos, wires spilling out of his pockets, draped around his neck, and sprouting forth from his sax. He might well resemble a seaweed-covered Groucho Marx just washed in on the tide, but when he starts to play it just takes your breath away. In fact, so transported by the music does he appear at times that the saxophone almost seems to be playing him, rather than the other way around. Thus will his knees, apparently involuntarily, give way beneath him as he searches for a low note, or he'll seem to be wrenched on to tiptoes in order to reach higher up the scale. Many times tonight I think I have him pegged and know just where a particular melody is headed, until suddenly out flips a spastic elbow and the tune veers off in a completely unexpected direction. Yet, for all the unpredictability and the gymnastics, this captivating performer retains a crucial sense of rhythm and discipline in his playing. EC recently remarked that he has come to despise the sax in the hands of "all but a few". My guess is that Nathanson is one of the few.

So there they are on stage, Roy and Elvis, heading towards what I assume will be a tender, downbeat finale as EC goes into one of those extended falsetto sections he's getting



more and more keen on. Hang on a minute, though. Just when we think it's all over and applause is breaking out all around the hall, Elvis suddenly seems to wig out completely. Bounding over to stage centre like a man possessed, he proceeds to lead the assembled throng through an extended and exhilarating gospel-style finale (a reprise of a reprise?). It's a fun way to bring the performance to a finish and there's a prolonged standing ovation as the closing chorus is repeated again and again (and again). Well-deserved bows are taken by all before the ensemble troops off, calls for "more!" being met with an unconvincing "we don't know any more songs" from one departing band member. Eventually, only pianist Rodman remains on stage, playing a poignant coda all alone in the now-deserted "bar". Up on the big screen, 'Cups' can be seen clearing away glasses and wiping down the counter. There's no getting away from it - it's finally closing time at Keaton's Bar & Grill. But, hey - didn't we have a big night?

Mark Perry

Singers:

ELVIS COSTELLO
DARIUS DE HAAS
BOSCO D'OLIVEIRA
DAVID DRIVER
DEBORAH HARRY
NANCY KING
ASHLEY SLATER
KENNY WASHINGTON
CLEVELAND WATKISS

Band:

CHRIS BATCHELOR (trumpet)
MARTY EHRLICH (reeds)
CURTIS FOWLKES (trombone)
SAM FURNACE (reeds)
BRAD JONES (bass)
J.T. LEWIS (drums)
ROY NATHANSON (reeds)
BOSCO D'OLIVEIRA (percussion)
J.D. PARRAN (reeds)
DEIDRE RODMAN (piano)
ADAM ROGERS (guitar)
REUBEN WILSON (organ)
KAREN STREET (bandoneon)

AS REPORTED IN BB27, Elvis added another string to his musical bow on October 31, 2000, when the Aterballetto dance company premiered choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti's *Sogno di Una Notte di Mezza Estate* at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Italy. Inspired by William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the work featured original music written by Elvis – his first ever ballet score – and performed by the Orchestra Del Teatro Comunale Di Bologna conducted by Carlo Tenan.

"I think this is good music, I am proud of it," asserted a typically upbeat EC when discussing the work with *Uncut* immediately prior to the premiere. "When I wrote with Burt Bacharach, I said that the words were only there to underline the meaning in the compositions. They weren't the same kind of words that I have written for myself. In this case it is the opposite. The music is underlining the meaning that was in the dramatic outline and in the dance itself. It might be pleasurable to listen to just as music, but it has really been written to accompany dance, so the sense of meaning, symbolism and the emotion comes through the movement and this sort of underlines the meaning."

Despite the fact that it is specifically a performance piece, EC seems keen that his music should be recorded in some form: "I know for certain that it will be so good that I would want to commit it straight to record," he told *Uncut*. However, the Italian magazine *Musica* found him a little more circumspect on the subject, pointing out that the final decision on this might not rest with him: "If my label considers that the music deserves to be heard independently from the dance performance, then a CD could be released. Although it has been written to accompany a ballet and a narration, for a new CD the best parts of the music I wrote could be adapted as part of a suite, and they could stand as an excellent bonus track."

To shed further light on the development of his contribution to *Sogno di Una Notte di Mezza Estate* we reproduce below the original English draft of EC's contribution to the programme notes which appeared translated into Italian in the actual souvenir brochure on sale at the performances.

Following its Bologna premiere, the Aterballetto production toured Italy through to mid-February. Further performances scheduled for this year are:

March 29, 30 & 31

Theatre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (France)

April 5

Teatro Bonci, Cesena (Italy)

November 22, 23 & 24

Theater Im Pfalzhaus, Ludwigshafen (Germany)

THE ITALIAN JOB: ELVIS, SHAKESPEARE & THE BALLET



Elvis Costello's programme notes for *Sogno Di Una Notte Di Mezza Estate*

Early in 2000 I received an invitation to attend a performance of the Aterballetto production, "Paradiso" and to discuss my participation in their upcoming adaptation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream". In truth, I had little or no understanding of the world of dance. When asked recently by a serious publication: "Who is your favourite dancer?" I replied honestly: "Cyd Charisse".

However, that evening I was completely overwhelmed at being in the same room as the Aterballetto Company. Seeing their grace and dynamism guided by such strong, artistic direction, I happily agreed to take on the commission. I have had a tremendous time writing this music. It is by far the largest scale instrumental work that I have attempted. It is written for an orchestra of more than sixty musicians, with special features for some of my favourite instruments: the bass clarinet, the cimbalom, and the vibraphone. There isn't a pencil left in the house.

The score of "Il Sogno" contains three distinct musical threads. The music of The Court is quite formal and contains a little pomp that should not always be taken seriously. The Artisans are accompanied by folk dances and brass band refrains while it seems to me that Oberon, Titania and Puck live in a more swinging and sensual realm.

Needless to say all these threads become entangled. There is mischief, danger, jealousy and confusion and many of the other essential engines of life. Finally, there is love, sometimes unlikely, confounding love.

There is also an interlude that I should mention. It is "The Play" in which The Artisans perform to the accompaniment of an old gramophone record. In a musical sense, each in turn picks up an instrument that they cannot really play in a courageous attempt to join in and present their entertainment. The members of the orchestra will no doubt be relieved that they have not been asked to perform this sequence. At this time of writing I am looking forward with great anticipation to working with all the musicians and the conductor, Carlo Tenan in the realisation of the orchestral score.

I wrote the music for "Il Sogno" after close consultation with Mauro Bigonzetti and Nicola Lusuardi. Thanks to the patience and dedication of their bi-lingual colleague, Karl Burnett, we were able to keep in frequent touch through the development of the score. Having already composed a great number of the basic themes, in July, I visited the Aterballetto studios in Reggio Emilia to discuss matters with Mauro, Nicola and Karl. At that time I also met with Fabrizio Plessi and other members of the creative team. Every aspect from the dramatic outline and choreographic intention to the stage design was examined in relation to the musical content. I then returned home to Dublin to write and orchestrate each scene in the production.

I cannot conclude without giving thanks to Allan Wilson, who not only prepared the printed score and parts but also gave me much invaluable advice and encouragement. I would also like to thank Chris Cozens who created a demonstration recording of the score, which was invaluable during my editorial work and as a guide for rehearsals. Finally and most importantly, I want to dedicate my composition to my beautiful wife, Cait, for all her love and understanding.

Elvis Costello (2000)

THEY CALL HER NATASHA WHEN SHE LOOKS LIKE...

BB's Nick Ratcliffe Interviews Lou Dagleish (also known as "Elsie Costello")



"It's very hard work being Elsie Costello, let me tell you..."

THUMB THROUGH YOUR LOCAL THEATRE'S FORTHCOMING EVENTS BROCHURE and the chances are it won't be too long before you're staring, open-mouthed, at grotesque publicity shots for whichever naff set of Queen or Bee Gees wannabes is currently doing the rounds. Scratching out an often-lucrative living in the armpit of show business by churning out slick greatest hits sets for the nostalgia market, these copycat performers have somehow come to be known collectively as "tribute acts".

As might be expected in this age of spin doctors and tabloid speak, the word "tribute" is being seriously misapplied here – unless, that is, its true meaning is to trade on somebody else's reputation by hawking around soulless facsimiles of their work. But it doesn't have to be that way. English singer-songwriter Lou Dagleish is hoping to reclaim the notion that one artist can pay tribute to another without sacrificing musical integrity. With four acclaimed albums of her own music behind her, Lou has lately turned

her artistic attentions towards the man she cites as her main influence, Elvis Costello.

They Call Her Natasha, a five-piece group fronted by Lou's alter ego "Elsie Costello", broke cover at Ronnie Scott's in Birmingham on 5th July 2000, performing a set made up entirely of Costello material. For Lou – who wrote a dissertation on Elvis's work for her Masters Degree – the aim is to present a cross-section of songs from the Costello oeuvre "with flair and imagination, whilst always remaining true to the spirit of the original versions". In the current climate, there's clearly an element of risk involved for an established artist dipping a toe anywhere near the murky waters of the Tribute, however sincere the intention. Guilty by association, and all that.

So, will *They Call Her Natasha* prove to be a musically rewarding excursion, or a one way ticket to artistic suicide? Beyond Belief's roving reporter Nick Ratcliffe donned his heavy metal tattoos and biker gear and set out for Bilston, deep in the darkest Midlands of England, to find out...

BB: As an established singer and songwriter in your own right, why do this?

LD: Because I've wanted to sing Elvis Costello songs ever since I started hearing them, and ever since I started singing. As a singer-songwriter it's really important that you push your own stuff. Obviously, the main aim is to do that. But what was tending to happen was that within my own sets I'd drop an Elvis Costello song in here or there. And then I started to think, wouldn't it be fun just to go out and do all Elvis Costello stuff? Then I started thinking, hang on a minute, there's this whole cheesy tribute scene that is becoming so popular. What about if I do a sophisticated version of a tribute band, and exploit my joy of singing Elvis Costello songs? Then I can say, well it's a tribute – which is true – but at the same time it gives me an excuse to indulge in a complete set of EC's stuff. I wanted to do something else for a bit – as a sideline. I've done four albums of my own stuff and I kind of wanted to take a little breather, if you like. It won't stop me writing or performing my own songs, in other ways, but for the time being I just want to get my rocks off singing Elvis Costello stuff by jumping on the tribute scene. But what I am finding is – this might sound arrogant – but I think Elvis Costello stuff is a little too sophisticated to jump on the bandwagon quite as easily as I'd anticipated. I think that it's going to be a different kind of audience. The same people that go and see Bjorn Again and Jean Genie are not necessarily going to want to go and see *They Call Her Natasha*. If they come, they'll then realise that there are a couple of songs they know, and they'll have a

great evening anyway. But prior to that, the concept has not, perhaps, got the commercial value. That's why it's a grower, as they say in the music industry. Well, I intend to keep growing it, anyway. It's certainly what we want. We've only done a few gigs so far and if in 20 or 200 gigs time the audience hasn't grown, then I'll say "OK, it didn't work". But none of us feel that's going to happen. We think we've just got to keep doing it. That's all you can do.

