Elton John

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Sir Elton Hercules John, CBE (born Reginald Kenneth Dwight; 25 March 1947) is an English singer, pianist, and composer. He has worked with lyricist Bernie Taupin as his songwriting partner since 1967; they have collaborated on more than 30 albums to date. In his five-decade career, Elton John has sold more than 300 million records, making him one of the best-selling music artists in the world. He has more than fifty Top 40 hits, including seven consecutive No. 1 US albums, 58 Billboard Top 40 singles, 27 Top 10, four No. 2 and nine No. 1. For 31 consecutive years (1970–2000) he had at least one song in the Billboard Hot 100. His tribute single, re-penned in dedication to the late Princess Diana, “Candle in the Wind 1997” sold over 33 million copies worldwide and is the best-selling single in the history of the UK and US singles charts. He has also composed music, produced records, and has occasionally acted in films. John owned Watford Football Club from 1976 to 1987, and 1997 to 2002. He is an honorary Life President of the club, and in 2014 had a stand named after him at the club's home stadium.

Raised in the Pinner area of London, John learned to play piano at an early age, and by 1962 he had formed Bluessology. John met his songwriting partner, Bernie Taupin, in 1967, after they had both answered an advert for songwriters. For two years they wrote songs for other artists, including Lulu, and John also worked as a session musician for artists such as the Hollies and the Scaffold. In 1969 his debut album, Empty Sky, was released. In 1970 a single, “Your Song”, from his second album, Elton John, reached the top ten in the UK and the US, his first hit single. After decades of commercial chart success, John has also achieved success in musical theatre, both in the West End and on Broadway, composing the music for The Lion King and musicals, Aida and Billy Elliot the Musical.

He has received five Grammy Awards, five Brit Awards – winning two awards for Outstanding Contribution to Music and the first Brits Icon in 2013 for his “lasting impact on British culture”, an Academy Award, a Golden Globe Award, a Tony Award, a Disney Legends award, and the Kennedy Center Honors in 2004. In 2004, Rolling Stone ranked him Number 49 on its list of 100 influential musicians of the rock and roll era. In 2013, Billboard ranked him the most successful male solo artist on the Billboard Hot 100 Top All-Time Artists third overall behind the Beatles and Madonna. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, is an inductee into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and is a fellow of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors. Having been named a Order of the British Empire in 1996, John was made a Knight Bachelor by Elizabeth II for “services to music and charitable services” in 1998. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, is an inductee into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and is a fellow of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors. Having been named a Order of the British Empire in 1996, John was made a Knight Bachelor by Elizabeth II for “services to music and charitable services” in 1998. He has performed at a number of royal events, such as the funeral of Princess Diana at Westminster Abbey in 1997, the Party at the Palace in 2002 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee concert outside Buckingham Palace in 2012.

He has been heavily involved in the fight against AIDS since the late 1980s. In 1992, he established the Elton John AIDS Foundation and a year later began hosting the annual Academy Award Party, which has since become one of the highest-profile Oscar parties in the Hollywood film industry. Since its inception, the foundation has raised over US$200 million. John, who announced he was bisexual in 1976 and has been openly gay since 1988, entered into a civil partnership with David Furnish on 21 December 2005, and after same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales in 2014, wed Furnish on 21 December 2014.

Life and career

Early life

Elton John was born Reginald Kenneth Dwight on 25 March 1947, in Pinner, Middlesex, the eldest child of Stanley Dwight (1925–1991) and only child of Sheila Eileen (née Harris; 1925–2017). He was raised in a council house by his maternal grandparents, in Pinner. His parents did not marry until he was six years old, when the family moved to a nearby semi-detached house. He was educated at Pinner Wood Junior School, Reddford School and Pinner County Grammar School, until the age of 17, when he left just prior to his A-Level examinations to pursue a career in the music industry.

When he began to seriously consider a career in music, Elton John's father, who served as a flight lieutenant in the Royal Air Force, tried to steer him toward a more conventional career, such as banking. John had stated that his wild stage costumes and performances were ways of letting go after such a restrictive childhood. Both of John's parents were musically inclined, his father having been a trumpet player with the Bob Miller Band, a semi-professional big band that played at military dances. The Dwights were keen record buyers, exposing John to the popular singers and musicians of the day, and John remembers being immediately hooked on rock and roll when his mother brought home records by Winifred Atwell, Jimmy Reed, and Muddy Waters. They moved into flat No. 1A in an eight-unit apartment building called Frome Court, not far from both previous homes. It was there that John wrote the songs that launched his career as a rock star; he lived there until he had four albums simultaneously in the American Top 40.

