

HERCULES

THE MAG

inside this issue:

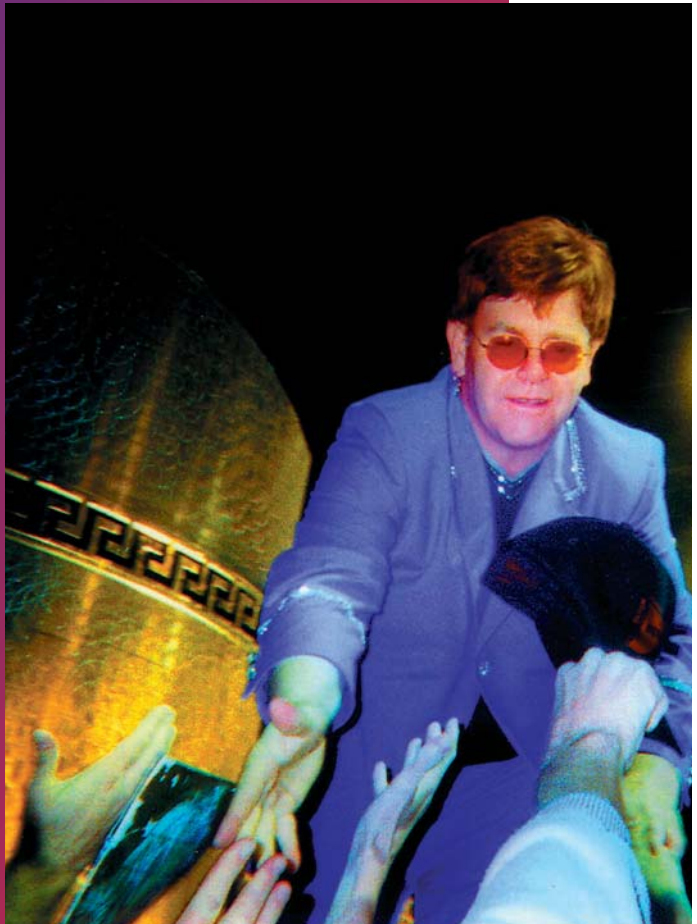
Elton's summer
Solo shows
reviewed

Millennium
Ticket prices
discussed

Elton & David
talk about their
new film

Special offer:
'Elton 2000'
candles

Announcing:
Hercules fan
conventions



Issue No. 49
DECEMBER 1999

FAN CLUB INFORMATION

Annual membership fee is £14 in the UK/Europe and £17/US\$30 for the USA and Rest of the World. Please note that your renewal date is printed on your address label in European format day/month/year.

Membership passes are available from your local HERCULES department: send a small photo of yourself when requesting your pass.

Please don't send enquiries or **fan mail** to the Elton John management, but to HERCULES Coordination. Letters will be passed on if necessary.

HERCULES is a quarterly publication released in March, June, September and December. In event of circumstances beyond our control, there is no guarantee for punctual shipment. It is published in English and German.

Printed articles do not necessarily reflect the editors' opinions. All information is based on the best of knowledge and belief. Reproductions permitted only by prior arrangement with HERCULES.

Member participation is always welcome. We are thankful for your submissions of any kind: reports, articles, photos, drawings, and suggestions. Please send them to the Editor, Tammi Law. Please understand that we cannot always publish all contributions. All photos will be returned.

UK Hotline 0906 888 20 20 (60p per minute)

USA/Canada Hotline 815/293 3843

Web site <http://www.eltonfan.com>

COPYRIGHT: HERCULES

Deadline for Issue No. 50 is 1 February 2000

No. 50 will be released
1 March 1999

Front cover:
Harewood House, Aug '99
(Photo: T Marshall)

Back cover:
Rockford I.L. USA, Sept '99
(Photo: S. Kalinoski)



HERCULES Chief Editor
Tammi Law
49 Horseshoe Crescent,
Peatmoor
Swindon SN5 5AX, U.K.
Tel. +44 (0)1793 881 264
HerculesEd@aol.com

Editorial Assistants:
George Matlock
Barbara Turner
David Wright
Urpu Kallio
(*Hercules Nordic*)
Francoise Linden-Gilles
(*Hercules Francais*)

Design:
Turnstyle Design

Translations:
Sabine Asenkirschbaumer
Stefanie Ganter
Mireille Mölbert

For subscription details,
please write to your local
HERCULES department
or to HERCULES Coordination:

