Elvis Costello at Harvard

ELVIS COSTELLO
The Harvard Spring Weekend Concert
At the Bright Hockey Arena, May 1

By THOMAS T. HUANG

I could have sworn that the king of America has gone stark-raving mad. For there he stands on stage, in this Ivy League hockey arena, the back of his gray-suit jacket sagging wet with sweat, his Princeton-glassed slipping down the side of his nose. He's strag- ging with his guitar. He could smash it to bits-and-pieces if he loses control. He swings and then jerks and stops and then swings again.

It is the last song of this two-and-a-half hour encounter, this one-sight, one-man stand. He launches himself and the crowd into a tune he wrote early on in his career. "Pump It Up." Only now he is playing it, like never before, a berserker, screening, psychedelic electric guitar through a DC-style go-go heartbeat that comes from a drum machine.

A gigantic wheel-of-fortune spinning-wheel of songs loops on the wall behind him. Red lights, blue lights rain in a circle and flash on and off. Two college women rock to-and-fro to the side in a 60's style dance-cage made of shifting beads that hang from a ring on a post.

Suddenly, the singer transforms his song into a prayer of "Sign O' The Times," and on the lyrics bump and grind against the edge of his harsh, hoarse voice, he whispers about young children in the city and coach and beer on the streets.

Pump it up, until you can't feel it.
Pump it up, when you don't even need it.

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