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ELVIS COSTELLO Spectacle Wienerworld (2010)

The spectacled one as Jools Holland...

Commissioned and produced by Sir Elton John, Spectacle was a prime time TV show broadcast in 2008, first in the States and in the UK towards the end of the year. A shorter second series was commissioned and broadcast 12 months later.



Essentially the series combines the best of the Parkinson and Jools Holland Later concepts. In the case of Spectacle each episode features usually just one guest, allowing the bespectacled one the time to probe in depth into influences, career defining moments, songwriting and just what makes them tick. And Elvis does a good job, clearly well researched and striking up an easy rapport with his guests. It's a lot more considered than the daft sort of questions that Holland comes up with like 'what would I get if I came round to your house for tea?'

And, of course the show is also a vehicle for Elvis to indulge in collaborative jamming with the likes of Tony Bennett, Lou Reed, The Police, Norah Jones, James Taylor and a host of others, except that is, in the case of Mrs Costello (Diana Krall) where Sir Elton takes over the hosting role. There's also an episode devoted to Bill Clinton.

Filming in front of a live theatre audience at the likes of New York's Apollo Theatre seems to have worked well, the artists being more comfortable in their own natural habitat than they would perhaps be in front of a TV studio audience. As a result the whole experience has a warm cozy glow to it.

In terms of whether you should indulge, I guess it

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really depends on how wide or narrow your musical tastes are. It's certainly an interesting watch, whatever your musical preferences, but a series running out at around 650 minutes over 13 episodes doesn't come cheap. For your hard earned cash you get a 5 dvd box set that includes some extras in the form of bonus songs, outtakes and backstage footage, rehearsal footage, and a stills gallery. And, of course a 28 page booklet.

I'd hardly class it as an essential purchase. On the other hand if you're a Costello fan (and there are many) it's probably a must just for all the collaborations. And if you don't like football, it's an alternative to the World Cup.

***1/2

Review by Pete Whalley

***** Out of this world | **** Pretty damn fine |

*** OK, approach with caution unless you are a fan |

** Instant bargain bin fodder | * Ugly. Just ugly

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