It's like any new project, you've just got to keep pushing it until people gradually get to hear about it through word of mouth. Venues can only do so much. They can tell people that this is what's happening, and it's then up to people to decide whether or not they want to come. And if they've not particularly got it, that it's an Elvis Costello tribute – that it isn't but it is, if you know what I mean – then they'll probably just think, well actually *Coronation Street*'s on. Which is fair enough. If I wasn't crazy about Elvis Costello, I'd probably watch *Coronation Street*.

If I wasn't keen on Elvis Costello, I wouldn't have driven 40 miles to be here... I know – and that hasn't gone unnoticed!

You did a University dissertation on the lyrics of Elvis Costello. Why Elvis?

Because within the Arts degree we were given quite a flexible choice of what we could spend our time considering and writing about. And it seemed to me a sensible thing to write about something I was interested in and, to a certain extent, clued up on. Of course, some would argue that I was trying to make the degree easier for myself! I said "Can I write about the song-writing skills of Costello?" and they said "Yes" – so I did, because I wanted to do something I enjoyed. It wasn't because I had some deep and meaningful idea about dissecting his lyrics and getting to the bottom of it, particularly. I mean, I *am* interested in that, but I didn't have any point to prove, other than "isn't he great?" – which you're not allowed to say in a dissertation. So I just concluded that he deserved to be considered as an intellectual artist, not just a pop star. That was my conclusion.

So you didn't have whole chapters on his use of imagery such as footwear or horses or anything like that? There are a lot of shoes, and a lot of horses!

No. I'm afraid not, no. I just had chapters about why he was good, and why this should be considered more than just a song. The same old stuff that you churn out when you're doing a degree, I guess!

Why do you think more people haven't covered his songs?

Because they're so difficult. I know that sounds arrogant, but they are very difficult to sing. I've found this out now. I knew that there were strong melodies, and I knew there were often very sophisticated arrangements, but it's one thing knowing and another actually doing. His sophistication is hidden in pop. That's partly what I was saying in my dissertation. You hear a Costello song and, at face value, it sounds like it's a pop song. Then you start learning to play it and you realise there's more to it than that! I mean, the guys in They Call Her Natasha hadn't been into Elvis Costello all that much before, and now they're kind of like "Wow! What's he doing there?" And they're really getting inspired by these weird key changes and arrangements. Likewise, vocally, I consider myself to have a reasonably wide range. Elvis Costello's range is so wide that I find some of his stuff *incredibly* challenging to sing, because they go from right down here, to right up there. I think that a lot of people would have a go and then, frankly, just shy away. Because it is really tough, hard work to sing. Even something like 'Oliver's Army'. Everyone knows that one, but singing it perfectly is so difficult because the melody is all over the place. His songs are tough, especially some of the later ones, because his range grows. As he moves on, his range gets wider and so the songs get more *ridiculous* - and all the more fun really. We do 'It's Time' and, my god, that is just an absolute monster...

So are you in training for 'Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4'?

Yeah, you could say that. (*laughter*)

Is the challenge in approaching EC's songs as a woman solely to do with the vocal range? Or is it more to do with the actual meaning of the words and thinking "Do I have to change all the *hims* to *hers* and *hers* to *hims*?"

A bit of both really. I like the gender play. I like the fact that it's a woman singing a man's song. I like the kind of feminist statement that this makes. But it's not a contrived feminist statement. I haven't gone "I will not change any of these things because I am making some kind of statement". But I think it's interesting that I am singing men's songs, kind of dressed like a man but not pretending to be a man. I like the playing around with the gender. Not in a kind of sexual way, but in an androgynous way. Is that the right word, androgynous? Or is that a Greek island?

Why the need for the alter ego "Elsie Costello"? Is it just like Declan MacManus reinventing himself as Elvis Costello?

Oh, that's an interesting thought. I hadn't thought of it like that, but now you've said

that, I might use it! (*laughter*) It was purely that I wanted to not be Lou Dalglish - which is, of course, what I do normally - and it seemed like a funny joke, to be honest. Originally, I thought I'd be Natasha - it will probably end up with people thinking of me as Natasha. Then I thought of the next line - "but she looks like Elsie" - and I thought, that's more self-deprecating, let's go for that. And, by coincidence, *Elsie* Costello looks a bit like the old tribute band thing. So it just all fell into place. We knew that a lot of people wouldn't get it. We need to say "Elsie Costello" louder than "They Call Her Natasha" and we possibly need a poster saying WE DO ELVIS COSTELLO SONGS, so that people understand it better. It is a little bit obscure for those that don't know. That's quite a good idea, by the way, "just like Declan MacManus, I reinvented myself". I prefer your suggestion. Maybe I should pretend that's the case!

How did you decide which songs to perform tonight? Are they personal favourites and the ones that you feel most comfortable with - or are they just the ones that the band have had time to learn?

No, there was more to choose from than we used in tonight's set. We've actually worked on twice as much material and, to a certain extent, there was just too much. We had to cut it down. And it wasn't just a matter of "which ones can I do?". I didn't want to do all the songs that keep my voice going [*emits low, crooning noise*] because it felt like a bit of a shame - that's not my natural voice. But at the same time it would be difficult to leave out some obvious ones like 'Oliver's Army' because you've got to consider the fact that you need a commercial edge. So I wanted to get a balance between the obvious stuff and the obscure stuff. But, given that, it was very difficult to know which to throw out and which to keep in. We didn't do 'Pump It Up', for example, and we didn't do 'Watching the Detectives' - and a lot of people will be disgusted with that. But I don't want to do 'Pump It Up' if it means dropping 'Inch by Inch' or 'I Want You'. And there's only room for so many songs per gig. My original idea was to do a track off each album, which we did the first time we performed it. So, in theory, we have a track off each album - which doesn't necessarily include everybody's favourites - but it was a case of "This is the song I like best on a particular album, but *this* is the one my voice will suit best, or *this* is the one that will lend itself to the dynamics of the set more readily. Musical practicalities had to be taken into account, so it was a process of elimination. We've taken a track off each album, chosen for whatever reason, put them together and then, depending on the gig, the

set list works itself out. Sometimes there'll be a couple from the same album. For instance, 'Alison' is on the same album as 'Red Shoes', so we've doubled up here and there. But it doesn't really matter...

It's only completists like me who'd spot that "ooh, you did two off *My Aim Is True* ... and you didn't do one off *King of America*..."

I did! Careful!

I'm sorry. I'll have to get my list out!

It was me that was obsessed with having to have one off of each, but you kind of have to have a word with yourself and go, maybe your obsession with that list won't work - just do what the gig requires.

Are you going to be trying any of the later period ones? Have you got a song from *Painted From Memory*, for instance?

Painted From Memory is where I have stopped, because there's just so much material that I thought "I have to draw the line somewhere". So I stopped before the Bacharach collaboration - which is sad because I so love the songs on that album. But that will come later... (*laughter*)

When writing your own material, do you think you'd ever consciously try to write in the Costello style?

I write my own stuff, which is, of course, my own style! But it's fair to say that Elvis Costello has always been an influence. I don't think many people would notice that, in that many people associate Elvis Costello with punky, aggressive music. However, within my writing, you would notice that certain melodic styles are common, and certainly I am influenced by him lyrically. I try to use clever wordplay. I try to be a little bit different verbally. And the kind of melodies that Elvis uses are the sort that make me tingle, so that's what I try to do. It doesn't necessarily happen in every song, but throughout my repertoire you might go "ah, you can hear the influence there". I think that in my stuff there is a kind of Celtic, Irish influence which can often be heard in Elvis's songs as well. In fact, Jackie Thomas from the Brodskys has got my album and she once said to me, "God, has Elvis heard that? It sounds so like an unreleased Elvis Costello song, like he could have written it." So people who are into Elvis will hear influences, but hopefully never a rip off.

An obvious question, but would you be happy one day if he recorded one of your songs, or wrote one for you?

Oh my god! Happy is not the word. There is no word other than "yes"!

Have you seen Elvis live?

Yes, loads of times.

When did you first see him?

Not in the early days. I didn't see him in the seventies. I first saw him around *Get Happy!!*, but my strongest memory of first seeing him live is when he was doing *Blood & Chocolate*. That's when I remember knowing all the stuff from before that, but I can't remember seeing the live thing before then. I don't know, because when you go and see him he does a mixture of everything he has done, so I can't really remember exactly which era it was. But it wasn't the really early days. I was a late starter as far as live is concerned, but I did listen to all the early stuff from a very young age.

Have you ever met Elvis?

Yes, through the Brodsky Quartet. Paul and Jackie had given him a copy of my album, based on the fact that I had covered 'Indoor Fireworks' on it.

So they were making sure he knew to collect the royalties...

That would be it, yeah! (laughter) Anyway, when I went to their concert, Jackie said to him "that girl who did your song is here, I'm sure she'd love to meet you..." To cut a long story short, he made a point of coming out to shake my hand. He said "Thank you for doing that track for me". And then we had a little bit of a conversation. I was trying very hard not to go completely blank. In fact, I have to be honest, when he thanked me for doing the track, I actually for a minute didn't have any idea what he was talking about. I was thinking "What is it? What track? What is he talking about?". Then I thought, "Oh shit, yes - I did his song." I was just looking at him as if to say "You've got me mixed up with somebody else, you can't possibly be saying this to me". I managed to redeem myself by saying "Oh no, it was my pleasure". I was just about to have a conversation with him but we were interrupted by Dave Allen. (mock bitterness) Yes, Dave Allen, the comedian! He interrupted and went "Can I just say hello there to ya, Elvis?" - they seemed to know each other very well - so Elvis made his excuses. We lost out to Dave Allen, but I have to say that Elvis did come over and say goodbye to me later. And then everyone who was left at the party wanted to be my friend. I got mobbed by people who wanted to know who I was!

So, what's the next phase of Elsie Costello's world domination plan?

We've only done three shows so far. One in Birmingham, one in York, and this one tonight in Bilston. The next thing we have



planned is a UK tour in February 2001.

Would you like to tour overseas?

