

Here's the product of my cabin fever (trapped inside during that mutant storm): clandestine exposure to the potent catalogue of Elvis Costello, number one songwriter of all time (roll over McCartney, tell Lennon the news) and number two artist (behind Van Morrison and ahead of the Band). Artistically Costello covers all the bases: an underrated vocalist, combining the rhythm of Bob Dylan, the soul of Van Morrison and the pop sense of Buddy Holly, a nonpareil songwriter and pun slinger extraordinaire; a true original.

Unlike contemporary angry young men, Joe Jackson and Graham Parker, Costello has shown distinct development through his amazing career, a career that started with...

My Aim Is True - One of the best debut albums of all time (ranks with *Are You Experienced*, *Music From Big Pink* and *The Velvet Underground and Nico*). Sporting loads of stolen hooks, a nasal, punchy singing style and a jukebox of tunes ranging from the deceptively tender "Alison" to the new wave intensity of "Watching the Detectives" to the songcraft mastery of "(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red

Shoes," Elvis proves that he's the new King.

This Year's Model - Frequently cited as his best album. Marks the debut of the Attractions, a fierce three piece unit who provide a far more muscular sound. The dense, animated playing results in the band virtually beating up pop tunes.

Armed Forces - Even more frequently cited as his best. Presents a new emphasis on production straying from the tightly packed sound of *Model*. The two big highlights are the infectious "Oliver's Army" and the fierce, anthemic "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love and Understanding."

Get Happy!! - Costello's version of Motown/Starline hits pretty hard, and contains some great songs, notably his cover of Sam & Dave's "I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down," "Love For Tender," "High Fidelity," "I Stand Accused" and "Motel Matches." However, this twenty pack of tiny tunes contains quite a few duds. Loads of fun despite the odd blank.

Taking Liberties - A collection of previously unreleased material. This mongrel doesn't flow real well, but it contains some great songs: "(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea," "Clean Money," "Getting Mighty Crowded" and yes, "My Funny Valentine" among them. Definitely essential for fans.

Trust - Quite underrated, I think. Here Elvis C. moves away from power pop to power through pop (okay?), a move perhaps influenced by Squeeze. Costello's voice dominates, no longer adenoidal, he's become a rough throated soul man (kinda). The songs certainly don't stand up as memorable, but Costello pulls out all his tricks



E

vis