



Elvis Costello

Declan Patrick MacManus OBE (born 25 August 1954), known professionally as **Elvis Costello**, is an English singer, songwriter, record producer, author and television presenter. According to *Rolling Stone*, Costello "reinvigorated the literate, lyrical traditions of Bob Dylan and Van Morrison with the raw energy and sass that were principal ethics of punk", noting the "construction of his songs, which set densely layered wordplay in an ever-expanding repertoire of styles."^[5] His first album, *My Aim Is True* (1977), is widely regarded as one of the best debuts in popular music history. It spawned no hit singles, but contains some of Costello's best-known songs, including the ballad "Alison". Costello's next two albums, *This Year's Model* (1978) and *Armed Forces* (1979), recorded with his backing band the Attractions, helped define the new wave genre. From late 1977 through early 1980, each of the eight singles he released reached the UK Top 30. His biggest hit single, "Oliver's Army" (1979), sold more than 400,000 copies in Britain. He has had more modest commercial success in the US, but has earned much critical praise. From 1977 through the early 2000s, Costello's albums regularly ranked high on the Village Voice Pazz & Jop critics' poll, with *This Year's Model* and *Imperial Bedroom* (1982) voted the best album of their respective years.^[a] His biggest US hit single, "Veronica" (1989), reached number 19 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

Born into a musical family, Costello was raised with knowledge and appreciation of a wide range of musical styles and an insider's view of the music business. His opportunity to begin a professional career as a musician coincided with the rise of punk rock in England. The primitivism brought into fashion by punk led Costello to disguise his musical savvy at the beginning of his career, but his stylistic range has come to encompass R&B, country, jazz, baroque pop, Tin Pan Alley and classical music. He has released album-length collaborations with the classical ensemble The Brodsky Quartet, the New Orleans R&B songwriter and producer Allen Toussaint and the hip-hop group The Roots. Costello has written more than a dozen songs with Paul McCartney and had a long-running songwriting partnership with Burt Bacharach.

Elvis Costello

OBE



Costello performing at the 2012 Riot Fest in Chicago

Background information

Birth name	Declan Patrick MacManus
Also known as	Declan Costello · D.P. Costello · The Imposter · Little Hands of Concrete · Napoleon Dynamite · Howard Coward ^[1] · MacManus · Elvis MacManus
Born	25 August 1954 <div>London, England</div>
Genres	<u>Pop</u> · <u>rock</u> · <u>new wave</u> · <u>power pop</u> ^[2] · <u>punk rock</u> ^[3] · <u>pub rock</u> ^[4]
Occupation(s)	Singer · songwriter · record producer · author · television presenter

Costello has had hits with covers of songs, including Sam & Dave's "I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down", Jerry Chesnut's "Good Year for the Roses" and Charles Aznavour's "She". One of the songs he is best known for, "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding", was written by Nick Lowe and recorded by Lowe's group Brinsley Schwarz in 1974, but remained obscure until Costello released his version in 1979. Costello's own songs have been recorded by artists including Linda Ronstadt, George Jones, Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash, Dave Edmunds, Chet Baker and Alison Krauss.

Costello has won two Grammy awards, two Ivor Novello awards, four Edison awards, an MTV Video Music Award, a BAFTA award, an ASCAP Founders award and a Gemini award. In 2003, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 2016, he was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. From 2008 to 2010, he hosted a television show, *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...*, on which he interviewed other musicians. In 2015, he published a well-received memoir, *Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink*.

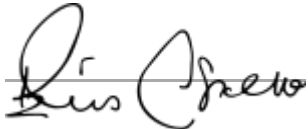
Early life

Elvis Costello was born Declan Patrick MacManus,^[b] on 25 August 1954, at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, West London, the only child of a record shop worker and a jazz musician.^[22] Both parents were from the Liverpool area and had moved to London together a few years earlier.^[23] Costello's father was Catholic and of Irish descent,^[24] but his mother is neither.^{[c][25]}

Family background

Costello's mother, Lillian MacManus (née Ablett, 1927–2021), was born and raised in Toxteth, Liverpool, the daughter of a gas-main layer and a mother who became increasingly disabled by rheumatoid arthritis as Lillian grew up.^{[27][28]} Responsible for caring for her younger brother and sick mother,^[22] Lillian left school at 13 and took the first of a series of jobs at music stores. After moving to London with her future husband Ross in 1951, she took a job in the record department in Selfridges department store and continued selling records through the 1960s.^{[29][30]} Even after she no longer worked selling records, Lillian maintained a keen interest in a wide variety of music, including the popular music of the day.^[31]

Costello's father, Ross MacManus (1927–2011), was a professional trumpet player and singer, born and raised in Birkenhead,^[32] across the River Mersey from Liverpool. He began his career in music in the late 1940s, playing trumpet in bebop bands in Birkenhead and Liverpool.^[33] He segued to playing trumpet and singing in modern jazz bands after moving to London in 1951.^[34] By 1954, he was sufficiently well known for his son's birth to be announced in the *New Musical Express*.^[29] From 1955 to 1968, he was a featured singer in Joe Loss Orchestra, one of Britain's most popular big bands.^[32] Ross had a solo cabaret

Instrument(s)	Vocals · guitar
Discography	<u>Elvis Costello discography</u>
Years active	1970–present
Labels	<u>Stiff</u> · <u>Radar</u> · <u>F-Beat</u> · <u>Demon</u> · <u>Columbia</u> · <u>Warner Bros.</u> · <u>Mercury</u> · <u>Island</u> · <u>Deutsche Grammophon</u> · <u>Lost Highway</u> · <u>Verve</u> · <u>Hear Music</u> · <u>Rykodisc</u> · <u>Rhino</u> · <u>Hip-O</u> · <u>Concord</u>
Member of	<u>The New Basement Tapes</u>
Formerly of	<u>The Attractions</u>
Spouse(s)	<u>Mary Burgoyne</u> (m. 1974; div. 1984) <u>Diana Krall</u> (m. 2003)
Website	<u>elviscostello.com</u> (<u>http://elviscostello.com</u>)
Signature	
	

act from 1969 through the 1990s, playing workingmen's social clubs in the North of England, Scotland, and Wales.^{[35][36]} Ross recorded for small record labels under a variety of aliases,^[37] including Day Costello – Costello being Ross's paternal grandmother's maiden name.^[38] He also recorded advertising jingles.^[39] In 1973, he sang the "Secret Lemonade Drinker" jingle featured in a series of popular and long-running advertisements for R. Whites, with Costello on backing vocals.^{[d][42][32]}

Ross's father, Patrick Matthew McManus,^[e] known as Pat, was also a professional musician.^[32] Pat was raised in an orphanage from age eight, where he learned to play trumpet. He later played trumpet as an army bandsman, a ship's musician for the White Star Line, and an orchestra musician in music halls and in theaters showing silent films.^{[32][45]} Costello has said that Pat, being the first in the family to make a career in music, is the reason he himself is a musician.^[46]

Childhood and early musical influences

Costello spent most of his childhood in Twickenham, in west London, before moving to Liverpool with his mother in 1970.^[47] Costello was raised Roman Catholic and served as an altar boy until he was 14.^{[26][48]}

Costello's parents had separated by the time Costello was ten years old, after which he was raised by his mother.^{[22][26]} Ross continued to be a significant presence in Costello's life and the two remained close until Ross's death in 2011.^{[38][49]} Costello has said that a childhood spent watching his father work gave him an innate sense of how to be a musician but also an understanding that a career in music was a job like any other, requiring discipline and hard work.^{[38][50]}

Costello's parents never insisted he take music lessons or otherwise pushed him to follow in the family business. Instead, they raised him in a home filled with music, encouraged his musical curiosity, and supported his efforts to find his own way toward a career in music.^[38] Lillian told journalists that she knew before he was born he would have a career in music and that she listened to a broad range of music while she was pregnant with him with the intention of giving him an early start in music appreciation.^{[22][51]}

As a young child, Costello's musical influences came from his parents' record collection, which encompassed a wide range of styles but centred on traditional pop and jazz.^[52] Ross's job with the Joe Loss Orchestra required him to sing many of the pop hits of the day for the band's weekly radio show. To learn these songs, Ross received demonstration copies of the original artists' records, which he brought home to rehearse.^[53] When Costello grew old enough to have an interest in the current pop hits, Ross began giving him five or six of these demonstration records per week. Costello has said, "That's why I know so many songs."^[54]

Chief among Costello's early favourites among the hit-makers of the day were the Beatles. Costello has said that, having turned nine years old in 1963, he was exactly the right age to experience the full force of Beatles fandom as he grew up.^[55] He has described the Beatles as his biggest musical influence.^[56] Costello was also deeply impressed by the songs of his future collaborator Burt Bacharach, which he knew through the hits British artists Cilla Black and Dusty Springfield had with them.^[57]

As Costello grew into his teens, his favourites included British beat groups the Kinks, Small Faces and the Who,^{[56][58]} Jamaican rocksteady and reggae acts who were popular in Britain,^{[59][60]} and especially Motown artists, who he knew mainly through their British hit singles and through the Motown Chartbusters compilation series.^[61] By the time Costello reached his mid-teens, Joni Mitchell had become an important and enduring influence on him.^[62] When Costello moved to Liverpool, he found he did not enjoy much of

the progressive rock that was popular with his peers, so, casting around for music he might like, he developed an interest in the Grateful Dead and other folk rock groups like the Byrds and the Band, and through them, country music.^{[63][64]}

Education and decision to pursue a career in music

Costello was a well-behaved if sometimes argumentative student, but not generally an academically outstanding one.^{[65][66]} Not having scored well enough on his eleven-plus exams to go on to grammar school,^[22] he attended a secondary modern school in Hounslow and then a comprehensive school in Everton, Liverpool, for sixth form.^{[f][69]} Costello did, however, show an early talent for writing. His mother told a journalist that, when Costello was 11 years old, his school entered him into a writing contest held by The Times intended for people aged 16 to 25, for which he won a prize.^[22] As he finished secondary school, he earned one A-level, in English, despite having made a firm decision to pursue a career in music a few months earlier and putting little effort into his final months of school.^{[50][70]}