Pub pianist to staff songwriter (1962–1969)

At the age of 15, with the help of his mother and stepfather, Reginald Dwight became a weekend pianist at a nearby pub, the Northwood Hills Hotel, playing Thursday to Sunday nights. Known simply as “Reggie”, he played a range of popular standards, including songs by Jim Reeves and Ray Charles, as well as songs he had written himself. A stint with a short-lived group called the Corvettes rounded out his time.

In 1962, Dwight and his friends formed a band called Bluessology. By day, he ran errands for a music publishing company; he divided his nights between solo gigs at a London hotel bar and working with Bluessology. By the mid-1960s, Bluessology was backing touring American soul and R&B musicians like the Isley Brothers, Major Lance and Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles. In 1966, the band became musicansong John Baldry's supporting band, and played 16 times at the Marquee Club.
The team of Elton John and Bernie Taupin wrote more than 200 songs together, many of which were recorded by Elton John. Taupin was cited by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the greatest lyricists of all time. A book written about Elton John, Elton: The Song Remains the Same, was published in 1975, and featured both music and personal insights into Elton John's life and career. The book was written by Rolling Stone magazine's contributing editor, Cameron Crowe.

The Book of Common Prayer, which has been used in the Anglican Church for over 500 years, was used as a source of inspiration for Elton John's music. The prayer book includes a wealth of music and poetry that has been used for centuries in the church. The Book of Common Prayer is also used by other denominations, such as the Episcopal Church and the Church of England.

The song was featured in the film A Far Cry from Paris, directed by David Lean. The film was based on a novel by the same name by Joseph Conrad. The novel was published in 1907 and tells the story of a young Englishman who travels to Africa to hunt for ivory. The novel was later adapted into a film in 1940, directed by John Ford.

The song was also featured in the film The Rose, which was released in 1979. The film starred Kris Kristofferson as the lead character, and was directed by John Huston. The film was a critical and commercial success, and helped to bring attention to the song and its composer, Elton John.

The song was also used in the television series M*A*S*H, which aired from 1972 to 1983. The show was set in a hospital during the Korean War, and featured a group of surgeons and nurses who operated on wounded soldiers. The show was known for its blend of humor and serious content, and was a popular show during its run.

The song was also featured in the film The Mission, which was released in 1986. The film was directed by Roland Joffé, and starred Robert De Niro and Liam Neeson. The film was based on a true story, and told the story of a group of Jesuit missionaries who were sent to the Americas to convert the indigenous peoples to Catholicism.

The song was also featured in the film The Hours, which was released in 2002. The film was directed by Stephen Daldry, and starred Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, and Julianne Moore. The film was based on the novel by Michael Cunningham, and was nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

The song was also featured in the film The King's Speech, which was released in 2010. The film was directed by Tom Hooper, and starred Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush. The film was based on the true story of King George VI, who struggled with a speech impediment.

The song was also featured in the film The Great Gatsby, which was released in 2013. The film was directed by Baz Luhrmann, and starred Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan. The film was based on the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and was a critical and commercial success.
In 1990, he achieved his first solo UK number one hit, "One Step at a Time", going to Diana's charities as well as to charities of which her sons Princes William and Harry are patrons.

In 1990, he achieved his first solo UK number one hit, "Sacrifice" (coupled with "Healing Hands") from the previous year's album, and his albums continued to sell, but of those released in the latter half of the 1980s, only "The One" (number 16, 1988) placed in the top 20 in the US.

In early September, he contacted his writing partner Bernie Taupin, asking him to revise the lyrics of his 1973 song "Candle in the Wind" to honour Diana, and Taupin rewrote the song accordingly. On 6 September 1997, John performed "Candle in the Wind 1997" at the funeral of Princess Diana in Westminster Abbey.[88] The song became the fastest and biggest-selling single of all time, eventually selling over 33 million copies worldwide, topping the charts in 38 of the 41 countries in which it was released. "Candle in the Wind 1997" became the biggest-selling single since UK and US singles charts began in the 1950s, having accumulated worldwide sales of 33 million copies.[89] The song proceeds of $5 million were donated to Diana's charities via the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.[90] It won John the Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance at the 37th Annual Grammy Awards. After the release of The Lion King soundtrack, the album remained at the top of Billboard 200 for nine weeks. On 10 November 1999, the RIAA certified The Lion King "Diamond" for selling 15 million copies.[91]

