



THE HOT SEAT
Elvis grills Elton
on *Spectacle's*
December 3rd debut.

Elvis Costello Talks Music on Cable

Police, Elton, many more stop by Costello's new Sundance Channel show
By Austin Scaggs

ELVIS COSTELLO SAYS he's been approached to host various music-related TV shows "since the Eighties," but it never worked out — until now. This winter, Costello debuts *Spectacle*, his new show on the Sundance Channel. Over 13 episodes — several of which were filmed at New York's Apollo Theater

TELEVISION

— Costello interviews and performs with artists he admires, from the Police and Rufus Wainwright to Herbie Hancock and Tony Bennett. (He even got noted sax player Bill Clinton to stop by. Clinton name-dropped N.W.A during the interview.)

In the first episode (airing December 3rd), *Spectacle* coproducer Elton John offers a spot-on impersonation of pianist Leon Russell. "He took it a step further by going to the piano and illustrating how Leon's style infiltrated his own," says Costello, sitting in a hotel suite in New York. "It was amazing." Other episodes feature one-off supergroups assembled by Costello. Norah Jones brought an unpublished Hank Williams lyric and performed it with Kris Kristofferson, Rosanne Cash and John Mellencamp. "We did a show with Jakob

Dylan, Jenny Lewis, and She and Him, and we opened with 'Show Biz Kids,' by Steely Dan," says Costello, who chose the song because of each of those artists' childhood exposure to the biz. "I listed everybody's connection. I said, 'Jenny's father is a harmonica player [virtuoso player Eddie Gordon], and guess what, Jakob, yours is as well!'"

Costello, who ably guest-hosted *The Late Show* when David Letterman fell ill six years ago, brings an encyclopedic musical knowledge to the interviews. "I think I actually experienced vertigo in the middle of Herbie Hancock's solo on 'Edith and the Kingpin,'" he says. "I looked up and went, 'It's Herbie! He played with Miles!'" And during the Smokey Robinson episode, the Motown legend told a story about his first visit to the Harlem theater — where he ran into Ray Charles, who helped Robinson arrange his songs so the Apollo big band could back him. "If Ray hadn't bailed him out that day, maybe there's no Smokey, maybe there's no Motown," says Costello.

The episode closes with Costello and Robinson duetting on "You've Really Got a Hold On Me." "That was one of the tracks on the first album I ever owned — albeit the Beatles' version," says Costello. "Now I'm singing lead onstage at the Apollo with the man who wrote it. It was thrilling and terrifying." **ES**

Police Men

It is Elvis Costello, not Sting, who's the chief of police in the new opera *Welcome to the Voice*, which opened in Paris with music by Steve Nieve, Costello's longtime killer keysman. Sting plays Dionysos, an opera-obsessed fanboy who seeks out his favorite diva. Costello has to flash his piece when Dionysos gets too close to the girl. "When I'm lying there in fear and pain," Sting said, "that's not acting." Costello responded, "It's in my contract to rough you up."



Watching the detective: Costello guns for Sting, who gets held up by his son, musician Joe Sumner.