If this would work overseas, I'd be there tomorrow. Your readers outside of Britain will just have to watch this space.

Finally, do you have any plans to take Elsie into a recording studio?

I'd love to do some recording. It's something I'm thinking on, trying to figure out when, where and most of all who's going to pay! Any donations are welcome - about ten grand should do it!

 <p>THE ROBIN R'n'B CLUB 2 MOUNT PLEASANT BILSTON WOLVERHAMPTON, WEST MIDDLESEX, WY14 1LJ</p>	<p>LOU DALGLEISH/ THEY CALL HER NATASHA</p> <p>A Celebration of The Works of ELVIS COSTELLO</p> <p>Sunday 15th October 2000 Doors Open 7:30pm Tickets £7.00 Advance £8.00 On The Door</p> <p>ENCLOSURES (01304) 637747 NO REFUNDS NO EXCHANGES</p>	 <p>THE ROBIN R'n'B CLUB 2</p>
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LIVE REVIEW

Elsie Costello / They Call Her Natasha
The Robin 2, Bilston, England
Sunday 15 October 2000

On a quiet Sunday night, Elvis Costello's "little sister" Elsie, took to the stage somewhere in England's Black Country. Elsie is the alter ego of Lou Dalglish an English singer/songwriter from nearby Birmingham. With her four-piece band They Call Her Natasha, she sang and danced where others apparently fear to tread with a set of eleven EC compositions and three EC-related covers.

To look at, Elsie Costello bears some resemblance to her "big brother" circa 1978. Black jacket, white shirt and thin black tie, blue jeans with turnups and black shoes. With her black spectacles, it is the long hair in bunches that distinguishes Elsie from Elvis. Her band comprises the same elements as in the Attractions - lead guitar (Tony Kelsey), bass (Dave Lowe), keyboards (Gladstone Wilson) and percussion (Neil Bullock). The set aims to cover the length and breadth of Costello's career from 'Alison' to 'Let Him Dangle'. There are fast songs, like 'Red Shoes', and slow ones such as 'Good Year for The Roses'. Dalglish says that she aims to include a song from every album up to *Painted From Memory* with the exception of *The Juliet Letters*, obviously difficult to present with a four-piece rock and roll band.

To make up for this omission, the venue screened the Juliet Letters video in lieu of a support act prior to her set. Lou/Elsie's version of 'Alison' is a considerable improvement on Linda Ronstadt's recorded

version that is so reviled by Costello. She accompanies herself on keyboards for 'Indoor Fireworks', which she also recorded for her recent *Calmer* CD. The stand-out song of the evening was 'I Want You' which closed the main set. Dalglish and her band play tightly to inject enough tension into the song to make it scary, but not too scary. Her interpretation is at least the equal of the original, and proves that Costello songs can work for someone with a different vocal range. Her range is wide enough to cope with the highs and the lows and the highs were really quite high, something in the style of Julie Cruise in parts.

For the faster songs, the band showed that they can kick when they need to, although they are not yet the equals of the Attractions. Gladstone Wilson on keyboards plays all the right notes, but lacks the genius of Steve Nieve and his ability to omit notes or extemporise within a song without distracting the singer, or losing the thread. Neil Bullock on drums worked hard throughout. Dave Lowe's backing vocals, on a couple of tracks, were very much like those of The Attractions themselves.

In keeping with the example set by the writer himself, Lou and her band have rehearsed some 40 songs and can therefore vary their set from gig to gig. For this, her third show as Elsie Costello, the evening closed, appropriately enough with '(I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea', the song from which Lou has taken the name for her band and her alter ego.

If you get the chance to see Lou Dalglish as Elsie Costello, do take it. For those, like Lou herself, who love EC's music, it is a rare chance to hear a different approach to some familiar material. Lou is not seeking to imitate the master himself, but to share with her audience her joy of the material in settings that are more intimate than the venues where EC himself now appears.

Setlist:

Accidents Will Happen
Inch by Inch
Red Shoes
Peace, Love & Understanding
Pills and Soap
Alison
Good Year for the Roses
Oliver's Army
Indoor Fireworks
Shipbuilding
Let Him Dangle
I Want You
My Funny Valentine
(I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea

They Call Her Natasha:

Lou Dalglish - vocals (and keyboards on 'Indoor Fireworks')
Tony Kelsey - electric guitar
Dave Lowe - bass guitar
Gladstone Wilson - keyboards
Neil Bullock - percussion



The Latest EC News

Tear off Your Head - It's EC, T-Bone & the Arc Angels!



T-Bone Burnett

Further news of *The Arc Angels*, the TV show which Elvis and John Mankiewicz are developing for Warners through Ron Howard's company Imagine, comes courtesy of the *Hartford Courant's* ctnow.com web site which published an interview with T-Bone Burnett on January 12 from Los Angeles. Burnett, who is involved as executive producer with responsibility for musical content, had this to say of the project: "Elvis Costello and I are doing a TV show together about four Russian supermodels who come to the US and become the world's most famous rock 'n' roll band. Elvis is writing all the tunes for it. We're going in to record a tune for the pilot tomorrow. It's called 'Tear Off Your Head, It's the Doll Revolution.'" While it remains to be seen if the projected series will ever make it to our screens - "Television is a many-stepped process," observes Burnett - song titles such as this one indicate that we can, at the least, expect some interesting music to emerge from the whole affair!

BB understands that the song "Daddy Can I Turn This?" - first performed during the Attractions' final tour in 1996 - is also under consideration for use in the series. The song (based on a child's remark discovered to be the last thing recorded on the "black box" recovered from a crashed aeroplane) featured no words other than the chilling title phrase in its early performances. Since then, the song has apparently undergone further development and Elvis is said to have presented a fully realised lyric to "Daddy" in meetings where he pitched the idea for the show. It was also performed recently in Dublin (see page 6).

Fly Me to the Sun

Elvis was back in Los Angeles at the end of January to contribute to what will probably turn out to be the final episode of the TV space sitcom *3rd Rock From the Sun*. With rumours abounding that NBC is unlikely to renew its option on the 6-year-old show,



'Fly Me to the Moon' at the January 23 taping as one of many signs that something out of the ordinary - and final - was in the air.

Elvis, reportedly in fine voice, did several takes of the Bart Howard penned standard, with Hollywood resident Pete Thomas sitting in on drums. (Too bad that Elvis never made it, as planned, to guest at a performance by Pete's band Jack Shit at LA's The Mint later the same night.)

Elvis Goes for the One

Reminding us that he still is a fan at heart, on November 13, Elvis Costello was among the fans who queued up at midnight in the cold and dark at the Liverpool HMV store to purchase the new *Beatles 1* collection.



A store spokesman told the *Telegraph*: "He was among the first 10 into the store and would have had to queue for up to an hour. People didn't realize it was him until he went into the store. He had on a wooly hat and scarf and so we think he was trying to be a bit low key. But staff recognized him and asked him to sign copies of his own albums."

While we found this story somewhat hard to believe, leave it to reader Joyce Slavik to confirm the facts with the man himself three night's later at the London *Keaton's* show. "I asked EC if that was really him at the HMV. He grinned and said, 'Well, I was visiting my Mum and someone suggested going down there so I figured why not.'"

So Long James Carr

Once dubbed the "World's Greatest Soul Singer," James Carr



died of cancer in Memphis on January 7 at age 58. Elvis paid homage to Carr by performing two songs associated with Carr; "Dark End of the Street" (which Carr was the first to record) and "Pouring Water on a Drowning Man" (which Costello also released on 1995's *Kojak Variety*). *The Essential James Carr*, issued by Razor and Tie in 1995, belongs in every record collection.

Variety columnist Army Archerd took the fact that EC flew in specially from Ireland to sing

Elvis & Burt on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?

EC's name showed up again on Regis' show last October, this time in a big way. The \$32,000 question was:

Who collaborated with Burt Bacharach on the 1998 LP *Painted From Memory*?

- A. Paul Simon
- B. Randy Newman
- C. Elvis Costello
- D. Paul McCartney

Well, the guy in the hot seat didn't know the answer, so he used one of his lifelines and polled the studio audience. And as a testimony to the LP's dismal commercial success, 43% went for Simon and 23% for Costello. Not satisfied, the contestant took another of his precious lifelines and his 50/50 left him with Newman and Costello. And although he took awhile to answer, he got it right and reached the safe haven of the \$32,000 level.

Macca's Paintings

Posturing himself lately as a renaissance man, Paul McCartney has published *Paintings* (Bullfinch), a collection of his art. In a November 1999 news story, Paul said this about painting familiar images:

"Sometimes a face will actually just appear when I'm painting, then I'll follow that. I suppose you can't help things looking like people you know - or other people thinking that. For example, Elvis Costello, I got that but I wasn't trying to paint a picture of him. But after it, I did think it looked a little like him, and I remember showing it to him and he quite liked it - and I didn't say, 'Hey, I think it looks a bit like you.'"

And while the press story mentioned one of the book's images conveying Elvis - after plunking down \$50 for the book, we certainly can't find it and Elvis is not mentioned anywhere in the accompanying text. Oh, well - it's a nice collection anyway.

Elvis Signs New Publishing Deal

On Tuesday, January 30, BMG Music Publishing announced that Elvis Costello had signed a "multi-year" agreement which will see the company managing all his future music writing efforts. The precise terms of the deal, which takes effect from this Spring, were not disclosed but a source at BMG told *Variety* that it would run for "at least a couple of years," with options for extensions thereafter.

EC's current publishing company, Plangent Visions, will continue to handle his back catalogue of recordings, although the BMG source also indicated that their agreement might be expanded in the future to include a portion of this work.

