

LIFE INTIMIDATES ART

A Tribute To Elvis Costello 1997-1998

A project like this could not have made its way to completion without the help of a number of individuals. Big thanks go to:

Marika Whaley, for taking the time to gather the suggested names for our tribute, and for tallying votes and presenting to us the eventual winning entry;

Jason Brown, for his work on assembling the tape tree structure;

Loki, for the wonderfully eclectic (and I mean that in the best way possible!) cover designs for the CD and cassette versions;

Connor(!) Ratliff, for gathering all the tribute information he could find and heroically assembling a cohesive web page for all to peruse (<http://www.aethego.com/lifeintimidatesart.htm>);

Hugh Lovell, who volunteered his services once again to master the product for us;

Dean Martucci, who produced the CD-R copies for use by all the branches;

And of course, we give our special thanks to the reason for all of this, Elvis Costello, without whom many of us would still be searching for the right words. It's with respect, admiration, and reverence to his creative process that we are able to present LIFE INTIMIDATES ART: A Tribute To Elvis Costello.

SIDE 1

1. Clean Money - The 50-Ft. Woman (1:55)

All voices and instruments are mine. Equipment was a Fender Strat, a shoebox provided percussion, and the whole thing was recorded on a Portex XR-3 4-track (there are actually seven tracks layered onto the recording). Main vocals were delivered into an ordinary plastic kitchen funnel to make it sound even more "low-fi", like I needed to make the extra effort! If you listen really closely you can pick up three guitar tracks - one makes only occasional appearances. Apologies for my accurate reproduction of the Attractions' backing vocals.

2. Strict Time - Michael Dare (3:25)

3. Less Than Zero - Here Comes Everybody!! (2:38)

This rough and unpolished performance is the work of three people: myself (on guitar), Jim Broyles (on vocals), and Ari Medoff (on bass). We were going to do "Veronica" instead, as it is the Elvis song we play most often, but we decided this would be more entertaining. I hope everyone likes it, despite it's off-the-cuff nature. It was recorded on a 4-track Tascam Portastudio, for those who care about such things. And yes, we're laughing because we suck.

4. Dam New Girls' Amster Talk - 13th Floor Elvises (3:05)

(2 notes here)

The 13th Floor Elvises - part myth, part cyclical band who's time has come and gone and come and gone again. Amid tales of cheese abuse, rampant egos, and partially-failed experiments, this quasi-legendary band was much less than the sum of its parts and much more than its reputation. Lost in a haze of smoke and mirrors, this one-off campfire reunion is even more spectacular due to the fact that the campfire was in the middle of a suburban living room. Oh yeah, the percussion that you hear is Minute Rice, not Rice-A-Roni (the San Francisco treat).

The 13th Floor Elvises, one of the greatest should-have-been bands of the 60's that never was, reformed solely for this contribution. While the band in its earlier incarnation eventually dissolved through acrimony -- band members never reached live gigs because they kept putting potatoes up the tailpipes of each other's vehicles--personality conflicts were set aside in a spirit of mutual revulsion just long enough to accomplish this unique live medley of Elvis Costello's "New Amsterdam/Girls Talk". The band consists of Tom Garritano, Dave Weil, Mark "4-track" Schnitzius, and Bruce White, augmented by the percussive talents of famed "Fifth 13th Floor Elvis" Mike Wolfe on Minute Rice box. The band is particularly proud of transposing "Girls Talk" into 3/4 time from its original 4/4 time, having spent a week with calculators determining that 3/4 is one beat less than 4/4.

5. Shabby Doll - Jennifer Sandifer (4:08)

What I tried to do with Shabby Doll was to combine both versions, since I always loved the swanginess of the alternate. I stole the drum track from one of my own songs; sped it up a bit. I've wanted to sing this song for a long time, because it seems to me the identity of the singer changes from first to second to third person. Listen to the lyrics. Would you have interpreted it differently had you never heard a man sing it?

6. New Lace Sleeves (...Something Almost Borrowed, Something Almost Blue...) - Paul Inglis (4:58)

My first multitrack recording (previously I used to bounce tracks between cassette decks - my tracks on 'Original Sin's are an example). An appropriate choice, since the first song I ever recorded was a Casio organ version of "Mystery Dance" in 1982. However, I rarely do cover versions, so this was a most interesting experience. EC's version of this song has such a distinctive arrangement (especially the drums) that I initially doubted that I could come up with anything worth bothering with. However, I had a head arrangement of "Tomorrow Never Knows" using the "New Lace Sleeves" drum part, so eventually it occurred to me to try NLS with the "Tomorrow Never Knows" drum part... This was just the starting point, as doing a "Beatles covers EC" type arrangement didn't seem to be very enlightening. The brief intro seems to have leaked out of my "Home

"Truth" arrangement. The intro and the last chord plus timpani coda parts were recorded before the rest of the track and then edited on to make the finished product. I then added a "guitar with everything" while mixing down the track (this part is particularly noticeable during the "She'll be the one" section near the end). The medley section was improvised in about two minutes; I then sat down with a guitar and a notepad and honed it a bit. The original medley was about a minute longer, but I spared you this extended version, knowing that the track would be well over six minutes if I used everything. As it was, I still had to edit a few bars from the final recording to get it down to five minutes...You will note that I have (lazily) opted to sing this in a higher key than EC - really makes for some scary high notes.

