



Photo: By Patrick Connelly at the Bottom Line

## Costello Signs with Polygram

ALTHOUGH NO OFFICIAL announcement has been made, several sources confirm that Elvis Costello has been signed to Polygram. While not revealing the name of the label, Elvis told *Billboard* in its October 25th issue that his new affiliation was "an unusual deal" which will allow him to pursue his many wide-ranging "musical ambitions."

The Polygram deal will enable EC to release different types of records under its affiliated labels where they can get directed marketing support. For example, a rock record could be issued by Mercury; jazz on Verve; and classical on London. About Warners, EC told *Billboard*: "I don't want to be put in a triple-A box - I don't think that's the beginning and end of where music is for me in the modern day", a reference to the "Adult Album Alternative" radio format in which he does not want to find himself typecast.

About the change, EC also told *Billboard*: "I reached a place where I needed to be somewhere fresh." Costello was expected to announce the signing in late October, but again he avoided naming the label on an October 23rd appearance on a UK chat show (see *Television*). It appears that the postponement of the announcement is merely one of professional courtesy by Polygram allowing Warners some time to promote its *Extreme Honey* Costello compilation.

Sources also indicate that a new Costello release is slated for the second quarter of 1998. However, Costello's first product for his new label will be included on the soundtrack to the new Coen Brothers' film, *The Big Lebowski*. Expected sometime in January, Costello's "My Mood Swings" will be the first single from the T-Bone Burnett-orchestrated soundtrack. EC is said to have written the song while in a taxi in New York City in October. The track was then rush-recorded in a local studio.

## Costello Live

1997's COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS continued as Elvis made two trips to the USA and a first-time trip to South America. In October, EC joined the Fairfield Four in support of their new LP for shows in Nashville and New York. He also made two appearances with the Mingus Big Band at the Fez night club which were warm-ups for two dates with the band in Brazil. The Mingus shows were highlighted by the debut of "This Subdues My Passion," a Mingus composition with words by Elvis. Finally, EC returned in November to make an appearance on the *Letterman* show backed by Toshi Reagon & Big Lovely to promote his new *Extreme Honey* release. **Full details inside!**

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Bruce Thomas
- ⇒ Village Music's  
John Goddard



# LIP SERVICE

From The Editor

I am not a very observant person. Simply stated, I am famous for not noticing things often right in front of my face. I have been known to walk around things without even paying attention as to why they were there in the first place. Clean or paint the house, add new furniture, plants, etc. - forget it - I'll never notice. With regards to Elvis Costello - obvious meanings of lyrics have even caught me by surprise 10 years later. Now this gets really scary when you think that I spent a good part of my professional career as an auditor! More on this subject later.

The year 1987 gave us a double dose of live Elvis. The Spring *Almost Alone* solo tour was followed by the Fall *South of the Mason-Dixon Line* Confederates tour: a five-city blitz through the Southern USA. Byron Wilson and I would again travel, this time to three shows by way of Southwest Airlines.

Our junket began with a Saturday trip to Nashville. The show there was at Vanderbilt University and featured guest appearances from locals John Hiatt (on a duet of "He'll Have to Go") and Dennis Locorriere (ex-Dr. Hook on "Lovable" which he claimed to be recording). The Confederates this time out featured Bay Area-pub rocker Austin deLone on keyboards and the tour's solo opener, Nick Lowe, on rhythm guitar.

We spent our Sunday night in a rather sedate Nashville and on Monday morning, we flew to Tulsa, Oklahoma. The show there was at the legendary Cain's Ballroom, a traditional honky-tonk bar, famous for having hosted the likes of Hank Williams and Bob Wills in the 40's and 50's and even Elvis & the Attractions in 1978. Would you believe we even found a record show on a Monday evening in Tulsa before the concert?

We stood on our feet near the front of the stage in true honky tonk style and the Cain's show was a blast. The next morning would bring us an early flight back home to San Antonio. There we would catch our breath before an afternoon drive to our final show in Austin at Willie Nelson's Opry House, a late substitution for the true local honky tonk, Gruene Hall, where EC had hoped to play.

Around this time I was doing quite a bit of business travel and I frequented Southwest



*Congrats to Alfonso Cardenas and Robin Wicks who were married on September 14th. Here's AC in 1994 backstage with EC & the A's in England.*

## Subscriptions

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Airlines quite often. I was most fond of their rear facing seats that offered extra leg room when the plane was not too crowded. We boarded the early flight to Dallas where we would change planes to SA and I led Byron to my usual place in the back. With a cup of coffee and my legs stretched across the seat in front of me, I was at peace at this early hour after our late evening the night before.

For about 20 minutes or so, I sat there on the aisle sipping my coffee with my face in the newspaper. Byron sat across from me in the middle seat and I was surprised when my usually shy friend began speaking to the gentleman sitting alongside me in the window seat. Perhaps it was more what he said that surprised me: "You're Nick Lowe, aren't you?" Yes, he was sitting three feet away from me and I did not notice him!

After exchanging pleasantries and amusing him with the tale of our recent itinerary, Nick told us that he was en route to Houston to replace a lost passport. (I did tell him that I would let him know if it ever turned up in a collector's shop!) We had a nice chat and

his interest in whom we were and what we did for a living was delightful. He also put us on the guest list for the Austin show which, although we already had tickets, did add a backstage pass to the Costello archives.



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## To The Editor

### TOUR RETRO FAN

I've renewed my subscription despite the recent lack of REAL Costello news. The Bacharach album sounds a bit whimsical. The classical stuff sounds just plain dull.

I think that the tour retrospectives are great (particularly of course if you were at the concerts). A *Tour to Trust* was the first time that I saw Elvis, and it was great. I first went to the Birmingham gig. This was famous for being about 45 minutes long with no encores. He blasted through several *Taking Liberties* songs with no pauses between them at all. Luckily, we were familiar with the album and we were exhilarated at not just hearing a "greatest hits" package. There were five of us at the Birmingham gig and we decided there and then to see a longer concert, so we booked up for the Southampton leg. This was a much longer concert which featured a great "Alison" encore.

I look forward to reading which songs were ACTUALLY played at these gigs as time does play tricks on the memory. Keep up the excellent work.

Paul Clayden, Essex, UK

*(Watch for more tour retrospectives in future issues of BB! - Ed.)*

### REFLECTIONS ON BB

Elvis's work, and its sources, is one of my passions so I enjoy your magazine very much and would like to say thanks to the team who produce it. The news of upcoming projects and releases is appetite-whetting and excellent, and the round up of articles, interviews and TV appearances consistently interesting. I wish you could quote from these at greater length, as promised with the Bruce Thomas *Bass Player* interview. Presumably, there are copyright issues here?

However, when it comes to tour song frequency bar charts, I have to add my voice to those who feel this is a faintly daft pursuit. Still, it keeps 'em off the streets I suppose! Seriously, it's no skin off my nose either way and the rest of the magazine more than makes up for it. I feel similarly about the collecting of the same recordings on different formats or promo discs - it's fine but it doesn't really enrich my appreciation of the music the way that some of the other articles you've featured do, for example, the fascinating interview with Ryko's Jeff Rougvin in *BB2*.

Dave Farr's contributions are invariably good, especially his recent piece giving some

perspective to Elvis's understandably frustrated "I quit!" outbursts. I also greatly appreciate his A to Z series, although I don't always agree with it. Particularly, I felt his dismissal of "After the Fall" was a bit wide of the mark. To me, it's a terrifically grown-up song about sexual obsessions and doomed controlling relationships - with some early Leonard Cohenisms and ace Spanish guitar attached. The way the lyrics slip in and out of dialogue form helps the song if anything. It's like a short story and the dialogue complies with the writer's "show and don't tell" rule.

There's one suggestion I'd like to make. To pool everyone's knowledge and feelings about Elvis's work, why not pick several songs per issue and ask for brief analysis, appreciation, clarification, references, anecdotes and so on from readers. The most enlightening bits could be collated and presented alongside the song's lyric. I reckon it could be very lively and interesting. What do other readers think?

Paul Bernays, London, UK

### BITTER ON HONEY

Regarding the *Extreme Honey* album, I feel that you as a magazine representing Costello fans should be very outspoken against releases like this which force fans to buy loads of material they already have. How often can you sell the same songs? Sometimes, when I think about it, I realise that I've spent an awful lot of money on Elvis since 1977 for items which brought no extra joy or excitement because they had nothing new to offer. Elvis Costello has brought lots of great times into my life, and still does, but my feeling is that it was more fun in the early years when you seemed to get value for money. Now it all seems so calculated and I wonder who's living the good life with all the money we spend?

Huib Beulen, Montfort, The Netherlands

### EXTREME RIP-OFF?

The record industry knows that fans will buy almost anything released by their favourite artists. Elvis fans have bought the *Demon/Ryko* reissues to get all the demos and unreleased tracks - even though we already had the albums on vinyl, and possibly on CD as well. No doubt, if 20th anniversary editions are issued with yet more unreleased material, we will buy those too. But now it is going too far. The "limited edition" *All This Useless Beauty* singles set cost almost as much as two albums - and what did we get that isn't available elsewhere? One new song (four times), cover versions by other artists and some dreadful remixes - in a "limited edition" so limited that over a year later the

singles are still being offered by Blackmail. And now *Extreme Honey*, another "best-of" compilation to go with the three others previously issued, but with just one new song. Who will buy this album? Not me.

Paul Benny, Knutsford, UK

*(Although we're happy to reflect the views of our readers on EC-related matters, Beyond Belief makes no claim to be representing anyone, so you'll find no editorial thundering in these pages. We take the point about the constant reissuing of material but would point out that (a) nobody is being forced to buy anything by Mr. Costello and (b) EC cannot be expected to tailor every record he releases for the diehard collector - these "best-of" compilations are, no doubt, welcomed by the less-committed fans and do serve to expose his catalog to new listeners. - Ed.)*

### ANOTHER VIEW

I just wanted to drop a quick note on the subject of *Extreme Honey* being a rip-off. I fear some of you are looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Even with the new track and rarity, this package is not for us; he's not preaching to the choir. This is a summation of a period in his life; for people who are daunted by such a large discography and need a jumping off point. It serves EC and it serves the record company, not so much because they are "ripping us off" with this release but because it may point neophytes to an impressive and varied body of work. The great notes and rarities are gravy for us. EC knows enough about record collecting to know how to put a rarities collection together. This package has a bone for us but is a sumptuous meal for the unenlightened. Some of you may feel that it doesn't do that job well. That's a personal taste issue. Of course, I bought it day one.

Eddie Gorodetsky, Los Angeles, CA

### A to Z to ETERNITY

The A to Z section continues to impress and delight. But I just did some distressing math. It looks like it will take 3 issues just to get through "A"; there are 26 letters in the alphabet; 26 times 3 equals 78; 78 divided by 4 issues per year equals 19.5 years!

So if these trends continue (and assuming every letter of the alphabet is equally represented is quite an assumption) it will be almost 20 years before this feature runs its course. And that's assuming that Elvis doesn't release any new compositions (God forbid) between now and then. It looks like (and I demand) that you should increase publication to a monthly basis!

T.J. Young Edina, MN

## Ask Dr. Ellen:

*An insight into readers' dreams about Elvis Costello by Dr. Ellen Slaten, Assistant Professor - Department of Psychiatry, University of Texas Medical School.*

This issue's dream comes from Stephen Thompson of Cambridge, England although it is actually his sister Bridget's dream:

*It was around the time that EC was due to perform at the Cambridge Folk Festival (July 1995). I and my sister were at the Cambridge railway station (for reasons unknown for a start) when we saw EC coming off a train - very modest! He was dressed all in black and we rushed over to speak to him. My sister (in the dream) hogged our time with EC and talked to him for a long time (even though she's not a big fan herself), while I (the true fan) barely got a quick "Hello" in!*

*He was very amiable and my sister asked him why he was playing the Folk Festival as it attracts a variety of unsavory characters. Not too strange as of yet - but - the dream was set in around about the mid-80's (circa 1985)! We were all about 12 years younger in the dream and I hadn't even discovered EC until 1989. In 1985, neither of us would've really known who EC was. But the strangest thing is why was the dream set in 1985 as EC didn't play the festival until 1995 (10 years later as mentioned above)? My sister and I would certainly like an explanation!*

Our readers from across the pond have reported quite an unusual dream. It is rare for a dream to indicate directly that action takes place in the past or the future. Dreams commonly unfold as if in present time, yet this dream is set in the past while foretelling events which did not occur until some 10 years later. The dreamer should reflect upon that particular period in her life (the mid-80's) for significant events, especially those involving her brother, since they share the experience of meeting EC in the dream. One wonders whether the dreamer is younger than her brother, as birth order in the family may relate to the number of dreams recalled. Research indicates that firstborns remember significantly fewer dreams than their siblings.

The dreamer and her brother encounter a friendly EC stepping off a train at a railway station. Trains are set on a fixed track without the option of moving somewhat at will.

Therefore, they tend to symbolize compulsive or habitual activities. This may reflect something in the dreamer's nature, and she should ponder her personal associations with trains. The dreamer enjoys a lengthy chat with EC while her brother, the more devoted fan, can't get a word in edgewise. This may be a comment on the way the siblings relate to one another. Dreams can reveal patterns in family relationships that might otherwise be overlooked. Especially puzzling are the confused time relations in the dream and the fact that such a chronology would be impossible in waking life. The irrationality of

the time sequence may indicate that time is of no importance in the dream message, or it may reveal the dreamer's difficulty with time: the passage of time, the use of time, or arriving for appointments on time.

*Thanks for helping out with info for this issue:* Jesse Ornoz, Richard Arthur, Chip Rollinson, Jeff Pargeon, Mike Hernandez, Phil Dennison, Connor Ratliff, Tom Schlegel, Karl Buhler, Chris Carson, Tom Freidrich, Bill Aho, Olivier Ridolphi, Huib Beulen, Tom X. Chao, Steven Castran, Peter Horsted, Rein Zylstra and Colin Wilkinson.



*Lou Reed and EC on October 3 after the Fairfield Four show at the Bottom Line in New York City.*  
*Photo by Jason Brabazon*

# *Live from Caffe Milano in Nashville* *... it's Mountain Stage* **EC Joins in Tribute to the Fairfield Four**

by Mike Bodayle

THIS STORY BEGAN SOME TEN YEARS AGO with a song that was co-written by Elvis Costello and Paul McCartney. Entitled "That Day Is Done," a song about EC's dying grandmother, Costello fans first heard it as the somber closing number during his 1987 tour with the Confederates. McCartney later included it on his 1989 *Flowers in the Dirt* LP and Costello reprised the tune later that same year on his first Rude 5 tour.

The plot later thickened in 1995 during his stewardship of London's *Meltdown* festival when he got the idea to perform the number live accompanied by one of his guests, the American gospel group, the Fairfield Four. A year later they recorded the song together in Nashville and this past September the track was finally released on the FF4's latest LP. And as he did recently with the Jazz Passengers, Elvis was more than ready to help promote another artist's record with some special live appearances.

The first such appearance was a hometown all-star tribute to the FF4, originally intended for the famed Ryman Auditorium. Scheduling difficulties, however, moved the show down the street to the Caffe Milano, a trendy dinner club which has recently gained notoriety for a regular series of Monday night performances by guitar-great Chet Atkins.

As a bonus, the show was also recorded and subsequently aired by *Mountain Stage*, the weekly syndicated public radio program from Charleston, West Virginia. Television cameras were also present as the entire evening's festivities were filmed on speculation with no specific market footing the production bill. Unfortunately, this means we may never get to see the taping, which was reported not to have gone smoothly from a technical standpoint.

Caffe Milano holds a scant 250 and with Warner Bros. and the special musical guests grabbing 100 or so of the tickets, fans quickly had to scramble on their telephones for the remaining seats in a single afternoon with many having to resort to standing room only. True to their form however, about 25 of the



Costello faithful were in attendance and were of course the first to gather at the club early that afternoon.

Still Too Soon to Know  
 Deep Dark Truthful Mirror /  
 You've Really Got a Hold on Me  
 Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood  
 That Day is Done (w/ FF4)  
 Jesus on the Mainline (w/ all)

Although a tribute to the FF4, the show was structured as a typical two-hour *Mountain Stage* broadcast, starting with host Larry Groce (Remember his hit "Junk Food Junkie?") singing the show's theme song. After two opening numbers by the FF4, looking sharp in their dark jackets and overalls, Kathy Mattea and her band performed a FF4 song a capella; the only guests not to sing with the FF4 citing the fact that Ms. Mattea's voice was too dissimilar in key. The pattern which then followed had each of the other special guests singing two or three songs by themselves followed by the FF4 joining them for versions of the songs they had previously recorded together. After Kathy, the other guests this evening, in order of their appearance, were Kevin Welch, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, LeRoy Parnell,

Steve Earle and last but not least, Elvis Costello.

Surprisingly, as the show was in progress, down the street at the Nashville Convention Center, Caffe Milano was awarded the honor of "Club of the Year" during the Country Music Association's Seventh Annual SRO

Awards. This was rather ironic since any fan at this evening's show who was there to hear the music certainly had a lot to be disturbed about. First off, the audience was full of record industry types (shades of The Supper Club *Costello & Nieve* show) who were there more to talk and laugh with their cronies than listen. Secondly, the food service was both noisy and distracting to the concert. If you listen closely to the broadcast, you might even hear the cappuccino-maker running during the show as we all did! This writer was also rather upset by having to settle his check during Steve Earle's great set.

Fortunately when Elvis took the stage after about an hour and a half, things had quieted down; partly out of an apparent respect for the guest from Dublin and partly due to the fact that many of the uninterested had finished their dinner and left. Wearing the now-famous black suit and black shirt (red tie this time), Elvis launched into a surprising solo acoustic version of *Brutal Youth's* "Still Too Soon to Know," a song not performed live since the 1994 tour and never before played solo.

After receiving the evening's loudest ovation, EC then invited local Nashville resident and Rude 5 veteran Larry Knechtel to accompany him on keyboards for "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror," which EC introduced a "psychedelic gospel song." Although there



participation on the da da da da da da's.

At last came the moment that Costello fans had been waiting for when the FF4 joined Elvis and Larry (on piano like the recorded version) for a perfect rendering of "That Day Is Done."

Costello then played toastmaster for the evening offering a warm introduction to the evening's honorees. The show then closed out with a four-song finale from the FF4. A beaming Costello watched the set from the side of the stage with his wife Cait, who by the way had enjoyed most of the evening's performers from the side of the stage while her husband roamed about the backstage area.

was a collective moan of dismay from some of the Costello faithful about hearing this well-worn number, Costello saved the day by wrapping in a lovely bit from Smokey Robinson's "You've Really Got a Hold on Me," a song that was made popular by another recording act that also started out in Liverpool. At this point a fan shouted for "God's Comic" to which Costello quickly replied: "if anyone's having a crisis of faith - this is not the place," a fitting comment to the "church-like" atmosphere that an evening with the FF4 creates.

three men (sans Kathy) joined Elvis and Larry for a song that was probably familiar enough for them to rehearse quickly, The Animals' "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" which EC of course recorded for *King of America*. A lively, fun version was delivered with Costello soliciting the usual audience

As is traditional for *Mountain Stage*, the show finale was a familiar song on which all the evening's guests performed. Closing out the night was the gospel number "Jesus on the Mainline" with EC strumming his acoustic guitar and taking his turn at a few lines as well. The choir was also joined by local

EC then had "the gentlemen of the orchestra" join him for the next number. The house band for the night was led by Mark Prentice on bass (also the co-producer of the FF4's new LP, *I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray*), and featured George Mainelli on lead guitar (from Bonnie Raitt's band), Kathy Styron on keyboards and John Gardner on drums. The



resident John Prine who was in the audience and to whom EC was introduced for the first time after the show.

The crowd was also then allowed to partake in the group photo session and casually mingle with the performers. All in all, an enjoyable evening was had by all who came out to pay their respects to a great group of guys: Robert Hamlett, Issac Freeman, Walter Settles, Joseph Rice and James Hill; the Fairfield Four.

West Virginia Public Radio sent the show to its more than 110 affiliate radio stations in the US by satellite on Friday, November 7 and it was aired by most that same weekend. Due to the limits of show's two-hour format, each artist had their first song cut from the broadcast including Costello's "Still Too Soon to Know." The show's ending number, the ensemble's rendering of "Jesus on the Mainline," was also cut short prior to hearing Costello's vocals.

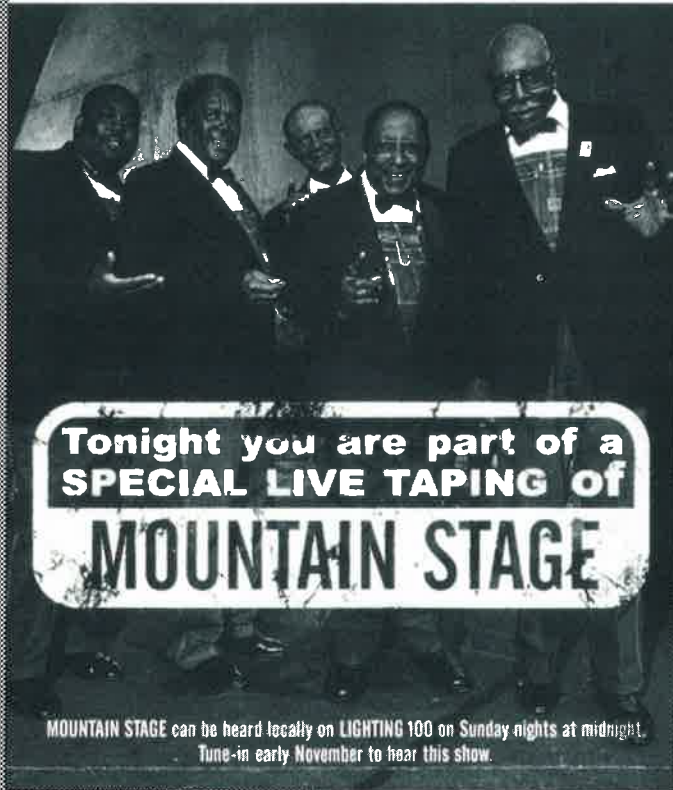
Something to watch for in the future is a possible appearance by Costello on a *Mountain Stage* CD. To date the show has released over a dozen compilation albums of highlights from the show. And guess what? They are issued on John Prine's Oh Boy label!

### **EC's introduction of the FF4:**

*I've been given the great privilege of making the final announcement of the evening before I hand you over to these gentlemen here. Like I said, we got a chance to sing that song, "That Day is Done," just a couple of years ago. I've been listening to the Fairfield Four ... as you might imagine ... I didn't grow up with this music. So, it was one of my great pleasures and surprises of my life when I first came over to America about 20 years ago. I'd go hunting in record stores and I'd track down some of the music that I already knew and make new discoveries all the time. I got a Fairfield Four record and I've been living with it ever since. And then to find myself standing on stage with these gentlemen is completely unbelievable to me I have to tell you. A couple of years ago I got invited to be the director of a very posh festival in the South Bank of London. England, that is. I know you've got a few of those Londons over here. And we had this very grand festival with orchestras and string quartets, jazz groups, and psychedelic musicians. It was my greatest pleasure to be able to invite the Fairfield Four over ... and it was their London debut. And not before time, those people need saving over there, I can tell you! And they did a jolly good*

*job of it too. And they were kind enough to invite me to come over to Nashville to record "That Day Is Done" with them. It's a real pleasure to be on the record and to be here tonight. We've heard some fantastic music but what you're gonna hear now is the real stuff. So please, one more time: The Fairfield Four!*

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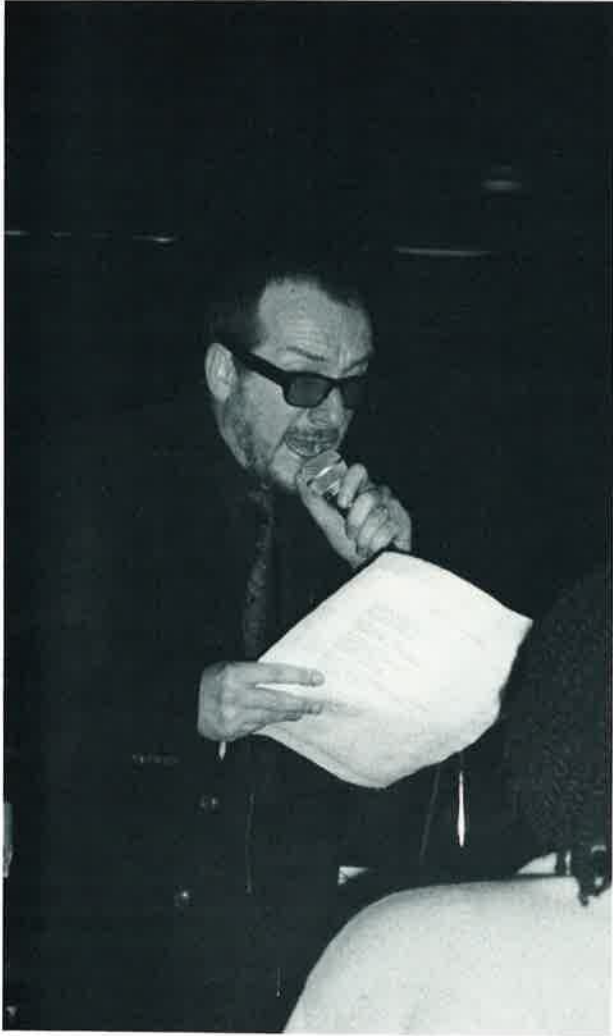


**Wenda Gaile Jamieson and Jake Sanders with EC backstage at Caffè Milano.**

*Photos on page 6 and 7 courtesy of Wenda Gaile Jamieson. Page 5 photo taken by Mike Bodayle. Special thanks to Lee Olsen at Keith Case & Associates for tipping us all off about when tickets would be going on sale. Also, thanks to Don Wafer at Mountain Stage for his help as well.*

As reported in BB#11, Charles Mingus' widow, Sue, had asked Elvis to compose lyrics for an unrecorded Mingus composition. As a result, a return appearance by Elvis Costello with the Mingus Big Band was expected. EC performed with the band on Sept. 25th for two sets and on Oct. 2nd for the late set after his Letterman taping with the Fairfield Four. Here's a first hand report from the Fez.

## From the Fez in Manhattan ... the Mingus Big Band EC Rehearses for Brazilian Jazz Festivals



at Fez. Alison (my better half) and I arrived early that night, took our seats, and were treated to a hot set of music during the early show by the MBB. (By the way, if you don't own one of their CDs, by all means, get one; this band is super! Thanks again to EC, for introducing us longtime fans to other wonderful styles of music, some of which I might never have had the opportunity to listen to were it not for Elvis' excursions into these waters.)

After the MBB played the second song of the late show, Sue Mingus, wife of the late, great Charles Mingus and the driving force behind the MBB, got up to introduce Elvis, saying he was going to be singing a couple of songs with the band. Sue told us how she had asked Elvis to write lyrics to some of Mingus' music, and one of the songs that EC would perform was the result of that request. Elvis, with lyrics in hand, began by thanking Sue and the band, and then opened with Mingus' "Weird Nightmare." He followed that with his own "Upon a Veil of Midnight Blue," and

performed in such an intimate setting. I mean, there were between 13 and 14 musicians on and around the stage, and Elvis literally was singing between the tables. You can usually get very close to say, a great painting or a wonderful sculpture, but it is not the same with a performing artist. That's why this show at Fez, last spring's Algonquin Hotel experience, and a couple of other cameos over the years have really remained with me.

I've been going to see and hear music for about 30 years now (and I've still not seen the Stones in a place as small as the Beacon Theater, though I'd kill to), and I hope I can continue for at least 30 more years. In that time, I hope every music fan has the opportunity to see his or her favorite artist in a similar setting. As far as EC is concerned, I hope he never stops growing and trying new artistic things. And as long as he continues to share that art with others, I'll be there for the ride.

### Down in Brazil with the MBB

Accompanied by his trusty tour manager, Milo Lewis, Elvis traveled from New York to Brazil to appear with the Mingus Big Band for the Free Jazz Festival 97 at the Palace in São Paulo (Oct. 9) and the Mam-Museu de arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro (Oct. 10). Both shows were sold out and included Jamiroquai, Neneh Cherry, Goldie and others on the bill. At least one of the shows was transmitted by the local Mutishow cable television channel.

Costello told a local paper: "I will sing a few songs, but I tried to select something that is representative of my repertoire. Besides, I'll be backed by the Big Band. I could not have better company." He would again perform his four-song special guest set with the MBB at both shows.

Press reports indicated that EC was quite thrilled about making his first-ever appearance in Brazil and made a promise to come back to play his own show.

Photo by Mitch Weinstein.

by Mitch Weinstein

I THOUGHT I WOULD TAKE A MINUTE or so to tell everyone about an artistic experience I had just the other night. It was a Thursday night, October 2, 1997 to be exact. There was sort of an advanced murmur among Elvis fans that EC might be performing that night as a guest singer with the Mingus Big Band at Fez under Time Cafe, a downtown NYC night spot. Adding fuel to the rumor fire was the fact that Elvis had previously appeared with the MBB at Fez, and that he was also in NYC to tape *Letterman* with the Fairfield Four to air the following night.

So, a few weeks before October 2, I made reservations for both the early and late shows

Weird Nightmare  
Upon a Veil of Midnight Blue  
Almost Blue  
This Subdues My Passion

"Almost Blue," and then finished with a song called "This Subdues My Passion," only performed a couple of times previously (at the Fez a week ago). It was fairly amazing, especially considering Fez is about the size of your living room, provided you don't have an apartment in Manhattan! There is something that really gets me about seeing a favorite



# That Day Is Done

## ... the Fairfield Four

### EC in New York to help promote new LP

After Nashville, Elvis and the FF4 took an early flight the next morning to New York City. On Thursday, October 2, they recorded an abbreviated version of "That Day is Done" for the Friday broadcast of the Late Show with David Letterman. That same Friday, the rumors proved true, and EC once more joined the FF4, this time for their appearances at the Bottom Line.

#### The Bottom Line: My Prayers Were Answered

by Tom DeMarchi

I RESERVED TWO TICKETS for the Wednesday, October 1 Caffe Milano Show the day they went on sale. Since I live in Florida, I figured I could meet up with a friend in Nashville (who, it turned out had already bought tickets of his own), fly up on Wednesday morning, spend the day checking out used record shops, go to the show at night, and catch a red-eye back to Miami so I could be back in time to work Thursday morning. The prospect of seeing Elvis and the Fairfield Four, not to mention Steve Earle, in such an intimate setting was too much to pass up. After confirming my reservation I hung up the phone and looked at my calendar. There penciled in on my Oct. 1 square were the words "Fly to Binghamton, New York." In my excitement I had actually forgotten I already had vacation plans to visit my girlfriend, Margaret, on the day of the show. I put my ticket reservations up for sale on the Elvis Classified Page on the Internet, canceled my plane reservations for Nashville, and prayed for more show announcements.

The response to my ad on the Elvis Classified Page was immediate, and I sold my ticket reservations. When it was announced that Elvis and the Fairfield Four were slated for an October 3rd appearance on the David Letterman Show, I figured even though it wasn't the same as seeing the show in person, I'd at least get to see an actual semi-live performance of this collaboration.

Then rumors started circulating about a possible Oct. 3rd Bottom Line show on the

same night as the Letterman broadcast. When the show was finally confirmed - for not one, but two sets - I purchased tickets for both shows. My prayers had been answered.

Margaret and I pulled into Manhattan at about 3:00pm and walked around Greenwich Village searching for the Bottom Line club. After stopping at a couple of used record stores for browsing and directions, we stumbled across the club on an adjacent corner to NYU's Mathematics Building. Since it was only 3:45pm, we decided to grab an early dinner. We walked around the neighborhood and found a Mexican restaurant called Loco something-or-other. After eating, we went back to the club, got our tickets, and asked when the doors opened. The ticket window guy said 6:00pm. I checked my watch: 4:45.

#### That Day Is Done (with the Fairfield Four with Larry Knechtel on piano)

Margaret left me there alone so she could find a bank machine. While I waited for her return I sat outside the club and wondered why I was the only person waiting for the doors to open. A trio approached the club just as a doorman appeared and he asked us all to line up on the side of the building in a single file. As we lined up another man walked up to me and said, "Are you Tom?" It was *Beyond Belief* contributor/long time Costellophile Tony Sacchetti with his friend Cal Massarro. We shook hands and exchanged pleasantries. The trio in front of me all turned around and said, "You're Tom?" I said, "Yes." They said, "We're supposed to be meeting you here." It was David, Jennifer and Ravsky from the EC Internet mailing list.

Margaret returned and joined the conversation. David's wife, Kirsten, soon joined us as well. Then as we were all talking a guy came walking up the street screaming, "Is there a guy named Tom here?" It was Steve from the list with his wife. I couldn't believe my good fortune; I'd traveled all the

way to New York City for a show and I met all these warm, friendly people. Elvis fans are a great bunch.

We all went in together, procured a couple of front tables, ordered drinks, and chatted away. The opening band, a teenage Christian group, hit the stage and half way through their set Elvis entered the building through the front door and headed backstage. When the Fairfield Four came on, I looked behind me, and there sat EC clapping and foot stomping at a table with wife Cait ten feet behind me.

The Fairfield Four played a short, yet inspiring set. Clad in matching overalls and black jackets, they belted out Gospel standards (during the introduction of "Hallelujah" one of the Fairfield's remarked that all of their songs were just like them - old) and selections from their new album, *I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray*. They soulfully sang stirring renditions of such classics as "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" (featuring bass singer Isaac Freeman, whose low voice made my chest rattle) and "Lay Down My Burden," plus a handful of songs from their latest release, including "Noah," "Help for The Needy (Today)," and the title track. Throughout their performance they encouraged the clapping audience to "shout 'Amen!' if the spirit so possess[ed] [them]." Every singer shined in his own way, but the performance of 24-year-old newcomer, Joseph Rice, was a real highlight. He was animated and smiling through his whole performance.

Elvis joined them, along with Larry Knechtel on piano, for the closing song, a raspy and somewhat edgy version of "That Day is Done." As soon as the song ended Elvis left the building rather quickly. His performance seemed a bit tentative. Though he sounded good, it was obvious his voice wasn't up to full strength. He'd been playing around New York for the past week, had done the Letterman and Caffe Milano shows, so perhaps he'd strained his voice and didn't want to chance further damage before flying down to South America for the upcoming Mingus Big Band gigs.

During the break, I asked one of the Fairfield Four (the bass vocalist) for the song list. He said, "Go into the dressing room and ask one of the boys. He'll set you up." So I went into the dressing room, was met by a super friendly set of handshakes and introductions from the Fairfield Four, their manager, and Larry Knechtel. They invited me to sit down, and we chatted for a while. I took a bunch of pictures then went back out



*EC at the Bottom Line*

*Photo by Jennifer Senft*

front to join Margaret for the second set.

Elvis had resumed his seat behind us by this time, so I went over and asked him if I could get a photo for this article. I said, "I don't mean to bother you, but . . ." I was nervous as hell. Here he was: in the flesh, not six inches from me. (Veteran fans who have had multiple meetings with the man - stop snickering. This was my first face-to-face encounter with him, so my palms sweated a bit.) He was very nice and polite, but asked if I wouldn't take a picture because he was trying to psyche himself out for the next set. He said, "Take stage pictures if you want. But I'm trying to concentrate on the job at hand." He put his hand up to his throat, scratched, and said, "My voice is kind of rough."

The Fairfield Four hit the stage again and gave another wonderful, but short, set. The song selection changed slightly: they again played "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and

His voice was in top form, and the energy and passion he exerted perfectly complimented the soothing Fairfield Four harmonies. My only complaint was that the set was too short. The whole crowd begged for more, but the lights came on and it was over. When I went over to Tony Sacchetti and Cal Massarro to say goodbye, Tony said, "That's Lou Reed behind you." I turned around, and sure enough, Lou Reed was sitting at a table with his entourage. Just as I was walking away Elvis bounded over to Lou and said, "Hey Buddy!" like a little kid who hadn't seen his playground friend in awhile. Lou warmly shook his hand, smiled, and drawled, "Elvis, how do you do the things you do?" I pulled out my camera and Elvis gave me a "Trust"-like pose looking over his glasses. I snapped the picture, said goodbye to all the nice people I'd met, and floated out of the club on a cloud.

"Hallelujah," and added an amazing version of "Lay Down My Soul by the Riverside." The rousing song "Row Jordan Row" had every appendage in the house stomping, banging or clapping. Elvis and Larry Knechtel again joined them on-stage for the encore, and I don't know what Elvis did for his voice during the break (perhaps his obligatory cup of tea with honey?), but he came back and belted out an inspired version of "That Day Is Done," which, for my money, topped the album version. It was obvious that he was trying to make up for the first set, and make up for it he did!

## FF4 on WFUV

Just prior to their shows at the Bottom Line, the Fairfield Four performed live and were interviewed by Meg Griffin on New York's WFUV-FM. Making no secret of his probable appearances with them that evening, here's what they had to say about meeting Mr. Costello:

*"He got a hold of one of our records somewhere and he liked the sound of it. He said 'I'd like to have you guys to background me on some number.' Finally, he wrote this number about the death of somebody in his family and he said 'I want Fairfield to background this number.' So he contacted our agency, Keith Case, and asked. He came to Nashville and we sang this number with him. He liked it so well that he took us to London (Meltdown) with him. We had a great, great, big time. We're very, very fond of him and we love him because he's very easy to work with."*

## Elvis Sightings

While in NYC, Elvis took in some musical entertainment which would also lead him to his next collaboration.

On Friday, Sept. 26th, he stopped at the Bottom Line for the Dan Bern / Toshi Reagon & Big Lovely show where he stayed only for the opening set by the Smithsonian Folkways recording artist. He left early (missing a great set by Bern) to head across the Village to see his old mate Ron Sexsmith perform at the Westbeth Theater.

However, EC was apparently so impressed with Toshi and her band that he arranged for them to accompany him on his November 18th appearance on *Letterman* (see *Television*).

Earlier in the week he was also spotted backstage at Met where he went to see future London Records label mate, opera-star Cecilia Bartoli, the beautiful young Italian mezzo-soprano.

Finally, on his return trip to NYC for *Letterman*, EC attended the US premiere of Paul McCartney's classical work, *Standing Stone* at Carnegie Hall and was quoted as having a "wonderful time".

## "It was 20 years ago today..."

Compiled by Mark Perry

To celebrate EC's 20th anniversary as a professional musician, BB presents the second installment of a continuing series looking back on his career...

### October 1977

● As EC prepares to join Ian Dury, Nick Lowe, Wreckless Eric and Larry Wallis on the notorious *Stiff's Greatest Stiffs*... Live! package tour ("my first proper tour") there is furious activity behind the scenes. The energetic Jake Riviera ("a man possessed" according to one colleague) is preparing to part company with Dave Robinson and Stiff, whilst also finalising a deal with Columbia Records in the USA where *My Aim Is True* is already selling heavily on import. ● 3rd - Nicky Horne's Capital Radio show broadcasts the interview and songs recorded on 27th September. Meanwhile, the Stiff tour opens at **High Wycombe Town Hall** and *My Aim Is True* is already history as far as EC is concerned: "If you want to hear the old songs you can buy the fucking record," he tells a bemused audience. This policy will be quietly dispensed with for the remainder of the tour, the 30-minute sets being based on material from both *Aim* and the still-to-be-recorded *This Year's Model*. The band's repertoire also incorporates such diverse covers as *I Just Don't Know What to Do With Myself* (Dusty Springfield), *Roadette Song* (Kilburn & The High Roads), and *Love Comes in Spurts* (Richard Hell). ● 4th - **Aberystwyth University**. ● 6th - **Exhibition Centre, Bristol**. ● 7th - **Bath University**. ● 8th - **Loughborough University**. ● 9th - **Town Hall, Middlesborough**. ● 11th - **Empire Theatre, Liverpool**. ● 13th - **The Apollo, Glasgow**. ● 14th - Stiff Records issue *Watching the Detectives*, their final Costello record. Live B-side cuts *Blame It on Cain & Mystery Dance* (from the 7th August Nashville Room show) are the first official releases to feature The Attractions. "One of the most important singles of the 70s," trumpets the NME. **Sheffield Polytechnic**. ● 15th - **Leeds University**. ● 16th - **Fairfield Hall, Croydon**. ● 18th - A mobile recording unit is in place as the Stiff tour reaches the **University of East Anglia, Norwich** (*I Just Don't Know What to Do With Myself* on the *Stiffs Live* album is taken from this show). ● 19th - **Top Rank Suite, Brighton**. ● 21st -



**Stiffslive:** Ian Dury, Wreckless Eric, Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Larry Wallis

Due to the absence through "illness" of Wreckless Eric, The Attractions perform twice at **Salford University**, their second set including a cover of Eric's *Whole Wide World*. ● 22nd - At **Leicester University**, EC deputises as Nick Lowe's guitarist in the absence of Dave Edmunds. His own set includes the cover of The Damned's *Neat Neat* later to be included on the free single SAM83 and a version of *Miracle Man* which will appear on the *Stiffs Live* album. ● 24th - **Champness Hall, Rochdale**. ● 25th - **Town Hall, Birmingham**. ● Columbia Records release the first US single *Alison* in a different mix to the UK version, a synthesiser part being added in an apparent attempt to make the song more "radio-friendly." Again, the B-side is a live recording designed to introduce the public to The Attractions' sound (*Miracle Man* from the 7th August gig at the Nashville Room, London). ● 26th - **Top Rank Suite, Cardiff**. ● 27th - **Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**. ● 28th - The cameras are rolling at **London's Lyceum Ballroom** and *Watching the Detectives* is among the performances captured for Nick Abson's

unreleased *Stiffs Movie* documentary. Meanwhile, San Francisco radio station KSAN airs a telephone interview with some of the tour luminaries from backstage at The Lyceum. EC confirms that he is all set for his forthcoming tour of America, although he's not really sure which parts he will visit: "I go wherever they point me..." ● 31st - At the **Civic Hall, Guildford**, EC's set features a new song, *Sunday's Best*, written for (but never recorded by) Ian Dury.

### November 1977

● 1st - U S A radio's *Rock Around the World* includes an interview with EC. ● 2nd - **Friars at The Vale Hall, Aylesbury**. ● 3rd - **Essex University, Colchester**. ● 4th - **Newcastle Polytechnic**. ● 5th - As the Stiff tour winds to a close at **Lancaster University**, EC marks its passing with a new song, written in a Newcastle hotel the night before. "The tour was getting so ugly I was compelled to write *Pump It Up*... just how much can you fuck, how many drugs can you do before you get so numb you can't really feel anything?" In retrospect, EC sees the tour as having been "fun" but "a failure as far as I was concerned... it was principally down to pushing Ian's album." ● Back in London, recording work begins almost immediately on the second album - the first with The Attractions - at Eden Studios in Acton. Pete Thomas: "The energy level, the excitement level, from Elvis turning up with the songs and then getting into the studio with Nick [Lowe], it was incredible. It was like a whirlwind in the studio. It was like: 'Go on then, do it again! Do it faster! Hit the drums as hard as you can! Have another drink!'. And Nick would just work it up into a frenzy through the day until, by the time you got the track, you were playing stuff that you never even thought you could play." ● 10th - As *Watching the Detectives* begins to climb

the UK singles chart (it will peak at number 15) *Top of The Pops* broadcasts a version specially recorded by EC & The Attractions at the BBC TV studios. ● Columbia issue *My Aim Is True* in the USA (with *Watching the Detectives* added) as the band cross the Atlantic for a low-budget club tour featuring a hectic 29 shows in 32 days. EC: "America was disappointing because everywhere you went you heard the same records. We were driving down the freeways turning the dial and getting different parts of the same track on different stations.

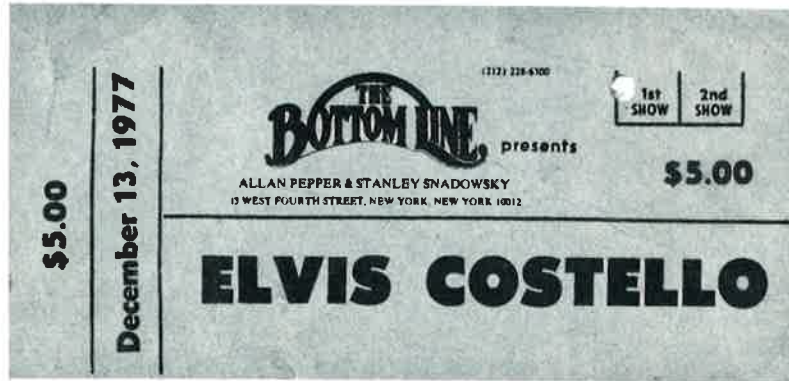
That's how blanket the acceptance was of The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Fleetwood Mac, Journey, Boston, Foreigner. It was hard for us to get our records on the radio, so inevitably we took against it." The tour repertoire is again based solidly around the first two albums with a few covers mixed into sets of

around 50 minutes duration. ● 15th - EC & the Attractions make their live USA debut with two shows at the **Old Waldorf Theatre, San Francisco CA** (both of which are broadcast on radio station KSAN). ● 16th - Two further shows at **San Francisco's Old Waldorf Theatre**. ● 18th - **The Whiskey, Los Angeles CA**. EC: "We played the Whiskey a Go Go and the audience consisted mainly of record industry people and twits in bin-liners that had seen a picture in some fashion magazine of the styles from London and thought that we'd be really impressed if they turned up dressed like that." ● 19th - **The Whiskey, Los Angeles CA**. ● 20th - The Attractions descend on Pasadena radio station KROQ. As DJ Rodney Bingenheimer attempts to keep order, Jake Riviera has an important message for listeners: "Wake up, California! Do you realise that Richard Hell is about to retire and The Eagles are going to put out another album? For Christ's sake get off your butts!" ● 23rd - **Jed's, New Orleans LA** (part of this concert is broadcast on radio station WNOE). ● 26th - **Capri Theatre, Atlanta GA**. ● 27th - **American Theatre, St. Louis MO**. ● 29th - **Bunky's, Madison WI**. ● 30th - **Beginnings, Chicago IL**.

#### December 1977

● 1st - BBC1 TV's *Top of The Pops* screens a repeat showing of *Detectives* as the record breaks into the UK Top 20. **Electric**

**Ballroom, Milwaukee WI**. ● 3rd - In the UK, Granada TV's *So It Goes* broadcasts three songs from the 2nd August Liverpool concert plus solo performances of *Alison* and *Radio Radio*. Meanwhile, the US tour reaches the **Riviera Theatre, Chicago IL** for a concert broadcast on radio station WXRT. ● 5th - EC discusses the impact of his first visit to the USA on his song writing during a WMMS radio interview: "...more things in America jump out at you - billboards jump out at you - TV programmes are louder . . . I've



been writing things down ever since I got here and I know I've got about half a dozen songs just waiting to be finished." WMMS is also on hand to present a much-bootlegged broadcast of the evening's concert at the **Agora Ballroom, Cleveland OH**. ● 6th - **4 Acres Club, Utica NY** (concert broadcast on radio station WOUR). ● 7th - Two shows at the **Hot Club, Philadelphia PA** (the first is broadcast on radio station WMMR). ● 9th - Two shows at the **Paradise Theatre, Boston MA** (first concert broadcast on radio station WBCN). ● 10th - Two shows at the **Paradise Theatre, Boston MA**. ● 11th - **Oxford Ale House, New Haven CT**. ● 13th - New York debut with two shows at the city's **Bottom Line** club. "Perhaps Mr. Costello will modify his visual packaging in future visits," notes the *New York Times* sniffily, adding that "while he's at it, he might get a sharper band . . ." ● 14th - Back in England it is reported that EC and Nick Lowe are to join the new Radar Records label, founded by former United Artists managing director Martin Davis and A & R man Andrew Lauder. Radar is to be distributed by WEA, and the deal with EC covers WEA territories worldwide with the exception of the USA, Canada and some parts of Scandinavia included in the Columbia agreement. ● 14th - Two more shows at the **Bottom Line, New York City NY**. ● 15th - EC is interviewed on radio station WLIR where he is happy to fill people in on his

career history to date: "I made a record for Stiff Records in England. It came out there. It came out here. And here I am!" Later, the Attractions perform at a party in the **Ukrainian National Home, New York City NY**. ● 16th - The first USA tour climaxes with two shows at the **Stone Pony, Asbury Park NJ** where, during his early set, EC introduces Bruce Thomas as "the future of rock & roll" causing something of a stir amongst the many Springsteen fans in the audience! ● 17th - EC & The Attractions appear as last-minute replacements for the Sex Pistols on NBC TV's *Saturday Night Live*. There is controversy when EC interrupts the opening bars of *Less Than Zero* to announce: "I'm sorry ladies and gentlemen . . . there's no reason for me to do this song here . . ." before launching into an unscheduled rendition of *Radio Radio*. Producer Lorne Michaels and his

crew are annoyed by the incident and NBC announces that Mr. Costello will not be invited to appear on the network again. EC: "It seemed like we'd done this terribly provocative thing, but I couldn't understand why. The song stated the bloody obvious as far as I could see." ● The band returns to England as *My Aim Is True* continues its slow climb towards the US Top 40. "We've never seen this much excitement for a new artist with a month-old album," announces a triumphant end-of-tour Columbia press ad (adding the slightly unfortunate double-edged claim that "Nobody breaks as many artists as CBS Records!"). ● 22nd - BBC1 TV's *Top of The Pops* screens a repeat showing of *Detectives* in its Christmas special as EC & The Attractions begin a three-night festive stint back at **The Nashville Room, London**. ● 23rd - **The Nashville Room, London**. ● 24th - **The Nashville Room, London**. All three of the Christmas shows are recorded, reportedly with a view to releasing a US-only live album in the New Year.

**Sources:** BBC Radio 1, *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*, *Record Collector*, *Creem*, *Mojo*, *New York Times*, *ECIS*.

*Beyond Belief is looking for photos and other memorabilia for use in upcoming installments of "It was 20 years ago today."*

# ELVIS COSTELLO

## A TO Z by Dave Farr

Part 3 of  
a continuing journey  
through the  
Costello songbook

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...

# B

### B MOVIE

Several of the songs appearing on *Get Happy!!* were radically rearranged between their initial live performances and the recording of the album. "B Movie" is a good example of one of these transformed songs. First performed live in early March 1979, the song was a fast-paced number based around a repetitive guitar and bass combination, rather similar to "No Action." Elvis performed it nightly through the end of the

spring tour of the USA, and continued to play it during the European shows that summer. But by the time the band went into the studio in the fall, they found many of the songs they were trying to record to be too "new wave," too readily categorized as the kind of identifiable "sound" which people associated with EC and the A's (and that imitative bands like the Jags were rewriting as songs like "Back of My Hand.") The prospect of repeating themselves caused Elvis and the band to rearrange these songs, and they looked to soul music for inspiration. In the process, "B Movie," like many of the songs that appeared on *GH*, was altered from a somewhat flat, aggressive song to one that retains aggression but mixes it with pain, married to a very infectious musical framework that makes it a pleasure to listen to. Both the music and EC's singing become much more multifaceted than the earlier version would allow. There is a casual aspect to Elvis' singing, more so than on most of the album, and much more than on his earlier records; the constriction in his voice is gone. The music, meanwhile, acquires a groove.

What jumps out of course is a very fat bass line which dominates the song. This track is one of the best examples of Bruce Thomas' bass playing. The bass part plays the track in and plays it out. In between, we have a great example of how much the band, and Nick Lowe as producer, could cram into a two minute space. The production constantly varies quite simple effects; echo on the voice, echo on the drums, vocal treatments, etc., come and go and keep the tune from ever settling down. That wide-mouthed bass opens things up, with a steady beat from Pete ricocheting off the wall. Elvis' vocal is echoed as well. Steve's keyboards stick to a supporting role in this song, whistling and gurgling in the background. The guitar is also secondary, playing punctuation and only revving up in the chorus (at

"to reel to reel"). The bridge gives us the most active section of the tune, with all instruments building up to a peak, as more echo is added to the vocal, with a treated overdub vocal ("I want . . . to break") chiming in between trademark Lowe-production drums. Back to basics for the last verse, with Bruce and Elvis only for a few lines until the swirling keyboards and drums take us to a final chorus which ends with a vocal overdub and Elvis fading out, yelling "you can't feel!" while a guitar note echoes in the air.

The track is a big improvement over the original version, and is always a highlight of the record. Strangely enough, after improving the song so much, Elvis dropped it from the live set. It is hard to tell how often it was performed during the *Get Happy!!* tour of England, as the off-the-beaten-track nature of that tour has left us with few play lists or tapes. But those we have seen and heard, lack any renditions of "B Movie." The song was played in a studio session for John Peel's UK radio show in March 1980, a nice version that included more emphasis on keyboards and a slightly longer ending. Aside from a couple of performances at the start of the 1981 American tour (see *BB12*), "B Movie" was left off the play list and has not been played live since.

### BABY IT'S YOU



Elvis and Nick on tour in the US in 1989.

Elvis has written off this cover of the old Shirelles' number (co-written by Bacharach) as a promotional gimmick concocted by Columbia Records, but it is nice to hear a recorded duet from Elvis and his old mate, Nick Lowe. This was recorded during the sessions for Nick's album, *Nick Lowe and His Cowboy Outfit*. Elvis produced a track ("L.A.F.S.") for that record, and Nick and his band would tour with EC and the Attractions in the US that summer of 1984. Supposedly Columbia wanted a tandem record to promote the tour. The track was released as a B-side to Nick's UK single, and also included on the B-side of "The Only Flame in Town" in the US. It can also be found on *Out of Our Idiot* and the Rykodisc re-release of *Goodbye Cruel World*. It's also noteworthy that this was the first EC track produced by Nick since the *Trust* LP.

In the latter half of the 1980's, when Elvis was doing as many solo tours as band tours, one of the highlights of the shows was when he would duet with his opening acts, either T Bone Burnett (1984, 1985) or Nick (1987, 1989). This track captures some of the feel of those acoustic duets, and the duo's voices go together very nicely. It's recorded simply, lead and bass guitars and a little percussion, with very slight tinkering. EC gets the lion's share of the vocals; Nick only sings the first verse and from then on Elvis sings lead. The best points are the guitar playing (very heavy acoustic layering and a nice electric solo from Elvis) and the overdubbed "sha-la-la"s.

Elvis and Nick performed the song live together a few times toward the end of the 1984 summer tour, on the West Coast, backed by the Attractions. Also, in 1984, there was an apparently impromptu performance by EC with the Attractions at Lancaster University. Elvis has also sung the number live a few other times, solo in 1986 in Dublin and also with Nick in London that same year, and with the Confederates while touring the Far East in 1987.

## BABY PLAYS AROUND

According to legend, this song was written by Cait O'Riordan while Elvis was round the corner. Elvis returned to find Cait waiting to sing him the song she had written. While he helped with the musical arrangement, as far as working out the chords and such, this is really Cait's composition. It's a lovely number,



UK 4-song EP for "Baby Plays Around"

rendered beautifully by Elvis in a nearly-solo version that stands out on *Spike* because of the simplicity of the production.

The acoustic guitar dominates this song, with Elvis singing in a high register, his voice close to breaking, a very mournful feel to it. Live performances following the release of the album sounded like the first verse of the recorded tune, and felt a bit spare. What transforms the recorded song are the Hammond bass pedals that come in on the second verse. Their sad throb sets off the high guitar notes and Elvis' vocal beautifully. (This sort of effect presages the Brodsky Quartet work, and this tune would in fact be well served by a Quartet backing.) A distant, ethereal organ played by Mitchell Froom briefly colors the bridge ("hold on to my pride."). Toward the end of the bridge, the guitar flourishes are a bit too dramatic, but just then the guitar drops back and the rather spooky sound of the Hammond takes over ("it's hard to reconcile . . . the facts I'm facing.") Elvis stops briefly, then goes into the last verse, and as the melody resumes, the distant organ and chiming bells sound from far away, as if demonstrating the distance between past happiness and present disarray. This is a brilliant moment. Elvis ends the song with some impressive picking, again a little overdone, but undercut from the start by what sounds like a mishap, with something striking the guitar. This mistake is left in and actually accentuates the song's sad and defeated tone. The louder guitar notes are angry ones, and this noise makes the anger sound futile. Alternatively, that thumping sound can be heard as something being thrown, or a door slamming shut. (On the other hand, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.) The high, clear guitar notes slow and fade with the sad Hammond surrounding them.

Elvis played the song live several times during the early 1989 promotional appearances in Europe for *Spike*, and then on the 1989 solo tour, beginning with the later US and through many of the UK, European and Japanese shows. He would play the song sitting down on a chair or stool, in order to concentrate on the difficult guitar playing (joking that since his wife wrote the song, he'd best get it right!). Since then, the song has only been revived once, a rendition

that is preserved on the *Deep Dead Blue* CD from the set with Bill Frisell at the Meltdown Festival (June 25, 1995). The Frisell version is really the only tune on that CD that does not add much to the original version, or change it significantly. Frisell does a nice job of playing the various figures with his guitar, but adds no surprises or reinterpretations, and the electric guitar lacks the warmth of the acoustic on the original. Elvis' vocal does not differ appreciably from the 1989 version, though his tone is a bit lower and thus less plaintive. Overall, the song lacks the weight of the *Spike* version, and that is mainly due to the absence of those keyboards, which really take the song to a deeper level.

"Baby Plays Around" was released as a single from *Spike*, the lead track of a 4-song EP in England (the other three tracks being previously released torch song-style cuts). It failed to make the charts.

## BABY'S GOT A BRAND NEW HAIRDO

*King of America* went through many changes in design and concept on the way to its release. According to Elvis, it was originally conceived as a solo album, following on from his distaste with the previous LP (*Goodbye Cruel World*) and the success of the solo tours in 1984 and 1985, during which many of the songs for the album were written. Later, it was planned as half solo and half with the Attractions. Eventually of course, the Attractions appeared on only one album track. "Baby's Got a Brand New Hairdo" was released as the B-side to the first single from *King of America* (in both the UK and the US), and has also been released on *Out of Our Idiot* and the Ryko reissue of *Blood and Chocolate*. This is the only other Attractions-backed song released from the *KOA* sessions, and it is apparent that *King of America* was simply not the environment for Elvis' old band. The song is a lightweight; Elvis referred to it as "very much a B-side" when it came out. The lyrics are throwaway, framed by a lot of repetition. Nevertheless, both Elvis and the A's work up a full head of steam in performance. The song's production, however, shortchanges the Attractions. Almost mono where the band is concerned, it squeezes the Attractions into a small space in the center and left center of the sound stage.

The track starts out with a strummed guitar very reminiscent of the opening to Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"; then the keyboards, bass and drums join in but are mixed into a jumble behind Elvis. EC's ragged vocal is way up front. When the first chorus begins and Elvis strikes his guitar strings, the guitar is placed way over in the right channel at high volume. This is repeated when he plays the short guitar refrain between verses, and is quite effective. Meanwhile, the Attractions struggle to be heard back in the center of the listening space. Steve Nieve, particularly, is engaged in all sorts of keyboard gymnastics here. The sameness of the choruses and much of the verses are enlivened by his constantly altering his keyboard lines. Yet you have to listen hard to really hear them. The bass and drums are indistinct. (EC's liner notes maintain that the song's most noteworthy point is Bruce's quoting Billy Boy Arnold at the appropriate moment, but one can scarcely hear the quotation.) The production makes the Attractions sound like a garage band, and it's in stark contrast to any other track released from these sessions, where the players are recorded in a very clear and natural fashion. If anything, the track sounds more like a *Blood and Chocolate* track, and it is noteworthy that this song was reissued on that disc rather than *KOA* when the Ryko series was prepared. This is the only instance where an outtake was placed on a different reissue than its source or outside its chronology, and the reason is as much aesthetic as anything else.

Elvis and/or the Attractions have never played this song live.

## BAMA LAMA BAMA LOO

Elvis had played the Little Richard original on UK radio when he was spinning his favorite platters. It's a typical Richard screamer, in the vein of "Rip it Up" and "Ready Teddy." In 1990, Elvis and several of his favorite sidemen went to Barbados to record an album of cover versions, and this is one of the tracks that resulted.



Rare Japanese promo CD single for "Bama Lama Bama Loo"

It's difficult to duplicate the almost manic energy of Little Richard, so Elvis goes for a rawer sound, and substitutes James Burton's guitar for Richard's trademark "wooooo"s. EC's vocal is a bit phlegmy and raw. The piano, central to Richard's recording, is secondary here as played by Larry Knechtel, basically a support on the beat, joining with bass and drums for a heavy

rhythm sound. The spotlight is given over to the solos by Burton and Marc Ribot. The track's tempo seems slow in retrospect, as the live performances that followed have always been faster. Things are livened up when EC, as producer, double tracks his vocal on the chorus and then on the second refrain. The guitar solos are inventive and devious, in that Ribot's solo sounds like it could be Burton, and vice versa. Handclaps join the mix at the end of the first solo and remain to the end of the song, a nice touch. Knechtel finally shows some spirit on the last verse and either Pete Thomas or Jim Keltner provides a powerful drum fill before a fine James Burton solo and a final chorus with a dead stop.

On the 1991 tour to support *Mighty Like a Rose*, "Bama Lama" was one of the many covers that were sprinkled throughout the set. It was played nearly every night all the way through the end of the tour in Australia. When *Kojak Variety* was finally released in 1995, a few live shows were arranged to promote the album, and the song was back in the set, this time with Burton and Ribot augmenting the Attractions. The strangest of these performances had to be for the *Late Show with David Letterman* in May of 1995. Letterman was taping the show in London that week, and sitting in with the house band were both Chuck Berry and Little Richard himself. Elvis and his six-piece band played Richard's song that night, with no acknowledgment of the fact that he was right there before them. A great opportunity for a one-off duet was missed, and rumors flew that Richard was not happy about the apparent slight. Elvis has also blamed that performance for the damage to his voice which ruined the worldwide FM broadcast from Shepherd's Bush Empire the next night. After *Kojak* came and went, this cover disappeared from the set with most of the others.

## BASEMENT KISS

One of the best of the songs Elvis and Cait wrote for Wendy James' *Now Ain't the Time for Your Tears* LP, released in 1993. EC's demo version can be heard as one of the B-sides to *13 Steps Lead Down* on the UK CD single. This demo version is rather spare, with Elvis on electric guitar (and the occasional overdubbed bass) and Pete on

drums. Even so, the song's debt and similarity to "Alison" are apparent. The opening guitar chords echo the opening notes of "Alison" directly. The songs are rather similar in tone. The demo doesn't give the song the treatment it deserves, but it's still quite effective. Wendy James' version is a very capable performance, one of the best on her album. She follows EC's demo almost exactly (note the drumming, which Pete does almost exactly the same as on the demo), but the production is obviously more thorough. The track has a nice, deep bass sound, which is needed to support James' rather frail vocal. James sings the song fairly well, within her limitations. It's unfortunate that her voice breaks on the "forbidden bliss" lines just as EC's voice did; this may be an example of slavish imitation. Some of the time, James sounds rather like Tracey Ullman; still, there are moments, particularly the start of the final verse ("Why were you so tardy . . .") where she delivers an affecting reading. A solid organ part is added, a good move which would naturally be carried over when the song was performed with the Attractions.

Elvis did perform this song occasionally with the Attractions in 1994, during shows in Japan and the UK. A live rendition from the Dublin show in December 1994 was released as a B-side to "The Other End of the Telescope," one of the four July 1996 UK singles. This rendition is much slower than EC's demo. The first verse is played solo by EC on guitar before the band kicks in, led by a dominant organ part by Steve. Bruce plays a bass part that is much more expressive and supple than those on the previous releases. Elvis does a nice job with the vocals, and hits the high notes his demo and James' release failed to reach. There are some problems that make it interesting that this version was chosen for official release: Elvis sings the wrong word at the start of the last verse, and also inverts the lines of the last chorus. Overall, however, it's a good rendition, and undoubtedly the only chance to hear this one by the band. Speculation that a band version of this song might be released on the *All This Useless Beauty* CD proved unfounded, although of all the Wendy James songs, this was probably most in the style of an Elvis and the Attractions ballad. The use of a live full-band version as an extra cut on one of the July 1996 singles makes this a kind of "honorary" *All This Useless Beauty* track. The released Dublin performance marks the last time this song has been performed live to date.

## BATTERED OLD BIRD

This semi-autobiographical number was first heard upon the release of *Blood and Chocolate* in September 1986, and was performed during the 1986 tour on the nights when EC and the A's played material from that album. It doesn't quite fit on the record; most of *Blood and Chocolate* has a very natural aggression and drama to it, partly due to the song writing and partly due to the way the album was recorded all in one room and mostly live; this track, on the other hand, has a forced drama to it.

EC's liner notes for Rykodisc reveal that the album track is a splice of two takes, a slower one and a faster one, and that this tune was difficult to record. The final product is not too successful. Elvis' vocal is slow and the melody is vague. The writing is not up to EC's standard; it is written in an awkward style of storytelling that randomly alters the meter and the length of the phrases. Production gewgaws (backwards tape, for example) and musical devices (the heavy piano chords, the two thumps, a heavy bass) are used to give the song more drama than it possesses inherently.

The music begins very slowly and quietly, mostly EC on guitar with Steve chiming in on organ, with the second verse adding

a steady beat by Pete that holds the song together through its permutations. On the choruses, a heavy piano chord and two thumps of the drums act as a musical theme. The music builds up to a faster section, with the harmonium covering the splice and leading us up from the two slower verses to what should be a more musically exciting section. But just as the tempo of the vocal increases, and the aggression as well, the music drops back. EC's acoustic guitar is the only instrument that raises its ante during the faster section. The Attractions' parts should have taken off at this point, but they do not. This leaves all the tasks of being aggressive to EC's vocal, and it becomes harsh and histrionic. EC's singing is sloppy; the song is performed as if he should sing on the beats, but often he fails to. For example, at "top of the stairs" in the fast section, there is not much logic to the fact that Elvis and Steve hit their notes out of sync. The transition back to the quiet section is very nicely done, kept in synch by Pete's woodblocks, and here Elvis gives us his best singing on the track (as well as the best lyrics). Yet, we are then suddenly back to a harsh vocal after a backwards tape loop, and then a very short fade out which is too short for what has come before. A longer fade out (as was often done in the live renditions) would be much more appropriate after the length of the song and the tempo changes.

"Battered Old Bird" remained in the set through the Attractions shows in January 1987, but has not been played since, save for a one-off solo version at the end of the early 1987 tour with the Confederates in Dublin. The live version would sometimes conclude with an extremely long, languid guitar solo from Elvis, accompanied by muted backing from Bruce and Pete, with Steve producing a wonderful bell or gong-like sound from the keyboards. Sometimes Elvis would just play the same note over and over, and at least once he went to the edge of the stage and had an audience member pluck the guitar string!

## BEATEN TO THE PUNCH

A minor number that flies by almost before you can get hold of it. This song was not played live prior to its appearance on *Get Happy!!* The recorded track features extreme stereo separation, with the bass



alone in the right channel, while the drums, guitar and keyboards are in the left. EC's vocal is centered but back in the mix. (The Rykodisc reissue overdoes this effect; EC is too far back, and the instruments are too far to the sides and not as sharp as on the earlier *Demon* CD.) Steve gets to intro the song with a rather shrill swirl of the organ, but the track belongs to Bruce Thomas, who gets to play the bass the way

Steve often plays the keyboards . . . jumping all over the place, varying the melodic lines from verse to verse, and putting on a real show. EC's vocal is rather manic, even going into a shriek at the end. But aside from some rattling drums leading into the last verse, it's the great bass part we listen to. *Get Happy!!* is in many ways a bass player's record, and the one where Bruce really gets to shine. This is undoubtedly due to the influence of the Tamla/Motown and Stax sides the band used as templates, songs where the bass line is always inventive and spotlighted.

This is another *Get Happy!!* song that was hardly played live; again, the 1980 tour of the UK is sparsely documented, but no record exists of it being done on that tour (although, like "B Movie," it was done for the John Peel radio show in March 1980, a good, slightly slower version with a longer ending). However, the tune was put into the set list for several shows in Scandinavia at the end of 1980, the Christmas show in Birmingham, and a few times in the 1981 US tour supporting *Trust*. (see *BB12*). Since that time, it has not been performed.

## BEYOND BELIEF

One of the classic Costello songs, and the result of Elvis' growing control over the end product in the studio. This track was first recorded in 1981 and entitled "The Land of Give and Take." Although, sadly, we have not been allowed to hear that version, EC has described it often enough that we know the backing track laid down by the band is the same as used on the record, but EC's vocal was quite different. There were twice as many lyrics, the tempo of the singing matched that of the instrumentation, and the vocal was in a higher register. Upon completion of the basic track, Elvis felt the vocal part was not much better than ranting, and failed to serve the song. He therefore recut his contribution, deleting half the song's lyrics, bringing the register of the vocal down lower, and slowing the tempo of the vocal line while retaining the original backing track. This successful experiment led Elvis to tinker with the vocal arrangements on the rest of *Imperial Bedroom*, as he spent the final phase of the recording sessions working mostly alone, with the Attractions providing minor overdubs to instrumental tracks that were essentially completed.

The song (and thus the album) starts with what sounds like the end of a count-in, then the bass booms into the speakers followed by a nagging beat and unsettled keyboards. As Elvis' vocal enters, the song's tone becomes all the more compelling because of the ensuing contrast of calm and unease. The song's musical backing sounds nervous and disturbed. Pete's drumming (his favorite of his performances, and done in one take, according to interviews) is steady yet very loose; the beat speeds up ever so slightly as verses progress, and then becomes more and more animated as the song ends. Bruce's bass keeps tolling like a black bell, the real punctuation of the tune, finally revving up in the coda. Steve's keyboards alternate between a very nervous sound which brings to mind shaky fingers tapping the electric keys, and swirling lines which twist around the sides of the song like ghosts. Add to this the occasional explosion or gunshot sound, and you have a musical setting that never gets frantic, never deteriorates into clatter or noise, but instead rattles with the sound of impending disaster, a sound that keeps getting closer as the song goes on. Gliding over this is a vocal which seems apart from the whirlpool surrounding it. EC's vocal is supple, subtle, and very calm. He keeps to a lower register than usual (with some casual falsetto thrown in), and his tone is confidential, almost whispered in places. Even the treated, megaphone-like vocal on the bridge and the double tracked





coda are very controlled. The use of overlapping, overdubbed vocal lines lets Elvis sing through each line fully, without having to take a breath or squeeze anything in. (A treat to hear these great lyrics given room to breathe.) He never sounds out of breath or hurried. He sounds like a matter-of-fact narrator over footage of approaching destruction.

It's unfortunate that the song ends so quickly; those who heard it live before the record's release may have been surprised, as I was, to hear the song end right after the vocal coda; by the third "I've got a feeling . . .," the song is already fading out. Live, this was followed by a long and thrilling instrumental section. In subsequent tours, this extended finish remained and in some cases was expanded, particularly as EC began jamming on the guitar at the song's conclusion (most notably in 1994).

"Beyond Belief" was premiered during the *Almost Blue-Almost 1982* tour, and has remained in all set lists with the Attractions since, including the last tour in 1996. (Aside from longer jams, the arrangement has remained the same; in some 1983 renditions, Elvis did sing the title line of "Friday on My Mind" over the song's intro.) Elvis has even played this song solo, in 1989. Ironically, the contrast in the recorded track works so well that the song can't duplicate this success live. It's impossible for Elvis to sing it onstage as he did in the studio. Instead, he is forced to sing all the words, without overdubs, meaning he has to hurry some lines, has to get his breath, has to push the pitch up. When his vocal gets more intense, the distinction between the music and the vocal disappears and the song becomes more of a typical rock song. It's still a powerful number live, but it's a different animal.

This song was considered as a single but never released as one; it did accompany "Man Out of Time" in the US as a promotional teaser to the album, and came out as the B-side (or double A-side) to the "Green Shirt" single in 1985.

**CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS:** The reference to "September 1994" in last issue's "American Without Tears" segment should have read "September 1984" . . . As covered elsewhere in this issue, a great new live version of "All This Useless Beauty" (BB12) has been released on the *Live From 6A: Late Night with Conan O'Brien* collection.



### **Would you like a BB-Binder?**

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# BRUCE THOMAS

Interviewed by Marsh Gooch

This interview was conducted via telephone from Seattle to London on January 31, 1997. It was used for a story I did on Bruce Thomas for *Bass Player*, which appeared in their June 1997 issue. Since the magazine is for bass players (duh!), the story focused primarily on Bruce's bass playing. But, since I've been a Bruce Thomas fan (by way of my love for Elvis Costello) since I first heard *Armed Forces* in 1979, my interview covered many more bases (pun intended).

I first talked to Bruce when his book *The Big Wheel* came out in 1991, for a short piece I did for the *Seattle Weekly*. Bruce and I seemed to have a bit of a rapport, and because I helped him with some information for his then-upcoming book on Bruce Lee (*Bruce Lee: Fighting Spirit*, Frog Ltd., 1994), Bruce got my wife and I backstage passes — and much better seats! — for Elvis Costello & The Attractions' May 5, 1994 show at Seattle's Paramount Theater. He phoned a few days in advance of the show and let me know what hotel he was staying at, and under what name. We offered to take Bruce out for dinner (they got into town a day early), picked him up at the hotel, and had an enjoyable evening talking about all kinds of things. We even played a "20 Questions"-style game to guess what song the band would be opening with the following night. Bruce said I should have known, being the big Costello fan I was, but I'd never had the chance to see the guys perform before. This was a big deal for me!

Well, anyway, the song was "No Action," the concert was brilliant, and after getting to meet Pete Thomas and Elvis backstage after the show, I didn't speak to Bruce but twice over the next two years. (I did get to see EC&A's brilliant "last USA concert" here in Seattle on September 1, 1996 at the Mercer Arena — the same place my high school graduation was held fifteen years earlier!) Finally, when *Bass Player* agreed on the story idea, I tracked Bruce down by sending a letter to his book publisher. We set up a time for me to call with tape recorder rolling, and the following is the complete transcript of that interview.

*Let's start from the beginning. How did you get started playing the bass, or a musical instrument?*

I was a harmonica player with a band called The Tremors. I went to see the Tremors play a gig, it was like an R&B band doing "High Heel Sneakers" and all that kind of thing. And I got up one night and played harmonica with them. I did three songs with them, "Got My Mojo Working," "High Heel Sneakers," and "Little Red Rooster." I went along with them over the next few weeks, just sort of getting up with them and playing a few tunes on the harmonica. Then one day the bass player didn't turn up, so I put the bass on and bluffed it. And I actually bluffed two or three gigs, and by the time I'd done a few I could at least play a 12-bar [blues]. And they just said, "Well, you've got the job." And he never came back.

*So opportunity knocked for you.*



*Opportunity knocked in a big way, yeah. I mean, I'd known a few rudiments of bass 'cause I'd made a bass guitar, so not only did opportunity knock but destiny called because I must have had it in the back of my mind or in my intuition that I was going to end up a bass player sooner or later. I made the bass in the school carpentry shop. It looked like some African tribal one-string zither or something.*

*Did your schoolmates look at it like, "What the heck is that?"*

Well it was a bit "what the heck is that," because I'd just put all these frets on it, you know, and I was playing an eleven-tone scale instead of a twelve-tone scale. So for like nine months I was playing Arabic music anyway.

*Have you ever used that in a session?*

I never used it on a session, but I used it for miming on *Top of the Pops* once. With one string on it.

*When was that?*

Oh that was "Everyday I Write the Book." [1983]

*Oh, I think I've seen that one before. Top of the Pops. That's a really compelling show.*

Well, I don't know what it compels you to do. It's compelling in one way or another.

*Suicide, I think maybe.*

It compels me to never want to do it again, after a few times.

*So you started playing bass, and then, at what point did you start really noticing other bass players? When did you start to really notice the difference that the bass made in a song?*

Pretty early on, because, luckily I was around at the time when there was a lot of good bass guitar parts on records, like The Beatles and stuff. And I used to listen to a radio station called Radio Luxembourg, which wasn't a pirate [station], it was a European station. But there was no pop music on radio when I was a schoolboy. So I used to listen to Radio Luxembourg under the bedclothes at night with a transistor radio. I used to crank it up and put my ear against the speaker and of course I heard the bass more than anything else. I used to listen to

records like that, with the old record player with the lid and everything. I used to actually put my head on the thing and let the bass boom around. So I was pretty aware of listening to bass. And I used to play albums at the wrong speed because you can hear the bass line better. Everything else goes by like The Chipmunks and you hear the shape of the bass line as a melody, played in a sort of melodic register.

*Is that because speeding it up brings the pitch up?*

It brings the pitch up but then you hear the bass line as a melody and everything else flies by like The Chipmunks. I didn't realize it until you asked me the question, but I suppose from very early on I was listening to the bass line as the skeletal melody of a song. Which is very much how I approach... and Mitchell Froom, for instance. The reason I get on so well with Mitchell Froom is that we both have that approach to bass on a record.

*You also tend to, a lot of times, it's almost like you're playing a fugue. It's like you're playing a separate melody that compliments the melody of the song.*

I suppose that's the sort of European classical tradition. I sort of veer between that European tradition and R&B, kind of. I've never been able to fully fall in one camp or the other. It's never quite known if you want to be Duck Dunn or Paul McCartney, and so you end up being everything.

*So after The Tremors, where'd you go next?*

After that I got another semi-pro band together up in the North of England, which was called The Roadrunners. And that actually was a pretty good band. It was only guitar, bass, drums and a vocalist. Once again I replaced the incumbent bass player, who went on to become the singer. And I did him a favor as well, because the bass player was a guy called Paul Rodgers.

*Oh really? So you "freed" him up to sing then?*

I "freed" him up to sing and also introduced him to "bad company," if you like. And the guitar player was Nick Moody from Whitesnake. It was a pretty good little band for a seventeen year old.

*You grew up in the north of England where?*

Near Middlesborough, which is sort of Chris Rea territory.

*So, mind if I ask when you were born?*

I don't mind you asking, but I was going to try and brush over that to sort of give my career a bit of longevity. (laughs)

*So should we just say you were born in the '50s?*

Yeah.

*Do you want me to say late '50s?*

You can say what you like. I prefer saying I came to London in the '60s as a teenager, that's what I say.

*Bruce, who, quote, came to London as a teenager in the '60s, unquote... When you did that, did you go looking for work in a band?*

The Roadrunners turned pro and came to London and split up fairly quickly because a couple of the guys couldn't stand the insecurity of having no money and doing all the classic things that happen when a group turns pro. Paul Rodgers obviously got the gig with Free so he went off. And then the drummer and the guitarist went home and I went round knocking on some very famous doors, being really cheeky. I went to see Jeff Beck and John Mayall and different people and asked them for a job. And a guy called Aynsley Dunbar who had a blues group. He went to join Frank Zappa on drums.

The thing was, about it, though, is I never actually got sent away. I actually got to at least play with them all. And I auditioned for Pete

Green's Fleetwood Mac as well.

*Really? Well I better not put that 'cause then people really will know how old you are.*

Well, I guess so. I was only a teenaged boy.

*Well, look at it this way. Most Americans think that Fleetwood Mac started in 1976.*

Yeah, well, I went to see all those guys anyway. I don't mind. I'm quite happy that I managed to play with Pete Green and all these guys and I didn't get sent away. But I'd only been playing a year or so, so I was still a bit wet behind the ears.

They were all good, though. Jeff Beck said, "Just stick with it and you'll never be out of a job," you know. They were all very encouraging and didn't say "Forget it, son."

*So, even though none of them were really biting at hiring you into their band, they could see some sort of promise then.*

I was only a young guy who'd just left home.

*Do you think the promise was in your ability or just the fact that you were a cheeky young guy who was willing to go for it?*

I think both. I wish in a way I could be that cheeky young guy again; I wish I still had that cheek and I'd go around knocking on a few doors again now.

*If you moved to London in the mid '60s, then, obviously we're talking about a ten year span before you joined up with The Attractions. When did Sutherland Bros. & Quiver come up?*

That was early '70s.

*So what did you do in the meantime? Did you continue knocking on doors?*

No, I played with a few bands for a year or two that didn't really get anywhere. I was in an R&B, Booker T.-style band with an organist called Pete Bardens, who you may have heard of. He eventually had that band Camel, I think. But he had a band with Rod Stewart and Mick Fleetwood and Pete Green called the Shotgun Express. Of course they left to form Fleetwood Mac anyway. I was hanging around that basic English blues/R&B scene with Jeff Beck, John Mayall, Free, Fleetwood Mac. And I was playing with those guys but I never got in a big band until later on.

*What was your first record appearance?*

My first record appearance was a single with Pete Bardens' group, which was called Village. We became progressive. Instead of being an R&B band we suddenly became progressive and did things like "Interstellar Suite" and things like that. We did R&B songs that turned into twenty minute psychedelic jams. You know the thing.

*Yeah, that was the rage at the time. Pink Floyd and all that. What did you draw from the blues and R&B that you've...*

Mainly that discipline to stick with a riff. You can't just whiz about all over the place. You've got to pick your spot to know when to go up on the "thin ones," as they say, to know when to play obligatos or whatever. There's functional bass playing and there's creative bass playing. And you've got to pick your spot, you know?

*But it seems to me that you do both.*

Yeah, well that's it. You have to. But you have to know what's appropriate where.

*Like in that Bass Player article where they did your bass line for "Everyday I Write the Book," he [author Karl Coryat] talks about how during the verses you're playing your own melody that helps along the vocal, but by the time it gets to the chorus you get back more*

to the roots of the chords and more like support it rather than create it.

Well, that's it. That's the whole alchemy, if you like, of bass playing, is to know when to do that. It's very much the same for keyboard playing or guitar playing as well. You have to know when you can cut loose a bit. But the blues side of it was definitely the discipline playing. John Mayall said a good thing to me, which I never forgot, in fact. He said in a blues band the bass player is like the left hand of the piano, like a boogie piano player. You've got to hit the root note on the one [beat], you know, when the chord changes you hit the root note on the change. You're not fiddling about. But then sometimes I like being the right hand of the piano as well. It's knowing when to be the left hand and when to be the right hand.

The other thing that [blues and R&B] teaches you is groove playing. The fact that you're playing very simply in terms of notes, but finding the groove is something that some people don't ever do in their whole lifetime.

*Well I think you must have found that pretty long ago because I listen to your bass playing and I hear grooves all over the place. Probably the most obvious groove riff that anyone would associate with you would be "Pump It Up." I imagine you're not so excited about playing that one anymore, but it certainly is a classic bass riff. I think most bass players my age go, "Jeez, can I try and play that one?" And I will admit that I can play it at half speed.*

Yeah, I suppose. I think that that aspect of bass playing is something that you can't learn. It's definitely one of those things you either have or haven't. It's just a musical thing that you can groove or you can't.

*If you didn't have any formal training, how did you start figuring those things out? Is it just from the experience of talking with people and playing with people who've got more experience than you and listening to what they have to say?*

In what sense?

*Well, you said that John Mayall said the trick is is when the chord changes you've gotta be on the root and then after that you decide what to do from there.*

Well, no, I just thought that was a good thing that created the right impression at the right time. It sort of induced a bit of discipline in my playing. And I suppose all the wandering off stuff was influenced by... McCartney, certainly, but another guy who had an influence was Phil Lesh from the Grateful Dead. Because he used to make excursions up the neck. And then you'd have a guy who could groove and play the most outrageous melodic things, James Jamerson [Motown studio bassist]. Duck Dunn [Stax studio bassist, also of Booker T. & The MG's] was very rootsy, but that was it. But Jamerson... it was when you realized that he was dropping beats or the syncopations where he would push ahead of the beat when everybody else was on the change, he would be anticipating it or lagging behind it. Or he'd pedal notes through a whole series of chord changes. Or he would play thirds and fifths and have his own sub-melody going on. That was one of the things... That's not the European tradition of counter-melody playing, that was very jazz-based. Some of his stuff sounded almost Middle Eastern. I guess I took that on board as well. But I learned music theory for myself, I didn't read it from a book or I wasn't shown it at some sort of "institute of bass technology." I figured out what chord triads were, and I figured out why they were called 6ths, and why they were called 7ths, and what note was augmented when a chord was augmented. And I figured out what the difference was between a minor chord and a major chord, and what note had to get flattened [sic] to make it minor.



*You figured that out on your own?*

I did all that on my own, yeah. I just sort of figured it out. But as a consequence it was much more exciting for a start. And as another consequence I didn't know what the rules were about what bass lines you played to what chords. I suppose I figured out, like Bach, that if you had a chord followed by another chord there were notes common to each chord or something. Or there were notes that would link one chord to another.

*So that's how you might anticipate the next chord change, by playing notes from that chord.*

Or how you would bind them together. I suppose I just figured out very very simple rules of harmony, basically. I started basing bass lines first of all on the chords, and then on the relationship of one chord to the next chord and so on. And then I realized you could sometimes play a tune which incorporated those. Or you could just play one note that went across it all. So I just sort of figured it out from first principles, really. And it just evolved from that.

*Do you think, had you been pushed into formalized training of theory, that you might have said, "This is boring."?*

Well, I'll tell you one thing that I think is just the absolute kiss of death to creative music, and that is all those blinkin' "College of Bass Technology" or whatever it is, where you get a diploma and the world and his wife go along there and tell you everything and you take notes. I've talked to people who've said "I just got my diploma from What's

And Such And Such, so I'm ready to do a record now." That's what you think, pal.

I learned a good lesson when I was very young. I worked as a commercial artist for awhile and I was taken on the job on the proviso that I went to college and got the right diplomas and things. And of course I didn't do that. I was spending all the time playing with The Tremors. So at the end of the year I got fired because I hadn't been attending any of this college stuff.

*So even though they were satisfied with you being able to do the work, for some reason they needed some pedigree from you.*

They sacked me because I'd been going out with this pop group every night. But at the same time as I got fired another job for a commercial artist was advertised in the newspaper. And I applied for the job along with about 103 other people that had just been newly qualified at the art college. And I got the job. Because I had the experience and the other 103 didn't get it because they all just had the diploma.

And I thought, that's just exactly how it works these days. It's the same thing. You know, most record producers, if some guy said "I just got this piece of paper from Such And Such A Thing," they wouldn't touch them for recording sessions. They want the people who've got some quirks or some who do it wrong, if you know what I mean.

*I imagine a school can't really teach you "feel."*

It also can't teach you creativity. It can teach you technique, and it can teach competence, and the rules, but there is always that danger that in the process you iron out any wrinkles that might make it unique. I mean, look at all the great artists. They're pretty untutored. Van Gogh didn't go to art college.

*And get his degree from the School of Oil On Canvas.*

I'm not just saying it's that old cliché about the "university of life"... I think if you're interested in anything you find it. And also, of course, you don't always have to listen to music to inspire music. You can go in the woods to be inspired to play a certain way. It's not like [only] music feeds music, and if you want to be an artist you just look at paintings. Everything feeds everything else in the end.

*When did the Sutherland Bros. & Quiver thing happen? Did you answer the door of opportunity again?*

Quiver was a band in its own right for a couple of years, and Tim Renwick was the guitar player, who's gone on to play with just about everybody in the world. I suppose in America he's most well-known for doing that solo on Al Stewart's "The Year of the Cat." But he's played with Cliff Richard and Elton John and Diana Ross and the Bee Gees and everybody.

*You did some records with Al Stewart, too, didn't you?*

I did those with Tim Renwick and the drummer — we did a lot of sessions in the '70s. We played on a lot of folk rock albums. Sometimes Richard Thompson was involved in them, and Iain Matthews. All the sort of folkie rock artists that have all disappeared now. That was when my session work really kicked in as well.

*By the time that you joined The Attractions you answered some ad in a music paper or something.*

In the *Melody Maker*, yeah.

*"Funexcitementtravel" or something like that, right?*

Right, one of Jake's [Riviera, Elvis Costello's manager] sort of wacky things.

*So had Quiver disbanded by then?*

Yeah, we were together about four years. We did a tour actually

supporting Elton John in '73 in the States, his record-breaking tour. He did huge business. We were doing football stadiums and we had a number 12 single in the charts as well, so it wasn't too much of a loser little band. [Note: The single actually only made it to #48 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 Singles chart in the US.]

*Now what song was that?*

It was called "(I Don't Want to Love You But) You've Got Me Anyway."

*Was that during Elton John's Goodbye Yellow Brick Road album?*

It was during the time of "Saturday Night's Alright Alright" [sic] and all that. That was the hot new record at the time. So we did a 73-date tour of America which was a pretty mega thing to do. Huge audiences. And we had a hit record, as well, so I don't think Elvis has ever got over that.

*What, that you had a hit record in America before he did?*

I'd had a bigger single than he had and done bigger gigs and got there before him, I suppose! I'm only joking, but I did once or twice remind him of the fact.

*And I'll bet it really sat well with him.*

I left that band and they continued for awhile. They had a couple of number ones in England. It wasn't a mega band, but it was well-known and respected.

Then I answered the ad in the *Melody Maker*. And I knew Pete Thomas from the pub rock circuit.

*Had you played with him before The Attractions?*

I hadn't played with him but we did similar kinds of gigs. When Quiver and Brinsley Schwarz and Chilli Willi were all doing that pub rock circuit.

*When you first tried out for The Attractions, what kind of a situation was it?*

Well, I answered the ad, but I don't think Elvis was that keen on... he wanted guys who had never been in bands before, he wanted punks. But the problem with that is, they couldn't play his songs. It's a different sort of thrashing out, you know, one chord psycho riffs. But his songs are quite... you know, he had Clover [a San Francisco group who later became part of Huey Lewis & The News] on his first record. So you don't get the kind of guys that can't play with attitude. You basically couldn't get Sid Vicious to play "Blame It On Cain," could you?

*Yeah, or anything, for that matter.*

[Elvis] had a couple of singles out on Stiff so I went out and bought them and learned them, and then I went to the audition and sort of pretended I was learning them for the first time. So I looked like I was really competent, except for the songs he played me that I hadn't heard.

*"Wow, he's good!"*

Yeah, "That guy picks up songs really quickly." Jake rang around and did a bit of checking out on me.

Pete Thomas was a big fan of Quiver, he used to come to all the gigs because he was a huge fan of Quiver's drummer. He used to turn up backstage at some of our gigs and come in our dressing room being a fan. And Pete always said that one day he saw me getting out of a taxi in London with a guitar case, and he thought that was the coolest thing he'd ever seen. That a musician could actually travel around London in a cab. He said that was the day he decided he wanted to be a pop musician.

*So you must have been pretty excited, then, when it turned out that you and he were gonna be in this group.*

Well, what I'm leading up to, is that he probably swung it for me. He was probably so determined he was going to play with me, that he probably, I would think, overrode Elvis's desire not to have me.

*This seems like sort of an ongoing theme: Elvis's desire to have you or not have you.*

I think it pretty much started as it went on, you know? I don't think he ever wanted me in the first place, and I don't think he ever wanted me back. (laughs) I was just a thorn in his side. It must be some sort of weird karmic thing or whatever that we've been thrown together and we drive each other crazy.

*The first song that you guys appeared on was "Watching the Detectives," right?*

That was just Steve. Nieve did that.

*You and Pete weren't on that one?*

No, he used The Rumour's rhythm section on that one.

*Okay, so it was the singles from This Year's Model, then.*

I think the first recording we did was *This Year's Model*. I think we did the album. We did that whole album very quickly.

*So when you entered this new situation where you already knew you were doing a record and you were faced with learning these new songs that you hadn't yet heard, or didn't have a record to learn off of, how did you approach it?*

We learned *My Aim Is True*, and then as soon as we decided... I did the audition, and then I was invited back to play with Pete Thomas, and Steve Nieve had already done his audition on a different day to me. And he impressed Elvis so much because he'd drunk three bottles of sherry and fallen asleep on the floor. I have to tell you that Steve Nieve thought that Elvis Costello was an Elvis Presley impersonator and he thought he was going to be going out and doing "Suspicious Minds." He thought he was getting a job with an Elvis impersonator.

*Oh really?*

Yeah.

*I've never heard that one before.*

He thought he was going off to be doing "All Shook Up" and things with a guy in a white suit.

*So he thought being able to drink three bottles of sherry might be an asset?*

He thought he would just be able to get drunk and...

*And sleep his way through it because it would be so easy.*

So in the end he ended up playing these mad sort of things that he's known for on these songs and he got the job and then fell asleep on the floor. Anyway, we all went off together. The first time that the four of us had been together is when we went off to learn the songs so that we had an hour's worth of stage material, which we were going to do on tour, and then record *This Year's Model*. So we had to go off and basically learn all the *This Year's Model* songs. And "Chelsea," for instance, was a Kinks song, like. If you've ever heard that Kinks song, "See My Friends," it's like a very slowed-down version of "Set Me Free" or "You Really Got Me"... it's one of those Ray Davies-ish guitar riffs, but very slow and dreamy. It was Bm, A and G. And he said come up with a bass line for that. And I started playing, basically, these arpeggios, like I said, I was just playing the triads of the chords in a very jerky sort of riff. And then Pete joined in and all of the sudden it completely changed into an entirely different song.

*Your bass playing, especially then, had a real aggressive feel to it. Like you were, I don't want to say "trying to prove something," but that you had something to say. Not to say that you don't now, but you know what I mean.*

Yeah, well I think I'd probably been waiting for ten years to have a



***Reader Brad Garrett gets an autograph from Bruce outside the Beacon in 1995.***

platform for my playing, you know? I think there was a lot that happened in a very short space of time when we suddenly realized that we were a world-class band, and I suddenly realized I was probably a world-class bass player. But it had taken me ten years to get the platform. You don't realize until the time that all this has been building up inside you and you're going to give it your best shot. It's nerves, you know. Nerves and drugs and all sorts of things.

*I said I thought you guys had played on "Watching The Detectives,"*

but actually you did play on the b-sides, which were the live versions of "Blame It On Cain" and "Miracle Man" I think it was.

Yeah, "Mystery Dance," I think. [Correct. "Mystery Dance" it is.]

Yeah, and even from there there's definitely a complete change in the sound of his songs when you hear those two versions versus the Clover versions. Frankly, I think the songs are pretty good on that album, but I don't really listen to it that much anymore. Well, the first one that I ever heard was Armed Forces. That's where I came in at. And the thing I was realizing the other day is that that album was one of the first albums I'd ever heard, that wasn't The Beatles, where the bass stood out. From the beginning of "Accidents Will Happen" and all the way through, there's an aggressive melody in the bass.

I guess that's as good a description as anything, really. The rehearsals for *This Year's Model*, I mean, God knows where the bass line for something like... umm... the one where it goes flying around all over the place...

"Lipstick Vogue?"

"Lipstick Vogue," yeah. I mean, I don't even know how that one came about, really. Not many of the songs were written like that [the way the Attractions played them]. We certainly speeded most of them up.

It seems like at that time, maybe punk was the catalyst that started speeding some things up.

The one thing you didn't want to do was to be seen to be falling the wrong side of the wire, I suppose.

So then how do you explain a song like "Night Rally," which is sort of a slow, kind of...

Well, I suppose that's about a violent subject, isn't it? It's a menacing subject, and it's a menacing song. I can't imagine people goose-stepping around really fast [to it], otherwise they'd look like Charlie Chaplin.

Well, they [Columbia Records] decided that that song was "too English" for us when they put that record out over here. And they put "Radio, Radio" on instead. Which is a great song, still. So, explain the bass riff in "Pump It Up" to me.

[Laughs] Funnily enough, I can tell you how that was derived.

Don't tell me it came from another song and dash all my dreams of it being just this God-like bass line.

That's exactly what I'm going to tell you!

Oh shit.

[Laughs] Do you want me to tell you or not?

No, you should now. I'm a grown-up man, I can take it.

It's basically the riff from "The Price of Love" by the Everly Brothers, if you've heard that song — Bryan Ferry did a version of it, so you could check it out on that. And then it's "You Really Got Me" on the end, but it's the notes of "You've Got To Lose" by Richard Hell & The Voidoids. So you combine the notes of one with the phrasing of the other and you've got yourself a riff.

Now, did you think it out that way? I mean, you're faced with these chords...

I didn't sit down and think "I'm going to play this with that," but what I did was I started playing this riff and then later on I thought, "Hang on. This is 'The Price of Love' but it's the notes of..." I mean, we did "The Price of Love" a couple of times as a cover version, and we had Richard Hell as a support band on one of our tours, so somewhere along the lines, that's how these things happen.

So you get the chords from Elvis, and he shows you that the song is

primarily E-A-B, just in different orders, and then... I'm more of a novice bass player, so I'm trying to get a better feel for how you would think it out.

I know one thing. You can't think it out with your mind. You think it out with your fingers. You do it by doing it — it's not an intellectual process. It's like, you don't have a boxer... you might plan strategy, but you can't just sit down and plan how the first round's gonna go. "He's gonna throw this punch, I'm gonna dodge to the left and then punch him back." You might have a general approach, but you can't know what you're gonna do until it happens.

I just did a session this weekend and I'd got the demo from Japan and I sat down and wrote out a chart, and then I played through it a couple of times. And I thought, there's no point in sitting down and working out ideas until I got there with him singing, and then with drums and guitar, and then him saying, "No, it should have more melody here," or this that and the other. And by the time we finished I got a really good bass part; I was really kind of surprised. I was as much an observer as I was a creator of it.

So just like a guitarist or a keyboard player you just need to start out with the basic, "Here's the chords," and you go from there.

Yeah. It's definitely hands and ears and things, you know. Obviously the chords are relevant, but the two other parameters that you have to be aware of, without thinking about, is what the drums are doing, and what the voice is doing. I get a lot of my ideas... a lot of where I decide to go relates to what the voice is doing.

You mean the notes that he's singing.

You can't clash with the voice. It's almost like the bass can become a second vocal part. But it can't leave the drums too far behind and it can't get in the way of the voice. It ties the very bottom and the very top together. It ties the bass drum to the voice.

That's an interesting way of looking at it.

That's the way I always go. And at the same time it's tying the bass drum to the voice, it's actually forming the skeleton that all the guitars and keyboards are draped over. Fortunately, Mitchell Froom shares a very similar philosophy. When he gets into pre-production, he listens to a song and he does exactly the same thing. He sits down and maps out the bass part before I ever get to hear the demos. He works out the bass part and says, "This is where you drive it. This is where the bass goes off and goes walkabout." He maps out the bass part and says, "Now interpret it."

So it's not like he's writing out the full-on bass lines for you, he's just saying "Here's what the feel of the song is..."

On some of them he's actually pretty much come up with the bass part and I just sort of make it sound like it's been played by a bass player rather than a keyboard player.

Now, I imagine not all producers are like that. I assume that when you were doing Elvis records that Nick Lowe didn't say... would he have said anything to you?

No, he didn't say anything at all, really.

Was that out of just the fact that he's a producer that works a different way, or out of the fact that he respected that you knew and could figure out what was going on?

I think a bit of both. Nick Lowe, he's produced records and he's written songs and he's sung on them, and I don't think he would ever say that his bass playing was one of his top abilities.

Right, the last few times I've seen him he didn't even play bass. He played guitar.

It's not such a vital thing to him. It's not his sole means of expression, musically, so it's not that vital a thing.