Although he never had any alternative career plan, Costello had previously been reluctant to commit to a career in music, partly because his upbringing had made him aware of the potential pitfalls involved. The shock of witnessing a teenage friend's death in a traffic accident changed his mind. He would later write, "Suddenly, everything but music seemed like a waste of precious time."^[71]

Costello completed his formal education in 1972 and, still living at home with his mother, set out to find a job that would earn him a steady wage while he pursued a career in music.^[58] He soon took a job as a computer operator at the Midland Bank data centre, in the Merseyside town of Bootle, because, at £20 a week, it paid slightly better than other unskilled work he felt he was qualified for.^{[g][30][74]} According to Costello, the job consisted of essentially manual labour such as mounting tape reels and loading punched cards.^[58] Because the job involved frequent periods of waiting for the mainframe computers to complete their tasks before beginning them on the next one, it gave Costello time to write songs while at work.^[58] Except for a few months in 1973 when he worked as a clerk at the Midland Bank Putney branch, he continued to work full-time as a computer operator until a few weeks before his first album was released in July 1977.^{[75][76]}

Music career

1969–1976: Pre-professional career

Costello began writing songs and teaching himself to play guitar by age 14.^{[56][77]} To test his songs in front of an audience, he performed them in folk clubs that permitted amateur musicians to perform unpaid.^[58] He played these clubs regularly in London and continued in similar clubs when he moved to Liverpool at age 16, although folk music venues that welcomed original songs were scarcer in Liverpool than in London.^[78] By 17, he was occasionally being paid a little money.^[35] On the eve of the release of his debut album in 1977, Costello told a journalist that by that time he had written hundreds of songs.^[79]

Rusty

At the beginning of 1972, Costello was invited to join a folk-rock band called Rusty by the band's founder, an 18-year-old veteran of the Liverpool music scene named Allan Mayes.^[80] As other members left, Rusty soon became a duo, with Mayes and Costello singing and playing acoustic guitars.^[81] For a little over a

year, Rusty played regularly in small venues like pubs, clubs, schools, and community centres, mostly in and around Liverpool, unpaid or for small amounts of money.^[82] In Mayes's estimation, Costello was already a talented songwriter, able to quickly write songs in a variety of styles, and could sing like Neil Young or Robbie Robertson.^[81] Mayes has said he introduced Costello to Brinsley Schwarz, a band that would be an important influence on him.^[83] While in Rusty, Costello wrote an early version of a song he would record in 1980 as "Ghost Train", although by then little remained of the Rusty version except the central narrative idea of a married double act making their way through the low end of show business.^[35] In 2022, Costello reunited with Mayes to record and release an EP called *The Resurrection of Rust*. The EP contained songs that were typical of Rusty's shows in 1972, including the early version of "Ghost Train", then called "Maureen and Sam".^{[84][h]}

Declan Costello

By early 1973, Costello had determined that the music scene in Liverpool was too small to support his ambition to have a career in music, so he arranged to transfer from his job as a computer operator in the Midland Bank data centre in Bootle to a position as a clerk at the bank's Putney branch.^{[78][74]} Returning to London, Costello moved into the same Twickenham flat where he had lived with his mother a few years earlier, by then occupied by his father (Ross), Ross's second wife, and their infant son.^[85] When booking himself into London clubs, he began using the name Declan Costello, adopting a family name that Ross had once made a record under, because it was easier to spell and understand than MacManus when he spoke on the phone.^{[86][50]} Around this time, Costello accompanied Ross to Costello's first professional recording session, for the R. White's "Secret Lemonade Drinker" commercial jingle. Ross sang the lead vocal while Costello played guitar and sang backing vocals.^{[i][42]}

Flip City

In the second half of 1973, Costello formed a band called Flip City with several slightly older men who, like him, were fans of Brinsley Schwarz and other pub rock bands. The members of Flip City also shared Costello's enthusiasm for The Band, the Grateful Dead, and Clover.^[87] For most of 1974, Costello shared a rented house in southwest London with some of his bandmates.^{[88][89]} Flip City played the London pub rock circuit until the end of 1975, occasionally opening for more prominent bands such as Dr. Feelgood, but generally making little money and attracting little notice.^{[90][91]} Flip City's performances consisted of a mix of Costello's original songs and covers of rock, R&B, and country songs. Their repertoire of Costello originals included early versions of songs that would appear on his first two albums as "Pay It Back", "Miracle Man", "Living in Paradise", and "Radio Radio".^[92] Costello wrote all but one of Flip City's original songs, did most of the singing, and chose the cover songs they played.^[93] A friend from those days later told a journalist, "It wasn't so much that he imposed the ideas; he was the one who *had* the ideas."^[94] None of the other members of Flip City shared Costello's commitment to pursuing a career in music and some disapproved of his desire to make money from his music.^{[93][95]}

Costello became engaged to marry a former schoolmate in late 1973.^[96] By then he had found a job as a computer operator at the Elizabeth Arden cosmetics factory in North Acton, in northwest London, similar to the one he had in Bootle and with similarly low wages.^{[97][88]} By early 1975, Costello was a husband and father and was struggling to support his family.^{[98][99]} Flip City's live engagements added little to his income, rarely paying more than the band's expenses.^{[100][101]}

Costello recorded demos with Flip City at several sessions from mid-1974 until mid-1975, hoping to use them to get live bookings, secure a recording contract, or sell Costello's songs for other artists to record.^[102] All but the first of these sessions were at a small studio owned by Dave Robinson, future Stiff Records founder.^[103] Robinson later said that he thought Flip City "could not play at all" but Costello was talented and ought to "find a real band."^[104]

After Costello became successful, Flip City's demos were widely bootlegged, often misleadingly labelled to imply they were outtakes from the My Aim Is True sessions or otherwise affiliated with Stiff Records.^[105] The only Flip City recording to have been officially released is Costello's song "Imagination (Is a Powerful Deceiver)", recorded in early 1975, which appeared as a bonus track on the 1993 and 2001 reissues of My Aim Is True.^[106] In the liner notes to the 2001 reissue, Costello wrote that, in retrospect, the song sounded to him like "a very early attempt to write a song like 'Alison'."^[107]

D.P. Costello

Even before disbanding Flip City in late 1975, Costello was writing songs he did not include in the band's repertoire.^[108] He recorded some of these as solo demos for Dave Robinson in mid-1975.^[109] For the next year, he shopped these and other solo demos to music publishers and record companies, hoping to be hired either as a songwriter or a recording artist.^{[110][79]} He sent out as many as 20 songs on a single tape to publishers, not yet realising that no publisher would have the patience to listen to so many songs.^[56] Sometimes he went to publishers' offices to perform his songs in person.^[107] None of this generated anything but rejections until he began creating "show reels" of no more than six of what he believed were his most attention-getting songs, selected to appeal to the recipient of each demo tape.^{[56][111][j]}

By February 1976, Costello was booking himself into clubs as a solo act under the name D.P. Costello, D.P. being his initials and a nickname he was sometimes called by his family.^{[112][113]} While working as D.P. Costello, he learned to sing and play guitar very loudly and developed a forceful stage presence, although he was still playing to small audiences for very little money.^{[78][114]} Few of the songs he had played with Flip City were included in these performances.^[115] Instead, he was debuting some of the songs that would start to get the attention of the music industry, such as "Mystery Dance" and "Wave a White Flag".^{[110][115][116]} Costello included both songs on a six-track demo tape he sent to London radio presenter Charlie Gillett, who thought "Wave a White Flag" was the best of the six.^[117] Gillett played several songs from the tape on his radio show later that year, the first time any Costello song received airplay.^{[118][k]}

Sometime in 1976, lack of money forced Costello, his wife and their toddler son to move in with relatives near Heathrow Airport, on the far west side of London.^[120] This meant Costello's commute to work in North Acton took him past the Hoover Building in Perivale.^[120] Around the same time, he was starting to become aware of the nascent punk movement, although he would not hear any of the British punk bands until they began releasing records.^{[121][58]} He was, however, inspired by the Modern Lovers' song "Roadrunner", with its reference to such quotidian landmarks as the Stop & Shop, to write a song about the historical Art Deco building he rode past every day.^[121] Although he did not record it until 1980, Costello regarded this song, "Hoover Factory", as an artistic breakthrough.^[121] In the period just prior, he had been

trying to imitate songwriters Randy Newman and John Prine.^[122] "Hoover Factory", he later recalled, got him "through the door to a different, less ingratiating way of speaking" in his songwriting.^[121] The next song he wrote was "Radio Sweetheart",^[123] which would become the B-side of his first single.^[124]

1976–1977: *My Aim Is True*

In mid-August 1976, Costello included "Mystery Dance" and "Radio Sweetheart" on a demo tape he gave to Stiff Records, a new independent label that had just released its first single.^{[125][126]} Partly due to the airplay received from Gillett around the same time, Costello was soon evaluating offers from several record companies, including Gillett's own Oval Records.^{[56][127]} Costello chose to work with Stiff Records because they seemed prepared to move the fastest.^[56] Stiff had been founded by Jake Riviera, who managed several acts Costello admired, and Dave Robinson.^{[128][56]} Nick Lowe, whom Costello was on friendly terms with because he had attended so many performances by Lowe's band Brinsley Schwarz, was the label's first artist and soon became its in-house producer.^{[129][130]}

Following a successful test-session in mid-September at Pathway Studios, an inexpensive studio in North London,^{[131][132]} Stiff agreed to finance more sessions for Costello with Clover, an American country-rock band from Marin County, California,^{[133][134]} as the backing band.^[135] Starting in late November or early December, Costello travelled to Headley Grange in East Hampshire, where Clover were living, to spend the day rehearsing and working out arrangements for a batch of his songs and then recording the songs with the band the next day at Pathway.^[136] Costello still held a full-time office job,^[107] so the sessions were spaced over several weeks to accommodate his work schedule and Stiff's tight finances.^[137] *My Aim Is True* was recorded and mixed in six four-hour sessions for a total cost of about £1,000.^[107] The final mix was completed in late January 1977.^[138] Producer Nick Lowe, recording engineer Barry Farmer and Clover bassist John Ciambotti have all said they found Costello confident, well-prepared, and mature beyond his years during the making of the album.^{[139][138]}