7. Blue Chair - Lars Jensen (3:43)

8. Baby Plays Around (Pronoun Trouble) - Loki (4:01)

Paul Cahill: Vocals, Kawai K1-2, Casio SK-1

Recorded on a Tascam Portastudio 424 MK2

It's not that he doesn't have to shoot you now, it's that he doesn't have to shoot ME now...vocals are courtesy of El Nino and a sinus infection, I went to the hospital to suffer for my art...I went the "When Doves Cry" bassless route, upon reflection (also, it was one less track to lay down)...eternal gratitude to Bill Brisell, whose solo guitar playing made it easier for a musical semi-illiterate like me to pick out chords and such...there were effects from an Alessis Nanoverb at one point, but somehow they're gone now...it is said that tape hiss can be very therapeutic...this was much more expensive than a personal ad, I must say..."I try to be strong, hold on to my pride..."

SIDE 2

1. Less Than Zero (Dallas Version) - No Oboe Combo (2:42)

2. Home Truths (Take It To The Bridge I Burned) - Paul Inglis (4:06)

I'd been playing around with this song in my head for ages. However, it was only when I came to consider recording it for BMI that I decided to change it from 3/4 to 4/4 time. After doing the medley for NLS, I couldn't resist throwing in a couple of other EC songs into this one, too. Then "Extreme Honey" came out and I thought, "Well, no-one else will do "Bridge I Burned". As I'm still recording this track I don't know whether my plan to sing the chorus of "TRIB" in progressively higher keys will actually work, as EC hits some pretty astoundingly high notes in his version (I guess you'll know when you hear it). At the start of the song, when I quote from "Pidgin English", you may note that I get a little help from EC himself (I hope he doesn't mind). I also hope that nobody minds too much that I have meddled with the original songs, especially my changes to the lyric of "Home Truths" "Taking Liberties, anyone?"

3. "TKO" (Boxing Day) - Connor Ratliff (3:43)

I decided that I didn't want to destroy an EC song that I had a lot of affection for, instead taking a fun throwaway tune and slowing it down to a completely inappropriate arrangement for piano and voice. Originally intended to be performed with Jeff Falzone (of Astheyyo fame), but the final cut does feature the lovely Sue Falzone on piano. Recorded with a Dictaphone and mixed on a beat-up Karaoke machine.

4. Town Cryer - The 50-ft. Woman (3:50)

Namally I don't like guitar/voice ballads, but I enjoyed the effect of singing harmony over myself so I decided to send it in. Elvis, as usual, has written a song that scrapes the bottom of my singing range. I also made some gender-motivated lyrical adjustments, and sang the lyric sheet lyrics instead of the actual ones. Equipment: Fender Strat, my Postex XR-3 4-track (only three tracks are used).

5. Poor Napoleon - Mike Hernandez (4:05)

Obviously the Deep Dead Blue version of this song was my main influence. What was originally a big studio production got stripped down to one voice and one guitar, and still came out a beautiful song (at least I thought so...ymm). Everything is me, from the shaky vocal to the 'lectric guitar to the little Spanish guitar intro from Big Nothing that I thought might make for a nice touch. You can be the judge of that. Everything was done on first take, live in the studio (well, in my bathroom). After I nailed that middle guitar section, I had this huge rush of adrenaline going through me (since I never got anything right the first time), and you might be able to hear it in the singing during last two verses. Felt pretty good. Everything was recorded on the new Postex X-77 4-track recorder, which now sits in the box awaiting my next venture into home recording.

6. Just About Glad - Vernon Knight (w/ Dan Arnold) (3:17)

7. Favourite Hour - Robert Stair (6:46)

I know of a man whose father lived a long and relatively happy life. He was more active than most, more prosperous than most, and well respected in his field as a man of accomplishment. He lived to see his children grow up, become successful, and have children of their own. Shortly before he died, his son visited him and they were looking through an old photo album. They came across a picture of his father as a young man, dressed in a style that was so much from another time, that his son had to comment, not meaning any harm, "That was so long ago!" His father's eyes welled up with tears as he slowly shook his head. "No," he told his son, "That was five minutes ago."

For me this song is about contemplating one's own mortality. It's been said a million times, but life is too short. This is me, my drum machine, a Casio keyboard, my Fender Princeton amp, and my beloved Rickenbacker 360, shamelessly begging for more time.

For our buddy, RJ/DW.

LIFE INTIMIDATES ART was administered by Mike Hernandez, and features the participation of several members of Elvis