HERCULES Coordination
c/o Stephan Heimbecher
Orleansstr. 59
D-81667 München,
GERMANY
Tel. +49 (0)89 48900369
Fax +49 (0)89 48900370
sheimbecher@eltonfan.com

HERCULES Fan Adviser
c/o Mireille Mölbert
Zaunweg 11
D-80805 München,
GERMANY
Tel. +49 (0)89 3244146
HerculesFA@bigfoot.com

HERCULES USA/Canada
c/o Sharon Kalinoski
P.O. Box 398
La Grange, IL 60525, USA
sharonk@maxi-signal.com

HERCULES U.K.
P.O. Box 315
Richmond
Surrey TW9 3QX, UK
HerculesUK@aol.com

HERCULES Benelux
c/o Arjen Buikstra
Sav. Lohmannstr. 1
NL-3214 XA Zuidland
Tel. +31 (0)1881 451511
EJBuikstra@wxs.nl
Assistant: Tim Blezer

HERCULES Italy
c/o Luca Zerbin
Via Scheiwiller n.9/A
I-20139 Milano, ITALY
lucaze@tin.it

CONTENTS

FEATURES

- Summer of Fun**
Elton's summer solo
shows8
- Solo Sets...**
UK/US solo sets
compared13
- Tick(et)ing...**
with Elton into the
next millennium14
- Pacing 1040 miles**
Hercules follows
the tour16
- Heart in the Right Place**
Interview with Elton
& David Furnish17
- The Son of your Father**
Hercules chats with EJ's
second cousin18

SPECIAL OFFERS

- Elton 2000 Candles**19

REGULARS

- Between 17 and 20**
Elton trivia & gossip ..18
- Club Information**2
- Convention Reports**20
- Letters to the Editor**22
- Lyric Quiz**20
- News Bullets**4
- Small ads**26
- Take Me Down To
The Ocean -**
EJ web site reviews21
- Tour Dates**27



FROM THE EDITOR...

Elton has certainly proved that he's feeling better since his heart operation in the summer. Not only has he returned to work - but it seems he's even busier than ever before!

His hugely enjoyable and successful Solo Tour continued with lots more sell-out shows throughout USA and Canada, during October and November. In between concerts, EJ found time to fly to other continents to appear at various special events and charity performances. See our News section for details.

The Solo Tour continues next year with more European dates in the summer. See the Tour Dates section on page 27 for full listings known at time of going to press. And the good news is - Hercules have again been able to secure seats to offer to club members in the PREMIUM sections of some of the German concerts in June 2000, ensuring that real fans get the best seats! Everyone was sent an Infoletter at the beginning of November offering the tickets through the fanclub. We make no profit on the tickets. More details later in this issue.

One of the other events which Elton attended during time-out from his hectic concert schedule, was the World Premier of Rocket Pictures first film, *Women Talking Dirty*. On the day of the premier, EJ and his partner David talk about the pressures of putting the film together, and how Elton reacted during the final few moments before his operation, on page 17.

One of the more surprising news items about Elton is the revelation that he has recently been running competitively in long-distance races! When competing, he keeps his identity quiet, but not surprisingly he has been recognised by one or two people as he makes his way round the course. See page 6 for more details.

It would appear that the bitterness between Elton and his previous manager John Reid continues. Elton has been quoted as saying "As far as I'm concerned, John Reid doesn't exist any more!". Not surprising then, that re-arranging the letters of "Elton John (Reginald Dwight)" gives us "Tangled long with John Reid"!

You have probably noticed lots of extra insert sheets with this issue of *The Mag*. We had so much to tell you about, and various items for you to order, that we felt it best to include separate Order Forms rather than ask you to rip out pages of your fanzine!

Our regular "Just for Fun" lyric quiz to test your Elton-knowledge has a festive feel for this Christmas issue. Give it a go. Congratulations to long-time Hercules member and huge Elton fan John Michie, who became a father in November to baby Chloe.

All that remains is to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. And how many of us will be listening to at least one Elton song on New Year's Eve, billed as the "biggest party in a 1000 years"?! Most of us, I expect! Have a good time.....

Tanni



Elton live - 1982



Elton live - 1984



Elton live - 1985

NEWS BULLETS...

Full details of the following news items have appeared on our Hotline and Web-site

CANADIAN TANTRUM

Elton nearly cancelled the concert in the Canadian city of Winnipeg on November 15, 1999 after an apparent wrangle with customs officials. Newspapers said Canada Customs cleared Elton in approx. 10 minutes but took two hours to process his five-person entourage! This led Elton to threaten cancellation of his show and forcing the city's openly gay mayor, Glen Murray, to step in and calm the waters.