By February 1977, Riviera and Robinson, who were now Costello's managers, had given him his new stage name, Elvis.^[140] The reference to Elvis Presley, who was still alive at the time, was simply intended to get attention.^[141] Costello neither particularly liked nor disliked Presley.^[142] Because Costello had seen his father, Ross, work under a variety of stage names, he gave little thought to the name change.^[37] Riviera and Robinson also helped give Costello a distinctive appearance that contrasted with the contemporaneous ideas how pop stars looked;^[143] they swapped the unobtrusive rimless glasses Costello had worn to correct astigmatism since he was a teenager for a pair with large black frames.^{[144][50]}

Costello's first single, "Less than Zero", was released at the end of March 1977.^[124] It received a few brief, mixed reviews in the British music press and sold very few copies.^[145] Two further singles, "Alison" and "(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes", also sold poorly; the former would become one of his best-regarded and best-known songs.^{[146][147]} However, Costello was receiving increasingly prominent, positive coverage in the British music press.^[148]

My Aim Is True had been completed since the end of January but its release was delayed, first because Stiff had wanted to release records by other artists who seemed more tied to transient music trends and then because of legal difficulties with Stiff's distributor, Island Records.^{[107][149]} It was released on 22 July

1977.^[150] Two weeks earlier, Costello had left his job as a computer operator at Elizabeth Arden on the condition that Stiff pay him, as an advance on future royalties, a regular stipend equal to the wages he had been earning at his job.^{[107][76]}

1977–1979: Peak pop stardom

In mid-June 1977, Costello held auditions for a bassist and keyboardist for a backing band for a tour to promote *My Aim Is True*, wanting a sparser sound than on the album.^[79] Pete Thomas, formerly of pub-rock band Chilli Willi and the Red Hot Peppers, who were managed by Riviera, agreed to be drummer, although Thomas was then living in California and needed to be brought back to England.^{[151][152]} Steve Goulding and Andrew Bodnar, rhythm section of the Rumour, also participated in these audition sessions, so that Costello could test how the musicians auditioning played as part of a band.^[153] Chosen were bassist Bruce Thomas (no relation to Pete), who was 28 years old and had ten years' experience in professional bands, the most successful being the Sutherland Brothers and Quiver;^{[154][155]} and keyboardist Steve Nieve (then Steve Nason), a 19-year-old student at the Royal College of Music who had formal musical training but no experience in any kind of pop group.^[156] The band, soon named the Attractions, would be Costello's touring and recording band for the next seven years.^{[157][158]}

"Watching the Detectives" and commercial breakthrough

Costello used the time with Goulding and Bodnar to arrange and rehearse "Watching the Detectives". He recorded the song with them at Pathway a few days later.^[153] Costello had written the song a few weeks earlier, partly inspired by the Clash's newly released debut album.^[159] Some of the musical ideas, which Nieve fleshed out when he overdubbed his piano and organ parts a few weeks later, were inspired by film scores Bernard Herrmann had done for Alfred Hitchcock.^[160] Costello later called the recording of "Watching the Detectives" his first experience of "making records as opposed to recording some songs in a room".^[159] The song would be released as a non-album single in the UK and as a track on the US version of *My Aim Is True*.^[161]

My Aim Is True received extensive, favourable coverage in the UK music press through a combination of effective publicity stunts, such as Costello busking in front of the London hotel hosting the CBS Records business convention, and genuine enthusiasm for his music among music journalists.^[162] The album reached number 14 on the UK Albums Chart within a few weeks of its release.^[163] "Watching the Detectives", released in mid-October, reaching number 15 in the UK Singles Chart, becoming Costello's first single to chart in any country.^{[164][107]} This was the first of an unbroken streak of eight Costello singles to reach the UK top 30.^[165] When Costello began touring the US in mid-November, he received prominent coverage in the US press, even though he played venues holding fewer than a thousand people.^[166] By this time, Costello had signed to Columbia Records, who released *My Aim Is True* in the US in early November.^[167] The album gradually climbed to number 32 on the US Billboard Top LPs & Tape chart and was named among the best albums of the year by US music critics.^{[168][169]} In mid-December, Costello and the Attractions appeared on Saturday Night Live, where they angered the show's producer by unexpectedly playing the then-unrecorded song "Radio Radio" during the live broadcast.^{[170][171]}

By late 1977, Costello had moved from Stiff Records to Radar Records, a new label founded by an associate of Jake Riviera.^{[172][173]} Riviera had split from Dave Robinson and was now Costello's sole manager.^[174] For the next year and a half, Costello's records were released on Radar in Britain.^[175]

This Year's Model

Costello recorded his second album and his first with the Attractions, *This Year's Model*, during short breaks from touring, from November 1977 through January 1978.^[176] Produced by Nick Lowe,^[165] it was recorded at Eden Studios, in west London, in eleven days.^[157] Inspirations for the album's sound included 1960s beat groups like the Who, the Kinks and Small Faces, as well as contemporary acts like Talking Heads,^{[177][178]} but the biggest influence was the Rolling Stones' album *Aftermath* (1966).^[179] Costello himself called *This Year's Model* "a ghost version of *Aftermath*" and "This Year's Girl" an answer song to the Rolling Stones' "Stupid Girl".^{[58][180]}



Costello onstage at Massey Hall,
Toronto, April 1978

Most of the songs on *This Year's Model* were written while Costello was still working a full-time office job, before his first album was released.^[165] Among them was "(I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea",^[181] which was released as the album's first single in early March 1978, reaching number 16 on the UK Singles Chart.^[182] The second single, "Pump It Up", which reached number 24, was written later, while Costello was on tour with other Stiff acts, in reaction to what he later called his "first exposure to idiotic rock and roll decadence."^{[183][165][184]} Upon release in March, *This Year's Model* entered the UK Albums Chart at number 4.^[185] The US version of the album dropped "(I Don't Want to Go

to) Chelsea" and "Night Rally", a song written in response to the rise of the British National Front,^[186] and replaced them with "Radio Radio".^[165] The US release reached number 30 on the *Billboard* chart but spent fewer weeks on the chart than *My Aim Is True*.^[168] "Radio Radio" was released as a non-album single in the UK in October 1978, where it reached number 29.^[187]

This Year's Model was highly praised by critics in Britain and the US. *Melody Maker* called it an "achievement so comprehensive, so inspired, that it exhausts superlatives."^[188] The *NME* review read similarly, saying the album was "so ridiculously good that one's immediate inclinations are to clamber effusively over the top, superlative peaking superlative."^[189] The *Village Voice* Pazz & Jop critics' poll voted it the best album of 1978.^[190] *Rolling Stone* named it among the best five albums of 1978.^[191]

For the seven months following the completion of *This Year's Model*, Costello and the Attractions continued touring Britain, Europe and North America, playing larger venues and debuting new songs that Costello was writing for his next album.^[192] In July 1978, Costello performed at the Danish Roskilde Festival, topping the bill with three other artists,^[193] premiering the song "Oliver's Army" that would become his biggest hit in the UK.^{[194][195]}

Armed Forces

Costello and the Attractions recorded his third album, *Armed Forces*, at Eden Studios in six weeks from August and September 1978.^{[196][197]} It was again produced by Nick Lowe, but Costello himself provided greater creative control.^[198] Like *This Year's Model*, the album's influences came from the music Costello and the Attractions listened to while touring, from the Berlin-era records of David Bowie and Iggy Pop to

ABBA and Kraftwerk.^{[197][199]} Costello later said that *Armed Forces* was his first album of songs he wrote with an awareness of having an audience. The album's lyrics reflected his experiences on the road in the US, as well his continued concern over the rise of far-right political groups in the UK;^{[197][200]} the album was originally to be called *Emotional Fascism*.^[197] Just before the album's completion in late September, Costello and the Attractions played to an audience of 150,000 in Brockwell Park, south London, as part of the second Rock Against Racism music festival.^[201] A few weeks later, they began six months of touring that included, for the first time, Japan and Australia, as well as the UK, Europe, Canada and the US.^[202]

Released in early January 1979, *Armed Forces* debuted at number 2 on the UK Albums Chart, and spent 28 weeks on the chart.^[203] In the US, it spent 25 weeks on the *Billboard* chart, peaking at number 10 in mid-March.^[168] The US release replaced "Sunday's Best" with Costello's cover of Lowe's "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding".^{[204][205]} Costello's best-selling single, "Oliver's Army", was released in Britain in February.^[206] Costello has said he wrote the song after his first visit to Northern Ireland and was inspired by seeing young British soldiers on the streets of Belfast as a part of the Troubles.^[207] The song reached number 2 on the UK Singles Chart.^[208] It was also his biggest hit single in Ireland, reaching number 4 on the Irish singles chart.^[209] The second single, "Accidents Will Happen", was released in early May.^[210] According to Costello, the song was written in response to his own marital infidelities. The song reached number 28 in the UK.^[211] In the US, it reached number 101, missing the *Billboard* Hot 100 but charting higher than any previous Costello single.^[212]

The concert tour promoting *Armed Forces* was marked by bad publicity.^[213] Costello and the Attractions played some shows that audiences considered too brief and refused to return for encores.^[214] Audiences in Sydney, Australia, and Berkeley, California, responded by vandalising the concert venues.^[214] After a concert in Columbus, Ohio, on 15 March, Costello got into a drunken argument at a hotel bar with members of the Stephen Stills band and entourage. The argument culminated in Costello disparaging James Brown and Ray Charles with racially charged insults, in comments he would later call "the exact opposite of my true feelings".^[215] When Costello's comments were reported in the press a few weeks later, the bad publicity was sufficiently severe and widespread to be regarded, including by Costello himself, as the reason he never achieved the top-level commercial success in the US that had been predicted for him.^{[216][217][218]}

In June, Costello had a hit as a songwriter when Dave Edmunds released his recording of "Girls Talk", a song Costello had written but not yet recorded.^[219] Edmunds' version reached number 4 on the UK Singles Chart and number 65 on *Billboard* Hot 100.^{[220][221]}

1980s

Costello's 1980 *Get Happy!!* album featured a sound based on vintage American soul music.^[222] Some songs marked a distinct change in mood from the angry, frustrated tone of his first three albums to a more upbeat, happy manner.^[223] The single, "I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down", was a rendition of a Sam and Dave song.^[224] Lyrically, the songs are full of Costello's signature wordplay. His only 1980 appearance in North America was at the Heatwave festival in August near Toronto.

