LPs

Trust
Elvis Costello and the Attractions
Columbia JC 37051

Sometimes an album is worth buying for the album cover alone. The front cover of Elvis Costello's *Trust* shows the big El himself peeking warily out from beneath his horn-rimmed sunglasses.

On the back, Elvis and his Attractions are playing in what looks like a mortuary. On one side of the record's inner sleeve a trench-coated Costello is doing his best Bogart impression as he lights up a cigarette. The other side has Elvis singing in front of a big band (reminiscent of the final scene of *The Buddy Holly Story)* which includes all of the Attractions.

For those who can't afford to blow six bucks on cover art, *Trust* also happens to contain some of 1981's best music.

The album contains *only* 14 songs (as opposed to 20 each on *Get Happy!!* and *Taking Liberties),* but they're 14 high-quality songs covering a wide range of subjects and musical styles.

Elvis Costello is a graduate of the Bob Dylan/Bruce Springsteen School of Enunciation, and half the fun of listening to his albums is trying to decipher the words. Lyric sheets are never included, and months or even years later there's still the thrill of discovery when another line suddenly becomes clear. And, once the words are clear, the next challenge is to figure out what the songs are about.

It's worth the effort, because Costello has quite a talent for manipulating the language. In "Shot with his Own Gun" he sings of a man "losing his touch with each caress," while the subject of "Big Sister's Clothes" has "eyes like saucers/You think she's a dish." And

in the Extended Metaphor Department, Costello warns a woman that she's "loosenin' all the screws that hold the hinges of my life."

The subjects of the songs are no less entertaining. "Fish 'N' Chips Paper" concerns the price of being rich and famous in the era of palimony suits ("The cost of living in sin-/Would make a poor man out of Paul Getty . . . You'd better speak up now if you want your piece") and anything-goes gossip mongering ("The man at the launderette is searching through your underwear for clues").

"Different Finger" is a country ballad in which the singer has a one-night stand with a married woman. And "White Knuckles" is a tale of domestic violence made more terrifying by the fact that Costello sounds downright cheerful ("It doesn't matter if your face doesn't fit/There's no charge for changing it," he grins).

Perhaps most intriguing is "New Lace Sleeves", an examination of love among the upper classes: "Bad lovers face to face in the morning/Shy apologies and polite regrets. . . Good manners and bad breath will get you nowhere"

A verse later, Costello begins a description with contempt: "The salty lips of the socialite sisters/With their continental fingers that never see working blister. His crooning turns into a plaintive whine for the next two lines: "Oh, I know they've got their problems/I wish I was one of them," and there's a question as to whether he wants to be one of the problems or one of the socialites. The two may be one in the same.

Fascinating album cover, fascinating record. . . *Trust* seems to have everything for the choosy rock and roll shopper; it even features a duet with Squeeze guitarist Glen Tilbrook on "From a Whisper to a Scream."

With six albums and more than ninety songs under his belt in less than four years, Elvis Costello shows no sign of slowing down.

By Phil Bernstein

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