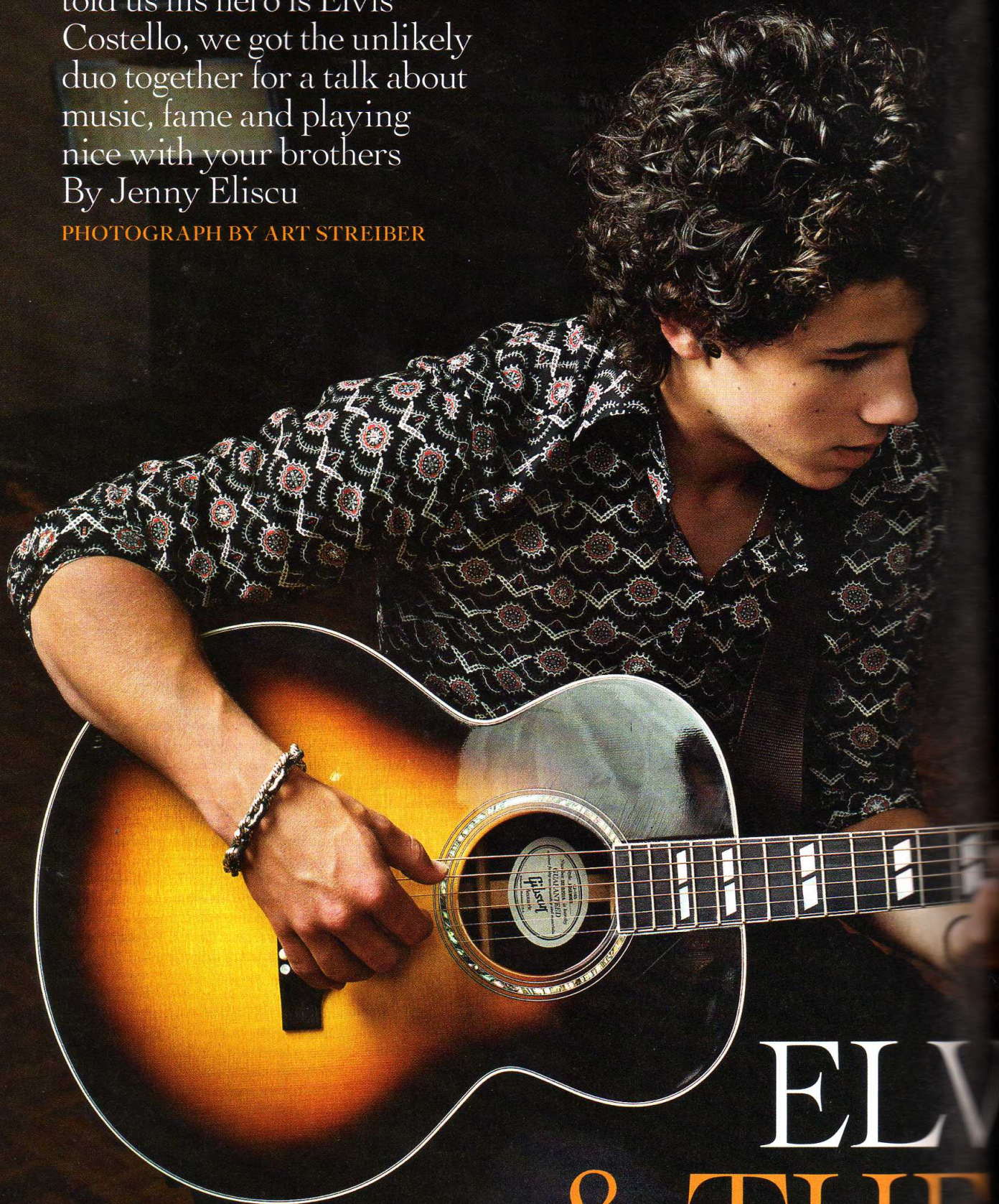


After teen idol Nick Jonas told us his hero is Elvis Costello, we got the unlikely duo together for a talk about music, fame and playing nice with your brothers
By Jenny Eliscu

PHOTOGRAPH BY ART STREIBER



ELVIS & THE



BRUCE COSTELLO ATTRACTION

ELVIS COSTELLO MAY have come of age at a time when rock stars were supposed to kill their idols, but Nick Jonas is the kind of rock star who hugs his. Earlier this year, the 16-year-old leader of the teen-dream act the Jonas Brothers told *ROLLING STONE* how much he admires Elvis Costello, and, like a rock & roll Make-a-Wish Foundation, we offered to get him together with his hero for a one-on-one interview. On a recent afternoon in Los Angeles, Jonas and Costello – both wearing black pants and mod-ish patent-leather shoes – met for the first time at a Hollywood recording studio, where they talked about everything from writing songs to Radiohead to teen-heartthrob status. Clearly star-struck, Jonas kept his poise as Costello, 54, sat across from him, but after they were done talking and Costello had left the room, Nick exhaled, nodded his head a couple of times and said simply, “That was awesome.” Later, Costello praised Jonas as “thoughtful and curious” and “interesting to spend time with.” He added, “I warned him about being better-looking than me.”

