

entertainment etc.

Record review

The New King: Elvis Costello

By Kari Howard

Rating ****

The man is a genius. How else can it be expressed? To say merely that he is a brilliant songwriter would be to mimic others and thus belittle his importance. Rather, he is a brilliant poet who puts his creations to music. Elvis does more than rattle off ditties; his thought provoking lyrics are remarkably intelligent without being intellectual. Despite his excellence, Costello does not condescend to his audience from a supercilious pedestal, extorting admiration on the strength of his reputation. Instead he continually grabs us by our throats with the gentle ferocity of his genius, forcing us to reaffirm our respect for his abilities. In **IMPERIAL BEDROOM**, Elvis Costello creates a dewy world that quivers with the arching pain of his disillusionment with romance.

The recurring theme of this remarkable album is epitomized most eloquently in *Little Savage* when Costello despairs, "I would have waited all my life/ Just to make love out of something other than spite/ But the beauty is the beast." The lines' purple tinge of regret infuses their cynical greyness with color. And his deliberate twisting of the beauty/beast motif by denying the equality of beauty and good is indicative of Costello's ability to constantly revive dying cliches and make them vibrant again.

When listening to this man, it is easy to become so involved in his poetry that the music is forgotten.

It is likewise difficult to categorize his sound. His nasal vocals glide over a quixotic combination of blues, jazz, and rock and roll that is hard to place. Not that Costello *wants* to be placed anywhere; he clings tenaciously to his individuality. He cannot be labeled. The nearest thing to such a label is the ambience of a smoke-filled cocktail bar that surrounds him. Picture, if you will, the desperate lonely-hearts sitting nervously atop bar stools. The garish flashing neon lights reveal a ghastly pallor. It's almost frightening, isn't it? Their unwritten songs are mortalized by Costello in his moody compositions.

The lyrics of *Almost Blue*, an almost blues lullaby, sound like they were scribbled on a cocktail napkin while Costello forlornly drank another solitary Scotch. That is not to say that the message is incoherent; indeed, his torture is even more wrenching when exposed in so tawdry a form: "Almost blue/ Almost doing things we used to do/ There's a girl here and she's almost you/ Almost." That final "almost" is agonizing in that it gives the impression that the man has given up hope. And the marvelous monotone of his delivery only reemphasizes this feeling.

The same desperation pervades *The Long Honeymoon*. Here Costello gives a three minute biography of a lonely woman who is pricked by insidious fears. "If he isn't in by ten/ She'll call up her best

friend/ Why doesn't he come home," she worries. "Why does her friend's phone keep on ringing/ Maybe she should just pretend." /And that is how the song ends. Will she pretend that nothing is wrong, we are left wondering. The hideous thing is, we already know the answer to that question. She will.

Costello, or "The Angry Young Man," as he has been dubbed, really shows us what anger and disgust are in *Shabby Doll*. In this powerful song, he reinforces the vicious lyrics with a brutal piano orchestration. "An Attraction" plunders the ivories as T.A.Y.M. (The Angry Young Man) condemns romantic fakes: "Untie the gag/ The cat's out of the bag/ But won't show his claws/ He's just a shabby doll."

Elvis Costello puts anger, disgust, cynicism, regret, and romance into music better than anyone alive today. He delights in giving the unexpected, be it in his words or in his syncopation. Long live the King: Elvis (Costello)! He really deserves the title.

Tanglewood Auditions

Theatre UNCA will hold auditions for its Tanglewood young people's production of *Pinocchio*, Feb. 5 at 10:30 a.m. and Feb. 6 at 2:30 p.m. at the Carol Belk Theatre. *Pinocchio* is a new play for young people by Arnold Wengrow, Chairman of the UNCA Department of Drama. The play will receive its premiere March 25-27. The production will be directed by Elaine Hunter Meyers, UNCA lecturer in drama. Young people from the community from third grade through high school are eligible to audition. No previous experience required. Auditions are also open to UNCA students, faculty and staff.

LONG LIVE THE KING:
ELVIS (COSTELLO)!



How to prepare tax returns

The Residence Life Staff of UNCA is sponsoring a workshop on how to prepare tax returns. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 16 at 3:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of the new highrise residence hall. Mrs. Martha Marshall, CPA and Assistant Professor of Accounting will lead the workshop. Bring your tax forms and your W-2 forms.

Coffeehouse Entertainment

Folk musicians Anne Lalley and Friends, and Hobey Ford and his cast of Golden Rod Puppets will appear Feb. 9 from 9 p.m. until midnight in the Coffeehouse. The performance is sponsored by the University Program Board and is free to all UNCA students.

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