Tiny Steps

Quotable: In an AOL on-line chat back in October, The Wallflowers' **Jakob Dylan** responded to a question about working with EC: "We wanted Lou Costello, but had to settle for Elvis. He's wonderful. We're all huge fans of his. You could consider us part of Oliver's Army." □ **Sir Paul** in *The Beatles Anthology* book, discussing misheard lyrics: "Jake Riviera, Elvis Costello's manager, thought that 'living is easy with eyes closed' was 'living is easy with nice clothes.'" □ Actress **Julie Bowen** (US TV show *Ed*) described to *TV Guide* how nervous she was in meeting David Letterman for the first time: "What's that Elvis Costello song about Alison? 'I wish that I could stop you from talking when I hear the silly things that you say.' I felt a bit like Alison in that moment." □ **Royalty Check:** The first of BBC2's *I Love the 1980's* programmes featured two EC tracks as background music: "I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down" in a bit about the opening of Alton Towers Theme park and "Black and White World" introduced a bit about the launch of *The Face* magazine. □ Somebody working on ITV's *Big Bad World* drama series is clearly doing their level best to swell EC's royalty statements. Not only did the first series feature "Alison" prominently in a key episode, but the first programme of the new series - screened in the UK on January 19, 2001 - included a lengthy excerpt from EC's version of "The Very Thought of You." And, as if that weren't enough, the second episode made similar use of "Oliver's Army." □ "Welcome to the Working Week" is used in its entirety during a job hunting sequence in the Amy Heckerling film *Loser* (Columbia, 2000). □ **Attractions:** Pete Thomas commenting on his work last year on The Proclaimers' fourth album: "I was constantly encouraged by the 'Britney Spears' bonus scheme. Every time something good happened in the studio, 'Fluff' the engineer allowed us (and him) another pin up of Britney. I know it's a good record because by the end of the album the control room was a pervert's dream." □ Pete's band Jack Shit continues to gig regularly at The Mint - so keep an eye on those listings whenever you're in Los Angeles. □ **Elvis Sightings:** Elvis was one of the lucky few (OK, 900) inside Dublin's intimate Vicar Street venue to see Bob Dylan's acclaimed show there on September 13, 2000. Interestingly, on hand to review the gig was none other than EC biographer Tony Clayton-Lea. ("Was it all air kisses and shaking of cravats?" wonders our man in Dublin, "or did it all end in tears?") □ And on February 7, El joined the likes of Mick Jagger (with Jerry Hall) and Salman Rushdie at a special fan gig for U2 at the Astoria in London.

CONCERT NEWS!!!

EC "Ready to Go" for RFH Birthday Bash

The NME web site reported in January that Elvis, John Peel, Scott Walker and Nick Cave are among the previous curators of the Meltdown Festival approached to take part in a special concert to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Royal Festival Hall in May 2001: "To mark the occasion the venue will host a series of special concerts and events. Although details are currently still sketchy, part of the series will be a concert 'involving all the previous Meltdown directors'. A spokesperson for the Festival Hall told NME.COM that although 'nothing is finalised at this stage', that 'all the curators have agreed in principle to do something and everybody's ready to go'."

Empire Rumour

In November last year, a usually reliable source whispered in BB's ear that EC would be playing at London's Shepherds Bush Empire in May/June 2001 "to promote his new album". No confirmation has been forthcoming, and, in view of comments EC has made about recording his next album when he's good and ready, the timing is perhaps unlikely. Still, you never know...

EC at UCLA

Liverpool-born David Sefton took over as director of UCLA Performing Arts on October 1, 2000, after seven years at the South Bank Centre in London where he was most recently head of contemporary culture. Sefton was the man who approached EC to act as artistic director of the Meltdown festival six years ago. ("I asked Elvis Costello to do 1995. That really was when Meltdown went over ground as a festival doing something very different for the South Bank.")

Considering the effect of his appointment on the artistic programme at UCLA, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "the 2000-2001 UCLA season programming is not his, and even the 2001-2002 season will feature artists who were booked many months in advance. The first all-Sefton season is 2002-2003. Sefton added that favorites such as Laurie Anderson, who has performed at UCLA before, and Elvis Costello, who has not, will definitely turn up on the UCLA program.

Sefton says he hopes to commission new works from them, rather than simply booking them into the hall. (Actually, Elvis *has* performed at UCLA before - with the Brodsky Quartet at Royce Hall in 1993 - but who are we to argue with the *LA Times*?)

Harry Smith Show

Well, as for a show at UCLA, it couldn't have happened any sooner! Elvis, along with Richard Thompson, Beck, Marianne Faithfull, Kate & Anna McGarrigle, Mary Margaret O'Hara, Van Dyke Parks, Bill Frisell and Smokey Hormel, is listed as a participant in "The Harry Smith Project" on April 25-26 at Royce Hall. Smith of course is the famed musicologist who assembled the traditional recordings that became the renowned *Anthology of American Folk Music*. The show is apparently being put together by EC's old pal: musical producer Hal Wilner.



BB-Blinders

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.

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Issues 1 to 27 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, 20/21 and 24/25 are double issues and cost twice the single issue price.*

SUBSCRIBERS SPECIAL! For every two back issues you order - get another one free!

Hey - thanks to these folks who helped with info for this issue: Steve Getchell, Paul Clayden, Bill Brown, Adrian New, Andy Anderson, John Harrison, Mark Bromley, Manfredi Buonomo, Filip Dejongh, Ulf Gotthardsson, Andrew Moorhouse, Barry Orr, Nick Ratcliffe, Jef van de Perre, Alfonso Cardenas, Craig Montoya, Robert Sabat, Richard Arthur, Mike Hernandez, Paul Hamilton, Graham Bowers, John Foyle (a big one!) and Clive Williams.

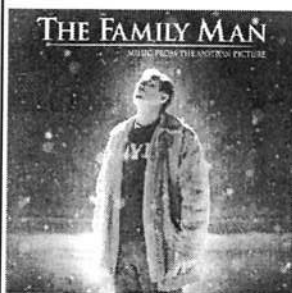
Also, special thanks to the following folks in the "business": Rudi Mallasch and Olga Makrias at Universal Music Group, Eleanor Blattel at Sire Records Group, Lou Dalglish, Kim Taylor, Lee Press-On and Marc Jordan.



Spotlight On New Releases

NOW AVAILABLE

"You Stole My Bell": *The Family Man: Music From the Motion Picture*, released in the USA on December 5 (Sire 31151-2) and on December 12 in the UK (London 4344311512), included a new



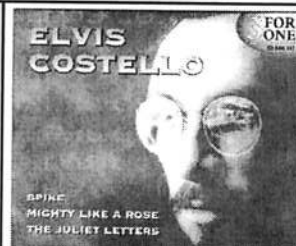
original track written by Elvis Costello / Cait O'Riordan. What amounts to EC's first release of the millennium is also his first credited to his association with the Island Def

Jam Music Group which evolved from Mercury/Polygram's acquisition by the Universal Music Group. (The film was released by Universal Studios although Sire Records is part of Costello's old label, the Warner Music Group.)

The film was a holiday release starring actor Nicholas Cage and the Costello song, "You Stole My Bell," plays over the film's closing credits. The piano-driven ballad lamenting over a broken relationship, sits alongside new recordings by Seal and Edwin McCain as well as catalog cuts from U2, Chris Isaak and the Talking Heads.

BB-reader Mark Helfrich served as film editor for *The Family Man* and told us: "Elvis and Cait wrote the song specifically for the film after viewing it. It was recorded earlier in the week, mixed by Elvis on Wednesday, the 8th [November], and we mixed it into the movie today, Friday the 10th. It's fantastic, of course! He said he had fun recording it. And he plays bass on it, too!"

Other than this, little else is known about the recording of the track as it literally seems to have come about overnight. Unfortunately it seems to have passed as quickly as it arrived with little notice or comment. In the USA, *Entertainment Weekly* called it Costello's "worst soundtrack contribution since 'Party, Party' and from Canada, the Jam Music web site said "it isn't quite grade A Costello, but at this point, we'll take any new Costello that comes along." And that pretty much sums up our feelings at *Beyond Belief*.



Oz "Three for One":

Late last year, Warner Music Australia packaged a "3 For One" CD Box Set of *Spike*, *Mighty Like a*

Rose and *The Juliet Letters*. (Catalog No. 9362480432) The three original CD's come in a newly made slip case and follow similar releases for the works of Miles Davis, Van Morrison, Tom Waits and Joni Mitchell.

Sessions at West 54th

DVD: While the full-length version of Costello & Bacharach's 1998 appearance on PBS's *Sessions at West 54th* hasn't received full treatment on DVD, their performance of *Painted from Memory* is among the selections on *The Best of Sessions at West 54th Vol.2*, released in March in the USA. And though the disk was to include as a bonus track - an alternate version of the song, it turned out to be nothing other than the sepia-toned video version that was on the full-length VHS video.

Rhino to Release Very

Best of in USA: Set for an April 17 release in America is the 2-CD *The Very Best of Elvis Costello* that was issued in the rest of the world in 1999. With the Ryko catalog deal having expired, the rights for the set were acquired by the "kings of reissues", Rhino Records. Now part of the Warners empire, this release could possibly be the start of a new affiliation for Costello. Watch these pages!

Compilations: EC's final recording for Warners, "The Bridge I Burned" from the *Extreme Honey* collection, appears on *Coded* from Sony Music Direct (TVK 24072) in Canada. ○ "Shipbuilding" shows up as part of a 2-CD UK set on Virgin (7243 8 49746 0 2) *film 2000 with Jonathon Ross*. Released in connection with Ross's BBC One television show on current film, the Costello track is represented in this collection of music from "cult movie classics" by its brief appearance in *High Fidelity*. ○ The UK CD *Dreampop* includes "This House is Empty Now."

Tidbits: Blue Plate Music has issued a 17-song promotional *Live from Mountain Stage 2000 Sampler* that includes "That Day is Done" by Elvis and the Fairfield Four. ○ Tony Bennett's 1994 *MTV Unplugged* (with his duet with Costello on "They Can't Take That Away From Me") has been released in SACD (Super Audio CD) format by RPM Records / Columbia (CS 66214). The format requires a special player. ○

More DVD News: The DVD release of *Straight To Hell* is said to include a deleted scene of Elvis tied to a chair with Cait hitting him! Both had roles in the film. ○ Roy Orbison's *A Black and White Night* was released in the UK through Pinnacle on January 29. ○ The Pretenders documentary *No Turn Left Unstoned* which features EC (see BB5) is included with a Greatest Hits video collection released by Warners in the UK. ○ *Bringing it All Back Home* with Elvis's "Mischievous Ghost" is available on DVD in the UK from Hummingbird Records. (They have also reissued the CD as well.) ○

NEW BOOTLEGS

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

Elvis Costello

Orpheum Theater (HIWATT) It seems like it has been forever since something new and exciting has come along in the bootleg department. Well, here comes a stellar quality recording that appears to be a soundboard recording from the final Attractions tour taken (Perhaps literally by gangsters and thieves?) from Minneapolis, MN on August 18, 1996. Great packaging and it is even pressed on gold disks - not CDR's.

Reader T.J. Young (who also reviewed the show for BB) had this to say about the disk's sound: "The sound is a crystal clear soundboard, but like many line-recordings, the mix strikes my ears as a tad unnatural, with the audience hardly audible and the low-end rather minimal (very similar to the popular *Brilliant Parade* bootleg in that respect). I don't mean to quibble though, I think folks will be pretty impressed by what they hear." Look out for it. (Perhaps from the good folks at Street Legal.)