In 1994, Elton John was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by Guns N' Roses frontman Axl Rose.[92] In 1995, he released Made in England (number 3, 1995), which featured the single "Believe". John performed "Believe" at the 1995 Brit Awards, and picked up the prize for Outstanding Contribution to Music. A duet with Luciano Pavarotti, "Live Like Heroes", reached number nine in the UK in December 1996.[93]

A compilation album called Classic Duets was released in 1996.[95]

In early 1997, he held a 50th birthday party, costumed as Louis XIV, for 500 friends. He performed with the surviving members of Queen in Paris at the opening night (17 January 1997) of the Presbytère Na Rein Perdu De Son Chant N Le Jardin De Son Éclat, a work by French ballet legend Maurice Béjart which draws upon AIDS and the deaths of Freddie Mercury and the company's principal dancer, Jorgen Dorr. Later in 1997, two close friends died: designer Gianni Versace was murdered; Diana, Princess of Wales in Paris died in a car crash on 31 August.[98]

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In 1996, he and Tim Rice teamed again to create songs for Dreamworks' animated film The Road to El Dorado, which was released in 17 different versions worldwide, including a CD/DVD combo; and his back catalogue – almost 500 songs from 32 albums – became available for legal paid download.[96]

On 1 September 2008, he performed at the Concert for New York City, performing "I Want Love" as well as "Your Song" in a duet with Billy Joel.[111]

In August 2003, he scored his fifth UK number one single with "Are You Ready for the Love of My Life?",[104] returning to musical theatre. John composed music for a West End production of Elton the Musical in 2005 with playwright Lee Hall. Opening to strong reviews, the show won four Laurence Olivier Awards, including Best New Musical. The eldest longest-running musical in West End history, the London production ran through April 2016, after 4,566 performances.[112] Elton Ille Illic has been seen as of December 2015 by over 2.52 million people in London and nearly 11 million people worldwide (on Broadway, in Sydney, Melbourne, Chicago, Toronto, Seoul, the Netherlands and São Paulo, Brazil etc.), has grossed over $800 million worldwide and is the winner of over 80 theatre awards internationally.[113] His only theatrical project with Bernie Taupin in London was the show Aida in 1999, which featured a live orchestra and dancers. In 2000, the show was also released as a CD and DVD.[114] Elton earned $20 million in 2005 for his performance in the biggest-selling musical in history, The Lion King.[115]

In 2011, he appeared on The One Show, performing "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" with Dionne Warwick, as part of his UK tour. In 2012, he performed on the Britain's Got Talent judges' houses round, where he was praised by both judges for his performance. In 2013, he performed on the US TV show American Idol, where he was praised for his interpretation of the song. In 2014, he performed at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, where he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by Queen Elizabeth II.[116]

In 2014, he released a new album, The Diving Board, which included the single "A Good Life". The album reached number two in the UK and number 13 in the US. The lead single, "A Good Life", was released in June 2014 and reached number 10 in the UK and number 53 in the US.[117] In 2015, he released a greatest-hits compilation CD, Rocket Man – Number Ones, which was released in April 2015 and featured 41 of his biggest hits. The album reached number 10 in the UK and number 32 in the US.[118]

In 2016, he announced his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour, which was postponed due to health issues. In 2017, he announced that he would be taking a break from touring to focus on his health. In 2018, he released his final studio album, The Divine Providence. In 2019, he performed at the Glastonbury Festival and at the Pyramid Stage, where he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by Sir Paul McCartney.[119]

In 2020, he announced his final tour, which was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, he released his 50th anniversary live album, Live at the Troubadour, which was released in November 2021. In 2022, he announced his farewell tour, which was postponed due to health issues. In 2023, he announced his new album, The Lockdown Sessions, which was released in September 2023. In 2024, he announced his final tour, which is scheduled to begin in 2025.

In 2002, King asked if John knew of Diana, Princess of Wales’ eating disorder. John replied, “Yes, I did. We were both bulimic.”

By 1975, the pressures of stardom had begun to take a serious toll on him. During “Elton Week” in Los Angeles that year, he suffered a drug overdose.

Elton John is an art collector, and is believed to have one of the largest private photography collections in the world. He has been named one of the 50 best dressed British men.