In January 1981, Costello released *Trust* amidst growing tensions within the Attractions.^[223] The single "Watch Your Step" was released in the US only and played live on Tom Snyder's Tomorrow show, and received airplay on FM rock radio.^[225] In the UK, the single "Clubland" scraped the lower reaches of the UK Singles Chart; follow-up single "From a Whisper to a Scream" (a duet with Glenn Tilbrook of

Squeeze) became the first Costello single in over four years to completely miss the chart.^{[223][226]} Costello also co-produced Squeeze's 1981 album *East Side Story* (with Roger Béchirian) and performed backing vocals on the group's hit "Tempted".^[223]

October saw the release of *Almost Blue*, a cover album of country music including songs written by Hank Williams ("Why Don't You Love Me (Like You Used to Do?)"), Merle Haggard ("Tonight the Bottle Let Me Down"), Gram Parsons ("How Much I Lied") and George Jones ("Brown to Blue"). The album received mixed reviews.^[227] The first pressings of the record in the UK bore a sticker with the message: "WARNING: This album contains country & western music and may cause a radical reaction in narrow minded listeners".^{[228][229]} *Almost Blue* did spawn a surprise UK hit single with a version of Jerry Chesnut's "Good Year for the Roses", which reached number 6.^{[230][231]} Costello had long been an avid country music fan and has cited George Jones as his favourite country singer. He had appeared on Jones' duet album *My Very Special Guests*, contributing "Stranger in the House", which they later performed together on a 1981 HBO special dedicated to Jones.^[232]

Imperial Bedroom (1982) featured lavish production by Geoff Emerick, engineer of several Beatles records.^[233] It remains one of his most critically acclaimed records, but again it failed to produce any hit singles—"You Little Fool" and the critically acclaimed "Man Out of Time" both failed to reach the Top 40 in the UK.^{[234][235][236]} Costello collaborated with Chris Difford, also of Squeeze, to write the song "Boy With a Problem". Costello has said he disliked the marketing pitch for the album. *Imperial Bedroom* also featured Costello's song "Almost Blue", inspired by the music of jazz singer and trumpeter Chet Baker.^[233] Baker later recorded his own version of the song.^[237] *Imperial Bedroom* placed first on the *Village Voice*'s annual Pazz & Jop poll.^[238]

In 1983, he released *Punch the Clock*, featuring female backing vocal duo (Afrodiziak) and a four-piece horn section (the TKO Horns), alongside the Attractions. Clive Langer (who co-produced with Alan Winstanley), provided Costello with a melody which eventually became "Shipbuilding", which featured a trumpet solo by Baker. Prior to the release of Costello's own version, a version of the song was a minor UK hit for Soft Machine founder Robert Wyatt.^{[233][234][239]}

Under the pseudonym The Imposter, Costello released "Pills and Soap", an attack on the changes in British society brought on by Thatcherism, released to coincide with the run-up to the 1983 UK general election.^{[233][239][234]} *Punch the Clock* also generated an international hit in the single "Everyday I Write the Book", aided by a music video featuring lookalikes of Prince Charles and Princess Diana undergoing domestic strife in a suburban home. The song became Costello's first Top 40 hit single in the U.S.^{[233][239][234]} Also in the same year, Costello provided vocals on a version of the Madness song "Tomorrow's Just Another Day" released as a B-side.

Tensions within the band – notably between Costello and bassist Bruce Thomas – were beginning to tell, and Costello announced his retirement and the break-up of the group shortly before they were to record *Goodbye Cruel World* (1984).^{[240][241]} Costello later expressed disappointment with the final album's production, describing it as "probably the worst record that I could have made of a decent bunch of songs".^[242] The record was poorly received upon its initial release; the liner notes to the 1995 Rykodisc re-release, penned by Costello, begin with the words "Congratulations! You've just purchased our worst album".^[243] Costello's retirement, although short-lived, was accompanied by two compilations, *Elvis Costello: The Man* in the UK, Europe and Australia, and *The Best of Elvis Costello & The Attractions* in the U.S. Daryl Hall provided backing vocals on the song "The Only Flame in Town" on *Goodbye Cruel World*.

In 1985, he appeared in the Live Aid benefit concert in England, singing the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" as a solo artist. Costello introduced the song as an "old northern English folk song", and the audience was invited to sing the chorus. In the same year Costello teamed up with friend T-Bone Burnett for the single "The People's Limousine" under the moniker of The Coward Brothers. That year, Costello also produced Rum Sodomy & the Lash for the Irish punk/folk band the Pogues and he sang with Annie Lennox on the song "Adrian" from the Eurythmics record Be Yourself Tonight.

Growing antipathy between Costello and Bruce Thomas contributed to the Attractions' first split in 1986 when Costello was preparing to make a comeback. Working in the U.S. with Burnett, a band containing a number of Elvis Presley's sidemen (including James Burton and Jerry Scheff), and minor input from the Attractions, he produced King of America, an acoustic guitar-driven album with a country sound. It was billed as performed by "The Costello Show featuring the Attractions and Confederates" in the UK and Europe and "The Costello Show featuring Elvis Costello" in North America. Around this time he legally changed his name back to Declan MacManus, adding Aloysius as an extra middle name.^[20] Costello retooled his upcoming tour to allow for multiple nights in each city, playing one night with the Confederates, one night with the Attractions, and one night solo acoustic. In May 1986, he performed at Self Aid, a benefit concert held in Dublin that focused on the chronic unemployment which was widespread in Ireland at that time.

Later that year, Costello returned to the studio with the Attractions and recorded Blood & Chocolate, which was lauded for a post-punk fervour not heard since 1978's This Year's Model. It also marked the return of producer Nick Lowe, who had produced Costello's first five albums. While Blood & Chocolate failed to chart a hit single of any significance, it did produce what has since become one of Costello's signature concert songs, "I Want You". On this album, Costello adopted the alias Napoleon Dynamite, the name he later attributed to the character of the emcee that he played during the vaudeville-style tour to support Blood & Chocolate. (The pseudonym had previously been used in 1982, when the B-side single "Imperial Bedroom" was credited to Napoleon Dynamite & the Royal Guard; whether the title of the 2004 film Napoleon Dynamite was inspired by Costello is disputed). After the tour for Blood & Chocolate, Costello split from the Attractions, due mostly to tensions between Costello and Bruce Thomas. Costello continued to work with another Attraction, Pete Thomas, as a session musician for future releases.

Costello's recording contract with Columbia Records ended after Blood & Chocolate. In 1987, he released a compilation album, Out of Our Idiot, on his UK label, Demon Records consisting of B-sides, side projects, and unreleased songs from recording sessions from 1980 to 1987. He signed a new contract with Warner Bros. and in early 1989 released Spike, which spawned his biggest single in the U.S., the Top 20 hit (it reached number 19) "Veronica",^[244] one of several songs Costello co-wrote with Paul McCartney. At the 1989 MTV Video Music Awards on 6 September in Los Angeles, "Veronica" won the MTV Award for Best Male Video.^[245]

Costello and McCartney wrote several songs together over a short period, which were released over a number of years:

- "Back On My Feet", the B-side of McCartney's 1987 single "Once Upon a Long Ago", later added as a bonus track on the 1993 re-issue of McCartney's Flowers in the Dirt
- Costello's "Veronica" and "Pads, Paws and Claws" from his album Spike (1989)
- McCartney's "My Brave Face", "Don't Be Careless Love", "That Day Is Done" and the McCartney/Costello duet "You Want Her Too", all from McCartney's Flowers in the Dirt (1989)

- "So Like Candy" and "Playboy to a Man" from Costello's *Mighty Like a Rose* (1991)
- "The Lovers That Never Were" and "Mistress and Maid" from McCartney's *Off the Ground* (1993).
- "Shallow Grave" from Costello's *All This Useless Beauty* (1996).
- Costello has also issued solo demo recordings of "Veronica", "Pads, Paws and Claws" and "Mistress and Maid" (a song he did not otherwise record). Two other McCartney/Costello compositions remained officially unissued, while existing as widely bootlegged demos ("Tommy's Coming Home" and "Twenty Fine Fingers"). These two tracks, along with demos of other songs from their collaboration, did eventually see release on the Paul McCartney Archive edition of *Flowers in the Dirt*.

In 1987, he appeared on the HBO special *Roy Orbison and Friends, A Black and White Night*, a tribute to his long-time idol Roy Orbison. In 1988, Costello co-wrote "The Other End (Of the Telescope)" with Aimee Mann, this song appears on the Til Tuesday album *Everything's Different Now*.

1990s

In 1991, Costello released *Mighty Like a Rose*, which featured the single "The Other Side of Summer". He also co-composed and co-produced, with Richard Harvey, the title and incidental music for the mini-series *G.B.H.* by Alan Bleasdale. This entirely instrumental, and largely orchestral, soundtrack garnered a BAFTA, for Best Music for a TV Series for the pair.

In 1993, Costello experimented with classical music with a critically acclaimed collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet^[246] on *The Juliet Letters*. During this period, he wrote a full album's worth of material for Wendy James, and these songs became the tracks on her 1993 solo album *Now Ain't the Time for Your Tears*. Costello returned to rock and roll the following year with a project that reunited him with the Attractions, *Brutal Youth*. In 1995, he released *Kojak Variety*, an album of cover songs recorded five years earlier, and followed in 1996 with an album of songs originally written for other artists, *All This Useless Beauty*. This was the final album of original material that he issued under his Warner Bros. contract, and also his final album with the Attractions.

