



Elton John

A former student of the Royal Academy of Music, the man born Reginald Kenneth Dwight in 1947 left school and immediately began his path in the music industry. His first band, Bluesology, was formed in 1961. He would later take his stage name from the Bluesology saxophonist Elton Dean and their charismatic frontman, Long John Baldry. Elton John was introduced to Bernie Taupin in 1967 by Liberty Records and amazingly, their first compositions were conducted by mail. In 1968 they became staff songwriters for the DJM record label, writing songs for budding pop stars.

Elton and Bernie's prolific nature was established early in his career. By the time Elton's self-titled breakthrough album and evergreen hit *Your Song* had introduced him to an international stage in 1970, they had honed their skill to such a degree that Bernie could turn out a lyric in half an hour and Elton could compose to it within the hour. In the period between 1970-76, with producer Gus Dudgeon at the helm, they made an astonishing fourteen albums including **Elton John**, **Tumbleweed Connection**, **Madman Across The Water**, **Honky Chateau**, **Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player**, **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**, **Caribou** and **Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy**. Amongst these, **Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy** was the first album ever to enter the Billboard Chart at Number One. **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**, with its string of American Number One hit singles and unbroken two month run at the top of the Billboard Top 100, became an all-time classic.

In 1974 Elton performed on John Lennon's comeback single *Whatever Gets You Through The Night*, and later that year was joined by Lennon onstage at New York's Madison Square Garden. This performance, always cited by Elton as one of the most memorable of his entire career, was to be John Lennon's final concert.

In the late 1970s Elton worked with other lyricists. The album **A Single Man** provided a fortuitous musical hook-up with Gary Osborne, and his 1977 sessions with Philly Soul producer Thom Bell gave him with a Number One UK hit in 2003 with *Are You Ready For Love*, when it was re-released due to demand from influential British DJs. In 1980 Elton and Bernie were reunited for the album **21 At 33**. The album swiftly reacquainted Elton with the Top Ten and was followed by **Jump Up!** with the smash single *Blue Eyes* and Lennon tribute *Empty Garden*. This return to peak form continued with **Too Low For Zero**, the home of two of Elton's live favourites to this day: *I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues* and *I'm Still Standing*.

In 1992 in the USA, and in 1993 in the UK, Elton established the Elton John AIDS Foundation; his pioneering charity dedicated to breakthrough work on behalf of those around the world living with HIV and related illnesses.

The 1990s saw him rise to new heights. In 1993 he released the double platinum album **The One**. His collaboration with Tim Rice on music for Disney's **The Lion King** garnered not only a Best male pop Grammy but also his first Academy Award. Elton collaborated with Tim Rice again on the Broadway smash **Aida**. The late 1990s were a time of personal tragedy for Elton, with the losses of fashion designer Gianni Versace, and of Diana, Princess of Wales. Only one artist can have the biggest selling single of all time, and since 1997 Elton has held that record. *Candle in the Wind 1997*,



Elton and Bernie's tribute to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, has sold well over 37,000,000 copies and raised thousands of pounds for Diana's charities. Elton received a knighthood from HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1998 for "services to music and charitable services."

In 2002 he launched the Elton John Scholarship Fund for the Royal Academy of Music with a concert at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, performing with the Academy's Orchestra and Chorus. This was followed by further fund-raising concerts in New York and at London's Albert Hall. The Academy has honoured him with Membership of the Academy and an honorary doctorate.

In 2004 Elton and his band began a residency with **The Red Piano** show at the Caesars Palace Colosseum in Las Vegas. The show proved so popular with audiences that Elton completed the original commitment of 75 shows over three years in only eighteen months. The engagement was extended to a final total of 241 shows, ending in April 2009. In 2008 the DVD of **The Red Piano** was released worldwide in several formats.

Billy Elliot The Musical, with music by Elton John and lyrics by Lee Hall, was launched on the London stage in 2005. The musical debuted in Australia in 2007, on Broadway in 2008 and is now also touring North America. In February 2011 the musical opened in Toronto, Canada.

