

## Elvis Costello

Spectacle: Elvis Costello

With... (RED)WIRE

Elvis, guests and chat on the box.

There's been a serious amount of cash thrown at this worthy, music-based chat show hosted by Elvis Costello and pitched somewhere between *Parkinson* and *Later With Jools Holland*. This we know because it's co-produced by Sir Elton John (its inaugural guest) and David Furnish. No expense is spared here; a reassuringly expensive, quintessentially American gloss beams forth from every frame, as an immaculately groomed succession of the great and the good settle down to a little old-school sycophancy at the hands of Costello.

Fair play to the increasingly generously upholstered fella, because this is exactly what the job requires: obsequiousness is the only language these people understand, and Elvis clearly knows his stuff. He also makes them, and their palpably well-heeled audience, look good. Each shot sees him cast as the only snagged English tooth in an otherwise perfectly capped Beverly Hills smile.

Second guest President Bill Clinton is disappointingly dull; Lou Reed and The Police good value. But, so focused as it is on its guests' music as opposed to their personality, it's easy to glaze over in the face of Diane Krall and Norah Jones. And there's the small matter of Costello's insistence on singing sensitive ballads as if he were shouting from the terraces. He tackles Reed's *Femme Fatale* as if he were



### SPECTACLE: ELVIS COSTELLO WITH...

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★

OUT NOW

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In 2003, with David Letterman immobilised by shingles, Elvis Costello guest-hosted *Late Show With...* and joked that he wanted the job permanently. First shown in 2008, *Spectacle...* proves that wasn't wild fantasy. The 13 episodes here find guests including Sir Elton John, Smokey Robinson and Bill Clinton picking through their musical history and influences and performing alongside Costello. He's no Paxman but Costello's drifting interview style is underpinned by a warmth and knowledge that his guests respond to. And anyone who can elicit a smile from Lou Reed has earned their presenting chops. **MATT MASON**

AUTUMN DE WILDE

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