ELVIS
COSTELLO
AND
"X"


Remember when the new wave in popular music broke into the public eye in the late seventies? All those outrageous performers got big-time publicity in splash articles in Time and the Rolling Stone, and we heard for the first time names like Iggy Pop, the Sex Pistols, and the Dead Kennedys. The self-styled music prophets who had been looking around for the Next Big Thing decided that this was it, and we the public just kind of braced ourselves for the deluge.

But when we opened our eyes again, we found that nothing much had really changed. New Wave was kept alive by die-hards tragically hip types and newspaper staffs of obscure colleges with no journals majors, but it turned out that though all these emotions at once. "Beyond Belief" and "The Long Honeymoon" are fine examples of this vocal flexibility. Although Elvis' lyrics are as ironic and satirical as before, but it certainly continues the fascinating evolutionary course his music has taken from a reactionary movement. It's an indication that New Wave is coming of age, ready at last to make real contributions to pop music.

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There are two things one notices about this album after an initial listening, the first being the number of words. Every song is packed almost from beginning to end with lyrics. For once the mixing engineer made sure they could be understood over the instrumentation. At times, however, Elvis' verbosity gets out of hand, and he's forced to wrap his melodies around the lyrics, instead of the other way around.

The second thing that raises notice in Elvis' marvelously plaintive voice. It can, at times, be evocative, powerful, taut, and beautiful. But good news and a glimmer of hope in the late seventies? All those outrageous artists of a willingness to stand alone on the merits of the music, instead of deriving identity from a reactionary movement. It's an indication that New Wave is coming of age, ready at last to make real contributions to pop music.

We're not sure (please turn to page 6)