In 1994, he sang "They Can't Take That Away from Me" with Tony Bennett for *MTV Unplugged*, appearing on the album released from the broadcast.

In the spring of 1996, Costello played a series of intimate club dates, backed only by Steve Nieve on the piano, in support of *All This Useless Beauty*. An ensuing mid-year tour with the Attractions proved to be the death knell, with relations between Costello and bassist Bruce Thomas at a breaking point, Costello announced that the current tour would be the Attractions' last. The quartet performed their final U.S. show in Seattle, Washington on 1 September 1996, before wrapping up their tour in Japan. Costello continued to work frequently with Attractions Steve Nieve and Pete Thomas; eventually, both became members of Costello's new back-up band, The Imposters.

To fulfill his contractual obligations to Warner Bros., Costello released a greatest hits album titled *Extreme Honey* (1997). It contained an original track titled "The Bridge I Burned", featuring Costello's son, Matt, on bass. In the intervening period, Costello had served as artistic chair for the 1995 Meltdown Festival, which gave him the opportunity to explore his increasingly eclectic musical interests. His involvement in the festival yielded a one-off live EP with jazz guitarist Bill Frisell, which featured both cover material and a few of his own songs.

In 1998, Costello signed a multi-label contract with Polygram Records, sold by its parent company the same year to become part of the Universal Music Group. Costello released his new work on what he deemed the suitable imprimatur within the family of labels. His first new release as part of this contract involved a collaboration with Burt Bacharach. Their work had commenced earlier, in 1996, on "God Give Me Strength" for the movie Grace of My Heart. This led the pair to write and record the critically acclaimed album Painted From Memory,^[247] released under his new contract in 1998, on the Mercury Records label, featuring songs that were largely inspired by the dissolution of his relationship with Cait O'Riordan. Costello and Bacharach performed several concerts with full orchestral backing, and also recorded an updated version of Bacharach's "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" for the soundtrack to Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me, with both appearing in the film to perform the song. He also wrote "I Throw My Toys Around" for The Rugrats Movie and performed it with No Doubt. The same year, he collaborated with Paddy Moloney of The Chieftains on "The Long Journey Home" on the soundtrack of the PBS/Disney The Irish in America: Long Journey Home miniseries. The soundtrack won a Grammy Award in 1999.^[248]

In 1999, Costello contributed a version of "She", released in 1974 by Charles Aznavour and Herbert Kretzmer, for the soundtrack of the film Notting Hill, with Trevor Jones producing. Costello's version of the song reached number 19 on the UK singles chart.^[249] For the 25th anniversary of Saturday Night Live, Costello was invited to the programme, where he re-enacted his abrupt song-switch: This time, however, he interrupted the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage", and they acted as his backing group for "Radio Radio".^[250] He also co-wrote another song with Aimee Mann, "The Fall of the World's Own Optimist", for her 2000 album Bachelor No. 2.^[251]

2000s

From 2001 to 2005, Costello re-issued his back catalogue in the U.S., from *My Aim Is True* (1977) to *All This Useless Beauty* (1996), on double-disc collections on the Rhino Records label. These releases, which each contained second discs of bonus material, ultimately fell out of print by 2007 after Universal Music acquired the rights to Costello's catalogue. Universal subsequently released new deluxe editions of *My Aim Is True* and *This Year's Model* with new bonus material of full-length concerts from the time of each album's release. These deluxe editions also fell out of print and Universal has reverted to re-releasing Costello's pre-1987 albums in their original context without bonus material.

In 2000, Costello wrote lyrics to "Green Song", a solo cello piece by Svante Henryson; this song appears on the Anne Sofie von Otter album *For the Stars*.

In 2000, Costello appeared at the Town Hall, New York, in Steve Nieve's opera *Welcome to the Voice*, alongside Ron Sexsmith and John Flansburgh of They Might Be Giants. In 2001, Costello was artist-in-residence at UCLA and wrote the music for a new ballet. He produced and appeared on an album of pop songs for the



Costello performing at Glastonbury, 2005



Costello performing in 2006

classical singer Anne Sofie von Otter. He released the album When I Was Cruel in 2002 on Island Records, and toured with a new band, the Imposters (essentially the Attractions but with a different bass player, Davey Faragher, formerly of Cracker).

On 23 February 2003, Costello, along with Bruce Springsteen, Steven Van Zandt and Dave Grohl, performed a version of The Clash's "London Calling" at the 45th Grammy Awards ceremony, in honour of Clash frontman Joe Strummer, who had died the previous December.^[252] In March, Elvis Costello & the Attractions were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.^[253] In May, he announced his engagement to Canadian jazz singer and pianist Diana Krall, whom he had seen in concert and then met backstage at the Sydney Opera House in Australia. That September, he released North, an album of piano-based ballads concerning the breakdown of his former marriage, and his falling in love with Krall.

The song "Scarlet Tide" (co-written by Costello and T-Bone Burnett and used in the film Cold Mountain) was nominated for a 2004 Academy Award; he performed it at the awards ceremony with Alison Krauss, who sang the song on the official soundtrack. Costello co-wrote many songs on Krall's 2004 CD, The Girl in the Other Room, the first of hers to feature several original compositions. In July 2004, Costello's first full-scale orchestral work, Il Sogno, was performed in New York. The work, a ballet based on Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, was commissioned by Italian dance troupe Aterballetto, and received critical acclaim from classical music critics. Performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, the recording was released on CD in September by Deutsche Grammophon. In September 2004, Costello released the album The Delivery Man, recorded in Oxford, Mississippi, on Lost Highway Records, and it was hailed as one of his best.



Costello's hand prints on the European Walk of Fame, Rotterdam

A CD recording of a collaboration with Marian McPartland on her show Piano Jazz was released in 2005. It featured Costello singing six jazz standards and two of his own songs, accompanied by McPartland on piano.

A 2005 tour included a gig at Glastonbury that Costello considered so dreadful that he said "I don't care if I ever play England again. That gig made up my mind I wouldn't come back. I don't get along with it. We lost touch. It's 25 years since I lived there. I don't dig it, they don't dig me....British music fans don't have the same attitude to age as they do in America, where young people come to check

out, say Willie Nelson. They feel some connection with him and find a role for that music in their lives".^[254]

In 2005, Costello performed with Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong. They played both Costello and Green Day songs together, including "Alison", "No Action", "Basket Case" and "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)".

In November, Costello started recording a new album with Allen Toussaint and producer Joe Henry. Costello had a collaborative history with Toussaint, beginning with a couple of scattered album tracks in the 1980s.^[255] In September 2006, Costello and Allen Toussaint performed in New York at a series of benefit concerts for victims of Hurricane Katrina.^[255] By week's end, Costello had written The River in Reverse, performed it with Toussaint and discussed plans for an album with Verve Records executives. Costello turned to older songs to reflect the national malaise at the time.^[255]

In a studio recording of Nieve's opera *Welcome to the Voice* (2006, Deutsche Grammophon), Costello interpreted the character of Chief of Police, with Barbara Bonney, Robert Wyatt, Sting and Amanda Roocroft, and the album reached No. 2 in the *Billboard* classical charts. Costello later reprised the piece on the stage of the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris in 2008, with Sting, Joe Sumner (Sting's son) and Sylvia Schwartz. Also released in 2006 was a live recording of a concert with the Metropole Orkest at the North Sea Jazz Festival, entitled *My Flame Burns Blue*. The soundtrack for *House, M.D.* featured Costello's interpretation of "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera, with the song appearing in the second episode of Season 2.

Costello was commissioned to write a chamber opera by the Danish Royal Opera, Copenhagen, on the subject of Hans Christian Andersen's infatuation with Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. Called *The Secret Songs*, it remained unfinished.^[256] In a performance in 2007 directed by Kasper Bech Holten at the Opera's studio theatre (Takeloftet), finished songs were interspersed with pieces from Costello's 1993 collaborative classical album *The Juliet Letters*, featuring Danish soprano Sine Bundgaard as Lind. The 2009 album *Secret, Profane & Sugarcane* includes material from *Secret Songs*.

On 22 April 2008, *Momofuku* was released on Lost Highway Records, the same imprint that released *The Delivery Man*, his previous studio album. The album was, at least initially, released exclusively on vinyl (with a code to download a digital copy). That summer, in support of the album, Costello toured with the Police on the final leg of their 2007/2008 Reunion Tour. Costello played a homecoming gig at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on 25 June 2006.^[257] and, that month, gave his first performance in Poland, appearing with The Imposters for the closing gig of the Malta theatre festival in Poznań. In 2006, Costello performed with Fiona Apple in the Decades Rock TV special. Apple performed two Costello songs and Costello performed two Apple songs.^[258]

In 2007, Costello collaborated with the Argentinean/Uruguayan electro-tango band Bajofondo on the song "Fairly Right" from the album *Mar Dulce*. In 2008, Costello collaborated with Fall Out Boy on the track "What a Catch, Donnie" from their album *Folie à Deux*. In Jenny Lewis' 2008 release, *Acid Tongue*, Costello provided vocals for the song "Carpetbaggers". In November 2009, Costello appeared live with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band at Madison Square Garden and performed the Jackie Wilson song "(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher".^[259]

In July 2008, Costello (as Declan McManus) appeared in his home city Liverpool where he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Liverpool.^[260] Costello was featured on Fall Out Boy's 2008 album *Folie à Deux*, providing vocals on the track "What a Catch, Donnie", along with other artists who are friends with the band.

Costello appeared in Stephen Colbert's television special *A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All*. In the program, he was eaten by a bear, but later saved by Santa Claus; he also sang a duet with Colbert. The special was first aired on 23 November 2008.^[261] Costello released *Secret, Profane & Sugarcane*, a collaboration with T-Bone Burnett, on 9 June 2009. It was his first on the Starbucks Hear Music label and a return to country music in the manner of *Good Year for the Roses*.

In May 2009, Costello made a surprise cameo appearance on-stage at the Beacon Theatre in New York as part of Spinal Tap's *Unwiggled and Unplugged* show, singing their fictional 1965 hit "Gimme Some Money" with the band backing him up.