*What are some of the other producers you've worked with, some of the other artists, and what kind of things have you picked up from them? You've worked with Geoff Emerick — what kind of thing would he bring to the picture?*

He basically brings his incredible knowledge of how to get those sounds. I've sat down with him and seen him get piano sounds and drum sounds or bass sounds and thought, "Oh, that's how they did it." I mean, you can hear The Beatles in it, for sure. He knows what to do with compressors and limiters and all that sort. The one thing he did allow me was, he said, "Look, we've spent two hours getting the drum sound, and everybody thinks you spend five minutes getting the bass sound." He said, "You spend two hours getting the bass sound if you want." Which is the first time anyone's ever said that to me. The other thing that I learned from him, that Paul McCartney did, he'd often get some of these really good inventive little improvisations in Beatles records on the bass part. Often McCartney would just have a completely wild pass at the track. They'd get the bass part down, and then he'd just jam over it two or three times and then maybe suddenly they'd hit on something.



*Would they do a comp track [parts of similar tracks compiled into one "master" track] of that, or just incorporate it into a main bass part?*

Oh, I don't know. They'd possibly do a comp track or use it on the outro of a song or whatever. But there's one thing he would do with me: He would put the bass through a compressor and then through another one and then through another one so that I was barely touching the thing and it sounded like a hundred-mile-long rubber band. He certainly knows and has developed a unique approach to EQ.

The bass just works in this low frequency [range], it doesn't seem to respond to all the little things that you can tweak keyboards and guitars with. Compression, definitely you need. And then the best thing for shaping the sound is some sort of equalization. Of course, you can use parametric EQ as well, but a graphic [equalizer] is kind of good because you can see what you're doing easier.

*You say that your typical live setup is a pair of Trace Elliotts [amps] with one set for the low frequencies and one for the high.*

That's because basically you're only gonna hear what's coming out of your ears, behind your head, and you get a bit of power and depth around your legs [from the LF amp] and you hear the notes round the head [from the HF amp]. If it was the other way around you'd just sort of hear the wind whistling past your ears and this sort of notes getting

lost around your feet. That's just a live thing so you can get a bit of power and clarity on stage. It's not a new idea — John Entwistle used to do it ages ago. It's not a stereo system, it's like a bi-amp [mono] system. You just have two amps set up rather than trying to find a happy medium. You just go for both.

*The reason why I ask is that a lot of the songs you play on, you'll stay in the low registers for the bulk of the song, but you'll do fills or outros to songs where you're really going up the neck a lot. Going up the "thin ones." I don't hear a lot of bass players do that. They just sort of stay in one area and never move out of it. "Great, you can hit the root notes and you know when to hit a third, you can do a twelve-bar blues, but..."*

Well, you've only got four strings...

*But now they've got twelve strings and sixteen strings.*

I know, they do, but you've got all the same notes on four strings, more or less. Five-string basses do not sound like bass guitars, they sound like tubas or synths or something. But they don't sound like bass guitars. It's another instrument.

*You say you've tried them all.*

I've tried them all and abandoned them all. There was a couple of years where I was sort of trying very hard to "get modern" or to go along with this thing for five strings and all the rest of it. But when all is said and done I couldn't convince myself. I don't know, I suppose they've found their place in society. But, I was glad that I wasn't completely put out of business by them anyway.

*You don't tend to do any thumb-hammers or anything like that.*

I have done. And I do from time to time. I mean, it was great when Larry Graham was doing it, and then it just all got a bit out of hand, really. A couple of years ago you'd go into Bass Center in London, and Mark King [of Level 42] was God, and it would sound like a bloomin' knitting machine factory. You'd never hear a note, you'd just hear [makes the sound of aggressive thumb hammering] and it would sound like an old fashioned office with everyone hitting typewriters.

*It's more of a percussion instrument that way.*

All percussion. There were no notes to hear.

*I guess you would say the bass was meant to be a bass. Not just a bass as in "b-a-s-s," but bass as in "b-a-s-e."*

Sure, it's the same as the voice. Now you have records where there's no vocal melody and you have records where there's no bass melody. It seems to me that melodies are a fairly important part of music. I mean, music is a combination of rhythm and melody, it's not just rhythm on its own. It can be melody on its own, I suppose. Rhythm just comes out of the phrasing of the tune. You can't really say that rhythm without melody is music. Maybe I'm just being old fashioned, but by definition I would have thought.

*When people say Elvis is a great songwriter, they should also have to say in the same breath that, "Yeah, but those songs would've been nothing without Bruce, Pete and Steve." I'm constantly amazed at the arrangements of the songs when I just pay attention to the band. I'm still amazed at listening to Armed Forces twenty years later because I hear things that I've never heard before.*

It's one of those things. We'll never know what would have happened if we hadn't have been there, would we, because you can't try infinite possibilities. You can only put one into operation, and so we'll never know what Elvis's career profile would have been without The Attractions and what his songs would have turned out like. I mean, we



know to a degree what happened after The Attractions, when he went off and did a couple of albums without us. But the classic period is just the classic period, I suppose, and that body of work will have to stand as it does.

*Now that I look back on all that, the stuff that I like is the stuff that you guys played on. Including Brutal Youth, including the new album [All This Useless Beauty].*

I think, to be honest, most people see it that way, except you would never ever in a million years get Elvis to admit that anything he did without us was any less than anything he did with us.

*But I listen to some of the bass lines of some of the guys who are playing on the records that you didn't play on, and it's almost like they're going, "I gotta play in a Bruce Thomas way in order for it to sound like Elvis." On King Of America, Spike, Mighty Like A Rose — "How To Be Dumb" and how that guy was obviously doing a Bruce Thomas.*

I think that was meant to be an insult rather than a compliment. [Note: Costello supposedly wrote "How To Be Dumb" as a barb at Thomas's book, *The Big Wheel*. Elvis didn't care for the way he was portrayed.]

*I found it more of a compliment, only the guy didn't carry it off as well as you would have.*

I've talked to Jerry Scheff [who played bass] about it, because he's done some of our songs with Elvis, and he said, "There's just no other way of playing them. You can't play them with other bass lines. I may as well just play what you played because there's no other way to play them."

*There you go. There's another vote for the fact that the bass is an integral part of — if not all music — at least his songs.*

Yeah. As you probably know, we did another version of "Chelsea" without the [original] bass riff on the last tour.

*It was sort of like a go-go song or something, wasn't it?*

Yeah, it just sort of segued out of one of the new songs and we managed to keep the same chords going over it and he was just basically singing the lyrics over the ending of another song.

*And I found that show, and those arrangements, very interesting. Is it a way of keeping them a little more exciting and fresh for you?*

Yeah, I think we would have just gotten frustrated early on if we'd just gone out doing the same old stuff. It's like the way Bob Dylan used to change his songs around.

*And I know Joe Jackson is a prime example of someone who really goes for different arrangements when he does a new tour.*

*When you started playing again with Elvis back on Brutal Youth, what sort of worries or apprehensions did you have?*

Well, I didn't have any. Because Mitchell Froom basically said to Elvis, "If he said he'd play on the album, would you let him?" and he said to me, "If Elvis wanted you on the album, would you do it?" So he basically smoothed it out with the two of us before we ever met. And then they did half the album with Nick Lowe, which was probably a coded message to me saying, "Look, we can still do this album without you anyway. If you want to come along and finish it off..." So I was never there from the start.

*Well, even Elvis played bass on a couple of songs.*

Yeah, only because they were older recordings where he was doing everything.

*Those demos that he and Pete did before the album.*

That's right, and then Nick came along and did a few tracks. So the

basic message was, we can do this without you. We've already got half an album. It wasn't like I was there for a full Attractions album.

*So why'd you do it?*

I got a tape and heard the songs and then went along. I think I was just doing a couple of the trickier ones, really.

*Well, why'd you go ahead and do that then, if you just felt like "We're letting you know we can do it without you?"*

I thought, "Well, it's fairly obvious that I can get work as a bass player without you." I didn't have anything to prove.

*Well, you'd obviously played on quite a few other people's records.*

It was quite good for me because I realized — it wasn't until the band split up — how people saw me in the scheme of things. I used to get rung up by quite a few people who wanted me on records, and it never ever got further than Jake Riviera. I didn't know until later on and then people would say, "Why didn't you do that record with me?" and I said, "I didn't know you wanted me to do one." They'd rung the office and I simply hadn't been told about it. So, in a way, we were kept a little bit out of things by Jake.

*Was probably the same true for Steve and Pete then?*

I'm sure it was, yeah.

*I know Pete has done the Richard Thompson records, and the Los Lobos records.*

Richard Thompson wanted me to play on [something] round about the time of *Hand of Kindness* [early '80s], you know, his really golden period. And the message never got to me. I don't know whether it would be political to mention it, because the bands are still in existence, but you might be surprised at who rung me up to play with them.

*That leads to another question I wanted to ask you. You mentioned to me one time before that you had played bass on other people's albums where you didn't get credit. They call that "ghosting" or whatever. Have you done a lot of that?*

I haven't done a huge lot of it, but I have done sessions like they used to do in the old days where they never credited the musicians, like The Monkees did.

*You told me at one point that you'd done an album by some metal pop band...*

They've split up now. There's a band in England called Little Angels who had a number one record, number one album. I don't think they were big in America but they were sort of an English Aerosmith, and their rhythm section wasn't really up to it. The guitarist was really good, in that modern "widdley diddley" genre.

*"Widdley diddley?!"*

Yeah, you know that sort of "widdley diddley," hammering-on playing and big whammy bar dive bombs and things. Van Halen, I suppose. Yeah, we did that album, and Bryan Adams did a bit of singing on it. Because they were sort of a teeny band, a pop group, they just wanted to make out that it was the group doing it all. But they've since disbanded so I don't suppose it matters, really. And there's a few things like that you know.

*What have you worked on most recently?*

I don't know about America, but the new Suzanne Vega album [*Nine Objects of Desire*, A&M]. And since I did that I was on tour for most of last year, and I've just been doing stuff for Japanese bands at the moment.

*So you're doing some sessions in Japan, are you?*

No, they came over here. I don't know if you'd know about them in America, but there are quite a few bands in Japan that are pretty huge, but I don't think they travel that well. The guy I've been working with recently is called Zenji — I don't even know what his band is called. But he's doing pretty well there. I don't even know their nicknames. [I've also done work with] a guy called Moto, I think Motoharu Sanu or something, is his name. He sells more records than Bruce Springsteen in Japan. All these guys, they pay more than anybody else. So they can't be doing too badly. Plus it's just a strong economy.

*What are you looking to do now? You've said that you're not tied down to The Attractions anymore again.*

A lot of the things I've been doing this year is, as you know I write books as well. It's very, very time intensive — it takes a lot longer to do a book than it does to do an album. So, I'm always quite happy... I've got two books I'm finishing off, and I've got a Bruce Lee biography [*Bruce Lee: Fighting Spirit*] out in paperback in England at the moment which is doing really well.

*That's the same one that already came out here, right?*

It came out in the States, yeah, but it's doing very well in Britain. So I've found myself doing two or three weeks of interviews on that, and writing the two books I'm finishing up. So I'm quite happy to do that for the next month or so. And then I'm gonna come over to the States. If I'm going to pursue my musical career seriously, I think I'd be better advised to do it in America, really. I feel almost like I'm starting again, in a way. Another era is about to unfold or something.

*So I imagine you're talking about moving to Southern California then?*

Yeah, I mean, Mitchell Froom very kindly lets me stay in his house because he spends an awful lot of time in New York, obviously, because that's where Suzanne lives and they're married. But he keeps a house on in L.A. because his favorite studio's in L.A. So quite a lot of the time he's happy to have me housesit for him. So I'll probably be heading off there fairly soon. I'll be waiting for the phone to ring, and I'll be ringing a few people myself.

*So it's a new start. This time you're gonna start looking for*



*opportunity rather than waiting for opportunity to knock.*

Both. In my experience you never sort of have an idea of what you want to do and then go out and do exactly that. But if you're opportunity-minded, if you like, or when you want something to happen and you go out with the idea of it happening... I suppose what I'm trying to say is you might go out and knock on Door A and then somebody will look out of Door B and say, "Hey, come in here." I don't think it ever works in straight lines, I think it works in

roundabout ways.

I like doing records, and I think I might have a couple of years in me as a road musician. It was always a bit intense with Elvis 'cause he's always such an intensely demanding person. Not just artistically, but personally. Quite. God, you know. Quite hard work.

*We could do a whole other interview on that.*

You could do a book on it. I think I did, once.

*Yeah, I hear he was really happy with that book, too. So you're doing another book that's got something to do with your travels.*

I might do a bit about being on the road, but it's not oriented in the same way. It's about non-musical travels, except there'll probably be a bit where I go on tour in the middle. There'll be other things going on.

*More like a Bill Bryson book? [Bryson has written travel books such as The Lost Continent, Notes from a Small Island, and Neither Here Nor There.]*

A bit of that, more like sort of Carlos Castaneda and Bill Bryson. This'll be almost like the tour gets in the way of the story. The tour is just something to deal with while the main story is going on, rather than the reason for the story.

*All the years that you were on tour, did you enjoy it? Was it basically twenty hours of travel and then the show was the main thing?*

Yeah, I think all of the clichés about touring are perfectly true. But, having said that, I find... The last tour we did with Elvis, I mean, Pete and I, I wouldn't be speaking out of turn to say we both felt like shit by the end of it. And then he [Pete] went straight off and did three months on the road with Suzanne Vega. And I spoke to him when he got back off the tour and he sounded ten years younger.

*Now how come you didn't go on that one?*

I think she feels loyalty to this bass player that she's worked with for some time. So they never particularly asked me and I never pushed for it. I suppose if I'd pushed for it I think I could have done it.

*But still, you play on over half of her new album.*

It suited me not to do it this time. But it wasn't the playing. Pete said, "I've just been on the bus with seventeen people and a baby and a nanny and we had all the equipment on the bus and it was painless." You just realize how hard work it is being on tour with Elvis when you go off and work with somebody else and you realize it's all going past painlessly.

*When you're in the midst of a tour, and you've got all the problems and pains in the butt that a tour brings on, when you get to show time, how do you get yourself fired up? When I saw you guys play in September [1996], I thought you were on fire, you were so hot. I was blown away by your playing that night. So, in spite of the fact that you've got a twenty year history with Elvis, how did you step up to plate, so to speak?*

I suppose that's my job. (laughs) I guess, in the end, there might be someone in the audience who wants to give me a job! That's what I'm hoping. I'm hoping somebody will come and save me from The Attractions.

That gig in Seattle was pretty good because it was the last gig of the U.S. tour, so it was a sort of landmark. I think we were all just running to the finish line. Japan was just horrible, but... Seattle was one of the better gigs, and we can do it. I just don't think Elvis is that into it. I don't suppose we'd be doing it after twenty years if that's all we did was tour around doing our greatest hits. It's the fact that you change arrangements and we all go off and write books and write operas or

play with string quartets, that just once we could come back and do a few more decent gigs. But I don't know if there's any more mileage in it now.

*When they layout this story I'll have them print the headline as sort of a business card or something.*

Yeah. "Weddings, bar mitzvahs..." Save me.

*Save Bruce Thomas.*

Save me from The Attractions. I don't mind Pete Thomas coming along, or Steve Nieve. In fact, I don't particularly want to be saved from The Attractions at all.

*It's Elvis you want to be saved from.*

I think that's hit the nail on the head! And I might bring my chums Pete and Steve along with me. I want to be headhunted and I'll take half the agency with me.

*Well, maybe we could get Suzanne Vega to do Suzanne Vega & The Attractions on her next album.*

I think there might be quite a few people with The Attractions on their next album. The Attractions are thinking of doing three albums in the near future. I think that's a new move, just to show you what's possible.

*I've always wondered what it would be like to hear some other good songwriters with you guys playing with them.*

Well, the thing that we did with this Japanese guy sounds like a better track than [anything on] *Get Happy!!* And a lot of people just want what we do. Like Pete said, "This guy just wants 'I Can't Stand Up (For Falling Down).'" And then it sounded fantastic. We're good at doing that, and people want it. Why don't we do a bit more of it? I don't think we're selling ourselves short.

*And that's why it was called Elvis Costello & The Attractions and not just Elvis Costello.*

*My wife wants me to ask you what you think of the newer bands like Blur, Pulp, Oasis and all that stuff.*

I think they're all good. I think it's very healthy. And Supergrass. And I like this sort of, they're very much harking back to the golden age of English pop writing, Ray Davies-ish and The Kinks and that sort of era. I mean, that's when all the good songs were written, and that's the well that you come to and draw from. I like those guitar sounds, I like that sort of music. The way the guitars hang, and the fact that they've got good melody in them. A lot of instant melody and stuff. You can't beat a good pop song, it's still the hardest thing to do.

*That's one thing I think Blur is just incredibly good at.*

That song, "Stereotypes," [from *The Great Escape*] the first time I heard that I thought, "They're doing 'Moods for Moderns.'"

*They just fuzzed up the guitar in the intro and...*

It's nice. I heard a record the other day, which was definitely someone [who] had pinched one off of me. Great. I did it in my time and now they're doing it to me.

*Someday someone will talk about you the way you talk about James Jamerson.*

Maybe so, maybe so.

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# Village Music:

## EC's Favorite Record Store

### The Interview with John Goddard



Elvis holding onto another vinyl score at Village Music.

by  
Tom  
DeMarchi

*" We see each other when he is in town. We can sit down and talk about music for four or five hours and it's fun. We've done it several times. He's so literate, and he knows about so much."*

John Goddard on Elvis



The proprietor of the legendary Village Music, John Goddard.

I'M SITTING ON A WOODEN BENCH in front of a closed health food store on Blithedale St. in Mill Valley, CA. It's an unsettling chilly morning. A strong wind blowing from the west, and the sun has yet to peek its head from behind the blanket of gray clouds covering the sky. I check my watch: 8:20. Still ten minutes before my breakfast meeting with John Goddard, owner of Village Music Record Store. We were supposed to meet yesterday afternoon, but due to construction delays on 101 just south of San Francisco, I was late. By the time I arrived, John's workers had left for the day so he alone had to man his store, and he was unable to leave the cash register unattended and grant me the interview. "You going to be around tomorrow?" he asked as he shuffled through a stack of records. "I have to catch a plane at noon to fly back to Florida," I said. "How about breakfast?" he said. "There's a nice place right around the corner. Eight-thirty."

I see John round the corner down the street. He's wearing jean shorts, running shoes, black socks, and a white T-shirt with "Amedee Ardoin" printed in red letters on the front. His thick gray beard and shock of white long hair bounce with his steps. He looks well-rested, alert, and at perfect ease with his surroundings. He passes Village Music, his stomping ground for the last 30 years, to greet me. We make our way to the Sunnyside Cafe.

*How many years has Village Music been in business?*

I've owned it for almost 30 years. I took it over from the previous owners in February 1968, but I started working there in high school in 1957.

*Did you start collecting records in 1957?*

Yes.

*The store's specialty is vinyl, and for some reason you haven't made that complete shift yet to CD. You have a CD section, but it's*

*relatively small compared to the record selection.*

Yes. I have a CD section, but I opened a record store, not an entertainment center. I'm not about to change the focus of the store every time the recording industry decides to change the format. I was a record collector before I was a record store owner, so it's still my first love.

*So the store is handling the transition from a record buying public to a CD buying public. You must cater to a record buying clientele who specializes in collecting.*

I cater to a worldwide clientele. I certainly couldn't survive on local business. I get customers from all over.

*Is that how you originally were contacted by Elvis Costello? Was he referred to you by someone?*

I don't know if you know who Bonnie Simmons is . . . she's a very famous San Francisco disc jockey, has been for years,

since the 60s. At one point she was the west coast head of promotions for Warner Brothers -- one of her many incarnations. Bonnie knew Jake (Riviera) from . . . I don't know where. Jake had been in the store before Elvis had. It was a combination of Bonnie and Jake, and the fact that Elvis knew Audie deLone and the guys from Clover. I think that's what drew Elvis to Mill Valley initially.

***Did the guys from Clover live around here? They eventually became the News for Huey Lewis.***

Yes. But originally Elvis just wandered into the store by himself, on what I think was his first U.S. tour in 1977. He was playing at the Old Waldorf in San Francisco which was a nightclub owned by Bill Graham, and he was staying at the Howard Johnsons off the freeway because that was the in place to stay for a lot of people. He hit town and the first place he went was Sweetwater, and then he headed up to my store.

***Sweetwater is a club near here? I own the "Sweetwater" Elvis Costello/Jerry Garcia disc, so I know he played there, but I don't know exactly what or where it is.***

Elvis and Steve played there on their last tour together. Elvis has a real soft spot for Sweetwater. It's a local club owned by a woman named Jeannie Patterson. It's only about three blocks from here and it holds 125 people. And Jeannie's booked some amazing talent there through the years. She sorta does a nightclub version of my store. So anyway, Elvis first hit Sweetwater, then my store. He's been coming by ever since.

***Does Elvis stop by Village Music on every tour?***

Pretty much. There may have been one he missed because they were in and out in a day, but he's been pretty consistent. I think he may have had the flu on that tour. One time he pulled up in front of the store in his tour bus and stopped in before they checked into the hotel. That was nice.

***He must be a good customer. From the interviews I've read and from what other people have said, Elvis has a deep love and understanding and passion for all kinds of music.***

All kinds of music. First time he came in he bought an Aretha Franklin record. Next time he came in he bought piles of George Jones and Frank Sinatra. He's all over the map. He buys a lot of Classical. He's very interested in Classical now.

***So what do you think about his "Kojak***

***Variety" quote, "Some of my best discoveries have been made in what may be the greatest record collecting store in the world: Village Music?"***

I'm thrilled. I was more thrilled about the fact that he called me and asked permission to do it. I thought that was really cool -- like I'm going to say, "no."

***I moved to California three years ago, and a friend of mine came out to visit me from Boston in September of 1994, months before "Kojak Variety" was released. When we got to San Francisco he said, "We've got to check out this record store called Village Music in Mill Valley." Another friend of mine had been looking for a John Gilmore/Clifford Jordan title called "Blowin' in From Chicago." We'd both been looking for it everywhere and couldn't find it. As soon as I walked through Village Music's door I saw it on display in the front record rack. I bought it on the spot. So when "Kojak Variety" was released I noticed the mention immediately and said, "I've been there and he's right!"***

All right.

***How did Elvis come about playing your 21st anniversary party at Sweetwater in 1989?***

I went through hell on that. I didn't know if the proper way to do it was ask Elvis himself or ask Jake. It was during the tour for "Spike." Elvis and I went to lunch and we were walking around town, so as he was getting ready to leave I finally said, "Do you think you might want to play at my anniversary party at Sweetwater?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, do I talk to you or should I go through Jake?" He said that he'd have Jake give me a call. Well I thought that was the end of it and I'd never hear another word about it. Jake called me the next day.

***Is Jake not very accommodating?***

I love Jake. He's a good friend of mine. Some people have trouble with Jake because he was very protective of Elvis. He was a great manager and he did what he was supposed to do. He could get in people's faces because he has no tolerance for fools and he has no tolerance for people he thinks are taking advantage of one of his acts. Anyway, Jake called me the next day and said, "I hear you want Elvis and Nick [Lowe] to play your anniversary party." I said, "yeah." Jake said, "Are you aware of what Elvis gets for a gig?" I said, "yeah." He said, "How much do you usually pay?" I said that I usually paid as little as possible. He said, "What's the most you've paid?" The year before I'd had Hank

Ballard and the Midnighters and I'd paid them \$2100.

He said, "I think Elvis should get more than anyone else, so why don't you add a dollar to that and pay him \$2101. That'll be fine." So we ended up with Elvis and Nick. Once they fell into place, I invited James Burton and Jerry Scheff, and they all came. We ended up with Elvis, Nick, Jerry Garcia, Charles Brown, Kim Wilson from the Thunderbirds, Sammy Hagar, James and Jerry, Elvis' wife Cait, Bob Weir, Commander Cody, and I'm forgetting somebody but I don't know who.

***I have the disc from the show, but all these people aren't listed.***

The disc only captures Elvis and Jerry. This was in a club that holds 125 people and we maybe crammed 150 people in there. We serve food . . .

***Do you charge admission or is this open?***

It's invitation-only. Totally private. By the time the day of the party rolled around I was getting 50 calls a day from people who wanted to come.

***So you have to turn down all these friends and great customers?***

I have to turn down everybody. The way I do these [anniversaries] is I usually invite 200-250 people because some people aren't going to be able to make it. It usually turns out at 125-150 people. This particular party had an unusually high acceptance. A lot more people were coming than were supposed to.

***Did people hear about the bill?***

I announce the bill right on the invitation. Then word got out. There were good friends, good customers, and famous people calling, and I had to say no to all of them. It got nasty there for a couple of days. At one point neither Jeannie at Sweetwater nor I would answer the phone. It got really bad. It only holds 125 people. It's very small. It's a great place. My original idea was to have Nick do a solo set, then have Elvis do a solo set, then take a break, come back, and see what happens. See whom we could get on stage together. I had no idea who was going to be there. Celebrity-types say they're going to come and they get tired or change their mind or it rains, and they don't show. So I still didn't know for sure if Garcia was going to show, or Sammy Hagar . . .

***Did you have to pay them too?***

They were guests, not performers. Jeannie is very good at getting people together to play



**Jerry Garcia and Elvis at Sweetwater - April 24, 1989**

and saying, "You play with you, and you're not going anywhere because you're playing next." As soon as the music starts, I'm out of it. I sit in my front row seat and watch the show and enjoy the music.

Jeannie's so sweet she can make anyone do anything. All of a sudden for the second half of the show all these people got up on stage. I was as surprised as anyone! Elvis came up with the Confederates, then Jerry Garcia joined them, then Sammy Hagar came out and Bob Weir. A steady stream of combinations. And Elvis had never met Garcia before.

***This was before the Musician Magazine article?***

Yeah. They had never met.

***Elvis was a big Dead fan.***

Absolutely. I was downstairs, and I saw Jeannie introduce them, and Elvis was saying to Jerry what a fan he is. I think it was during the Europe '72 tour in the Dead booklet for the tour there's an audience shot from the stage and Elvis was saying, "I'm in that shot. I'm in the audience for that show." He was like a little kid meeting one of his heroes. Jerry Garcia was the same way meeting James Burton from his Elvis Presley and Ricky Nelson days.

Burton's a major player. I was more impressed with Burton being there than anyone else. James Burton's been a hero of mine for forty years. One of my first

rock-n-roll records is "Suzie Q" by Dale Hawkins. That's the first record Burton played on. He was sixteen years old. I was more impressed with him being there than everything else put together.

***Do you know what's going on with him now? I read that he got in an accident and may not be able to pay his bills.***

He fell out of a tree. He screwed up his ankle and when he went to the hospital they gave him some kind of anesthetic that he had a bad reaction to and he went into a coma. He was in a coma for a couple of weeks. He's playing again. He toured last year with Jerry Lee Lewis. I don't know if he's totally back up to snuff, but he's doing okay.

***Do you know if he'll be playing with Elvis again?***

I have no idea. I ask Elvis every time I see him, "When are you going to play with Burton again?" He did play with him at that worldwide thing for the "Kojak Variety." The big broadcast. And he played with him on Letterman. I don't know if they'll tour together again, but Burton shows up when Elvis calls him.

***How often do you talk to Elvis? How does it work -- do you call each other up?***

I've never actually worked up the nerve to call him. I talk to him about once or twice a year if he's not touring, and if he is touring I'll get

a call from LA or if he's in San Francisco I'll see him in the store. It's not like we call each other once a week.

***He must have such a vast music collection now that he's looking for specialty items. Do you help him find hard-to-get records?***

I'm not so sure he's looking for much anymore. I mean, he's always looking for something new that he hasn't heard before, but I don't think he's looking for that many specific things. It's more like he comes in the store and says, "Pick out some things for me," or "Have you gotten anything new that you think I'd like?" Every once in a while if he's looking for a song he wants to cover he'll give me a call and I'll send him a tape.

***Last time I spoke with you, you had just spoken with him about his Polygram deal.***

Actually, I didn't hear that from him, I heard that from Hal Willner. Hal had just seen him in New York a few days before.

***What do you know about the deal?***

They didn't give him as much money as he could've gotten had he gone with someone else who's bigger, but they've given him total artistic license to do whatever it is he wants. And Polygram's such a conglomerate that they have Verve Records and London and their regular pop label, so if he wants to do a jazz record they'll put it out on Verve and push it as a jazz record, and if he wants to do a Classical record they'll put it out on London Records and push it as Classical. Like that thing he did recently with John Harle . . .

***"Terror and Magnificence."***

Yes. He's got a promotion system to cover him. Warner Brothers couldn't do that. Warner Brothers doesn't have a Classical department, so they didn't know how to push a thing like "The Juliet Letters." A company like Polygram could handle it. I'm only speculating, but I guess that's why he went with them.

***Do you know any specifics, like how many records he signed to do with them?***

No. I'm assuming he can do what he wants,

though. That's good for him because he's more apt to put out more than they expect. He's got a song coming out with the Fairfield Four.

**Is it "That Day is Done?"**

I'm not sure what song it is. He did record something with them. They played a couple of my anniversary parties.

**I've got a tape of the Nashville show from the "All This Useless Beauty" tour where the Fairfield Four join Elvis for "That Day is Done."**

I'd like to hear that. They're really nice guys, all in their eighties now. They're from Nashville, and they were formed in the late 1920s by a guy named Sam McCurry, who among other things is B.B. King's favorite singer. B.B.'s told me that. He's another one who comes in on every tour. I love B.B. King. Very nice man, a real sweetheart. I'm not positive, but I think Elvis became aware of the Fairfield Four when I sent him a videotape of them from one of my anniversary parties. I'm not sure, but I think so. I've been a fan for years. I didn't even know they were still together, but then I saw them at a jazz festival about fifteen years ago in New Orleans. Then I found out a few years later that a woman I know in Oakland who books gospel shows knew them very well, so she arranged to have them come out. So they played a couple of anniversary parties. In fact, the guy who founded them had stopped touring with them, but he came out the last time they played here and sang with them. He was like 90 years old. It was only a couple of months before he died. I wasn't even aware that Elvis even knew who they were, but a couple of years ago he told me that he was putting together a line up of various groups for a festival in England [Meltdown] with the Fairfield Four, Jeff Buckley, and another one of my favorites who's played at a couple of my anniversary parties, Jimmy Scott. Jimmy Scott is a black ballad jazz singer from the forties and fifties who started out with Lionel Hampton. It seems like Elvis and I gravitate toward the same people.

**Which is probably why he keeps coming back to you and asks for your suggestions when he comes into your store. Didn't Jimmy Scott just do a record with Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers?**

They did a song together for Kevin Spacey's film, "Albino Alligator," or something. Flea, Jimmy Scott, and Michael Stipe did the song for the credits. Weird combination. I haven't heard the song, but it's a strange combination.

Jimmy's a strange guy.

**The possible connection between you, Elvis, and the Fairfield Four through the video that you sent leads me to my next question: Have you noticed any influence, either directly or indirectly, that you may have had from stuff that you may have suggested, in the music Elvis writes?**

Not in the music that he writes because he listens to everything. But I know several of the songs that he used on "Kojak Variety" he got from me. A lot of musicians have come into the store, and a few of them have become, I think, friends. Elvis is one of them, B.B. King is one of them, Ry Cooder is one of them.

**I noticed you wearing a Ry Cooder shirt yesterday.**

Actually, if you can arrange to be here on July 26th, he's playing an in-store performance. He's playing with a group from the 50s called Don and Dewey.

**Where do you see Elvis in pop music?**

I'm not a big fan of pop music. I think Elvis has gone so far beyond pop music. I don't put him in the same place as groups like U2 or whatever. He's well beyond it.

**But according to interviews, he considers himself a pop musician.**

Yeah, but he's not a rock artist. He's closer to Frank Sinatra than he is Bono or David Bowie or something like that. I think he's a pop musician in the purest sense like Frank Sinatra was a pop singer. He does songs that reflect his time. And he writes, which Sinatra didn't do. He does material that reflects his life and his times, and to me that's more than just being a pop singer. He's a spokesman for an awful lot of people. I hate to compare him to Dylan because I can't stand Dylan, but I think his song writing reflects the same things now that Dylan's did thirty-five years ago. He looks at the world around him.

**For some reason, though, Elvis doesn't have the same popularity that Dylan enjoyed. He's almost like Frank Zappa in that everyone knows who he is, everyone knows what he looks like, everyone has heard something by him, and everyone knows he's well-respected in artistic and critical circles, but not a lot of people buy his records. I wonder why. Is it a fickle market?**

One thing is record companies don't know how to market anybody who's a bit off the beaten path, which Elvis has always been. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that pop

music now is something that you can listen to in the background. You can bounce along with it, you can hum along with it, it goes in and it goes out without leaving much of an impression. And Elvis you've gotta work at. You've gotta listen hard to understand his lyrics -- quite often you can't anyway. That's what I loved so much about the Costello/Nieve project. You could really hear the lyrics. Part of what Elvis does is make thinking man's music; I don't know how big a place there is for that right now.

**I'm an English teacher at Florida International University, and one of my classes is Introduction to Literary Analysis. I have my students read plays by Shakespeare, stories by Joyce, and lots of poems. Whenever we get to the poetry section, I incorporate song lyrics because I think it's something they may be able to relate to a little easier than, say, a Shakespearean sonnet.**

**So I gave them the entire lyric sheet from "Spike," had them read it over, then I showed them a video of an interview Elvis did in 1989 when the album first came out. He played solo acoustic versions of many of the songs and gave detailed explanations of the lyrics. My students, whose ages are between eighteen and twenty-one, didn't know what to think about "Spike." I suggested that they listen to the lyrics of their own music a little closer so they could see if what's being said is important to either the artist who's singing, or them when they listen. One of my students raised his hand and said, "I already know the music I listen to is nothing like this. My music says nothing at all. That's why I listen to it. I'm into the beat."**

That's valid. You're not sixteen. When I was sixteen, I was listening to Little Richard, I certainly wasn't listening to lyrics. That's why techno is so popular right now. It's just a repetitive rhythm. Much of the time there aren't even lyrics. That's what my eighteen-year-old listens to and he loves it. It's the ultimate in mindless music -- at least the ultimate so far. We'll see what else they come up with.

**What's that say about the future for artists like Elvis?**

I think there's enough people in the world for him. Elvis is never going to have a multi-platinum album. It's just not going to happen. I think he knows that. Like anybody, I think he'd like to have a hit record just to show he could do it. And he never really has. Ry Cooder's the same way. He'll never have



**Any plans for Elvis coming back for another anniversary?**

Maybe. I'd like to have him do it. I don't do it every year anymore. My 25th anniversary got a bit out of hand and fell apart. I came that close to having B.B. King and the Grateful Dead both playing it, but they both worked so much that I could never coordinate it. Then Jerry started getting high again . . .

**Was this the year before he died?**

Couple of years. But I asked him when he was in the store, told him that I was trying to get the Dead and B.B. together. He laughed. He said, "Yeah, it's a possibility." He came back a

a hit record.

**His soundtrack music is very popular.**

It's very popular, but it doesn't sell. I know he's never had a platinum album, and I don't know if he's ever had a gold album either. It's not music for the masses. That doesn't diminish their importance as artists. Elvis is a major guy in popular music whether his records sell or not. He has a new record and he's on the cover of magazines all over the world, he does interviews on TV when he wants, he can do broadcasts if he wants. That's a stature that his sales certainly don't warrant. They never have.

**But he has a respect in the music industry that's almost unparalleled. He's like Tom Waits or Rickie Lee Jones in that he has his loyal fan base, but he can basically write his own ticket despite his sales.**

The difference is, Elvis works. He tours. He records prolifically. That's something that Tom Waits doesn't do. It's certainly something that Rickie Lee Jones doesn't do. She does a little tour when a new album comes out, which isn't that often. Waits does what he wants. Elvis does what he wants.

Whether it's making a record with John Harle, or recording a song with the Fairfield Four, or making a solo album, he does what he wants. I don't think one is necessarily more important than the other. He just does what he wants. Like that album of songs ["Now Ain't the Time for Your Tears"] he

wrote for that lady singer [Wendy James]. She asked him for a song and he gave her an album.

**That he wrote in a weekend with Cait.**

Yeah.

**What do you think Elvis wants?**

This is pure speculation, because I don't know the man that well. But I think he wants to be able to make enough money to live comfortably, to tour successfully whenever he wants, and to do whatever little oddball project that comes along that interests him. A lot of musicians are like that. Ry Cooder's the same way. He signed up to play with Don and Dewey simply because he liked them when he was fifteen years old, and he's never played with them or met them. I've had Ry play maybe five of my anniversary parties simply because I could set him up with people he wanted to play with. Maybe they played a solo he likes. My first anniversary party, which was after nineteen years, was because Jeannie and I were trying to figure out how to get Ry to play in a club that small. So I said, "Why don't I throw a party?" And that's how the anniversary parties started. It's a tribute to the respect for my store. It's not me. It's my store. Ry has played. Elvis has played. Albert Collins, John Lee Hooker. At one point on stage we had Ry Cooder, Albert Collins, Carlos Santana, and John Lee Hooker all playing together.

month later and said they were for it. But it never happened.

**It's thirty years next year.**

I may try to get Santana, or Elvis. Or somebody, I don't know. It's not like Elvis and I know each other that well. We see each other when he's in town. We can sit down and talk about music for four or five hours and it's fun. We've done it several times. He's so literate, and he knows about so much. As long as we're talking about music, he can bounce things off me that he probably can't with a lot of other people, and I can react by saying, "Oh yeah, I've heard that." "I've got that record." We can interact musically over a broad spectrum. First time he came into the store he didn't say a word.

**Did you know who he was?**

Oh yeah. He looked around for about thirty or forty minutes, did not say one word. I couldn't have gotten a word out of him if I'd gone up and goosed him. Tom Waits was the same way the first time he came in the store. Next time he came in the store he bought the big stack of records with George and Frank and Otis Redding. Now when he comes in we talk. We can talk. I'm sure he's got people all over the world that he can do that with. But they don't all have record stores. Plus, he loves Mill Valley.

**What about his comments at the LA dates of "All This Useless Beauty" where he said that**



*he wouldn't ever be back, would never tour again?*

Again I'm speculating: he'd just gotten into a big blowout with the people at Warner Brothers. I got the feeling talking to Elvis, even though he didn't say so, that they got into a real screaming match. When I talked to him, he'd just gotten through trying to talk to Warner Bros. and it just didn't go well. He was tired of it. As much as he wants to manage himself, he doesn't really want to have to deal with this. That's the part that Jake always did. Elvis didn't have to do it. He'd just come from an awful meeting from Warner's, and he was frustrated and pissed. I don't believe for a minute he'll never tour again.



*Do you think it had to do with the way they promoted, or didn't promote, "All This Useless Beauty"?*

"All This Useless Beauty" may be his best album. I really think so. If not best, it's his most accessible. It's the one that if people had been exposed to it they would have accepted. Most of his records are not that accessible.

By far it's his most accessible, and people would have bought it. I think he was frustrated. Basically, Warner Bros. isn't interested in someone who's only going to sell 300,000 - 400,000 records. Ten years ago there was a record convention at Warner's, and the then-president, I forget his name, actually got up and said, "We're not interested in acts that don't sell a million."

*This guy still president?*

No. But I'm sure he's president somewhere. I don't know what's worse, the fact that he said it or that that's the mentality. With that mentality Bonnie Raitt would have never gotten a contract. Elvis loves performing though. He may never tour with the Attractions again. I have no idea. But he'll never stop performing because he enjoys it too much. It's just an opinion, but he loves it.

*What's your favorite Elvis record?*

"All This Useless Beauty" is the one I listen to the most. As much as I loved "Kojak Variety" for the music and the plug, "All This Useless Beauty" is the one I like the most. It's an easy one to listen to.

*You've met Cait. What influence has she had on Elvis's music?*

A lot. I love Cait, and I think she's a big influence on Elvis because he's happy with her. It's obvious. They're very much in love. I can remember a time they were in the corner of my store dancing to something that was on the record player. They're really, really happy together. That's gotta have an effect on his writing, his career, everything. He's content with himself. He's not an angry young man any more. He's more like a Jerry Garcia than a Joe Strummer. If you're any kind of songwriter or musician at all, you can't stay the same person. You grow.

*Fondest memory?*

When he called to use Village Music in "Kojak Variety." When he asked permission. Or when he agreed to do my party. Actually, one time I got to go down to LA and watch the Confederates practice for a whole day. That was great. And Elvis just sat on a couch strumming his guitar while they set up. That was nice.

*How did that happen?*

I asked Jake. He ran it past Elvis and there I was. It was before their Australian Confederates tour. 1987, I think.

*Can you sum Elvis up in one word?*

Fun.

THE WAITRESS CLEARS THE TABLE of our dirty dishes. We walk outside. It's warmed up a bit. I ask John if it's okay if I take some pictures of the store. He poses in front of the "This Year's Model" signed promotional poster. I take a picture of John standing in front of Elvis taking a picture. I wander through the aisles taking pictures of the posters and records that cram every spare inch of Village Music. I try to think of one word that sums up John Goddard and Village Music: Fun.

**Village Music does Mail Orders.**

**Contact John at:**

Village Music  
9 E. Blithedale St.  
Mill Valley, CA 94941  
(415) 388-7400

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The Latest EC News

Honey - Dig It!

Extreme Honey came and went without a great deal of fanfare (see release info in Add to Your Collection). However, it may well have a long shelf life in the years to come as an essential collection for those looking to explore this period of Elvis Costello's music. His final contractual release for Warner Bros failed to chart in both the US and UK and was even hard to find in stores. (The full track listing, which was selected by EC, appears in BB12.)

Warners started its EH promotion in late September by updating its Internet site (www.wbr.com) to include info on the release as well as a 30-second sound clip from the recently recorded "The Bridge I Burned." The label also provided some promotional support with full page ads in music mags such as Mojo and Q (We'll bet EC loved those typos!). Elvis himself appeared on a chat show in the UK and Letterman in the US (see Television) and gave interviews to the Independent newspaper and to Billboard.

As for the LP, "The Bridge I Burned" of course attracted the most attention and the reaction from fans seemed to be one of either love or hate. The track, although very modern-sounding, is not that far a cry from "Hurry Down Doomsday" which EC recorded in 1991. The version making it to EH is the one that Elvis sanitized as a result of Prince's (excuse us, The Artist's) refusal to grant his permission for EC's original recording of the track, then called "Pop Life." According to sources at Warners, the only difference between the two songs is the insertion of the rap (by "MC MacManus" himself) in the place of several lines directly quoted from Prince's original 1986 "Pop Life." Elvis also now sings "Pop Lie" on the "Bridge"- version.

As an unexpected bonus surprise, Warners also issued a promo CD single for "Bridge" that included a "Facino Remix" (apparently misnamed for the author of the rap segment - see box insert) and a "Pop Lie Remix" that sets an entire new set of biting, cynical lyrics to the "Bridge" rhythm track. At press time no other release of these versions was

planned making this single destined to become a valuable Costello collectible.

The LP release also included great liner notes penned by EC in the form of a diary of his years at Warners. In them, he gets to make his parting remarks at those who worked at his label of the last eight years: "The good people know who they are. The bad people know where I live." The Billboard (Oct.25th) story also ran some comments from Warner's president Steven Baker, party to a reported shouting match with Costello (see BB12). Showing no bitterness, Baker had this to say: "However our relationship ended, everybody here really loved being in business with him. Personally, every time I was on the phone with him, I had to stop and say to myself, 'I'm talking to Elvis Costello, one of my all-time favorite artists! This is a cool job.'" Of interest to all was Baker's comment that there may be future Warner's Costello product involving B-sides and unreleased material.

The "Bridge Rap":

"And remember to free faraway from the unbridled, the impudent, the malicious, and the unlucky. For these being full of bad demons or rays are maleficent, and like lepers and people stricken with plague, they harm not only by touch but even by proximity and by sight."

Quote from Marsilio Ficino, Italian philosopher (1433-1499)

Costello also had comments about his former band mates, the Attractions. In the EH liner notes he refers to the ATUB tour as the band's "last" and in Billboard he terms the breakup as "permanent." As expected, malice is directed toward bass player Bruce Thomas who is actually cropped out of the only Attractions photo in the EH liner notes. In the Independent (Oct. 28th), Costello pulls no punches when it comes to the "twattish bassist" whom he accuses of "deliberately fucking it up." As for the A's future he adds: "I don't have any sentiment at all about the Attractions. You won't see them again." On a positive note however, the EH liner notes say "Keep an eye on this new duo. I think they'll go far." about Costello & Nieve.

Fretwork Release EC's Purcell Tribute

The English viol consort Fretwork has included an EC composition on Sit Fast, its latest album for the Virgin Classics label. "Put away forbidden playthings" was originally commissioned for a Fretwork

Costello on the charts

Peak chart positions for EC's LP's:

Table with 3 columns: Song Title, UK, US. Lists various Costello LPs and their chart positions in the UK and US.

concert at the London South Bank Centre's Henry Purcell tercentenary festival on March 7, 1995 where contemporary music inspired by Purcell's Fantazias and In nomines was presented together with the original 17th century works. Recorded during the Spring of 1996 at St. Bartholomew's Church in Oxford, Suffolk, England, Sit Fast presents a selection of those original South Bank commissions in a different context, this time alongside a number of works predating Purcell which have been newly-arranged for viols.

EC's contribution is divided into two parts: an opening instrumental section followed by a song for countertenor (performed at the original concert and on the album recording by Michael Chance) which, according to the composer, "laments the interrupted access to the musical possibilities of Purcell's time." Fretwork has retained "Put away forbidden playthings" as part of its concert repertoire since the premiere and EC even joined the group to sing it himself (suitably modified for his vocal range!) at a London Lighthouse HIV/AIDS benefit concert on April 2, 1995, and again during the closing night of the Meltdown festival on July 1, 1995.

Table with 2 columns: Title, Fretwork. Lists Sit Fast, Virgin Classics, CD: 5 45217 2, UK release date: 20th October 1997, and includes EC's "Put away forbidden playthings" featuring a vocal by countertenor Michael Chance.

## The Irish in America

Elvis Costello will be contributing a song to the accompanying soundtrack to *Long Journey Home - The Irish in America*, a six-hour, four-part TV special produced by Walt Disney for PBS in the United States. The track was recently recorded with Celtic musicians, The Chieftains, whose leader Paddy Moloney helped form the new Unisphere Records label that will release the disk through BMG Classics. Joining Costello on the disk will be Van Morrison, Mary Black, Sinéad O'Connor and Vince Gill. The disk comes out on January 13 while the show airs January 26-28.

## Folk Anthology

Elvis once again employed his literary talents with a brief contribution to the liner notes of the CD release of Harry Smith's influential and historical 1952 compilation *Anthology of American Folk Music*. The collection was released in August in a 6-CD set by Smithsonian Folkway Recordings (SFW40090) in a package that also included 100 pages of essays and notes. The set was also chronicled in the recent Greil Marcus book *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*. According to Smithsonian: "This anthology brought virtually unknown parts of America's musical heritage to public attention with lasting political, economic, and aesthetic consequences."

"First hearing the Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music* is like discovering the secret script of so many familiar musical dramas. Many of these actually turn out to be cousins two or three times removed, some of whom were probably created in ignorance of these original riches. It also occurred to me that as we are listening at a greater distance in time to a man or woman singing of their fairly recent past of the 1880s, we are fortunate that someone collected these performances of such wildness, straightforward beauty, and humanity."

Elvis Costello

## His Old School

Now here's one for the compulsive Costello collector - a CD single issued by EC's old school choir from the Campion Boys School in Liverpool. The CD is called *A Collection of Songs for the Young Homeless on Merseyside: Featuring Mike McCartney and Campion Boys School*. Costello's contribution to the CD however is limited to the following quotation on the front sleeve: "Congratulations to Campion Boys. Good luck to Merseyside Accommodation

Project (MAP)" - Declan MacManus A.K.A. Elvis Costello (Old boy). The disk includes the song "Take it Into Your Hearts" with words and music by Mike McCartney and it is performed by him with ex-members of the La's, Rain, Electrafixion and the Christians. Also included are three songs written by Vincent Spencer, the Head of Music at Campion High School and performed by the current school choir.

The CD was released last winter and was spotted by alert reader Huib Beulen in a Beatles magazine. (Mike McCartney is Sir Paul's brother who once recorded under the name Mike McGear.) Huib saw the words "Elvis Costello" in very small print which made him curious. After trying all kinds of things to find out more about the CD without any result, Huib found the address of The Campion Boys School through the Liverpool tourist office. After writing them to purchase a copy of the CD, Huib was surprised to get a free copy together with a note by Mr. Spencer. He responded: "Unfortunately, although Elvis was keen to be involved (as an ex-pupil of the school, and believing M.A.P. is a worthy charity) he was extremely busy at the time of recording. In between touring different parts of the world, he was able only to give us the message that was printed on the cover. Nevertheless, I hope you enjoy listening to the CD. I particularly recommend tracks 4 and 6 which were recorded 12 months apart. They were sung by the same singer, and performed by the same band. Who knows a future Elvis Costello may be amongst them."

## Pet Sounds Soundbite

Elvis furthered his reputation as a musicologist by supplying a quote which was used in an ad for The Beach Boys *The Pet Sounds Sessions*, a four-CD box set released around the historic 1966 LP. Alongside quotes from Paul McCartney, Tom Petty, Matthew Sweet and George Martin, Costello noted: "If all the record players in the world would get broken tomorrow, these songs could be heard a hundred years from now."

## Bacharach Update

While we all wait with bated breath and little knowledge about the Costello/Bacharach project, another brief tidbit came out in a local arts magazine as Burt continued to sporadically perform. In late October, while performing in the Ohio town, he told *Columbus Alive!* that he and Elvis were about to go into the studio for their fourth writing session since recording "God Give Me Strength." Burt had this to say about EC

and the project: "He's singing everything, you know he's so brilliant. He's such a fine musician. I wouldn't touch the lyrics. He's the greatest lyricist of our time. But we'll sit at two different keyboards and we'll each come up with fragments or we'll interchange cassettes. This week I've just been working on the stuff we did last time, so when he gets back from Brazil, I'll give him four or five things that I've worked on or altered."

Also, after an early November concert in Dallas, Burt told a fan that 7 or 8 songs have been written so far and that he and EC would be meeting again in December. Burt called the efforts "a quite impressive piece of work."

## More Talk

Which veteran trooper came to Clive Anderson's rescue after those bad boys of pop The Bee Gees had "stormed out" of his BBC TV chat show *All Talk?* Step forward Mr. Showbiz - Elvis Costello! It so happened that the Brothers Gibb were filming a segment for the following week's programme on the same evening that EC appeared on the show (*see Television*). After Barry Gibb had suffered a sense of humour failure on being teased about his group's former name of Les Tossers and led his slightly shamefaced brothers from the stage, Elvis obligingly volunteered to do a bit more chat to fill the breach.

The additional footage was not screened the following week for continuity reasons. "We'd have had to pretend that Elvis Costello had been waiting for a week in the wings on the off chance of doing a bit more interview," explained Clive Anderson, speaking later on Channel 4's *Light Lunch*, "but it was very nice of him - so I like Elvis Costello!"

## Some Updates

■ Yes, it's true. Elvis will have a cameo role as a bartender in *Spiceworld*, the movie due out this winter. He told *Billboard Bulletin* that the experience has allowed him to "get in good with all my friends' kids." ■ Progress continues on the Rhino Records compilation of previously-released Costello covers. At last report EC had requested a CD-R to be made so he could plan the song sequencing. ■ On a somewhat related sour note, the planned compilation of new Costello covers by Mafia Money Records is on indefinite hold. Label boss Dave Liebowitz reports that it was becoming too difficult to secure the proper commitments from all the various bands. ■ Finally, contrary to initial reports, EC's version of Bruce Springsteen's "Brilliant Disguise" was left off the recent *One Step Up, Two Steps Back* compilation. Licensing for the song fell through at the last minute. ■

## Tiny Steps

**Dead Elvis:** The question in a *Canoe* on-line poll for the weekend of the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death was "Which of the following Elvis inspired musical events do you prefer?" (a) Dread Zeppelin (b) Paul Simon's *Graceland* album (c) The *Honeymoon in Vegas* soundtrack (d) "Going to Graceland" by The Dead Milkmen (e) "Always on my Mind" by The Pet Shop Boys and the winner: (f) Elvis Costello ■

**Book Mention:** A great read for mystery lovers and music fans is *I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass* (Bloodlines, U.K.). This debut novel by Paul Charles, the head of Asgard, Europe's best known concert promoter, follows the murder of the head of the fictitious Camden Town Records through the streets and sounds of London. Each chapter heading is followed by a quote from a rock song, with Elvis getting the bill three times. One of the detectives in the story also goes on a date to see EC & the A's at the Roundhouse. ■ **Book Mention #2:** This quote about his novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, comes from *Stanley Kubrick*, a 1997 biography, by John Baxter, 1997 "... rock singer Elvis Costello built up an eccentric collection consisting entirely of scores of copies of the novel's British first edition, which by the nineties could fetch £500 each."

■ **Quotes:** From the *Liverpool Echo* 12th August: Danny, the drummer of Jubjub who supported EC on his UK tour last year: "Costello was brilliant. Spending time with him and his band was like real rock and roll. We had some great after-show parties." EC responds: "Jubjub is, are, am, wonderful." ■ As a presenter at the recent VH1 Fashion Awards in New York, the ever-humble Bono joked: "It's time that Irish musicians were given credit for being at the forefront of the fashion industry." He then said "America had Elvis Presley - We have Elvis Costello" and "America had Jim Morrison - We have Van Morrison." ■ **Trainspotting:** On the November 8th edition of *Saturday Night Live* in the USA, comedian Colin Quinn portrayed EC in a mock "We Are the World"-type tribute song entitled "Save the Nanny," referring to the recent au pair baby-murder trial. Quinn also used a snippet of "Waiting for the End of the World" as an intro to one of his satirical news segments. In 1994, actor-comedian Michael McKean also portrayed Costello on the program in a similar song parody about President Clinton's Whitewater scandal.

## Covers Corner

US retro-punkers and Reprise recording artists **Green Day** have recorded a version of "Alison" which they may issue as a B-side or as a bonus track in Japan.

Young guitarist/composer **Julian Coryell**



(son of renowned guitarist Larry) performs a rhythmic-based instrumental of "Shipbuilding" on his new release *Duality* (N2K Encoded Music). With

Costello having been one of Julian's favorites since he was a youngster, here is what he rather cryptically told *BB* about his decision to record the song: "*His imperial greatness . . . if any one of my endeavors could qualify as a Brilliant Mistake, perhaps I too could be the King of America. At the very least, honoring the Jack of All Parades with my own attempt at Useless Beauty was as fulfilling as one of London's Brilliant Parades, or diving for pearls.*"

*In other bits of new news:*

The UK group **Scarfo** have released a cover version of "I Want You" as a bonus track on their *Cosmonaut No.7* CD single (Deceptive Records).

A group from Brazil, **The Haimundos** have recorded an English-speaking version of "Oliver's Army." Elvis himself played an advance copy of this forthcoming release on Irish radio (*see Radio Radio*).

*Now some old news which has just surfaced:*

Tracy Thorn and Ben Watt, better known as **Everything But The Girl**, are said to have performed a live version of "Indoor Fireworks." The UK duo has also recorded both "Almost Blue" and "Alison."

The cover of "Alison" by the **Holly Cole Trio** which was mentioned in *BB12* can be found on a 1994 CD from Japan, *Yesterday & Today* (Capitol).

Sticking with the same song and country, **Tomio Inove** performs a cover of "Alison" on the 1989 Japanese compilation *Les Enfants* (Polydor).

Finally, on a past version of *Mountain Stage*, host **Larry Groce** performed a version of "Everyday I Write the Book."

## Gold & Platinum

### US (Certified by RIAA):

Armed Forces	Gold	1979
My Aim Is True	Gold	1981
Spike	Gold	1989
Best of EC&A's	Gold	1989
This Year's Model	Gold	1991
My Aim Is True	Platinum	1991

Gold awards represent manufacturer sales of 500,000 units while platinum represents 1,000,000 units.

### UK (Certified by BPI):

My Aim Is True	Silver
This Year's Model	Gold
Armed Forces	Platinum
"Oliver's Army"	Gold
Get Happy !!	Gold
Almost Blue	Gold
Goodbye Cruel World	Silver
King of America	Silver
Blood & Chocolate	Gold
10 Bloody Marys	Silver
Out of Our Idiot	Silver
Spike	Gold
Mighty Like a Rose	Silver
Brutal Youth	Silver

Qualifying levels: *Singles (Pre-1989)* Gold: 500,000. *Albums* Silver: 60,000 Gold: 100,000 Platinum: 300,000

US dates are the years in which awards were achieved. UK dates were not available. Thanks to Rob Harvey at RIAA and Kaylee at BPI.

## Another Costello Book

As noted last issue, author Brian Hinton is hard at work in wrapping up *Let Them All Talk*, his biography of Elvis Costello, due sometime next year from London's Sanctuary Publishing. Now another book is in the works from the other side of the pond.

Jim Perone is currently penning *Elvis Costello: A Bio-Bibliography* which will be published by Greenwood Press. The standard format for Greenwood's "Bio-Bibliographies in Music" series is a 20-25 page biography; a discography; a bibliography of materials related to the discography (reviews of albums, singles, and guest appearances on recordings); a general bibliography, including reviews of concerts, biographical articles, e-zines, major web pages, books, etc. The book will be thoroughly indexed and is due the end of 1998.



Spotlight On New Releases

**Extreme Honey:** Elvis fulfilled his Warner Bros. contract with the expected October 20-21 UK/US releases of the planned greatest hits package (see *BB12*). The CD was also issued in Australia on November 3rd and in Japan on November 5th. See the related feature story in *On The Beat*.

**Extreme Honey: The Very Best of the Warner Bros. Years** Elvis Costello Warner Bros.

US Advance CD	2-46801-A
US CD	9 46801-2
US MC	4-46801
Europe Advance CD	9362-46801-2
Europe CD	9362-46801-2
Europe MC	9362-46801-4
Australia CD	9362-46801-2
Canada CD	CDW-46801
Japan CD	WPCR-1633

18-track compilation including the newly recorded "The Bridge I Burned." Also, features diary-like liner notes by Elvis covering his 1988-1997 activities.

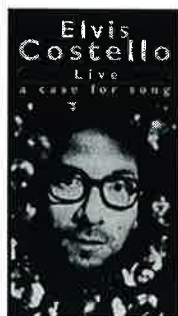
In the US a promo CD single and a promo CD sampler were also issued.

**The Bridge I Burned**

Warner Bros. PRO-CD-9045  
4-track CD single with both a picture cover and a picture disk includes: *Edit* (4:14), *Album Version* (5:20), *Facino Mix* (4:19) and *Pop Lie Mix* (5:19). The last track contains entirely different lyrics.

**A Taste of Extreme Honey**

Warner Bros. PRO-CD-9076  
5-song promo CD sampler with a stickered cover including "The Bridge I Burned," "So Like Candy," "My Dark Life," "London's Brilliant Parade" and "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No. 4".



**A Case for Song:** Also found in record stores riding on *Extreme Honey's* coat tails was the long awaited and often delayed US release of EC's first live concert video. Issued on VHS (38456-3) by Warner Reprise Home Video, a laser disk version was also released on November 5th through Image International (ID4196WO). The video entered *Billboard's* "Music Video Sales" chart at #11.

**Bridge Benefit:** As reported back in *BB11*, Elvis was included on the November 18th release of live recordings from Neil Young's annual benefit concerts. An advance promo was issued in October.

**Bridge School Concerts Volume 1**

Reprise Records US CD: 2-46824  
Includes live solo acoustic version of "Alison" (backing vocals from Neil Young) recorded Oct. 26, 1990 at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, CA.



**TV CD's:** As previewed in *BB12*, Elvis also shows up on two CD's of live appearances on US talk/chat shows. Both the O'Brien (October 7th) and Letterman (November 18th) disks were preceded by advance promo CD's and a promo video was also issued for the O'Brien disk.

**Live From 6A: Late Night with Conan O'Brien**

Mercury Records US CD: 314 536 324-2  
Includes the Costello & Nieve recording of "All This Useless Beauty" from May 21, 1996.

**Live on Letterman: Music from the Late Show**

Reprise Records US CD: 2-46827  
Includes the Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello performance of "God Give me Strength" from February 25, 1997.

**Ross Sings Elvis:** Billed as "a must not only for Ross's own fans, but for all devotees of both Elvis'," an LP of Presley covers recorded by EC's dad has been reissued on CD in the UK. An LP titled "Elvis Presley's Golden Hits Sung by Big Ross & the Memphis Sound" was originally released in 1972 on the Pickwick label.

**Elvis' Dad Sings Elvis** Ross McManus  
Hallmark UK CD 306602  
*Reissue of 1972 LP of Elvis Presley songs as sung by Costello's dad, Ross MacManus.*

**Compilation Corner:** Here's some more recent release information all in an effort to make your collection complete:

**A Hard Nights Day**

MCA UK 2-CD: MCD 60047  
45-track compilation from the Stiff Records archives includes "Watching the Detectives" and "Alison" from Elvis Costello.

**Not with that Clown: Great Songs of Sexual Jealousy - The Human Condition Series #1**

Mushroom Records  
Australia CD: MUSH 33039.2  
MUSH 33039.5 (w/ T-shirt)

Compilation of twisted love songs includes "I Want You" by Elvis Costello & the Attractions, whose lyrics also provide the source of the CD's title.

**The Ray Davies Songbook**

Connoisseur Collection UK:VSOP CD244  
Collection of "Kink's covers" includes "Days" by Elvis Costello.

**Mama's Got A Squeeze**

**Box:** On Oct. 27th in the UK, a 6-CD set was released containing remastered versions of Squeeze's first six albums with added bonus tracks. Included is *East Side Story* which EC co-produced with Roger Bechirian (and for which he is credited with "funny voice" on "Tempted"). One of two bonus cuts added to this album is a previously-unreleased Bechirian/Costello production titled "The Axe Has Now Fallen." Costello, of course, also contributes backing vocals to "Black Coffee in Bed" on the *Sweets from A Stranger* CD. Meanwhile, the accompanying booklet quotes Chris Difford thus: "I thought Dolly Parton was a packet of sweets until Elvis made me listen to country music." (continued)

Six Of One . . .

Squeeze

A&M UK 6-CD Box: 540801-2

Includes reissues of assorted Costello contributions plus the first ever release of the Bechirian/Costello-produced *East Side Story* out take, "The Axe Has Fallen."

### Updates From Last Issue:

Here's the info about two releases that came out around press time of *BB12*:

### September Songs - The Music of Kurt Weill

Sony Classical US CD 63046

Europe CD SK 63046

Australia CD SK 63046.

Japan CD SRCS-8358

Includes "Lost in the Stars" by Elvis Costello & the Brodsky Quartet.

### I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray Fairfield Four

Warner Bros. US CD 9 46698-2

Includes the McCartney/MacManus composition "That Day Is Done" featuring lead vocals by Elvis Costello with Larry Knechtel on piano. Also, includes liner notes by Elvis about the recording of the song.

**Tidbits:** ■ According to one source, it turns out that the possible reissues of *My Aim Is True* and *Armed Forces* may be just another "fine idea at the time." ■ The Jazz Passengers *Individually Twisted* CD was released in Japan on October 21st. ■ *Hablando Solo* featuring Ariel Rot backed by the Attractions was released on Nov. 3rd in Spain. ■ In Australia, CIC is planning to release two compilation videos from MTV Unplugged. Volume 2 is said to contain Elvis Costello and the Rude 5's version of "Deep Dark Truthful Mirror." ■ Steve Nieve plays piano on one track from Alain Chamfort's *Personne N'est Parfait* CD (Epic / Sony Music) released in France.■

## Elvis on Letterman



Photo by Tony Sacchetti

## Television

*TFI-Friday* (September 5 - Channel 4) With regular programming suspended by the death of Princess Di, highlights from the last two years were shown, including the complete April 19, 1996 performance of "Alison" which was previously cut by ending credits.

*Sessions at West 54th* (September 27 - PBS) Airing of the July 29th taping with Ron Sexsmith including the duet with EC on Burt Bacharach and Hal David's "Windows of the World" (from 1967) and Ron's cover of "Everyday I Write the Book." Sexsmith told a fan that he and EC mutually picked the song which he already knew and for which Elvis was unsure of the words. Ron originally thought they might perform "Wastin' Time" from his most recent LP.

*Late Show with David Letterman* (October 3 - CBS) Performance of a shortened "That Day is Done" with the Fairfield Four with Larry Knechtel on piano. Taped on October 2.

*Clive Anderson All Talk* (October 23 - BBC1) Rare UK chat show appearance to promote *Extreme Honey* ("my passport to freedom"). The series employs "Let Them All Talk" as its theme tune ("as a good, soulful song it makes a great theme tune for a chat show," noted the composer dryly) and, amid the relaxed banter, EC's departure from Warners was covered (Anderson: "Is it acrimonious?" EC: "Not now!") as was the new "very complex" record deal which EC said would offer him "the chance to use different machinery - even different labels - in order to present [my music] to just the people who want to hear it, using the people who know about it." There was an amusing moment when audience questions were invited and one lady, with Paul McCartney's recent symphonic work in mind, asked a nonplussed EC whether he had ever thought of writing a "serious" piece himself. "Other than the jokey one about trampling to death a Prime Minister?" queried Anderson.

*Late Show with David Letterman* (November 18 - CBS) EC promoted *Extreme Honey* with a performance of "So Like Candy" backed up by Toshi Reagon & Big Lovely. Elvis poked fun at the usual cold temperature of the Ed Sullivan Theater by wearing a heavy yellow coat and a cap. Ms. Reagon and her band provided nice backing vocals to a rollicking acoustic romp that wound up with a great a capella finish. (see photo at left)

## Radio Radio

*The Eclectic Ballroom* (October 28-Radio Ireland) Local boy Elvis joins DJ John Kelly and plays some of his favorite music for three hours of fun radio. (See EC's play list on page 39 and a feature story on page 40.)

## In Print

### Magazines:

*Q* (Sept.) Story on Brodsky Quartet offers this from Paul Cassidy: "The first time we went out 'live' with Elvis - and this is after months of working on *The Juliet Letters* - we came off at the interval and he turned round to us and said, 'Shit, what are you doing out there? It's so loud.' As soon as we got on a stage, with the adrenaline and so on, the volume went up about ten times, and he just couldn't believe it - he who'd been standing in the middle of the Attractions for 15 years!"

*Uncut* (Sept.) Editor Allan Jones gives us yet another Costello remembrance: Nick Lowe's tale of hearing about the death of the other Elvis on a drunken evening with Jake Riviera at the Hope & Anchor club. While Nick was brought to tears, Jake's reaction was rather unsympathetic: "We're gonna have to call him Elton Costello."

*Entertainment Weekly* (October 24) In its feature music story entitled "The Thrill is Gone," David Browne moans about how "many of our '80's pop heroes (Costello, Mellencamp, Byrne and Prince) have stopped making sense." Starting with and focusing on his disappointment with EC's recent work through the vehicle of *Extreme Honey*, Browne sounds bored with life rather than the artists he criticizes. As Chris Willman, *EW* Senior Writer and friend of *BB* told us about Browne's piece: "I tried to talk him out of it."

*Billboard* (October 25) Feature story on the *Extreme Honey* release includes comments from EC and Warners prez Steven Baker (see *On the Beat*). EC also tells us the source of the LP's title which came from a trip to Spain. "I was getting told off in a write-up for not playing enough of my ballads - and I think I misread the translation, 'This is extreme honey'. I thought it was a great phrase, connoting the sweet and the tart often which exist even inside the same song."

*Mojo* (Oct.) Includes a fascinating and well-illustrated 9-page retrospective on the 1977 *Stiffs Greatest Stiffs* . . . Live package tour. Written by Will Birch (also a noted record-producer and the drumming-songwriter for the great late '70's band, The Records) this article documents thoroughly the sleazy, low-budget trek around the British college circuit underscored by a battle of egos between the Jake Riviera/Elvis Costello and Dave Robinson/Ian Dury camps. "It was a bunch of mad people on the road," recalls EC without apparent fondness. "There was a lot of staying up late and a lot of badness . . . We were young, we were free. Just like Cliff! But it was hardly *Summer Holiday*." Elsewhere in the magazine there's an interview with Bebe Buell, still extracting mileage from her rock & roll love life. Her relationship with EC is said to have dated from a first, fleeting glimpse of the "folky and boring" Elizabeth Arden employee at a 1975 modeling assignment in London. We are spared few sordid details of their subsequent romance as Ms Buell goes on to recount events which would, perhaps, be better kept private.

### Newspapers:

*USA Today* (September 10) Joe Jackson gets compared to Costello in a piece by David Patrick Stearns focusing on Joe's new *Heaven & Hell* release on the Sony Classical



label. Cast as both having risen from the British punk scene with recent classical leanings, Jackson had this to say about EC: "We have a lot in common. We both really care about music, we're both the same age and we're looking to push the envelope. One of these days, we're due for a long chat over a few beers."

*The Independent* (October 28) UK daily offers up "Elvis's Army Is Here to Stay," an article with some brief comments from EC and a color photo to plug *Extreme Honey*. In addition to some remarks about the Attractions and in particular, Bruce Thomas (see *On the Beat*), Costello briefly discussed his future: "I would like to make another rock 'n' roll record. One the like of which no one's ever heard. I feel to some extent, everything I did with the Attractions was sampling. It was like Oasis with wit. If I ever make a rock 'n' roll record again, it won't sound like anything else."

## Eclectic Ballroom (Radio Ireland, 7pm-10pm, Tuesday 28th October 1997)

### Play list selected by Elvis Costello:

- ✧ "Dominique's Discotheque" - **Mel Torme**  
Right Now! (Columbia 1997 reissue of 1968 LP)
- ✧ "So Sharp" - **Dyke & The Blazers**  
So Sharp! (Kent 1997)
- ✧ "Tell Him I'm Not Home" - **Ike & Tina Turner**  
UNKNOWN LP
- ✧ "Take It Or Leave It" - **The Rolling Stones**  
Aftermath (Decca 1985 reissue of 1966 LP)
- ✧ "Death's Black Train Is Coming" - **Rev. J.M. Gates**  
Roots N' Blues: The Retrospective 1925-1950 (Columbia Legacy 1992)
- ✧ "Gathering Flowers for The Master's Bouquet" - **The Stanley Brothers**  
The Complete Columbia Stanley Brothers (Columbia Legacy 1996)
- ✧ "Heaven" - **Jimmy Scott**  
Heaven (Warner Bros 1996)
- ✧ "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" - **Charles Mingus**  
Passions of A Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings 1956-1961 (Rhino 1997)
- ✧ "That Day Is Done" - **The Fairfield Four**  
I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray (Warner Bros 1997)
- ✧ UNKNOWN SONG - **Al Green**
- ✧ "Oliver's Army" - **The Haimundos**  
advance copy of forthcoming Brazilian release
- ✧ "Action" - **Toshi Reagon**  
Kindness (Smithsonian Folkways 1997)
- ✧ "Faster Pussycat to The Library!" - **Sam Phillips**  
Omnipop (It's Only a Flesh Wound Lambchop) (Virgin 1996)
- ✧ "Witchi Tai To" - **Harpers Bizarre**  
Feelin' Groovy: The Best of Harpers Bizarre (Warner Archives 1997)
- ✧ "Neon Wilderness" - **The Verve**  
Urban Hymns (Hut 1997)
- ✧ "Deep Dead Blue" - **Anúna**  
Deep Dead Blue (Danú 1996)
- ✧ "Put away forbidden playthings" - **Fretwork**  
Sit Fast (Virgin Classics 1997)

- ✧ "Harlan County" - **Jim Ford**  
Harlan County (Demon/Edsel 1997)
- ✧ "(Pardon Me) I've Got Someone to Kill" - **Johnny Paycheck**  
The Real Mr. Heartache: The Little Darlin' Years (Country Music Foundation 1996)
- ✧ "Mr. Fool" - **George Jones**  
Cup of Loneliness: The Classic Mercury Years (Mercury Nashville 1994)
- ✧ "The Whiskey Makes You Sweeter" - **Amy Allison**  
The Maudlin Years (Koch Records International 1996)
- ✧ "Ring of Fire" - **Anita Carter**  
Ring of Fire (Bear Family 1994)
- ✧ "The Bridge I Burned" - **Elvis Costello**  
Extreme Honey: The Very Best of The Warner Bros. Years (Warner Bros 1997)
- ✧ "Bing Bang Bong" - **Sophia Loren**  
Greatest Hits (Vivimusica 1995)
- ✧ "John the Revelator" - **Blind Willie Johnson**  
Anthology of American Folk Music (Smithsonian Folkways 1997)
- ✧ "No Time to Cry" - **Merle Haggard**  
1996 (Curb Records 1996)
- ✧ "My Son David" - **Jeannie Robertson**  
The Alan Lomax Collection Sampler (Rounder 1997)
- ✧ "April After All" - **Ron Sexsmith**  
Other Songs (Interscope 1997)
- ✧ "Wig Wise" - **Duke Ellington with Charlie Mingus & Max Roach**  
Money Jungle (Blue Note 1989 reissue of 1962 LP)
- ✧ "Southern Belle" - **Elliott Smith**  
Elliott Smith (Kill Rock Stars 1995)
- ✧ "Raining in Memphis" - **Dan Penn**  
Nobody's Fool (Repertoire 1997 reissue of 1973 LP)
- ✧ "I'll Look Around" - **Nina Simone**  
Saga of The Good Life and Hard Times (RCA 1997)
- ✧ "La Partenza" - **Genoese longshoremen**  
The Alan Lomax Collection Sampler (Rounder 1997)
- ✧ "Molly Marlene" - **Mel Torme**  
Right Now! (Columbia 1997 reissue of 1968 LP)

# Dancing At The Eclectic Ballroom

EARLIER THIS YEAR, a DJ at the new Dublin-based commercial station Radio Ireland was pleasantly surprised to receive in the mail an unsolicited parcel of CDs postmarked "Brentford, England." Curious to find out the reason for their sudden generosity, John Kelly telephoned Demon Records and discovered the delivery to have been instigated by one of the company's directors, a resident of Dublin who happened to be an enthusiastic listener to his regular weekday evening programme *The Eclectic Ballroom*. Described by BB's Dublin correspondent as a show where "Ellington fades into Beck, into Motorhead, into Seamus Ennis," it's not hard to see why it should have found a kindred spirit in Elvis Costello.

One Thursday evening in October, Elvis took a bundle of his own records along to the Radio Ireland studios to join a "blessed and honoured and touched" Kelly at the turntable.