Awards Time

With a two out of five chance of being part of the Grammy-winner for the "Best Compilation Soundtrack Album for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media," Costello's contributions to *High Fidelity* and *The Sopranos* lost out to the soundtrack to Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous*.

Congratulations however do go out to James Burton who will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of fame on March 19 and to Burt Bacharach who received Sweden's prestigious Polar Music Prize on January 22.

Television



100 Greatest Albums of Rock and Roll (VH1 - January - USA) The music channel does it again with another week of one-hour segments. Hosted by actor and music

expert Jeff Bridges (After all, he was in *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, wasn't he?) this series again features Elvis as one of its frequent talking heads and his recording debut, *My Aim Is True*, manages to check in at number 80. He was also one of the 500 artists polled in compiling the list. Here are your EC sound bites.

The subject matter: "They're albums that still sound very fresh today."

Radiohead's *OK Computer* (No. 94): "It's a very concentrated work. It sounds like people who have worked in their own world for a long time. And made a beautiful thing - that you have to enter into that world."

Television's *Marquee Moon* (No. 83): "I love the arrangements. I like the way the songs were constructed. It's a very edgy record."

Jeff Buckley's *Grace* (No. 73): "It's a beautiful record. The thing that strikes you I think most of all is his voice. I mean it's a singer's record in my opinion."

Bruce Springsteen's *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (No. 68): "*Darkness at [sic] the Edge of Town*" was just extraordinary. You had all these brand-new songs. They were very free. They were enormously proud-sounding songs."

Dusty Springfield's *Dusty in Memphis* (No. 58): "She had the vocal ability to, in some ways, go beyond some of the things that you heard in R&B."

Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* (No. 40): "*Astral Weeks* might be the best record of original thought that anybody's ever made. It's completely unlike anything that went before it. You can sort of hear the influence of certain kinds of music upon it. The vocal performances are the freest that I think Van ever recorded."

Van Morrison's *Moondance* (No. 32): "The *Moondance* songs - the influence of R&B is very, very strong and the songs are heavily structured. You could recognize it as a band that could be playing in a bar; but it's

playing these really great songs."

Aretha Franklin's *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You* (No. 30): "I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You" - that might be the best single ever made. It has this center to it. It's easily my favorite record by her."

Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (No. 29): "*Blood on the Tracks* is very intense and very intimate."

Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run* (No. 27): "I was a really big fan of Springsteen's first two albums and then suddenly there was this band sound on *Born to Run* and this big production number at the beginning of it - the title song." [Listen again. Ed.]

The Clash's *London Calling* (No. 25): "They were about my favorite group. I used to play *London Calling* all the time. They had great songs on there and they had songs you wouldn't expect them to write." (EC's comment was from 1996.)

Joni Mitchell's *Blue* (No. 14): "The stories are very, very intense. They seem very personal. I never think it's really important that we know that those things happened. What's important is that we think they're true and *Blue* is a great example of that."

Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* (No. 9): "On *Blonde on Blonde* there are a lot of really fantastic images in the words. Lots of, you know, 'jewels and binoculars hanging from the head of the mule' and people sat around, probably on drugs, and wondered what all that meant. However those words strike you is why they work so well. They work on your imagination as well as being works of imagination."

The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* (No. 6): "*Rubber Soul* is a great record. They were like the 'N'Sync of their day, weren't they, at one point. But the big difference was that they wrote their own songs and they played and they were a good rock 'n' roll band."

The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (No. 3): "*Pet Sounds* is an unbelievable record. It's like classical music or something. Wonderful compositions, beautiful singing, and I think maybe in a 100 years time, people'll be playing those songs on the piano trying to work out where they came from."

The Beatles' *Revolver* (No. 1): "When it really comes down to it, I think *Revolver* is my favorite. It's got everything."

And the show's final comment:

"And we're still trying to make that record today, 30 years later."

(Note that all of the records EC commented upon made his *Vanity Fair* 500 except for the two Springsteen selections.)

MAIT is presented amongst a backdrop including "Detectives" from 1978's

Rockpalast and an unknown grainy black & white clip of "Alison." Here's what they said:

Liz Phair: "Elvis Costello, *My Aim is True*, was an album I remember very clearly from high school. It was sort of anthemic. It gave us that kind of like 'Wow! We're kinda cool, but we're kinda brainy too' - feeling."

Elliot Smith: "He seems to like words. He seems to actually like being imaginative and thoughtful within building little card houses out of words."

***Freedom Highway* (January 5, 2001 - ARTE - Europe)** As far as we're aware, this was the first TV showing for Philip King's documentary on protest song (see *Film*).

***The Big Breakfast* (January 12, 2001 - Channel 4 - UK)** It's moments like this which



Remember, you're a Womble.

make us realise just why we love Elvis. In the middle of a light-hearted, 2-hour knock-about early morning show awash with cheap laughs, crew in-jokes and the ineane banter of B-list celebs, he delivers a towering take-no-prisoners version of 'Pump It Up', kicking up a haze of distortion with his trusty acoustic and pick-up in the garden of the house which serves as the show's studio. The fact that he's wrapped in a thick coat to protect himself against the bitter 8am cold, and that his audience is made up of 500 prize-winning viewers most of whom probably couldn't give a toss about him, only serves to make the moment more special. He might be happy to look on with wry amusement (rubbing shoulders with the likes of Lionel Blair, Christopher Biggins and, er, a womble) during the rest of the show, but when it comes to the music, there's simply no messing about. Outgoing host Johnny Vaughan is a big fan ("I've made no secret of my love for this man") and apparently requested this surprise appearance on his final show personally.

Radio Radio

***Today* (November 14, 2000 - BBC Radio 4)** Includes a brief interview about *Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill*. Asked why pop singers are now turning to jazz ("Is this because rock and pop have run out of ideas or people are bored with the format?") EC responds: "All these pat theories that commentators put

about ...the only people they interest are the commentators and critics, they don't interest musicians that much. They're just a lot of hot air, ways to fill up the paper ... It's like, what's that programme, *Review*? That's just World Federation Wrestling for middle class people, you know, that have read some books. It's completely fake."

Jazz on 3 (November 18, 2000 - BBC Radio 3) Full transmission of the *Keaton's Bar & Grill* performance recorded at the Royal Festival Hall on November 14 last year - thankfully without the exploding guitar amp!

It Didn't Happen: DJ John Kelly was trailing an appearance by EC on his RTE radio show *The Mystery Train* in November which didn't happen. (He did however show up on 9 March. Full report next issue.)



Magazines:

Elvis Costello Information Service (October 2000 - Netherlands) Issue 113 of Richard Groothuizen's Dutch-based fanzine focuses on the second part (1980-95) of a chronological studio session listing of EC's officially released output.

Musica (October 26, 2000 - Italy) Interview feature by Antonella Mucciaccio which sees EC doing his bit to help publicize *Sogno Di Una Notte Di Mezza Estate* (see page 10) without trying to pass himself off as a great expert on either ballet or Shakespeare.

"Ballet has been a mystery to me through the years," he confides. "I dance only in my mind." And as for the literary angle: "I read what they told me to at school. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Dickens and Hardy but also writers of the second half of the 20th century such as Graham Greene - who was the one I preferred - together with George Bernard Shaw and W.B. Yeats. My favourite writer of all, though, was James Thurber. Generally speaking, I prefer to read real stories like history and musical biography, rather than fiction." (Translation: Manfredi Buonomo)

Elvis Costello Information Service (December 2000 - Netherlands) Issue 114 features part 3 of the studio sessions listing, covering the years 1996-2000, plus a reprint of the ubiquitous Damon Coward interview (see below).

Mojo (January) Mag runs news story about EC's possible adventure into television as covered in the last *BB*. They stole the same quotes from the press release that we did, but

they sport a new recent color photo.

Uncut (January 2001 - UK) Interesting five-page illustrated interview feature by Jens Christensen (aka "Damon Coward") which originally appeared on his web site *The Stamping Ground*. The conversation finds EC in reflective mood about his work over the past few years:

"I have just had a long term collaboration with Burt Bacharach, which took about three years from the time we first started writing together to the making and release of *Painted From Memory* and then I spent all of last year touring with Steve Nieve, which was very exciting, and in that way I got to learn, not just about how to sing those songs, but also which songs of my own from the last 20 years I really enjoyed singing. It was the most touring I have done since the early days, even though it didn't have the same...you know...anxiety and edge that it obviously has when you are touring with a rock'n'roll band. But it doesn't mean that I'll never do that again, but I certainly won't tour with The Attractions again, that's definitely disbanded permanently...I always hope there's an opportunity to work with Pete Thomas again and my relationship with Steve Nieve is very good, you know..." [Let me see now, that leaves umm... - Ed.]

Yahoo! Internet Life (January) EC's deal with Emusic (making his LP's available for download) gets a mention in the "2000 Year on the Net" feature.

Uncut (February) Cover story is "100 Singles That Changed Your Life: How Many Have You Heard?" Well, there actually were a few that escaped these sheltered ears - including the number one entry - "Rebel Without a Pause" by Public Enemy.

EC is represented at No. 25 with "Chelsea". "Twitching with specky, punky, amphetamine edginess on *TOTP*, cerebral yet savage, you knew that Costello was never going to be blown away with the more one-dimensional shouters of his generation."

Newspapers:

The Independent (October 4, 2000 - UK) Spencer Leigh's obituary for Paddy Chambers, stalwart of the UK "Merseybeat" scene in the 60s, includes the following: "In 1985 he borrowed my book *Let's Go Down The Cavern* from the library and was astonished to find that Elvis Costello had recorded his song 'Night Time'. He called me for confirmation and found he was entitled to £500 in royalties, which he spent on a new guitar." EC & The As version of 'Night Time' was recorded in 1982 for the band's scrapped summer EP of Merseybeat covers and eventually appeared on the B-side of the "Everyday I Write the Book" 12-inch the following year.

The Guardian (November 4, 2000 - UK) Includes a colour reproduction of Costello's photograph "Birthday Feet" from the

forthcoming Big Issue book *Life's Ups and Downs* (see Books).

The Guardian (November 15, 2000 - UK) Subject number 1,761 in the regular *Pass Notes* feature - the paper's "ironic" take on those short attention span 300-word guides for the chattering classes - is none other than our Elvis. Naturally, the Grauniad hacks are all a-twitter at EC's remarks about BBC 2's *Review* programme (see *Radio Radio*) which, they postulate, stem from his being all consumed with bitterness towards that show's host Mark Lawson. "It all started when Lawson slated his Burt Bacharach duets album, *Painted from Memory*. Costello took umbrage. So when the critics started attacking his current project, jazz musical *The Keaton Bar & Grill* (in which he plays the narrator - is there no end to his talents?), he was left fuming. And Lawson was a natural target for his ire." [Mmmm. Right. I'm sorry, what were you saying...? - Ed.]