Other performers in the fallout surrounding an Israeli raid on Gaza Flotilla the month before. In his introduction to that concert, Elton John noted he and other musicians should not “cherry-pick our conscience”, in reference to Elvis Costello, who was to have performed in Israel two weeks before John did, but canceled in the wake of the aforementioned raid, citing his (Costello's) conscience.

He released The Union on 19 October 2010. John says his collaboration with American singer, songwriter and sideman Leon Russell marks a new chapter in his recording career, saying: “I don’t have to make pop records any more.”

He received The Million Dollar Piano at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas on 28 September 2011. John performed the show at Caesars for the next three years. He performed his 3000th concert on Saturday 8 October 2011 at Caesars.

John’s property in Nice is based on Mon Boron mountain.

Putin’s call came just a few days after two phone pranksters called Elton John, pretending to be Putin and his spokesman, and causing John to erroneously thank Putin for the call on the singer’s Instagram account.

In September 2013, John received the first Brits Icon Award for his “lasting impact” on UK Culture.

In 2015, he was named one of the 50 best dressed British men.

In 2014, he claimed Jesus would have been in favour of same-sex marriage.

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John has said that he took risks with unprotected sex during the 1980s and considers himself lucky to have avoided the AIDS epidemic.[197] In 1986, he joined with Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder to record the single "That's What Friends Are For", with all profits being donated to the American Foundation for AIDS Research. The song won John and the others the Grammy Award for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals. In April 1990, John performed his 1968 ballad "Skyline Pigeon" at the funeral of Ryan White, a teenage haemophiliac he had befriended.[198]

Elton John became more closely associated with AIDS charities following the deaths of his friends Ryan White in 1990 and Freddie Mercury in 1991, raising large amounts of money and using his public profile to raise awareness of the disease. He founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992 as a charity to fund programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention, for the elimination of prejudice and discrimination against HIV/AIDS-affected individuals, and for providing services to people living with or at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This cause continues to be one of his personal passions. In 1993, he began hosting his annual Academy Award Party, which has become one of the highest-profile Oscar parties in the Hollywood film industry, and has raised over US$200 million.[193] In early 2006, John donated the smaller of two bright-red Yamaha pianos from his Las Vegas, Nevada show to auction on eBay to raise public awareness and funds for the foundation.

To raise money for his AIDS charity, he annually hosts a glamorous White Tie & Tiara Ball in the grounds of his home in Old Windsor in Berkshire to which many famous celebrities are invited.[200] On 28 June 2007, the 9th annual White Tie & Tiara Ball took place. The menu consisted of a truffle soufflé followed by Surf and Turf fillet mignon with Maine lobster tail and a giant Knepperocker glory ice cream. An auction followed the dinner held by Stephen Fry. A Rolls Royce 'Phantom' droptop coupé and a piece of Tracey Emin's artwork both raised £800,000 for the charity fund, with the total amount raised reaching £3.5 million.[201] Later, John sang "Delilah" with Tom Jones and "Big Spender" with Shirley Bassey.[202] The 2011 guests included Sarah, Duchess of York, Elizabeth Hurley and George Michael (who performed "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" in a duet with John, and the auction raised £5.5 million, adding to the £45 million the balls have raised for the Elton John AIDS Foundation.[190]

Honours and awards

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in its first year of eligibility in 1994. He and Bernie Taupin had previously been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1992. John was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1995.[203] For his charitable work, John was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II on 24 February 1998. In October 1975, John became the 1,662nd person to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.[194]

He was awarded Society of Singers Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.[204] He became a recipient of a Kennedy Center Honor in 2004, and a Disney Legends Award in 2006. In 2000, he was named the MusiCares Person of the Year for his artistic achievement in the music industry and dedication to philanthropy.[205] In 2010, he was awarded with the PRS for Music Heritage Award, which was erected on The Namaste Lounge Pub in Northwood, London, where John performed his first ever gig.[206]

Music awards

Film awards

Academy Awards

1985: Best Song Written Specifically for a Motion Picture (nominated) for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" from The Lion King
1984: Best Original Song (nominated) for "Hi-De-Hi!" from Elkton John & Tim Rice’s Aida
1983: Best Original Song (nominated) for "That’s What Friends Are For", performed by Dionne Warwick & Friends (award shared with Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight & Stevie Wonder)
1975: Best Original Song (nominated) for "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" with Ray Cooper, Davey Johnstone, and "Big Spender" with Shirley Bassey[202] The 2011 guests included Sarah, Duchess of York, Elizabeth Hurley and George Michael (who performed "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" in a duet with John, and the auction raised £5.5 million, adding to the £45 million the balls have raised for the Elton John AIDS Foundation.[190]

Tony Awards

1998: Best Original Musical Score (nominated) for The Lion King
2000: Best Original Musical Score (nominated) for Aida
2009: Best Score (Music and/or Lyrics) (nominated) for Billy Elliot the Musical
2010: Best Play (nominated) for Next Fall

Elton John Band

Since 1970, John's band, of which he is the pianist and lead singer, has been known as the Elton John Band[208][209] The band has had multiple line-up changes, but Nigel Olsson, Davey Johnstone, and Ray Cooper have been members (albeit non-consecutively) since 1970 (Olsson), 1972 (Johnstone) and 1974 (Cooper). Olsson left the band in 1984 but rejoined in 2000.[210] Ray Cooper has worked on and off with the Elton John Band because he maintains obligations to other musicians as a session player and sideman as a road-tour percussionist.

Current members

- Elton John – lead vocals, piano
- Nigel Olsson – drums, vocals
- Davey Johnstone – guitar, musical director, vocals

John Mahon – percussion, vocals
Davey Johnstone – keyboards, vocals
Tony Keys – bass, vocals
Carl Dixon – drums
Rod Stewart – lead vocals, guitar
Billy Joel – lead vocals, piano
Shirley Bassey – lead vocals
Caribou – lead vocals
Sinead O'Connor – lead vocals
Ray Charles – lead vocals, piano
Billie Holiday – lead vocals, piano
Dionne Warwick – lead vocals, piano
Ray Cooper – lead vocals, piano
Dio – lead vocals, piano
Stevie Wonder – lead vocals, piano
Tim Rice – lead vocals, piano
Elton John – lead vocals, piano
Nigel Olsson – drums, vocals
Davey Johnstone – guitar, musical director, vocals
John Mahon – percussion, vocals
Kim Bullard – keyboards
Matt Bissonette – bass
Ray Cooper – percussion

Previous band members
Guy Babylon – keyboards
Bob Birch – bass guitar, vocals
Tom Costello – drums
David Hentschel – synthesiser
Tony Murray – bass
Roger Pope – drums, percussion
Fred Mandel – keyboards, guitars
Dee Murray – bass guitar, vocals
James Newton Howard – conductor, keyboards, orchestrations
Caleb Quaye – guitar, drums, percussion
Kenny Passarelli – bass, background vocals
Charlie Morgan – drums
John Lennon (credited as Dr. Winston O’ Boogie) – guitar
Labelle – vocals, background vocals
David Sanborn – saxophone
David Paich – organ
Jeff Porcaro – drums
Pete Townshend – guitar
Stevie Wonder – harmonica
Jean Witherspoon – backing vocals

Other notable contributors and guests
Leon Russell – piano, vocals
Gus Dudgeon – production
Paul Buckmaster – orchestrations
Lesley Duncan – acoustic guitar, vocals, background vocals
Dusty Springfield – background vocals
Rick Wakeman – organ
Jean-Luc Ponty – electric violin
Luther Vandross – vocals
Kiki Dee – background vocals
Bruce Johnston – vocals, background vocals
Carl Wilson – vocals, background vocals
Toni Tennille – vocals, background vocals
Tower of Power – horns
Don Henley – vocals
Chris Rea – vocals
Tammy Wynette – vocals
Gladys Knight – vocals
Paul Young – vocals
Bonnie Raitt – vocals
Leonard Cohen – vocals
George Michael – vocals

Discography
Solo studio albums
Empty Sky (1969)
Elton John (1970)
Tumbleweed Connection (1970)
Madman Across the Water (1971)
Honky Château (1972)
Don’t Shoot Me I’m Only the Piano Player (1973)
Goodbye Yellow Brick Road (1973)
Caribou (1974)
Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy (1975)
Rock of the Westies (1975)
Blue Moves (1976)
A Single Man (1978)
Victim of Love (1979)
21 at 33 (1980)
The Fox (1981)
Too Low for Zero (1983)
Ice on Fire (1985)
Leather Jackets (1986)
Reg Strikes Back (1988)
Sleeping with the Past (1989)
The One (1992)
The Big Picture (1997)
Songs from the West Coast (2001)
Peachtree Road (2004)
The Captain & the Krueger (2006)
The Diving Board (2013)
Wonderful Crazy Night (2016)

Collaborative albums
Live in Australia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (1986)
Duets (1993)


"Elton John, David Furnish get married": CNN, 21 December 2014.


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