Over the course of a fascinating three-hour show, during which both men's sheer enthusiasm for music shone through, EC programmed a typically unpredictable selection from some of his recent listening discoveries. Thus were the ailing radio station's listeners serenaded by ancient folk ballads, hard-edged country tunes, tetchy jazz sessions and even a "Brazilian punk rock" version of 'Oliver's Army' ("it sounds just like Fermanagh punk rock," noted Kelly sagely). And where else would you be likely to hear such surreal links as: "We'll be back after the break with some Merle Haggard, some Duke Ellington, and some Sophia Loren?" Some callers to the station were even moved to suggest that EC be allowed to take over the programme permanently. "You can have the show, if I can have the band," joked Kelly. "You're welcome to the band, believe me," came the muttered reply.

*Here are a few EC snippets from the between-song conversation . . .*

## Warners

"I've written a diary of the last few years. It's been a bit up and down. I tried to tell the truth about it. I try not to be embittered. It hasn't all been great in terms of commercial fortunes but I got to play with a lot of good people, I got to make a lot of records that I'm proud of. With the record company business there's always going to be a bit of tension if you want to go your own way."

## "The Bridge I Burned"

"As usual with these compilations, they call it *The Very Best of* and then they ask you to make a track which is brand new. I've no idea whether it's the best, so I wanted to do something unlike anything I've done . . . It so happened that my son Matt not only played bass on it but ended up co-producing it with me which took it in a different direction. He's going his own way in music, as is the way, and I don't want to put the spotlight on him too hard, but of course it was terrific to work with him, and also Danny Goffey who came in and did a smashing job. We had a loop going and he gave us some live action on top of that. We just had a bit of fun doing something different."

## Mingus Big Band

"I was invited to sing with the Mingus Big Band at a jazz festival in Brazil, of all places. I get my statements from my record company and I sell four records in the whole of South America so it was a deep surprise for me to be invited down there. We got an extremely good welcome from the people down there and a lot of interest . . . The Mingus Big Band is run by Sue Mingus - with a rod of iron, I must say! They're an unpredictable bunch to say the least . . ."

## The Fairfield Four

"Although I clearly wouldn't believe everything they believe and I might actively disagree with some things that they agree with, you can't help but be moved by their conviction for what they do . . . They said a very sincere prayer before we sang and it must have had some effect because I did feel as if I

had more freedom to sing. I'm not saying I was touched by the holy spirit or anything, but it made me feel connected to what they were doing . . . There were hardened TV people that had their jaws dropping at the sound of this group."

## George Jones

"He's not a very self-conscious artist . . . he seems quite a distant fellow . . . I sang a little verse of ['Big Fool of The Year'] to him and he looked at me like he could not believe I knew the words of this song. I just don't think he understands how much people think of him. It's a real shame."

## Johnny Cash

"He used to visit [Nick Lowe] in Shepherd's Bush which was a very bizarre sight for the people staggering out of the pub on a Sunday afternoon . . . I'll never forget when I opened the door to Nick's big three-storey terraced house and there's John in the doorway. And he goes: 'Hello, I'm Johnny Cash'. As if he could be anybody else!"

## Burt Bacharach

"A lot of people say he's easy listening but I dispute that. I think people get a kitsch kind of view of him, particularly younger people, and I think they overlook the fact that his songs are some of the sexiest, darkest, most emotional songs. 'Anyone Who Had a Heart' - you could hardly say that's easy listening. It's very tense. That's the part of his writing that really appeals to me . . . We really kind of sit at the piano and horse trade over this bar and that bar. He's a very exacting musician and he's terrific to work with. I'm hoping that when that record gets done we will be able to do some live dates."

## Ron Sexsmith

"Ron Sexsmith has released a second record and for my money it's at least as good as, if not better than, his first one, which is really saying something . . . extraordinary songs and such a gentle approach to music, yet there's really a mind going on in there in the elegance of the tunes and the thought behind the words."

*(Our thanks to Martin & John Foyle, Therese Mary McDonald, and Eddie Gorodetsky for their help with this article)*

*See Elvis Costello's play list on page 39*



## Fan Flashbacks

### Tom Garritano - Knoxville, TN

MY FIRST RECORD WAS *LET IT BE*, which my older brother's girlfriend gave me. I've still got that copy with the red Apple label. "Ripeness is all," a great man wrote. Keisha was gorgeous and extremely sweet to me, a ten-year-old kid. My brother Mike was too cool for words. He was nine years older than I - a hippie then, and later a new waver. One of his favorite songs was "I'll Never Grow Up" from Peter Pan, and I always think of him when I hear Tom Waits "I Don't Wanna Grow Up," too.

My son's name is Michael. Most of my early musical taste was blatantly borrowed from him, partly because his many records were the only ones I had access to and mostly because his word was gospel to me. He gave me his old record player and didn't complain much when I scratched his records. He did have great taste, and not just in music. He bought Richard and Linda Thompson albums when they came out in the 70s. Dylan, Muddy Waters, and too many more to mention.

One of my first deviations from aping his tastes was when I taped Graham Parker and the Rumour's *Live at Marble Arch* off the radio in '76 or '77, months before we'd heard of anything like the Pistols. I enjoyed the tape and tried to turn him onto it, but Mike said GP sang like shit. About a year later, he was a GP fan after all. At his apartment in late '77, I heard what sounded like a new GP record. He told me it was Elvis Costello, though I didn't believe it until seeing the black/white/yellow *MAIT* album cover.

EC became my fave almost immediately, although GP was Mike's - probably because he had caught GP and the Rumour in person at Park West in Chicago, a radio tape I still treasure despite the fact that most of it's tacked onto the new reissue of *Squeezing Out Sparks*. I was away at school and missed that show, but didn't make the same mistake when EC and the A's played at the Aragon ("Air-a-groin") Ballroom (March 10, 1979).

Careless, I hitchhiked from deep in the Illinois farm fields. Got picked up within moments by an old trucker who smoked Luckies and called himself "Mile-a-Minute" Swanson because that was how fast he was known to drive. He wasn't going all the way to Chicago, but he dropped me off in Galesburg - birthplace of Carl Sandburg - with two of his buddies who were piloting a freight train to the city. They agreed to take me with

the understanding that, if the train cracked up or I otherwise got maimed or killed, they would disavow any knowledge and claim I was a stowaway. When it slowed to about 5-10 mph in a southwest suburb, I jumped off and lived to brag about riding the rails.

The show was transforming to me, obviously, and I still relish photos of EC in that wild silver-lamé jacket he wore on the *Armed Funk* tour. Mike was at the show, and we went to many more, including the one that required us to catch a Greyhound on New Year's Day in 1982 to see the marathon show with the Attractions at the not-quite-so Grand "New" Opry. The last time I saw my brother before he died in 1984, I gave him a tape of *Goodbye Cruel World*, which is just one more reason for me to seldom listen to that one. I'd rather try to imagine he was looking on last summer as my wife and I watched Elvis tear into "That Day is Done" at the Ryman with the Fairfield Four.

### Mike Halliday - Bradford, UK

HARROGATE? NO, I'D NEVER BEEN THERE EITHER, which was why I arrived at Harrogate bus station at 5pm on the chill evening of November 9, 1984 to give me plenty of time to find the venue for one of EC's first solo shows in England, and my first ever EC gig. As luck would have it, it took me about three minutes to find the Royal Theatre as it was (and still is, as far as I know) virtually next door to the bus station. The time was now 5:05pm, the doors opened at 7:30pm so I had a couple of hours to look around Harrogate.

At 5:10pm I had exhausted the delights of Harrogate, and now there was no option but to enter the nearest public house, and reflect on why I was all alone in Harrogate, why I had no friends who wanted to go with me to see Elvis . . . in fact, why I had no friends! It was my own fault. In the days when people raved about "Red Shoes" and "Oliver's Army," I was still into Led Zeppelin. When people were urging me to buy *Punch the Clock*, I had just discovered the first Clash LP. Now I had at last caught up - and all my friends had gone off Elvis. All through his career so far, I felt as though I'd missed the bus. But never again. (How prophetic those words would prove before the evening was over.) But from this night onwards I was to become a devoted fan.

The show was opened by a name at the time unknown to me. T-Bone Burnett bravely began with "King of the Road" accompanied only by his (and gradually the audience's) finger clicks, and later sang a song with possibly the best title ever - "Having a

Wonderful Time, Wish You Were Her."

When Elvis began with "Strict Time," "Stranger in the House," and "Man Called Uncle," I knew I was in for a treat. There are rare moments in rare concerts when you actually forget where you are. You are spellbound, and the spell is broken by thunderous applause that follows the eerie silence at the end of a song when no one quite knows whether to break the spell or not. And it's then you realise everyone else in the concert hall has forgotten where they are as well. There were at least two of these moments on this night in Harrogate - "Only Flame in Town" and "End of the Rainbow." (I now realise there are several of these moments in each EC show.)

At the end of the main set, just after "Riot Act," I had to leave. The last bus from Harrogate left at 10:30pm, the last train even earlier. Unbelievable, I know, but if you have ever been to Harrogate you will know that every visitor wants to leave the bloody place as early as possible. As I stood shivering in the encores, (only the Coward Brothers, that was all) I realised time was approaching 11pm and there was a suspicious lack of buses. In fact at 11pm there is a distinct lack of anything in Harrogate. Even the pigeons fly to Ripon for the night. ("Where?" you cry. . . it's near Harrogate . . . oh, never mind).

At 11:05pm I discovered I was at the wrong bloody bus stop, and the only transport to my home 30 miles away had been and gone. What now? Would I become the first ever homeless person in Harrogate? (It's that kind of place. The definition of poverty in Harrogate is when you only own two cars.) Would a bespectacled singer pass by and take me to an all night drinking session at his hotel? Sadly, no. As the rain began to fall, and quickly turned to sleet, I had no option but to pay for a taxi. At this remote distance in time almost 13 years on, the amount it cost would be meaningless, but it cost more than my ticket, T-shirt, programme and badge combined.

Was it really worth all the expense, the heartbreak of having to leave before the encores, the shiver as I watched a warm, glowing bus pull into the far end of the station and pull out again, and the horror of realising that that was the bus that I should have been on. And the ultimate sickener of seeing people leaving the Royal as I passed in my taxi - I could have seen the end of the show after all and still caught a taxi. Instead, I spent the encores freezing to death in the bus station! Was it really worth all that? Don't ask silly questions!

# Covers Corner

*OK archivists out there, here's a complete listing of all known covers of Costello compositions. Those played live but not known to have been recorded by the artist in question have been noted. As always, additions to this list are more than welcome.*

**Alison (10)**  
 Betty Blue (h)  
 Barry Christian  
 Holly Cole Trio  
 Everything But the Girl  
 Green Day  
 Tomio Inove  
 Linda Ronstadt  
 Darden Smith (live)  
 Rachel Sweet (live)  
 Glenn Tilbrook (live)



**Nick Lowe:** First to record "Indoor Fireworks" in 1985.

**Pump It Up (10)**  
 The Bluesbusters  
 Exodus  
 Makin' Time  
 Molly Half Head  
 Mudhoney  
 Richard Thompson (live)  
 Those Darn Accordions  
 Trixter  
 Warrior Soul  
 The Wildhearts

**Shipbuilding (5)**  
 Tasmin Archer  
 Julian Coryell (d)  
 Hue & Cry  
 Suede  
 Robert Wyatt

**Almost Blue (4)**  
 Chet Baker  
 Everything But the Girl  
 Jennifer Jason Leigh  
 The Ritz

**Green Shirt (4)**  
 Hot Chocolate  
 Kevin Kane  
 The Loved Ones  
 The Tremblers

**Indoor Fireworks (4)**  
 Everything But the Girl (live)  
 Nick Lowe  
 Katy Moffatt & the Great Unknown  
 Kelly Willis (live)

**Mystery Dance (4)**  
 Justine Bateman & the Mystery  
 Dyan Diamond  
 Ellen Foley (live)  
 Nighthawks

**Oliver's Army (4)**  
 Blur  
 Billy Bragg  
 Bob Geldof (live)  
 The Haimundos

**Stranger in the House (4)**  
 Julie Adams (a)  
 George Jones  
 Rachel Sweet  
 Erik van Neygen (g)

**Everyday I Write The Book (3)**  
 Larry Groce (a)  
 Winston Reedy  
 Ron Sexsmith (live)

**Girls Talk (3)**  
 Dave Edmunds  
 Linda Ronstadt  
 'Til Tuesday (live)



**Dave Edmunds:** Took "Girl's Talk" to #4 on the UK charts in 1979.

**I Want You (3)**  
 Betty Blue (h)  
 Scarfo  
 Raymond van't Groenewoud (g)

**Just A Memory (3)**  
 Marti Jones  
 The Shakin' Pyramids  
 Dusty Springfield ("Losin' You")

**The Other End of the Telescope (3)**  
 Aimee Mann (solo) (e)  
 Sleeper  
 'Til Tuesday

**All This Useless Beauty (2)**  
 Lush  
 June Tabor

**Baby Plays Around (2)**  
 Mary Coughlan  
 Hillary James & Bob James



**Wendy James:** The "Queen of Costello Covers" recorded an entire LP of Costello songs written especially for her.

## *Now Ain't the Time for your Tears: Wendy James*

This is a Test  
 London's Brilliant  
 Basement Kiss  
 Puppet Girl  
 Earthbound  
 Do you Know What I'm Saying?  
 We Despise You  
 Fill in the Blanks  
 The Nameless One  
 I Want to Stand Forever

**Beyond Belief (2)**  
 Jason Falkner (live)  
 Suzanne Vega (live)

**Chelsea (2)**  
 Herman Brood  
 The Nutley Brass

**From a Whisper to a Scream (2)**  
 Clouseau (g)  
 Glenn Tilbrook (live)

**Miracle Man (2)**  
 Fitz of Depression  
 Outlaws

**Radio Radio (2)**  
 Thelonus Monster (live)  
 Tracey Ullman (c)

**The Big Light (2)**  
 Johnny Cash  
 Trevor Harrison



**Paul McCartney:** Song writing partner has recorded seven songs co-written with Elvis.

**McCartney, MacManus**

Back on my Feet  
My Brave Face  
You Want Her Too  
Don't Be Careless Love  
That Day Is Done  
Mistress and Maid  
The Lovers That Never Were

**Upon A Veil of Midnight Blue (2)**  
Charles Brown ("I Wonder How She Knows") (e)  
Mary Coughlan

**Watching the Detectives (2)**  
Herman Brood  
Duran Duran

**Accidents Will Happen**  
Himuró Kyosuke

**All Grown Up**  
Tasmin Archer

**Deep Dark Truthful Mirror**  
Tasmin Archer

**Deep Dead Blue**  
Anúna

**Dirty Rotten Shame**  
Ronnie Drew

**God Give Me Strength**  
Kristen Vigard (f)

**Hand in Hand**  
Mathilde Santing

**Hidden Shame**  
Johnny Cash

**High Fidelity**  
Q-Tips

**I Hope You're Happy Now**  
Pollyanna

**(I Love You) When You Sleep**  
Tracie

**It's Not Too Late**  
T Bone Burnett (e)

**I Want To Vanish**  
June Tabor

**Man Out of Time**  
Ulf Lundell ("Man av Idag") (b)

**Maureen and Sam**  
Allan Mayes (e)

**Miss Mary**  
Zucchero (e)

**New Amsterdam**  
Tasmin Archer

**Our Little Angel**  
Roseanne Cash

**Party Girl**  
Linda Ronstadt

**Peace in Our Time**  
Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine

**Possession**  
Wet Wet Wet

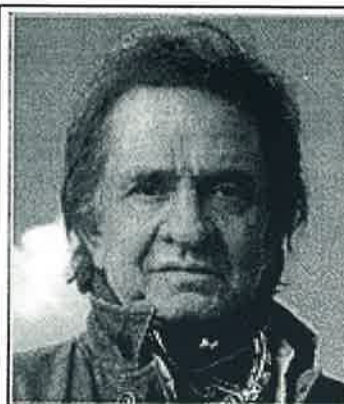
**Punishing Kiss**  
Annie Ross & the Low Note Quartet

**Put away forbidden playthings**  
Fretwork

**Radio Sweetheart**  
Carlene Carter

**Red Shoes**  
29 Palms

**Riot Act**  
Karen Farr



**Johnny Cash:** Recorded "Hidden Shame" which EC wrote for him but passed on "Complicated Shadows"

**Shadow and Jimmy**  
Was (Not Was) (e)

**Shamed Into Love**  
Ruben Blades (e)

**Shatterproof**  
Billy Bremner

**Sleep of the Just**  
Marti Jones

**Sunday's Best**  
The House Band

**Talking in the Dark**  
Linda Ronstadt

**That's What Friends Are For**  
Georgie Fame

**The Birds Will Still Be Singing**  
Norma Waterson

**The Comedians**  
Roy Orbison

**The Deportees Club**  
Christy Moore

**The Element Within Her**  
Marti Jones

**The Miranda Syndrome**  
Ruben Blades (e)

**Town Cryer**  
Wet Wet Wet

**Two Little Hitlers**  
Todd Rundgren

**Unwanted Number**  
For Real

**Veronica**  
Sarah Masen

**Watch Your Step**  
Maypole (live)

**Wave A White Flag**  
Ben Folds Five (live)

**Welcome to the Working Week**  
Fitz of Depression

**World's Great Optimist**  
Aimee Mann (live)

**You Bowed Down**  
Roger McGuinn



**Linda Ronstadt:** Her 1979 "New Wave" *Mad Love* LP included three Costello songs.

**Notes:**

- (a) Live on Mountain Stage radio program
- (b) Sung in Swedish
- (c) On her television show
- (d) Instrumental
- (e) Co-written
- (f) In film "Grace of my Heart"
- (g) Sung in Flemish
- (h) Dutch group-sung in English.

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*Note: This index is basically designed to create a single reference for each feature or news item that has appeared in the magazine. As a result, there is limited cross-referencing from individual features. Listings for releases (other than bootlegs), cover versions, television and radio appearances and "in print" items are not represented and will be compiled at some future date.*

# GLITTER

# GULCH

Free Classifieds To Readers

## COSTELLO RARITIES WANTED

Can anyone offer me a copy of the first and last episodes of the BBC Radio 1 *Lives & Times* series? Also want a good quality boot of last Attractions tour and audios of "Complicated Shadows" (Cashbox version) & cover of Sleeper's "What Do I Do Now?" **Paul Bernays, 34 Emmanuel Road, London, SW12 0HF (UK)**

## FOR SALE

UK 12-inch singles "Man Out Of Time"/"Green Shirt" (green vinyl)/"Only Flame"/& others. *ATUB* CD single set, *Deep Dead Blue* CD, *Q* mag *Splash* CD, UK 7-inch singles & LPs. Send your wants list or ask for my list. **Paul Benny, 45 Garden Road, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 6HT (UK)**

## FOR SALE

*Blood & Chocolate* Bournville box tape - rare & withdrawn £20, "Other Side of Summer" 12"£8, *Spike* white label in-store play promo LP £20, *Costello & Nieve* 5x CDs (sealed) £40, *2½ Years in 31 Mins* promo CD £10, "High Fidelity" 12"£8 Also have *Terror + Magnificence* Nov. 11, 1996 tape (extra EC songs). **Albert Freer, 92 The Silver Birches, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7TT (UK)**

## WANTED

"London's Brilliant Parade" 12" single! "You Tripped At Every Step" CD single!! "Almost Blue" Interview LP!!! Plus, I am interested in tapes from the *Trust* tour, the *Spike Rude* 5 Tour, and the Long Island Costello & Nieve show that closed the C&N tour in 1996. I have tapes to trade. **Connor Ratliff 38 Pilgrim Street, Liverpool L1 9HB (UK)**



## Back Issues

**Complete set for \$48/£36. Otherwise \$5/£4 each. Deduct \$1/£1 for each issue after third.**

- BB1 (Feb 95)** - Debut Issue! *Brutal Youth* tour report and set lists.
- BB2 (May 95)** - Interview with Ryko's Jeff Rougvie. Dylan & "Royal" McCartney concert reports. Costello covers.
- BB3 (Aug 95)** - Full *Meltdown* report. *Kojak Variety* live from London. *CyberTalk* interview with EC. Roskilde Festival.
- BB4 (Nov 95)** - Beacon Theater rehearsals. Cambridge & Edmonton Folk Festivals. McCartney & MacManus song writing partnership.
- BB5 (Feb 96)** - *Costello Sings Again* - Part 1. Brodskys in Bristol, Nieve in NYC and *Meeting Of Masters* in Sweden.
- BB6 (May 96)** - *Costello Sings Again* - Part 2. EC on US TV. *ATUB* preview. *X-Files*, Bacharach, Ron Sexsmith.
- BB7 (Aug 96)** - *Costello & Nieve* in the US. Brodskys in Denmark. EC the Producer. Critics look at *ATUB*. VH1 *Storytellers* Special.
- BB8/9 (Dec 96)** - Double Tour Issue! Concert reports, photos & set lists. Allan Mayes interview on working with young Declan in 1973.
- BB10 (Mar 97)** Exclusive Interviews: Costello on GOMH, McGuinn and Pete Thomas. T+M live. Elvis at the Movies.
- BB11 (Jun 97)** Warners split. Nashville w/ Skaggs, NYC w/ Jazz Passengers, Bacharach & Mingus Big Band. Elvis on the Bookshelf.
- BB12 (Sep 97)** *Tom Thumb* in the Park. 1981 *English Mugs* Tour. Session w/ Sexsmith. Fairfield Four.

## Competition

In our previous issue, as a part of the *Costello Specs* piece on EC's song writing credits, we asked for the 14 artists who have written exactly one officially-released song in collaboration with Mr. Costello.

Winning entries were submitted by Gary Wise from Tuscaloosa, Alabama and Adrian Boddy of Letchworth, England. In fact, they both reminded us that there are actually 15 songs if you include the Allan Mayes/ Elvis Costello song "Maureen and Sam", which was actually an early version of EC's "Ghost Train". This track was independently released on a 1984 LP by Allan.

Costello/Difford (1982)  
Coward/Coward (1985)  
Costello/Cliff (1986)  
Was/MacManus (1988)  
Costello/Keltner (1991)  
Costello/Moloney (1991)  
MacManus/ Brown (1992)  
MacManus/Zuccherro (1992)  
Burnett/Neuwirth/MacManus (1992)  
MacManus/Yeats (1994)  
Costello/Frisell (1995)  
Costello/Mann (1996)  
Costello/Bacharach (1996)  
Costello/Jones (1997)

Several entries included Clive Langer which is incorrect since on the recent CD reissues he was given credit for "The Great Unknown" in addition to "Shipbuilding". Also Brian Eno co-produced but did not co-write "My Dark Life" and Costello's collaboration with John Doe, "We Don't Even Try Anymore" was never released.

## For Next Issue:

*Did you wonder what that jazzy music was that accompanied Elvis & the Attractions on stage at the start of each show on the ATUB tour? Or how about that spoken blues intro that was used on the 1991 Rude 5 tour? Or that blaring punk song by a female singer on the BY tour?*

*For our little contest this time, try and identify the three songs above. The tie-breaker will be to name any other music that Elvis regularly used over the PA to kick-off their entrance. Name both the song, artist and tour.*

## Framed and Hung Up

The next artistic entry from one of our talented readers comes courtesy of Neil Anderson, a lawyer in Marysville, Washington. Nice work Neil!



**READERS'**  
**CHOICE**

### Bacharach & Costello

In our last issue we asked you the following:  
*In light of the talk about the Bacharach/Costello project, which 3 Bacharach songs and which 3 Costello songs would you like to see the duo rework.*

*Here are the results with the songs listed in readers' order of preference:*

#### BACHARACH:

##### Anyone Who Had A Heart

I Just Don't Know What to Do with Myself  
Walk on By  
Say A Little Prayer  
This Guy's In Love with You  
Windows of the World  
The Look of Love

#### COSTELLO:

##### Just a Memory

Satellite  
Black Sails in the Sunset  
Still Too Soon to Know  
Having it All  
Accidents Will Happen  
The Long Honeymoon

#### FOR NEXT ISSUE:

*It's time for an update of our original Readers' Choice poll. Simply tell us your 5 favorite Costello LP's and your 5 favorite Costello songs. Will "King of America" and "Beyond Belief" be dethroned?*

### Andrew's Debut!

BB-subscriber and noted music archivist Andrew Sandoval has released his first CD, *Million Dollar Movie*, on eggBERT Records in the US. This wonderful sounding pop Mini-Album has gotten rave reviews off its limited West Coast release. The disk also features the talents of Peter Holsapple, Jon Brion and Giant Sand's John Convertino and was engineered by Tchad Blake.

The disk can be ordered directly from eggBERT at (714) 990-5652, (714) 671-1661 (FAX) or at [eggbertcd@aol.com](mailto:eggbertcd@aol.com) and is only \$6.99 plus postage.



*Neil Anderson  
July 1997*

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# **BLACK & WHITE WORLD**

*This photo was taken in 1979 at  
the now-defunct Armadillo World  
Headquarters in Austin, TX by  
Drew Knarr.*