The Guardian (November 16, 2000 - UK) John L. Walters reviews the London *Fire at Keaton's* concert:

"Did the young Elvis Costello once dream of fronting a 21-piece band, swinging and singing his heart out, just like his dad, Ross MacManus, or Frank Sinatra, with a hat on the back of his head? If so, his dream came true at the end of Tuesday night ... But though this magnum opus used a big band, with a six-piece rhythm section, six horns, eight singers and an accordion (Karen Street), they only appeared together on stage for the final *Fire Suite Reprise*, with Costello on terrific form while the band wailed and images of smoke, bars and close-ups filled the video screen behind in what was also a live, global webcast."

Expressen (December 1, 2000 - Sweden) Swedish tabloid includes a short feature on Anne-Sofie von Otter's collaboration with "secret admirer" EC. "I must admit that when we met for the first time, I didn't know so much about Costello, I didn't have any of his records, and had only heard a few on the radio," says the acclaimed mezzo-soprano, who now lists *Kojak Variety* as her favourite Elvis record. Interestingly, when asked whether their voices work well together she admits candidly that "With all respect to Elvis, I must say that they don't go together too well." [Bet we won't see that quote turning up on the publicity for the new album - Ed.] Nor is she claiming to be his best friend following their work together: "He is extremely sociable, talks all the time, and has thousands of ideas, and is a very dynamic person. But I can't claim that I know him at a more personal level." To everyone's horror, the paper claims that the album is to be titled *Elvis Costello Meets Ann-Sofie von Otter - A Musical Love Story*. Thankfully, just as we were reaching for the sickbags, we found this to be untrue. (Translation: Ulf Gotthardsson)

The Independent (January 12, 2001 - UK) In the *Mix* column ("The Independent's Guide To Pop's Unlikeliest Collaborations") unearths a few old quotes for a small feature on EC & George Jones's 'Stranger in The House'. Elvis: "I didn't imagine that recording with George Jones would suddenly make me country entertainer of the year. But I didn't mind if it helped me get into Nashville a bit more." George: "Till I opened my door that time in Nashville, Tennessee, I didn't know who he was."

Books:

Life's Ups and Downs (UK - published on November 22, 2000 by the Big Issue in The North Trust in partnership with Communication Design & Trade Book UK) A host of musicians, artists, poets and writers - plus Mick Hucknall - were asked to provide a photograph which "looked either up or down" for this book which was designed to provoke thought about our perspective of the world. EC's contribution is a picture titled "Birthday Feet", seemingly a shot of his own shoes which he presumably photographed on his birthday last August. Everybody involved with the project donated their services free of charge and all proceeds from the 5,000 numbered copies of *Life's Ups and Downs* will be used to help place homeless people into "good homes, good jobs, good health, good life". The book is available by mail order only, priced at £25 from: The Big Issue in The North, 135-141 Oldham Street, Manchester M4 1LL, Tel: 0161 834 6300

Kill Your Idols: Elvis Costello

David Sheppard

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USA: Thunder's Mouth Press

ISBN 1560253037 Pub. Jan. 27, 2001



A lame effort in a series that also includes Beck, The Clash, Leonard Cohen, Tom Waits and Neil Young. Part One: The Story can be fun if you are looking for a summary of EC's career in 51 pages and like to keep score of how many factual errors you can find. (We quit counting!) Part Two: The Music gives a brief two or three sentence song-by-song synopsis that'll only serve to make you better appreciate Dave Farr's "A to Z." And finally, Part Three: The Legacy contains a few interesting observations by the author about EC but by this point in the book you couldn't care less.

Internet:

The Stamping Ground (November 7, 2000 - www.elvis-costello.net/) Danish songwriter and EC fan Damon Coward first published the interview he conducted with Elvis in Bologna last October on his Costello web site. It was removed after being sold to *Uncut* (see Magazines).

BBC Radio 3 Jazz (November 13, 2000 - www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/jazz/) RealAudio interview with Roy Nathanson ahead of tomorrow's Keaton's performance in London: "I always envisaged Elvis being the narrator of the story - sort of the *rabbi* of this experience - because he holds such power... [Elvis & Debbie Harry are] such believable characters on stage when they're telling their story..."

BBC Radio 3 Jazz (November 14, 2000 - www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/jazz/) Webcast of *Fire at Keaton's* with an archived RealPlayer version available for some four weeks after the performance. (Four short video clips were added to the site later and were still available as we went to press.)

StreamSearch (November 17, 2000 - www.streamsearch.com) Elvis is featured prominently as an interviewee in *Little Red Robin Hood*, a 60-minute film about Robert Wyatt. (See accompanying story.)



Freedom Highway (Directed by Philip King - Hummingbird Productions, Ireland 2000) Receiving its world premiere at Dublin's New Theatre on October 26, 2000 was this 90-minute documentary which examines the history and application of songs and music in the context of struggle and liberation, focussing on the Civil Rights movements in the USA and Northern Ireland, South America, Britain, Tibet, Chicano America and the Anti Apartheid movement in South Africa. EC's contribution comes in the form of three interview segments and a performance of U2's 'Please'. Also featured in performance are Tom Waits, Emmylou Harris, Dick Gaughan, Ringo Mandlingozi, Ani di Franco, Yungchen Lhamo, the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Family Factory Choir, June Tabor, Norma Waterson & Eliza & Martin Carthy, Billy Bragg and others. The director is, of course, no stranger to working with Elvis. Since they collaborated on the TV series *Bringing It All Back Home* in 1991,

King has also directed promotional films about the making of *The Juliet Letters* and *Painted From Memory*.

Little Red Robin Hood This 60-minute documentary film about Robert Wyatt can be seen in streaming video at www.streamsearch.com. Filmed in 1998 at the Teatro Ilirico in Milano, Italy (with what sounds like Steve playing "Shipbuilding" on piano in the background), here's a segment in which Elvis talks about Robert and his



recording of "Shipbuilding":

"Robert's performance of it is absolutely immaculate. I mean it's perfect in my opinion. The only reason I recorded it myself is 'cause I loved the song so much I wanted to sing it. I also thought that maybe even more people might hear it if there were two songs; two versions... and a good song can be interpreted more than once."

["Shipbuilding" video is shown]

"The process of making the record, you see, what I explained is when I went to Australia, I arrived and all these very lurid reports of the war were occurring, and I wrote the text of "Shipbuilding" very quickly to this tape of Clive Langer playing the piano and sort of singing without any words, sort of like [imitates],

singing like that, 'La-la-la' or whatever. Then I rang him up and said 'I finished the song but it's nothing as you've imagined. It's quite serious and I think it's the way the music sounds.' So we never really were



in the room together when we worked on the song. I wrote the words exactly to the music and then Clive I think showed it to Robert. Then Clive recorded the backing track of the accompaniment, and I recorded the vocal session. So we co-produced the record but again we were never in the studio together. It sounds a very creative way to make a record but you've got to understand at the time, Clive was tremendously successful as a producer; still is. He was very in demand as a producer and I was on tour a lot. So the days that he was available to work on this record as opposed to Madness or Dexy's Midnight Runners, and all these other groups he was producing and the days that I was available, never coincided with the day Robert was available to sing."

I'll Fix Your Flat Tire Merle!

Elvis joined Johnny Cash, Tom Waits, Keith Richards and Bob Weir in offering praise in a full-page ad for the new Merle Haggard LP, *If I Could Only Fly*:

"It's great to hear Merle Haggard in a very intimate recording and in such a fantastic voice. This is a great record."

Covers Corner

Swing is Dead: Reader John Edmisten pointed us to Bay Area jump-swing band **Lee Press-On and the Nails**. This campy act billed as "San Francisco's favorite swing demons" seem to have released the first recorded cover version of EC's "**Wave a White Flag**," his demo from 1976 that appeared on the *MAIT* reissue.



Look for the track on their 1999 CD *Swing is Dead* (Irascible Records). The 10-piece band has also released a killer live version of the song on their new *Playing Dirty* recorded live last August at the Derby in Hollywood (Hepcat Records).

BB got a hold of Lee Press-On and here's what he had to tell us:

"As you probably know, Lee Press-On and the Nails is by definition a swing band, but I feel that shouldn't limit us to playing just the same old Top 40-type swing tunes that most bands of our ilk do. I'm constantly listening to modern material as well, looking for recent tunes that would work in a swing context. We've done "Hot for Teacher" by Van Halen and, "Istanbul (not Constantinople)" made popular by They Might Be Giants. We just worked Wall of Voodoo's "Mexican Radio" into the set, and of course there's "Wave a White Flag."

The reasons why I chose that song are three-fold. One, I love Elvis. I believe he's one of the great songwriters of our time, and I always wanted to pay tribute by doing one of his songs. Two, when I first heard the song as an added track on the *My Aim is True* CD, it was just guitar and voice. I thought it would sound great given the full Dixieland treatment. And three, the subject matter. It's a rather gruesome song when sung as a solo, but when you turn it into a duet (I sing it with my wife Leslie Presley) it kind of takes the edge off and gives it that Addams Family esthetic that we seem to be so adept at.

Additionally, Mr. Costello admits in the liner notes to *MAIT* that the song was inspired by Randy Newman, who happens to be another one of my all-time favorite songwriters."

On Napster: If digital music is your thing, several Costello covers circulate at www.napster.com. One unique track to be found there is the first known cover of "**Poor Napoleon**." Canadian band **Moxy Fruvous**



perform a clever acoustic version of the song, laced with some great harmonizing, on what sounds like a live radio or television performance. (And based on the timing of some audience laughter, it sounds like some one "took their stockings off.") If you know more about this great track please let us know. (P.S. According to their web site, the band has also covered "**Alison**" and "**Oliver's Army**.")

Marc Jordan's Almost Blue:



Brooklyn-born but raised in Canada, pop songwriter (for the likes of Rod Stewart and Cher) and jazz singer, **Marc Jordan**, released a version of "**Almost Blue**" on his 1999 LP *This is How Men Cry* on EMI Music Canada. Marc told **BB** that he recorded this

"great, great song" after hearing the Chet Baker version.