EJ stepping down from his Private Jet in Winnipeg, Nov 15.

"He was very upset, but when Sir Elton discovered we were both gay and I did lots of AIDS work, it helped," Murray was quoted as saying in the tabloid Winnipeg Sun. "We did everything we could to make him happy." This included providing a police escort for Elton's limousine and making him an honorary citizen of Winnipeg.

Promoter Kevin Donnelly said officials were overzealous in their searching. "This is a man who was knighted by the Queen, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who has been clean for over a decade, and the things they were looking for are no longer a part of his environment," said Donnelly, of House of Blues Concerts, which promoted the show. Needless to

say, nothing illegal was found on board EJ's private jet. Elton was reported to have said it was 'shoddy treatment' which leaves a negative tone in the mind of a performer," Donnelly added. "The Stones and Guns N' Roses get through with more courtesy. It was Elton's first concert ever in the Prairie city, and he promised to return to Winnipeg after receiving a warm reception from the crowd."

NEW ALBUM NEWS?

At the time of going to press, Hercules have had no official news about a new EJ album. At one time, there was a rumour that Elton would be in the studio at the end of 1999, with an album due for release in the Spring. He then announced all the extra US Solo shows which kept him busy during October and November. However, as reported earlier in the year, Elton and Tim Rice have completed 10 songs for the DreamWorks animated movie *El Dorado*, which is expected to be released in March 2000.

PHONE JAMMER!

Elton will kick off his solo tour in the year 2000 with two concerts in Honolulu, Hawaii on January 7 and 8, 2000. Demand for concert tickets jammed telephone lines across downtown Honolulu over the weekend of November 20/21, 1999. A spokesman of the telephone company said calls to the ticket hotline took about 98 per cent of the capacity for the area.

NICE AND SOLO

Elton is set to continue the Solo Tour with more shows in Europe in 2000. Fans should expect 11 shows in Germany plus more in other parts of Europe.

And towards the end of the first leg of the current US/Canada Solo Tour, Elton played his 48th and 49th (sold out) shows at New York's Madison Square Garden, Oct. 15 & 16. These near 3 hours shows were full of energy and emotion: Elton played a great version of "Philadelphia Freedom", an extended intro to "Take Me To The Pilot", and seemed almost unstoppable during "Rocket Man" and the solo part in "Burn Down The Mission". EJ included John Lennon tribute "Empty Garden" as well as a beautiful version of "Harmony".

ELTON SECOND BIGGEST

SELLER OF THE DECADE

The Spice Girls' debut Spice was the biggest-selling album of the decade, creating an estimated taking of £20 million. Elton took second place with *The Lion King* (at £14 million sales) and *Oasis* are at number four with *What's The Story? (Morning Glory)*, earning £12 million, beating their idols the Beatles, whose *Anthology Vol 1* rests in seventh place with £8million. Elton gains more than one entry.

The list of what the nation's pop stars are worth was compiled by Cliff Dane, the industry's financial expert, in *Rock Accounts 1999*. The Spice Girls also took the number three position with the album *Spiceworld*, which earned them £13 million.

Here's Elton's other appearances in this authoritative chart: Position 8 *Very Best Of*, released in October 1990, took £8 million, and in position 14, *Love Songs*, released in November 1991, bagged £7 million. Elton's *The One* held joint 29th place with *The Beatles' Live At The BBC* and *Annie Lennox*. No fewer than seven Elton John albums made it into the chart, equalling estimated sales of around £44 million.

NEWS BULLETS...

These news items have appeared on our Hotline and Web-site

MUSICARES PERSON OF

THE YEAR

Elton has been named MusiCares person of the year by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. Elton will receive the nod, which recognises an artist's music industry career and philanthropic accomplishments, at a black-tie gala in Hollywood on Feb. 21, 2000 - two days before the 42nd annual Grammy Awards ceremony.

STAYING WITH AIDA

Elton's and Tim Rice's 2nd hit musical, "Aida", will stage on Broadway on Feb. 23, 2000 at New York's Palace Theater. Tickets go on sale on Dec. 5. Tickets available via Ticketmaster, or phone the Theatre's box office at USA (212) 730-8200.

10TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT OF STONEWALL

Elton played at the sell-out 10th anniversary concert of Stonewall, the pressure group for gay and lesbians on Nov 28, