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DVD Review - Spectacle: Elvis Costello with... Season 1

The Police, Elton John, Lou Reed, and more make this a must-see for serious music fans.

Drake Lelane, Nov 20, 2009

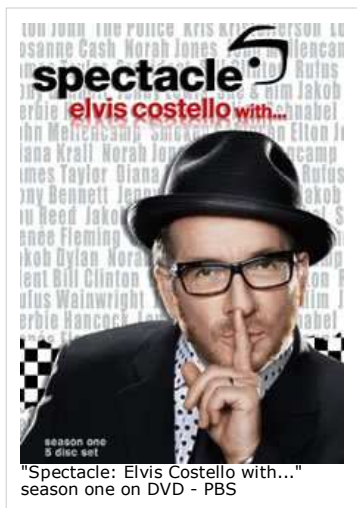
One of the surprise debuts of last year had to be *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...*, a talk show featuring Costello pulling off the rare triple threat: host, performer, and bandleader. Equal parts interview and jam session, the Sundance series relies upon Costello putting the artists at ease, getting even the prickliest of artists to open up and speak warmly about their influences.

But, as Martin Mull once famously quipped, "talking about music is like dancing about architecture," and so it's the tremendous musical performances sprinkled throughout that add beautiful flesh to the meat and bones discussion. Guests on the first season include [Elton John](#) (who also served as executive producer), [Lou Reed](#), [The Police](#), [Rufus Wainwright](#), [Kris Kristofferson](#), [Jenny Lewis](#), [She & Him](#), and [Smokey Robinson](#). And for not being a musician at all, [Bill Clinton](#) still held his own, talking about his love of Elvis and jazz musicians growing up in Arkansas.



Highlights from the sessions -- recorded at both the famed Apollo Theater and 30 Rockefeller Center in NYC -- include Rufus Wainwright's discussion of meth use; artist Julian Schnabel (*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*) recounting personal tragedy involving [Lou Reed](#) and the death of his father; and the edge-of-seat uncomfortable interaction between [Sting](#) and drummer [Stewart Copeland](#). It's naked moments like these that you never see on television anymore, and even if you have to suffer through paint-drying moments ([James Taylor](#), [Tony Bennett](#)) to get to them, they're worth the effort.

Bonus features include four exclusive performances from Costello that didn't make the original telecasts: "Ballad of a Well Known Gun" (from the Elton John episode), "Beginning to See the Light" (Velvet Underground/Lou Reed), "Purple Haze" (with The Police), and the Smokey Robinson-written classic for Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, "No More Tearstained Makeup" (see video below). Plus, the disc also includes plenty of backstage interviews with Sir Elton John, Sting, Smokey Robinson, Rufus Wainwright, Rosanne Cash, and even Elvis Costello himself.



"Spectacle: Elvis Costello with..." season one on DVD - PBS

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