In December 2009, Costello portrayed The Shape on the album *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, a collaboration between rock singer John Mellencamp and novelist Stephen King. In February 2010, Costello appeared in the live cinecast of Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion*, singing some of his own songs, and participating in many of the show's other musical and acting performances. On 30 April 2011, he played the song "Pump it Up" with the Odds before the start of a Vancouver Canucks playoff game at Rogers Arena in Vancouver, British Columbia.^[262]

2010–present

Costello released the album *National Ransom* in autumn of 2010.

On 26 February 2012, Costello paid tribute to music legends Chuck Berry and Leonard Cohen, who were the recipients of the first annual PEN Awards for songwriting excellence, at the JFK Presidential Library, in Boston, Massachusetts, on 26 February 2012.^[263] In September 2013 Costello released *Wise Up Ghost*, a collaboration with the Roots. On 25 October 2013, Costello was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the New England Conservatory.^[264]

In 2012, he played ukulele, mandolin, guitar and added backing vocals on Diana Krall's 11th studio album, *Glad Rag Doll* (as "Howard Coward").^[265] On 10 September 2013, he played during the Apple September 2013 Event after the introduction of iTunes Radio, iPhone 5C and 5S at Town Hall, at the Apple campus.^[266]

On Gov't Mule's album *Shout!*, released in September 2013, he sang on the track "Funny Little Tragedy". In March 2014, Costello recorded *Lost on the River: The New Basement Tapes* with Rhiannon Giddens, Taylor Goldsmith, Jim James and Marcus Mumford.^[267] During the 2016 Detour, he performs with Larkin Poe.

On 12 October 2018, Costello released his first studio album in five years, *Look Now*, recorded with The Imposters. The album features three songs co-written with Burt Bacharach, and one song co-written with Carole King. Costello wrote and produced a large majority of the album himself, with help from producer Sebastian Krys. On 26 January 2020, *Look Now* won the Grammy Award for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album at the 62nd Grammy Awards.

Costello was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2019 Birthday Honours for services to music.^[268]

In 2021, Costello released *Spanish Model*, a remix of 1978's *This Year's Model* with Spanish lyrics. Singers from Spanish-speaking parts of the world, with help from Spanish-speaking songwriters, translated all 16 songs of the album into Spanish, with the new vocals set to the original recording and instrumentation by the Attractions. The singers included Juanes, Jorge Drexler, Luis Fonsi, Francisca Valenzuela, Fuego, Draco Rosa, and Fito Páez.^{[269][270]}



Costello performing in tribute to music legends Chuck Berry and Leonard Cohen, who were the recipients of the first annual PEN Awards for songwriting excellence, at the JFK Presidential Library, in Boston, Massachusetts on 26 February 2012

In 2021, Costello appeared at the Royal Variety Performance playing two songs with the Imposters. He was introduced by the MC Alan Carr as a man who has achieved everything except appearing at the Royal Variety Performance. Between songs Costello informed the audience that he was the second McManus to appear. His father Ross appeared in the 1960s singing "If I Had a Hammer".^{[271][272]}

In January 2022, he performed on The Graham Norton Show.^[273] That same month he released the LP The Boy Named If, recorded with the Imposters.^[274] The Resurrection of Rust by a reformed Rusty followed later that year.^[275]

In April 2023, Costello collaborated with Slovenian band Joker Out on their single, "New Wave".^[276] The compilation The Songs of Bacharach & Costello was also released at this time.^[277] In August 2023, he made a three-dates mini-tour together with Italian singer-songwriter Carmen Consoli, a project the two had originally planned in 2012 but that at the time had been shelved due to Consoli's pregnancy.^{[278][279][280]}

Writing

Since the early 1980s, Costello has written about music for publications including Hot Press,^{[281][282]} Details,^[283] Mojo,^[1] Musician,^{[292][293]} NME,^[294] Rolling Stone,^[55] and Vanity Fair.^{[295][296][62]} He has also written several articles about football (soccer), as an avid and knowledgeable fan, for the Times of London.^{[297][298][299]} A Vanity Fair editor who worked with Costello said, "His copy was clean, elegant, and ready to run."^[300]

Costello has written liner notes for releases by artists including Gram Parsons,^[301] the Fairfield Four,^[302] Dusty Springfield,^[303] Booker T. & the M.G.'s,^[304] Burt Bacharach,^[305] and Bill Frisell.^[306] He has written forewords to books by Geoff Emerick,^[307] Loretta Lynn,^[308] and Wanda Jackson.^[309]

In 1993, Costello began reissuing his catalog of albums from 1977 through 1986, on Rykodisc, and wrote detailed liner notes for each reissued album. Reviewers praised these liner notes as frank and charming.^{[310][311]} In 2001, he began a second round of reissues, this time of his catalog from 1977 through 1996, on Rhino Entertainment, and wrote even more detailed liner notes. Goldmine said the Rhino liner notes brought "a wealth of insight into the songs and the creative process itself" and that "liner notes simply don't get any better than this."^[312] Pitchfork called them "truly fascinating."^[313] Several journalists noted that, at a total of 60,000 words, the Rhino liner notes amounted to a serialised memoir.^{[314][217][315]} In 2012, Slate magazine published a book review of the Rhino liner notes in which it called them "one of the best rock-star memoirs of the last decade."^[315]

In 2015, Costello published Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink, a memoir that had little overlap with his reissue liner notes.^[316] In this book, Costello recounted his life in music and traced parallels between his own experiences and those of his father and grandfather, both of whom were musicians.^[317] The book received enthusiastic positive reviews from prominent publications. The New York Times said it contained "some of the best writing – funny, strange, spiteful, anguished – we've ever had from an important musician."^[318] The Washington Post praised it as having more in common with Frank McCourt's memoir Angela's Ashes than Mötley Crüe's The Dirt and said it was more enjoyable than Keith Richards' Life and Bob Dylan's Chronicles: Volume One.^[319] However, some positive reviews noted that the quality of the writing in the book was uneven and that the book might have been improved by being shorter, more focused thematically, or both.^{[318][317]} The few negative reviews the book received criticised its nonlinear structure, its relative lack of emphasis on Costello's pop-star period, and its lack of details about his romantic

relationships.^[320] The book reached number 7 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list.^[321] It was shortlisted for the Penderyn Music Book Prize, a British award for excellence in writing about music.^[322] The audiobook, narrated by Costello, was nominated for a Grammy Award.^[323]

Acting and television presenting

Costello has played himself or fictional characters very similar to himself in movies and television shows including *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999),^[324] *The Simpsons* (2002),^[325] *Frasier* (2003),^[326] *Two and a Half Men* (2004),^[327] *30 Rock* (2009),^[328] *Treme* (2010),^[329] and *Sesame Street* (2011).^[330] He has also played more character-based roles, such as the title character's eccentric brother in screenwriter Alan Bleasdale's television series *Scully* (1984), an inept magician in Bleasdale's movie *No Surrender* (1985), a teacher at an impoverished school in the movie *Prison Song* (2001), and the title character's father in the children's animated series *The Adventures of Pete the Cat* (2017).^[331] In 1995, he appeared as a guest pundit on the British football commentary television show *Football Italia*.^{[299][332]}

In 2003, Costello substituted for an ailing David Letterman as the host of *Late Show with David Letterman*", making him the only musical guest of the show to have served as guest host.^[333] Costello's performance on that show led to interest in developing a music-oriented talk show with him as the host, which came to fruition a few years later.^{[334][335]}

In 2008, Costello began production on *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...*, a show on which he interviewed and performed songs with other musicians.^[336] Guests included Tony Bennett, Bruce Springsteen, Smokey Robinson, Bono and the Edge of U2, opera singer Renée Fleming, and former president (and accomplished saxophonist) Bill Clinton.^[337] The series ran for 20 episodes over two seasons from 2008 through 2010.^[338] It aired on Sundance Channel in the US, CTV in Canada, and Channel 4 in the UK.^[339] The show received favourable reviews in the US, with reviewers praising Costello's ability to get his guests to reveal insights into their creative processes and calling him a "deeply knowledgeable, erudite and witty host."^{[340][341][337]} In Canada, the show won a Gemini Award for Best Talk Series.^[342] In Britain, however, it was aired in an overnight time slot and largely ignored.^{[22][334]}

Public image and controversies

Costello revealed little about his background and gave few interviews in the first five years of his career, so the few widely published interviews he gave played a large role in forming his early public image.^[217] In a widely quoted August 1977 interview with Nick Kent, Costello said the only things that mattered to him were "revenge and guilt".^{[58][343]} This phrase would be associated with him throughout his career.^[217]

1977 *Saturday Night Live* appearance

On 17 December 1977, Costello and the Attractions appeared on *Saturday Night Live* as last-minute replacements for the Sex Pistols.^{[170][344]} One of the songs Costello was scheduled to perform, at the request of his record company, was "Less Than Zero", a song Costello wrote in reaction to seeing British fascist Oswald Mosley being treated with what Costello felt was undeserved deference during an interview on British television.^{[344][58]} Costello did not want to play the song because he thought the subject was too obscure for American audiences and the song was too low-key to make a strong impression.^{[107][345]} Instead, he wanted to play the then-unrecorded song, "Radio Radio". During the live broadcast, Costello played a few bars of "Less Than Zero" and then told the Attractions to play "Radio Radio", which they

played in its entirety.^[173] This angered the show's producer, Lorne Michaels, because Michaels was not prepared for the change and because "Radio Radio" had not been cleared by NBC's censors.^{[346][347][m]} When asked about the incident on NBC's *Tomorrow Show* three years later, Costello said he was told he would never appear on American television again.^[348] He appeared as musical guest on *Saturday Night Live* again in 1989 and 1991.^[170] Although the incident provoked little comment at the time, by 1999 it had become so well known that *Saturday Night Live* invited Costello to perform a parody of it with the Beastie Boys on the show 25th-anniversary special.^{[349][350]}

1979 Columbus, Ohio, incident

In March 1979, during a drunken argument with Bonnie Bramlett and other members of the Stephen Stills band, at a Holiday Inn bar in Columbus, Ohio, the singer referred to James Brown as a "jive-ass nigger," then upped the ante by pronouncing Ray Charles a "blind, ignorant nigger."^[351] Costello addressed the controversy at a New York City press conference a few days later, stating that he had been drunk and had been attempting to be obnoxious to bring the conversation to a swift conclusion, not anticipating that Bramlett would bring his comments to the press. According to Costello, "it became necessary for me to outrage these people with about the most obnoxious and offensive remarks that I could muster". In his liner notes for the expanded version of *Get Happy!!* Costello writes that some time after the incident he had declined an offer to meet Charles out of guilt and embarrassment, although Charles himself had forgiven Costello, saying "Drunken talk isn't meant to be printed in the paper." Costello worked extensively in Britain's Rock Against Racism campaign both before and after the incident. In an interview with Questlove (drummer for the Roots, with whom Costello collaborated in 2013), he stated: "It's upsetting because I can't explain how I even got to think you could be funny about something like that," and further elaborating with, "I'm sorry. You know? It's about time I said it out loud."^[352]

2010 cancelled Tel Aviv concerts

In early 2010, Costello was invited to play his first concert in Israel, on 30 June of that year, at the Caesarea Amphitheater north of Tel Aviv.^[353] Due to high demand for tickets, a second concert was added for 1 July.^[354] At first, Costello seemed resolved to resist political pressure on artists to refrain from performing in Israel due to the country's controversial treatment of Palestinians. In early May, Costello told Israel's largest daily newspaper, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, "As soon as you play you are going to get criticised." Costello told the newspaper he did not agree with organisations that "think that they need to boycott Israel to pressure it," saying he thought "culture is the only way in which humanity shares experiences, and that is why I need to come and perform here."^[355] Two weeks later, he announced on his website that he had cancelled the concerts because of what he called the "grave and complex" sensitivities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.^[356] He told *The Jerusalem Post* his decision was part of a "30-year conundrum" that he had been dealing with regarding playing in Israel. He also told the *Post* that he had not been threatened or coerced, but that he "woke up one day and realised [he] couldn't go on with the shows." The promoters of the concerts expressed shock. Israeli Culture Minister Limor Livnat, a member of right-wing Likud Party, denounced the decision. The organisation Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel praised it.^[357]

Personal life

Costello has no full siblings.^[22] He has four half-brothers from his father's second marriage, all of whom are musicians.^[32]

In November 1974, Costello married Mary Burgoyne.^[358] Costello has said he had hoped to marry Burgoyne since he was 14 years old and they were at school together in London, although they did not begin dating until four years later, when Costello moved back to London after living with his mother in Liverpool for two and a half years.^{[359][360]} They have one child, Matthew MacManus, born in early 1975.^[98] Costello's rapid rise to fame put a strain on their marriage almost immediately.^[361] The couple separated in early 1978 but reconciled the following year.^{[362][363]} They separated permanently in mid-1984 and finalised their divorce in 1988.^{[364][365]} Costello has said that his inability to remain faithful in his first marriage, and the emotional turmoil it caused him, has been a major inspiration for his songs.^{[22][366]}



Costello and Diana Krall in 2009

In early 1985, Costello began a romantic relationship with Cait O'Riordan, then bass player for the Pogues, whom he met in October 1984 while their respective bands were on tour together.^[367] In May 1986, they exchanged wedding rings and thereafter presented themselves, and were regarded, as husband and wife. They were never legally married.^{[368][365]} In September 2002, Costello ended the relationship.^[369] O'Riordan said that she was never married, that there was "no piece of paper with marriage on it". They have no children. Since their split, both Costello and O'Riordan have described the union as unhappy.^{[370][371]}

In early 2003, Costello became engaged to marry singer and pianist Diana Krall, whom he met at the Grammy Awards ceremony the year before.^{[372][373]} They married in December 2003.^[374] The couple has twin sons, born in December 2006.^[375]

Health

In July 2018, Costello announced that he had been successfully treated for a cancerous growth six weeks earlier, but needed to cancel the remaining six dates of his European tour to continue recovering from the surgery. Costello said he had underestimated how much time he would need to recover.^[376] He resumed performing in September 2018.^[377]

Humanitarian causes

In 2017, Costello helped establish the Musician Treatment Foundation as a member of its board of directors. The foundation, which is based in Austin, Texas, helps under- and uninsured professional musicians receive free orthopedic care for upper limb injuries.^[378] He performed concerts for the foundation's benefit in October 2017 and December 2022.^{[379][380]}

Costello sits on the advisory board of the board of directors of the Jazz Foundation of America, which provides emergency financial support and other services to working and retired musicians.^[381]

Vegetarianism

A pescatarian since the early 1980s, Costello says he was moved to reject meat after seeing the documentary *The Animals Film* (1982), which also helped inspire his song "Pills and Soap" from 1983's *Punch the Clock*.^[382] In January 2013, Costello teamed up with Paul McCartney to create an advertisement campaign backing vegetarian foods produced by the Linda McCartney Foods brand.^[383]

Legacy

Costello is considered by experts in pop and rock music to be one of the best songwriters of his generation. Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic summarised Costello as, "The most evocative, innovative, and gifted songwriter since Bob Dylan, with songs that offer highly personal takes on love and politics."^[384] In 2015, *Rolling Stone* ranked him 24th their list of the greatest songwriters of all time, calling him a songwriter of "almost unparalleled versatility."^[385] When he was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2016, the induction announcement said the impact of Costello's songs "far out-distanced their commercial performance."^[386]

Costello's debut album, *My Aim Is True*, is widely considered one of the best debut albums in the history of rock music.^{[387][388]} On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the album's release, *Billboard* called it "one of the most influential albums in the history of rock and punk" and "one of the strongest debut albums in history".^[389] Although Costello never applied the term "new wave" to his music,^[56] Costello's early records helped defined the new wave music genre. AllMusic said, "Costello's early albums changed the face of pop music by harnessing punk's energy to a leaner, more incisive aesthetic that included pop hooks, virtually inventing new wave in the process."^[390] In their 2013 list of greatest albums of all time, the *NME* described *This Year's Model* as "defining the British new wave."^[391] In their 2009 list of greatest albums of all time, *Rolling Stone* said "the keyboard-driven sound of [Costello's 1979 song] 'Accidents Will Happen' helped define New Wave."^[392]

Musical artists with little connection to new wave have also claimed influence by Costello. Bruce Springsteen has said that comments Costello made in the press criticising Springsteen's early songs as overly romantic led Springsteen to write darker songs for his 1978 album *Darkness on the Edge of Town*.^[393] Thom Yorke called *Blood & Chocolate* "the album that made me change the way I thought about recording and writing music [and] lyrics" and named it as an important influence on his band Radiohead's album *OK Computer*.^[394] Liz Phair, in her appreciation of Costello for *Rolling Stone*'s 100 Greatest Artists of All Time, wrote: "I'd pay a great amount of money to audit a course taught by him."^[395] Suzanne Vega has called Costello one of the "melodic geniuses" whose music she listens to in order to "stretch my sense of melody."^[396]

Prominent artists in other fields have claimed influence or inspiration from Costello. Filmmaker and comedian Judd Apatow has called Costello "a gigantic inspiration to me" and has suggested that he and other comedians are "fanatical" about Costello's music because of the "spirit of standing up for what you believe in and the humor" in it.^[397] Satirist and television host Stephen Colbert has described Costello as "probably my favourite rock artist" and said he sees parallels between his own humor and Costello's "wry, sardonic" songs.^[398] Novelist Bret Easton Ellis titled his 1985 novel *Less Than Zero* after a Costello song and its 2010 sequel *Imperial Bedrooms* after a Costello album. Ellis has said Costello was once his "idol".^{[399][400]} Visual artist Peter Blake featured Costello prominently in his 2012 reworking of the

artwork he created for the cover of the Beatles' 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Blake said he included people he admired and who had contributed to British culture since he created the original work.^[401]

Awards and honours

Entertainment industry awards

United States:

- ASCAP Founders Award (2003)^[402]
- Grammy Award, Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals, "I Still Have That Other Girl" (1998)^[403]
- Grammy Award, Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album, *Look Now* (2019)^[404]
- Grammy Hall of Fame, *My Aim Is True* (2007)^[405]
- MTV Video Music Award, Best Male Video, "Veronica" (1989)^[406]
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, with the Attractions (2003)^[253]
- Songwriters Hall of Fame (2016)^[407]

United Kingdom:

- BAFTA, Best Original Television Music, *G.B.H.* (1992)^[408]
- Ivor Novello Award, Outstanding Contemporary Song Collection (1995)^[409]
- Ivor Novello Award, PRS Outstanding Contribution to British Music Award (1997)^[410]

Netherlands:

- Edison Award, Pop category, *My Aim Is True* (1978)^[411]
- Edison Award, singer-songwriter, *Spike* (1989)^[412]
- Edison Award, Extra/special production, innovative, *The Juliet Letters* (1993)^[413]
- Edison Award, International singer, *Painted from Memory* (1999)^[414]

Canada:

- Gemini Award, Best Talk Series, *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...* (2010)^[342]

Critics' best-of lists and music press awards

Best of year:

- NME Awards Best Songwriter (1978)^[415]
- NME Awards Best Songwriter (1983)^[416]
- NME Awards Best Album, *Punch the Clock* (1983)^[416]
- Village Voice Pazz and Jop critics' poll, number 1 album of the year, *This Years Model* (1978)^[190]
- Village Voice Pazz and Jop critics' poll, number 1 album of the year, *Imperial Bedroom* (1982)^[417]

Best of all time:

- Five albums on NME's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time (2013):^[418]
 - *This Year's Model* (#256)^[391]
 - *My Aim is True* (#281)^[391]
 - *Imperial Bedroom* (#316)^[391]
 - *Punch the Clock* (#345)^[391]
 - *Blood and Chocolate* (#483)^[391]
- Four albums on Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time (2009):^[419]
 - *This Years Model* (#98)^[420]
 - *Imperial Bedroom* (#166)^[421]
 - *My Aim Is True* (#168)^[422]
 - *Armed Forces* (#475)^[392]
- Number 24 on Rolling Stone's 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time (2015)^[385]
- Number 80 on Rolling Stone's 100 Greatest Artists of All Time (2010)^[395]