More Searching for Covers:

Still searching around at www.allmusic.com, here are some more Costello covers that we have uncovered:

Female crooner **Lu Campbell** offered up the cool version of "**Almost Blue**" that Frank Sinatra never recorded. You can hear her effort along with some other standards on 1997's *This Town* on Chicago's Floyd Records.

Punk-rocker guitar, bass and drums trio, **Scared of Chaka**, do their thing to "**Hand in Hand**" on their 1996 eponymous debut LP on 702 Records. (Folks, keep this CD cover away from the kids and you won't find this one at Wal-Mart! Let's just say breasts and guns and leave it at that.)

Pyschobilly (a sort of new wave rockabilly) artists **Guana Batz** included a slapping version of "**Radio Sweetheart**" on their 1999 26-track collection of previously released covers, *Undercover*, on Anagram in the UK.

Costello Tribute Shows:

Well things sometimes come in bunches. It looks like our friend Lou Dalglish isn't the only Costello tribute show in town these days. Here's a few others that happened out there in the USA:

Portland, OR: Local musicians led by



Sattie Clark

former 17 Reasons Why singer **Sattie Clark**, **Lara Michelle** (Carmina Piranha) and "quirky chanteuse" **McKinley** hosted an "Elvis Costello Tribute

Night" at the Laurelthirst Public House back in September. Singer-songwriter Clark, whose next venture was an R.E.M. night, called the Costello show "a blast" that led to great performances from the local singers involved and lots of impromptu contributions from the crowd.

Atlanta, GA: Goon Squad, an all-star tribute to Elvis Costello featuring local musicians **Ronnie Sabol**, **Gary Yoxen** of the X-Impossible, **Brann Dailer** and **Brent Hines** of Mastadon and **Billy Fields** of Seek played at the Nine Lives Saloon in February.

San Diego, CA: Oliver's Army is the name of the Costello tribute band fronted by **Ken Dow**, the former bass player of the acclaimed San Diego band The R.A. Brotherhood. You can even sample some of their covers at <http://members.home.net/olivers-army>. Giggling around the San Diego area, the band boasts an impressive song list from "Accidents Will Happen" to "Why Can't a Man Stand Alone."

Shipbuilding: Former Miracle Legion member **Mark Mulcahy** released a solo EP titled *I Just Shot Myself in The Foot Again* on Mezzotint back on October 10, 2000. The 5-track disc includes his take on the Costello/Clive Langer classic "Shipbuilding". **BB** had previously reported that Mark was performing the song live and his version is a nice tender reading set to acoustic guitar accompaniment.

Cover Story

"He wrote me a note and thanked me for treating it so tenderly."

Roseanne Cash to *Beyond Belief*, about Costello's reaction to her 1995 cover of his "Our Little Angel," at a recent Nashville book-signing for her new children's book, *Penelope Jane*.

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...

FAVOURITE HOUR

The years 1992 and 1993 saw Elvis barreling forward on two paths: while writing and recording *The Juliet Letters* with the Brodsky Quartet, he was also laying down basic tracks for the songs that would end up on *Brutal Youth* (and writing the Wendy James tunes as well). One song that came out of the *Juliets* milieu ended up on the later album. "Favourite Hour" was composed in the summer of 1992 while Elvis was teaching a songwriters

course at Dartington International Summer School in the UK. A recital at Dartington in August of that year saw the second-ever live performance of *The Juliet Letters*. As one of the encores, Elvis premiered what he called an "outline" of a song he'd written at the school. Interestingly enough, the theme of "favourite hour" was apparently the theme required for a class songwriting project. Leave it to EC to lead by example.

The tune was later performed with the Quartet at the Dublin show used in the *Juliets* video (Nov. 1992), as well as once during the 1993 tour. Although the song was unlike the bulk of the material set for the new album, Elvis apparently could not resist including it, though he was right to place it at the end of the record. (However, early promo tapes of *Brutal Youth* had the song next to last - surely a mistake!) Still, the song is written like a *Juliet Letter*, and would have benefitted from the strings. The vocal arrangement, especially, is akin to the *Juliets* material, with its amazingly lyrical melody, its overreaching high notes, and its ineffable sadness. Nonetheless, EC somewhat curiously did not use the services of the Quartet on the record (as he would two years later for "I Want to Vanish").

Instead, we have EC basically performing solo, accompanying himself on piano. (There may be some overdubbed organ or harmonium in the mix, but if so, it's uncredited.) This changes the sound from chamber music to a more gospel-flavored one. The strict, unadorned structure (verse / chorus / verse / chorus / verse / chorus, with no bridge at all, and the song title used as the end of the chorus) reminds one of "Clowntime is Over." The soundstage here is very compressed, with EC's vocal very centered and up front, yet lacking the intimacy of the *Juliets* sound. There is an echo on the vocal but it is very flat. The keyboards seem to widen out slightly as the track progresses, but all in all it's kept very austere (as EC's piano playing necessarily is). The song has such a gorgeous melody that it overcomes some dodgy lyrics and a few strained notes (even in its backbone) to stand as a lovely song. What makes this work is the

chorus, which is beautifully written and, in the main, beautifully sung. It is hard to think of a more affecting moment in EC's work than the phrasing of the last "small mercies and such"; when he sings it that last time and shivers through "mer-CIES an-an-and suuucch." It's perfect.

"Favourite Hour" was not really in step with the sound of the *Brutal Youth* tour in 1994, and was rarely performed. When it was, it was as a duet with Steve Nieve on organ as the only musical accompaniment. For the summer shows at the Albert Hall, Steve received special permission to play the monstrous Albert pipes for a thrilling version with Elvis each night. A more orchestrated version was played with the "Punishing Kiss" orchestra at Meltdown in June 1995. Elvis also performed the song with the Brodskies at the Bristol show in November that same year. Recently, in 1999, Elvis and Steve revived the song during their tour, performing it as an un-mixed encore at several shows. Elvis also sang it at the Michael Thomas showcase at Almeida this past summer.

FEVER



Little Willie John

This Little Willie John number, made famous by Peggy Lee and covered by that other fella called Elvis, among others, was added at the end of performances of "Inch by Inch," during the 1999 *Lonely World Tour*. Elvis sang a verse and chorus, punctuated by loud electric guitar and Steve's organ, tongue firmly in cheek. A live version from February 1999 in Sydney, Australia was released as a track on one of the "Toledo" CD singles in April 1999. The released

live track is quite embryonic and sounds almost hesitant; by the end of the 1999 tour, EC's vocal had grown much more vigorous, and the guitar and piano licks more prominent and distinctive.

FISH 'N' CHIP PAPER

Trust is a troublesome album. Elvis often refers to his and the band's addled state during *Get Happy!!* and claims they sound nearly out of control, but *Get Happy!!* is a triumph of material. *Trust* is a real mixed bag, and the band sounds less inspired. There are several classic tracks on *Trust*, but there are also tracks that seem to be more filler than anything else. The production is opaque; the band seems to be behind a dirty window and trying like the devil to break through it. Moreover, many of the songs seem to have no coherent style. Whereas Elvis had the inspiration with *Get Happy!!* to shackle the band's nearly uncontrollable energy to classic frameworks from the Motown and Stax catalogs, with *Trust* there is no model. The arrangements are not tight, and the sound is often not sharp enough to hold one's interest. Many of the songs seem to just toss a raft of sounds into the mix to see what sticks. "Fish 'n' Chip Paper" is a good example of this; while not a bad song, it's a mish-mosh that employs so many devices to get wherever it's going that it never quite seems to get anywhere.

What one notes with a track like this are the various sounds and noises that can be cataloged as the song progresses, rather than an overall feel. The songs that are brilliant from *Trust*, like "Watch Your Step" and "New Lace Sleeves," have a unity of sound and arrangement that focus the ear on the overall vocal performance. On the lesser tracks, it's a sales rack of sounds, and the vocal is just another item. A hurried start with the clipped drums that last throughout is accompanied by what is probably Bruce's bass, overdubbed, playing very high notes that sound like someone humming or vocalizing, while Elvis sings in a fairly awkward meter.

The vocals on the verses are a little rushed and breathless (usually because there are too many words per line), and sometimes brayed. The first part of the chorus shifts into a slightly slower tempo, with a very pleasant double tracking added to the vocal, helped along by a drum buildup. But the remainder of the chorus vocal is then treated to sound like a megaphone, which is more distracting and irritating than effective. Next we have an instrumental bridge, once a rarity in EC's work, and a guitar solo at that! Yet, for most of it, it meanders through the same figure several times, only becoming interesting when the guitar (accompanied by piano or possibly strings) goes up to a higher octave in the last bar or two. Steve then executes an arpeggio that sounds like a phone ringing, and the drums and guitar sort of tackle the bridge to the ground with a thump, and then Pete raps on its head. The final verse goes back to the earlier sound, Steve inserting some more filligrees; the band throws in an incongruous "ooo-oooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-OOO-ooo." The shrugging fade out at the end confirms that this song really wasn't written tightly. It sounds like it was trying very hard to be fun. All that being said, the song does lope along fairly well, and is more likable than some of the other album tracks. Bruce plays some stellar bass (this album is full of energetic bass lines), and there is a lot to listen to on this cut. It simply doesn't hang together too well.

"Fish 'n' Chip Paper" was played live around the time the LP was being recorded, but by the time the LP was released, it was already off the set list.

SIVE GEARS IN REVERSE

For this song filled with automotive metaphors, the joke is, the Attractions play like a garage band! On a breathtaking record like *Get Happy!!*, this track is one of the few plodding numbers. It was premiered live in Scandinavia just prior to the recording of the album, and featured the same arrangement, but an extra lyric verse and more guitar grinding. A very "King Horse"-like drum intro drops us into a churning guitar and bass riff (the bass is turned up very loud here, and sounds like it's pulling the floorboards up underneath it), while Steve plays some squeaky organ notes in the background. An acoustic guitar is also being slapped around in the left channel. The buildup is pretty good, but the verses drag a bit, with Bruce playing fat but repetitive riffs on the bass. The chorus improves things, as the bass accelerates (especially starting to skip under "patience is exhausted" and forward), but there is a ponderous, stadium rock feel to the playing, particularly under "driving you to de-e-e-eath." EC's guitar solo after the second chorus (and a few barks) is okay and suitably grungy, while Bruce again gets points for some nimble playing, ranging from high notes to low rumbles. The song seems to fade away prematurely, and that missing third verse feels conspicuously absent.

It's not a bad track, but this LP is so filled with gems that an okay track seems quite mediocre. After the album release "Sive Gears" was played several times during the tours in March, April and May (the latter two with Martin Belmont lending even more of a garage sound to this tune). After that point, it dropped out of sight.

