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Spectacle: Elvis Costello with . . . (Season Two DVD)

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By **Danny R. Phillips**



Elvis Costello has been good at many things throughout his career as a musician. From the snott-nosed, pissed off, former IBM employee who gave us “Accidents Will Happen,” “Alison,” “New Lace Sleeves,” and “Radio, Radio” to the still-much-loved, still-bitchy-at-times entertainer that he is today, his career has run the gamut. But it seems that some of his most curious work has been as host of the love fest known as *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with . . .*

I must admit, though I was an avid watcher of the program on The Sundance Channel, I think I was the only one. The show languished in obscurity; the audience who was not watching were really missing out.

Don’t get my opening statement wrong. It’s not that Mr. Costello is a good host (he’s not; sometimes seeming wooden or caught up in himself during the interview segments). In my mind, he’s secondary to the show itself, even though his name is on the marquee.

The reason people should've watched the show and should pick up the newly released Season 2 DVD is for the performances by artists you would NEVER imagine seeing on television.

From Nick Lowe doing a heart-wrenching rendition of "The Beast in Me" to Richard Thompson blazing through "Shoot Out The Lights," in the process proving to the few watching and the full seats at New York's Apollo Theater why he is one of the greatest guitarist and songwriters that nearly no one recognizes.

And lest I forget the moment of greatness that was the guitar pull by young singer-songwriters (and it seems, the only guests ever booked to play the show born during or after the reign of Reaganomics): Ray LaMontagne; Ron Sexsmith (who brought LaMontagne to tears when he sweetly sang "Secret Heart"); and the lovely, beautifully-voiced Miss Neko Case.

It's these performances that make this DVD worth watching and re-watching. If music occupies a special corner of your life all its own; if you wake up in the night with lines from U2's "Running to Stand Still," The Band's "Rag Mama Rag," or Springsteen's "Highway Patrolman" blasting through your mind, *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with . . .* is tailor made for you.

But please allow me to give you a very important tip my friends: Skip most of the interviews (especially Mary Louise Parker's sickeningly sweet interview with Elvis) and go straight to the performances and you will be, without a doubt, golden.

Season Two of Spectacle: Elvis Costello with . . . was released on June 7 and is available through [See Of Sound](#). *Spectacle Season One* is also [available](#).

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