Honorary degrees

- Doctor of Music, University of Liverpool (2008)^[423]
- Doctor of Music, New England Conservatory of Music (2013)^[424]

Discography

Albums as solo artist and bandleader

- *My Aim Is True* (1977)
- *This Year's Model* (1978)
- *Armed Forces* (1979)
- *Get Happy!!* (1980)
- *Trust* (1981)
- *Almost Blue* (1981)
- *Imperial Bedroom* (1982)
- *Punch the Clock* (1983)
- *Goodbye Cruel World* (1984)
- *King of America* (1986)
- *Blood & Chocolate* (1986)
- *Spike* (1989)
- *Mighty Like a Rose* (1991)
- *Brutal Youth* (1994)
- *Kojak Variety* (1995)
- *All This Useless Beauty* (1996)
- *When I Was Cruel* (2002)
- *North* (2003)
- *The Delivery Man* (2004)

- Momofuku (2008)
- Secret, Profane & Sugarcane (2009)
- National Ransom (2010)
- Look Now (2018)
- Hey Clockface (2020)
- The Boy Named If (2022)

Collaborative albums

- The Juliet Letters, with the Brodsky Quartet (1993)
- Painted from Memory, with Burt Bacharach (1998)
- For the Stars, with Anne Sofie von Otter (2001)
- Piano Jazz, with Marian McPartland (2005)
- My Flame Burns Blue, with the Metropole Orkest (2006)
- The River in Reverse, with Allen Toussaint (2006)
- Wise Up Ghost, with the Roots (2013)
- Lost on the River, as member of The New Basement Tapes (2014)
- The Resurrection of Rust, with Allan Mayes (2022)

Composer, soundtracks and scores

- G.B.H., with Richard Harvey (1991)
- Jake's Progress, with Richard Harvey (1995)
- Il Sogno (2004)

Producer for others

- The Specials – the Specials (1980, with the Specials)
- East Side Story – Squeeze (1981, with Roger Béchirian)
- "Free Nelson Mandela" – the Special A.K.A (1984)
- Rum Sodomy & the Lash – the Pogues (1985)

Filmography

As actor

- 1979 film debut as "The Earl of Manchester" in Americathon. Costello and the Attractions mime the song "Crawling to the U.S.A." in the film, which also appears on its soundtrack album.
- 1984 as "Henry Scully" in the UK TV series, Scully
- 1984 as "Stone Deaf A&R Man" in The Bullshitters, a movie made by members of the comedy troupe The Comic Strip, first aired on Channel 4
- 1985 as inept magician "Rosco de Ville" in the Alan Bleasdale film, No Surrender
- 1987 as "Hives the Butler" in the Alex Cox film, Straight to Hell, starring Joe Strummer and Courtney Love. Costello's "Big Nothing" (AKA "Town Called Big Nothing") appears in the

film and on its soundtrack album.

- 1994 as himself on *The Larry Sanders Show* in the episode "People's Choice"
- 1996 as himself on *The Larry Sanders Show* in the episode "Everybody Loves Larry"
- 1997 as a barman in *Spice World*
- 1999 as himself in *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, performing Burt Bacharach's "I'll Never Fall In Love Again" (with Bacharach), which also appears on its soundtrack album.
- 1999 as a younger version of himself in *200 Cigarettes*
- 2000 as himself, filling his car with petrol in the full-length feature *Sans plomb*, whose soundtrack includes several of his songs
- 2001 as himself performing "Fly Me to the Moon" on the series finale of *3rd Rock from the Sun*
- 2002 as himself on the episode "How I Spent My Strummer Vacation" of *The Simpsons*
- 2003 as Ben on *Frasier*, in the season 10 episode "Farewell Nervosa"
- 2003 as himself in *I Love Your Work*
- 2004 as himself in the UK TV *Dead Ringers* New Year Special, apparently and reportedly having serendipitously entered a filming venue.^[425]
- 2004 as himself in *Two and a Half Men* – Season 2, Episode 1
- 2004 as himself in *De-Lovely*
- 2006 as himself in *Delirious*
- 2006 as himself in *Before the Music Dies*
- 2006 as himself in *Putting the River in Reverse*
- 2006 as himself in *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*^[426]
- 2008 as himself in *A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All!*
- 2009 as himself on the *30 Rock* episode "Kidney Now!"
- 2010 as himself on *Treme*
- 2017 as himself in *Ex Libris – The New York Public Library*
- 2017–2019 as Pete's Dad (voice) in *Pete the Cat* (Season 1)

As part of soundtracks

- 1983, "Party Party" appears in the film of the same name and on its soundtrack album.
- 1991, "Days" (a cover of the Kinks song) appears in the film *Until the end of the World* and on its soundtrack album.
- 1995, "My Dark Life," a collaboration with Brian Eno, appears on the album *Songs in the Key of X*.
- 1996, "God Give Me Strength," a collaboration with Burt Bacharach, appears in the film *Grace of My Heart* and on its soundtrack album. Nominated for Satellite Award for Best Original Song.
- 1998, "My Mood Swings" appears in the film *The Big Lebowski* and on its soundtrack album.
- 1998, "I Throw My Toys Around," a collaboration with No Doubt, appears in the film *The Rugrats Movie* and on its soundtrack album.
- 1999, "She" (a cover of the Charles Aznavour song) appears in the film *Notting Hill* and on its soundtrack album. The song peaked at No. 19 on the UK Singles Chart.
- 2003, "The Scarlet Tide," written by Costello and T-Bone Burnett and performed by Alison Krauss, appears in the film *Cold Mountain* and on its soundtrack album. Nominated for Academy Award for Best Original Song and Grammy Award for Best Song Written for Visual Media.

- 2019, "I Want You" appears twice in the critically acclaimed British film *Only You*.

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Notes

- Costello's albums have appeared at these ranks on the *Village Voice* Pazz & Jop critics' poll: *My Aim Is True* (1977), number 2;^[6] *This Years Model* (1978), number 1;^[7] *Armed Forces* (1979), number 5;^[8] *Get Happy!!* (1980), number 7;^[9] *Trust* (1981), number 3;^[10] *Imperial Bedroom* (1982), number 1;^[11] *Punch the Clock* (1983), number 11;^[12] *King of America* (1986), number 2; *Blood and Chocolate* (1986), number 9;^[13] *Spike* (1989), number 7;^[14] *Brutal Youth* (1994), number 31;^[15] *Painted From Memory* (1998), number 18;^[16] *When I Was Cruel* (2002), number 13;^[17] *The River in Reverse* (2006), number 32.^[18]
- Costello was born Declan Patrick MacManus. He changed his legal name to Elvis Costello after he became successful under that stage name, according to him, to rebut the insinuations of "smartarse customs officials" and "obnoxious journalists who accused me of being a novelty act."^[19] In 1985, he changed his legal name to Declan Patrick Aloysius MacManus.^[20] The extra middle name is a reference to a character played by the comedian Tony Hancock.^[21]
- Some sources incorrectly state Costello's mother is of Irish descent and Catholic, apparently taking Costello's comments in some interviews that he is of Irish descent to mean he comes from an exclusively Irish and Catholic background. However, in *Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink*, Costello writes that his maternal grandparents "were unusual for a Merseyside couple in not having any Irish, Scottish, or Welsh blood between them" ^[25] and that his mother was raised Congregationalist.^[26]
- Some sources incorrectly state that Ross is the actor seen singing the jingle in the television ads, the writer of the jingle, or both. The onscreen actor is Julian Chagrin.^[40] The jingle was written by Rod Allen, the jingle-writing member for the advertising agency Allen, Brady, and Marsh.^[41]
- Ross changed the spelling of his surname to MacManus early in his career as a musician.^{[43][44]}
- Some sources incorrectly state that Costello attended the grammar school St Francis Xavier's College, Liverpool. He did not. He attended Campion Catholic High School in Everton, Liverpool a comprehensive school that had previously shared a campus with St Francis Xavier's College when the combined schools were known as St Francis Xavier Bi-Lateral School.^{[67][68]}
- Britain had no national minimum wage in 1972, but £20 a week, when adjusted for inflation, is approximately equal to 75% of the 2023 national minimum wage for 18- to 20-year-olds.^{[72][73]}
- Rusty's version of the song was co-written by Mayes and Costello, but by the time Costello recorded it as "Ghost Train", nothing remained of Mayes's contribution, so "Ghost Train" is credited to Costello alone.^[35]

- i. In a little-seen version of the television commercial, in which the lemonade drinker fantasises that he is a singer in a nightclub, Costello and his father mimed instruments as members of the singer's band.^[42]
- j. Sources prior to 2015 state that Costello sent the six songs he sent to Charlie Gillett, often referred to as *The Honky Tonk Demos*, to everyone he sent demos to during this period, including Stiff Records. However, in his 2015 memoir, *Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink*, Costello states that his notebooks from this period indicate he was sending a different set of songs to each recipient. The deluxe ebook edition reproduces handwritten notebook pages illustrating this.^[111]
- k. After Costello became successful, the six songs he sent to Gillett were widely bootlegged.^[119] They received an official release as bonus tracks on the 1993 and 2001 reissues of *My Aim Is True*.^{[106][107]}
- l. Costello wrote articles for *Mojo* in 1994,^[284] 1998 (three articles),^{[285][286][287]} 1999,^[288] 2002 (two articles),^{[289][290]} and 2014.^[291]
- m. Many sources assert without evidence that Lorne Michaels or others associated with *Saturday Night Live*, rather than Costello's record company, had told Costello not to play "Radio Radio", or that the supposedly anti-corporate nature of the song's lyrics was the reason he was told not to play it, or both. This is not supported by Costello's account, nor by Micheals' account, nor the accounts of others directly involved with the show.^{[345][346][347]}

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External links

- [Official website \(https://elviscostello.com/\)](https://elviscostello.com/) 
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