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This Film On

Spectacle: Elvis Costello With... - Season Two

(2011)  

350 min. Sundance Channel.



The best music show on television is back in Season Two of *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...* It's unfortunate that Season Two is roughly half the size of Season One (seven episodes versus thirteen), but we'll take what we can get. Aired on the Sundance Channel in the US, *Spectacle* features the leading light of popular music today, Elvis Costello, as host and regular performer. In each episode, Costello shines the light on famous friends, sitting down to interview them and standing up to cover their

songs and/or play side by side with them.

Season Two includes a show with Bono and the Edge, a two-parter with Bruce Springsteen, an episode in which Costello is himself the subject (interviewed by "music journalist" Mary Louise Parker), as well as three shows with multiple performers featured. One episode is a good old-fashioned "guitar pull" with Neko Case, Sheryl Crow, Ron Sexsmith, and Jesse Winchester; another finds Costello assembling a band, one by one, from a guest list of Levon Helm, Nick Lowe, Richard Thompson, and Allen Toussaint; Costello devotes a third show to the singer-songwriter, as represented by Lyle Lovett, Ray LaMontagne, and John Prine. There's huge appeal to both aspects of the series—the musical segments and the interviews. Costello has great showman instincts, from his

glorious, patent salesman-styled hype in introducing each guest to his impeccable musicianship and easy, personable manner with the guests.

Though Season Two is somewhat overshadowed by megastar guests Bruce Springsteen and Bono & the Edge (all of whom Costello winningly disarms for uniquely relaxed interviews), the shows with multiple guests stand an excellent chance of introducing audiences to somewhat lesser known artists. As Costello points out, a greater measure of fame eluded Winchester when he dodged the Vietnam draft on moral grounds, but he gets a nice showcase here, bringing Neko Case to tears with his performance of "Sham-A-Ling-Dong-Ding," and on the same show, Case does terrific renditions of "Prison Girls" and Harry Nilsson's "Don't Forget Me," while Sexsmith nails "Secret Heart" and Costello's "Everyday I Write the Book" (in a duet with its author). Of course, Costello nuts like me will take a special shine to the show in which Parker turns the tables on Costello; though he has difficulty yielding the floor to the starstruck substitute host, fans won't mind one bit.

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Aspect ratios: 1.78:1

Number of discs: 2



Audio: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1, LPCM 2.0 **Street date:** 6/7/2011

Distributor: MVD Visual



MVD Visual happily brings *Spectacle* back to Blu-ray in a fantastic two-disc set. The 1080i transfers here look great: the brightly lit, brightly colored stages of these studio-shot shows are made to pop in hi-def, and no digital artifacts distract from the presentation. Of greater importance is the audio, which comes here in two fine flavors: a DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 and an LPCM 2.0 stereo fold down. The former is especially impressive in its dynamics, and even adds a trickle of audience ambience in the rear channels.

Amounting to an extra episode of sorts, the documentary "**Spectacle: Elvis Costello With... Inside Notes**" (42:11, HD) takes us behind the scenes with producer David Furnish as our tour guide. Furnish takes in the Neko Case/Sheryl Crow/Ron Sexsmith/Jesse Winchester taping at New York's Apollo Theater and the Bono & The Edge taping at Toronto's Masonic Temple. The invaluable backstage footage gives us a very real sense of how the shows are assembled and rehearsed and taped.

As on the Season One set, we get **Bonus Songs**, in this case Elvis Costello and The Impostors on "Dirty Day" (4:31, hD); Bono, Edge and Elvis Costello on "Alison" (4:14, HD), and Elvis Costello and The Impostors on "I Want You" (9:09, HD). Music fans, this one's for you.



[Spectacle](#)

Bruce Springsteen,...

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