FOR OTHER EYES

The leadoff track on *The Juliet Letters*, and the first notice to the listening audience of the dramatic change in EC's singing. As with all leadoff tracks, it is imperative that the song set the tone properly for the album, and this one does a banner job. After the musical intro of "Deliver Us," the song leads with a very sonorous cello, and Elvis comes in with a perfectly pitched vocal. It's easy to forget, eight years later, how different this voice sounded when the record came out. But listen to it again and hear the control in Costello's vocal, the way he ranges from highs to lows, the newly developed vibrato that

he employs - judiciously - at the end of the lines, the emotion that bleeds through. It's a brand-new day for Elvis as a singer.

Another hallmark of *The Juliet Letters* that is previewed in this track is the mix of humor and sadness; not only in the vocal sound, but in the music (written exclusively by EC, though the words were a joint effort with Michael Thomas and Paul Cassidy). The gloomy cello notes that open the song, lull one into expecting a somber number. But as the text takes some unexpected turns, as the story turns silly or rueful, the music follows suit, with plucked strings, catlike whines, and other theatrical business that abets the storytelling. This coloration is extremely effective.

Theatricality is a major part of these songs, as the live concert presentations in 1993 proved so well, and this song shows how the music is used to illustrate the sub text of the lyrics. Note the slow and worried start, which works into agitation and worry as the narrator searches for imagined indiscretions, followed by almost jokey, cartoonish sounds as the absurdity of the calls to the dentist's office are revealed. Then the doubt and fear creep back in, along with the hurt of knowing that something is making these feelings surface. The music returns to the sad tone it starts with, mirroring the cycle of worry the uncertain lover must face. EC's vocals are recorded flawlessly; there is not a wasted breath to be heard. When his voice breaks on "our lips feel sore," the imperfection stands out (and perhaps is meant to). His vocals have never been so commanding. As with all the *Juliet Letters*, this one was performed each night on the *Juliet* tour and at Bristol in 1995, and to hear it reproduced live and sung so well on stage was a revelation all over again.

FORGIVE HER ANYTHING

Here's a song that was not released until later, as an outtake, and thus suffers from the memory of its live rendition. This was a lovely ballad performed only fleetingly on the *Costello Sings Again* tour in 1986. It had been attempted with the Attractions for *Blood and Chocolate* but did not make the cut. The 1986 live performances were solo with Elvis accompanying himself on piano, and the song seemed like an instant classic, one of those fractured ballads EC coaxes out of the keyboard. Elvis writes differently on the piano; perhaps because he is more proficient with the guitar, his piano songs seem more halting, and they take detours and twists of melody that a guitar-based song will not. Many of the most haunting melodies EC has written come from keyboard explorations.

Having been lucky enough to hear "Forgive Her Anything" as it was played solo in 1986, I was excited to hear that the unreleased track would be included on the re-release of *B&C* in 1995. Unfortunately, the version released from 1986 is more of a rehearsal, and fails to realize the song's potential. EC's own liner notes recognize this, referring to it as only a "rough" version, and an example of how the *Blood and Chocolate* recording sessions really did not lend themselves to producing any "fancy" songs.

The intro is very standard Attractions material, a slightly lighter variation of the intro to "I Hope You're Happy Now" (used again later for "How to Be Dumb," and heard on this same LP to some extent on "Home is Anywhere . . ."), with a heavy bass. The instrumentation is generally quite heavy, and it takes the plaintiveness out of the song. The musical arrangement also errs seriously by employing a jerky rhythm, first in the drum and bass and then amplified by the keyboards and by clipped electric guitar notes. Steve's organ ends up chirping along and setting up a nervous beat under what should be a very lilting melody. EC sings in the same manner; he cuts up the vocal lines and the lyrics, and the pauses for breath and the spaces within lines are in the wrong places. It's all about half a measure too fast and it's sung in a desultory fashion, like a guide vocal.

Despite not releasing the song, Elvis obviously had a soft

spot for it, performing it a few times on the ensuing tour, and attempting to record it again for the next couple of albums. But no polished recording has emerged, and, sadly, it has not been played again live. A Costello/Nieve version, with EC's matured vocal technique, would be a real gem.

FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM

This song was kicking around in some form as early as 1979, when Elvis gave some material to Jo Marshall on demo tapes (for details, seek out the otherwise unremarkable Krista Reese EC bio: lotsa pictures but not much else except for this chapter). Marshall's EC-penned "Mighty Man" combines some of the lyrics from "Whisper" with the music that would eventually grace "King Horse."

An unusual example of Elvis releasing a vocal duet, this one features EC trading verses with Glenn Tilbrook of Squeeze (and also includes Martin Belmont on guitar).



Elvis & Glenn

It was introduced onstage by Elvis and the Attractions during the summer tour in 1980, and played at most of the remaining dates that year. While *Trust* was being recorded, Elvis was also heavily involved with producing Squeeze's *East Side Story*, a collaboration that led to work with both Difford (on "Boy With a Problem") and here, with Tilbrook.

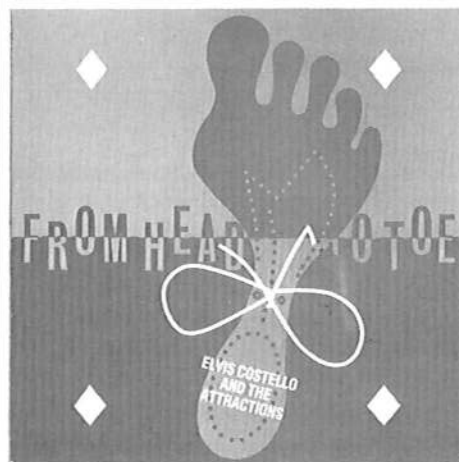
Glenn had apparently done the guide vocal for the track while EC suffered a sore throat, and was then invited to participate in the final product.

Like many of the songs on *Trust*, this one is a little overloaded and over worked. But this song is strong enough to survive. The central riff on guitar and piano is a great hook (and should have been played much louder and upfront on the guitar - this was remedied in concert), and the mix of EC and Tilbrook's vocals is very pleasing. A very Lowe-style drum sound (bopping from channel to channel) gives us a kick start, followed by the central riff. EC's vocal is a little out of control, and too much of a wail, but Tilbrook smoothes things out and they work well together. (Live, if Tilbrook was not onstage, EC's vocal was improved by his having to sing all the lines).

Bruce's bass is really the star of the track, bouncing through a kind of "Into the Action" line and then really cooking under the "waiting too long" traded refrains. The guitar riff should have really come out swinging after that first chorus, but is curiously muted; Steve's piano keeps the riff at a nagging but persistent level off to the side, while the guitar just plays noise. Steve adds a nice sweep of the keys over the choruses, and the finale on drums and piano (a bit of Bach here?) is a good finish.

Live in the US in 1981, Elvis often was joined by Tilbrook for the song as an encore, as Squeeze was the opening act on the tour. Belmont was also along for the latter part of the tour, and his guitar beefed up the song. Tilbrook also made a few guest appearances on the song in the UK, including a televised performance on *Jim'll Fix It* in March. Surprisingly, "From a Whisper" was chosen as the second single from *Trust* in the UK. It failed to chart (lack of a new B-side didn't help matters). In 1982, a very different version was played during the spring tour of Scandinavia. Elvis slowed the song down considerably, making it a kind of blues stomp. In some ways, this version is at least as effective as the album's. It brings out a desperation to the lyrics that is not heard in the laddish duet on the record. After that tour, the song faded until a surprise performance with Steve in Italy in 1998, apparently prompted by equipment problems that led Elvis to grab his electric guitar and launch into this one to keep the momentum going!

FROM HEAD TO TOE



UK single for "From Head to Toe."

This Smokey Robinson song was apparently recorded as part of a planned EP of cover songs from the Merseybeat era, EC basing his version on a cover by The Easybeats. The single, produced by Elvis, is just about perfect. Pete's rock steady drum, Bruce's bouncy bass, and a rhythmic piano simply compel your toes to start tapping. EC's vocal is smooth and sure. The second

verse adds clipped guitar notes to further accent the rhythm. The band joins on the chorus for call and response vocals, a rarity, while Pete's drums carry the momentum forward, and then Steve's piano dances back from the chorus into the verse. On the third verse, EC is overdubbed providing backing vocals ("BA, ba, ba, ba"). In verse four, Bruce ratchets up the bass from the chorus on, leading in with a very Motown-style signature, while Steve's playing switches from rhythm to lyrical. EC's vocal track, meanwhile, is double tracked (starting at "sweet baby!" on the chorus) with a high sweet harmony vocal, really giving it the Smokey touch. A very Merseybeat final chord, and you have the end to a really fine pop record.

"From Head to Toe" was played every night during the 1982 tour. It was released as a single to promote the UK tour in September 1982 (and mimed on TV), but failed to set the charts afire. Elvis continued to play the song live throughout 1982, and often on the 1983 UK tour, adding Afrodisiak on backing vocals (instead of the dulcet tones of the Attractions). Since then, it has not been in the set.

FULL FORCE GALE

This surprising rendition of the Van Morrison number was released in 1995 on *No Prima Donna*, a collection of Morrison covers. Elvis joined with The Voice Squad, a Dublin-based a cappella group. Elvis of course was a fan of Van the Man, and heavily influenced by him. Van's style is all over EC's early work, especially the bootlegged Flip City material that was recorded just prior to EC's discovery by Stiff.

Elvis and Van have played together onstage on a few occasions now, first when Van came on for the encores at the last of three nights with the Confederates at the Albert Hall in January 1987, and more recently during some of the encores at the Fleadh shows in 1999. And of course, Van's "Jackie Wilson Said" has been a staple of EC's live set since 1987.

The recording is a real stunner. This is the only a cappella record EC has released. He sings the first verse and the start of the second completely unaccompanied, and then the Voice Squad comes in with a bravura backing. After the first bridge, the Squad stays in formation while EC gets to improvise, even singing in an all-out falsetto. Then the roles are switched as the group improvises around EC's more regulated verse. Elvis saves the best for last, with a great finish on the last "Lord," running the scales vocally. It's an exceptional record.

"Full Force Gale" has only been performed live by EC once, but what a performance it was. At the 1995 Meltdown Festival, Elvis teamed up for a rendition with the Fairfield Four that was truly amazing. No further attempts since then. Might be pointless!

BLACK & WHITE WORLD

A classic shot of Elvis & Bruce Thomas from the opening date (July 14, 1982) of the USA Imperial Bedroom tour. Taken at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium by our good friend Karl Buhler.

