

Young Costello ultra punk

'My Aim Is True' embodies many of the feelings students struggle with daily

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You know that "emo" look the cool little kiddies love? You know, thick, black-rimmed glasses, suit and tie, Chuck Taylors, etc. Well, it may come as a surprise, but the look was perfected in 1977 by one young Declan McManus (known to most as Elvis Costello). Not only did young Declan perfect the look, he had the attitude and the edge that is missed sorely by many of today's little "emo" kiddies. When Elvis Costello made *My Aim Is True*, he wrote songs containing a slight pinch of bitterness (for our purposes, "slight pinch" means "a hell of a lot"). Around the same time, Johnny Rotten was yelling "Get pissed, destroy."

Elvis got pissed, all right. But unlike the Sex Pistols' aggressive punk rock, he incorporated poppy hooks, sing-a-long choruses, and — gasp! — clever lyrics.

My Aim Is True is a great album for any college student, because along with the bitterness that accompanies a broken heart, a fear of the pressures of adulthood permeates many of the tracks. The album opens with "Welcome to the Working Week," and like any good introduction, it establishes the theme

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of the album. The song signifies the beginning of the adulthood that Costello was just entering with his "next big thing" acclaim. The next track, "Miracle Man," is a gem that moves the theme along and includes some of those clever lyrics and a sing-a-long chorus. With the lines, "Why do you have to say that there's always someone who can do it better than I can? / Don't you think that I know that walking on water won't make me a miracle man," Costello professes that feeling of being unappreciated that we all know too well. And somehow, he makes the universal connection without being cliché or generic.

Along with the adulthood pressure theme, Costello ventures into the land of heartbreak with his classic "Alison," which bears the lyrics that give the album its name. The pained lyrics illustrate perfectly the feeling of reuniting with a lost love. Thankfully, the album has some songs that deal with less serious subjects, to vary the mood. "Mystery Dance" is a short burst of old-school rock that borrows from Costello's namesake, Elvis Presley, with its

"Jailhouse Rock" base. The song jokes about the awkwardness of sexual encounters, including the line, "She thought that I knew and I thought that she knew / So both of us were willing but we didn't know how to do it."

If one so dares, I highly recommend a special edition of the album including an extra disc full of never-before-released songs, demo versions of a handful of songs from the original album and a few live recordings.

The newly released songs on the second disc are tremendous, and they make one wonder how they could go so long without a proper release. The live tracks include "I Just Don't Know What to Do With Myself," the Burt Bacharach song also famously covered by the White Stripes, and an alternate version of "Less Than Zero." On *My Aim Is True*, Costello masters the art of youthful anguish buried in the background of bright pop rock. The album shows his ability to write his own angst-ridden, bitter lyrics without the grungy screaming or that pseudo-emo whining that often comes along with the thick, black-rimmed glasses.



Elvis Costello brings out a sense of youth in his album *My Aim is True*.
Courtesy www.elviscostello.info

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