NJ: How many different bands did you have before the Attractions?

EC: Before I was in any way good enough to call myself a professional, I was really only in two bands. When I left school, I was in a band with four guys, and within six months we were a duo. The guy who was the singer – he owned the microphone, so that was the only reason he was the singer – we got rid of him pretty quick. Then I went to live in London and got together with some guys who liked the same kind of music as me. We shared a house for a while – it was like being in the Monkees. Then, for the Attractions, I had already released my first album, and the record company said, “Now you have to go on tour.” So they put together the Attractions through auditions. We were so lucky, because we could have had auditions for years and never stumbled onto guys that good.

NJ: Was the fact that your band was put together from auditions an obstacle?

EC: Well, we didn’t grow up together. Obviously it’s really different because you guys are brothers. My four half brothers were all in a group together for many years, so I know a bit what that’s like. When you’re in a group, it makes you older, because you have a lot of experiences that somebody of your age just living in a neighborhood wouldn’t have. You get famous and you travel, and if you get really famous, you can’t go out of your hotel room. I mean, I know the kind of scene it causes when you guys go out. I’ve seen it on the TV.

NJ: It’s definitely something to get used to – it’s a shock to all of us. At times, it does get a little frustrating, but for the



GENERATIONAL IDOLS
Nick, Joe and Kevin Jonas (from left) in New York, 2008; Costello with the Attractions, 1979.

“You get real famous, you can’t go out of your hotel. I know the scene it causes when you guys go out.”

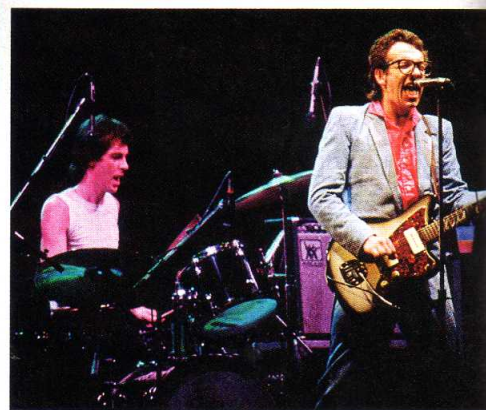
most part we have a good team that helps us keep it all together. As far as fans go: The only difficult thing is when they go in our house. That’s, I mean, it’s kind of odd for anybody, I think.

EC: I never had to deal with anything that intense, but we were a proper pop group for a while. Around 1978, every single we released in England was a hit. Recently, somewhere in a drawer, my mother found some old teen magazines with a picture of Debbie Harry from Blondie, a picture of Sting, and then there’s a picture of me [laughs]. It was hard to take seriously when it was happening, because I just thought it was so absurd.

NJ: I’m reading a book right now that’s about you – *Complicated Shadows: The Life and Music of Elvis Costello*.

EC: Oh, my God.

NJ: And it talks about the first song you ever wrote.



EC: “Winter,” it was called. And it was in E-minor. You can see I got started right away with the cheerful music.

NJ: Is there a recorded version of that somewhere?

EC: No, I was just 13 then, and the earliest recordings I have are one or two songs from when I was about 17. Usually what I did – and I don’t know whether you do this – was write into a notebook. I still do it that way. You fill up a notebook and you think, “Well, out of that notebook you might get three or four songs.” What about you? How do you do it?

NJ: I keep a lot of stuff on the computer, but I also do it on my phone. For me, typing on my computer is more of a convenient way sometimes to do things, because I don’t have much time. I have to put it down quickly. Then, when we’re in the studio, I can send the lyrics off to the brothers.

EC: Oh, yeah? I wrote a song recently like that – actually, with Rosanne Cash and Kris Kristofferson. He lives in Hawaii, and she lives in New York, and I was in Vancouver. And she said, “I’ve got a bit of a song. Do you want to see if we can write it

THIS PAGE: PAUL DRINKWATER/NBCU PHOTO BANK (JONAS BROTHERS PERFORMING); HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS (COSTELLO PERFORMING); OPPOSITE PAGE: MARK J. TERRILL/AP IMAGES (NICK JONAS); CHRIS GABRIN/REDFERNS (RETRNA/COSTELLO)