Billy Elliot is staggeringly successful, not only with audiences worldwide, but also with the most hard-bitten theatre critics.

The 2001 album **Songs From The West Coast** gave him another smash hit single with *I Want Love*, and then in 2005 he had another hit with the Billy Elliot song *Electricity*. In 2006 he released the autobiographical

album **The Captain & The Kid**, sequel to *Captain Fantastic*. 2007 saw the release of **Rocket Man - The Definitive Hits**. The release of this album coincided with a huge anniversary for Elton. On March 25th, 2007, he celebrated his 60th birthday while breaking his own record with an unmatched 60th concert at the legendary Madison Square Garden in New York. No other entertainer has come close to matching this record.

Over four decades since the 1969 release of his first album, **Empty Sky**, Elton John is still creating some of the finest music of his career and continues to play frequent, sell-out concerts all over the world. He remains committed to his music and to touring becoming more, rather than less, busy as time passes. He has toured much of the world over the past two years, and one of the highlights of 2009 was Ray Cooper's welcome return to the stage with Elton for an amazing concert at the Royal Albert Hall in aid of the Royal Academy of Music. During 2010 Elton performed solo, with Billy Joel, with Ray Cooper, and with his band. He also recorded a new studio album, **The Union**, in collaboration with Leon Russell and Bernie Taupin, and produced by T Bone Burnett. Released last October, the album has been an international chart success and led to Elton and Leon Russell touring in the USA along with their bands.



' a life in music '



A photograph of Ray Cooper, a percussionist, performing on stage. He is wearing a white shirt and sunglasses, and is captured in the middle of playing a drum set. The stage is lit with warm, orange-red lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The name "Ray Cooper" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif font on the bottom left of the image.

Ray Cooper

Ray Cooper grew up studying piano, strings and woodwinds, eventually developing his craft under the tutelage of classical percussionist Jimmy Blades. Foregoing a career in the theatre, Ray established himself as a studio musician in 1960s London. While playing live with Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine, Blue Mink and other groups through to the 1970s, he continued to be one of the most sought-after session players in the UK. Both before and during his tenure with Elton, Ray played on other artists' hits including America's *A Horse With No Name*, David Essex's *Rock On* and Carly Simon's *You're So Vain*.

Ray first worked on an Elton John track in August 1971, when he played percussion on three songs for the album **Madman Across The Water**. Six months later, Elton invited Ray to be a part of the band for a February 1972 performance at the Royal Festival Hall, and then again for his spectacular Christmas shows at the Hammersmith Odeon in December 1973.

The following month, Ray recorded the album **Caribou** in America as an official member of the Elton John Band. For the next two years, a blistering pace of stage and studio work was set, as Elton and the band recorded more than four albums' worth of songs and played nearly 150 concerts world-wide. On tour, Ray consistently won fans over with his rambunctious stage persona, tambourine-tossing, and duck call solo on *Honky Cat*.

The two-man show was originally developed in 1977. In May of that year the pair played six consecutive nights at London's Rainbow Theatre. In 1979 Elton and Ray rekindled the two-man show they had forged two years earlier

and took it out on the road. The **A Single Man** tour made international headlines for its shows in the USSR in 1979, and was renamed **Back In the USSA** for its ensuing North American leg. While not the first Western act to play Communist Russia, Elton was by far the most popular, and one of the Moscow concerts was filmed for television broadcast, and later video and DVD release. Even though the original idea for this tour was to do a few shows for a short while, by the time the dry ice had cleared, Elton had amassed as many concerts as he had ever done in one eleven-month span.

Ray continued to perform and record with Elton sporadically through the 1980s and 90s, once again bringing his showmanship to the 1986 **Tour De Force** concerts with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. During the 1980s, Ray also played in the studio and on stage with George Harrison, Eric Clapton and Mick Jagger. It was also during this time that he began to work in motion pictures, accepting George Harrison's invitation to join his fledgling company, Handmade Films. This new career path helped Ray establish a cinematic CV (as musician, producer and actor), most notably with former Monty Python Terry Gilliam. It is, for example, Ray's silent portrayal of a beleaguered office worker offering a fly in **Brazil**, the 1985 Gilliam film, that sets that movie's extraordinary events in motion.

In the early 1990s Ray toured as a member of Eric Clapton's band, and in 1992 his performance on the MTV **Eric Clapton Unplugged** concert introduced a new collection of fans to his unique skill set.

Elton and Ray revived their piano-and-percussion tour on September 9, 1994. They played nearly fifty dates over the next two years, and it was during this time that the duo first brought their act to the Royal Albert Hall, when they took to the stage for twelve shows in two weeks in the winter of 1994.

Earlier that year, Ray had played on Elton John's album **Made In England**, and during the 1994-1995 World Tour Elton and Ray, this time with the full band, returned to Russia, fifteen years after their groundbreaking shows in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The pair's final performance of the two-man show was in Tokyo, Japan, on February 16, 1995.

In 2002, Ray co-produced and played percussion in the **Concert for George**, a touching and brilliant tribute to George Harrison, with whom he had developed a close friendship. The DVD of the concert won Ray a Grammy Award in 2005 for best Long Form Video. Since the 1990s Ray has also continued his long association with director Terry Gilliam; most recently working on the film **The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus**. Since 2009 Ray has toured with Elton in South Africa and Europe.

In September 2011 Ray will perform with Elton and the band at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas in Elton's new production, **The Million Dollar Piano**.



*Elton John is
a living legend.*

*Many claim this
elusive title, but few
truly have earned it.*

Elton John has earned it.

He lives it.

He relishes it.



The original “2 Man Show” in 1979 was, at that point, undoubtedly the artistic high point of my career. It was an incredible challenge for me as a musician and performer but also an act of extraordinary bravery and generosity on Elton’s part to allow me that platform. As I have often remarked, I consider my work to be that of a colourist; serving to embellish, underline, reveal and support. Elton’s music, with his magnificent voice, virtuosic playing and his complex and iconic songs, is the perfect vehicle for the drama and palette of percussion. The “2 Man Show” was an ideal opportunity for me to practice my craft as a percussionist in the dream circumstances of supporting a solo artist like Elton.

Embarking once again on a duo collaboration with Elton, I cannot help but reflect on what this show has meant to me and how, after the “2 Man Show” tours of 1979 and 1995, this magical distillation and reduction of his wonderful songs relates to the musical landscape of the world we live in today. With minor changes our instruments remain the same: Elton’s keyboard has acquired various new colour and dynamic possibilities through electronic and computer technology, although admittedly his hands and voice seem to withstand any erosion that time would take on mere mortals!

And I return to my trusted array of orchestral and ethnic percussion instruments. I don’t think that time has diminished our energy or our joy and I would like to think that we can still serve the truth of these songs while inviting listeners to discover new colours, new emotions and to savour Elton’s music in this intimate performance experience. The “2 Man Show” offers the acoustic space to hear this music with just this honesty and clarity.

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Elton John AIDS Foundation

In 2010, the Elton John AIDS Foundation supported programmes that kept 150,000 babies and children living with HIV alive. Please help us do more in 2011.

Thank you for your support and have a wonderful evening.



Sir Elton John holding a newborn with AIDS at the Nkandla Hospital in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

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Elton John

Featuring **Ray Cooper**

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Percussion Ray Cooper

Stage Costumes for Elton John

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Stylist Jo Levin

'A' Party

First Hairdresser/Make Up John Fallows

Second Hairdresser Jamie Pritchard

Valet Mike Hewitson

Transportation Coordinator Marcus Selhoff

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ROCKET



And now it's in us, *always with us...*

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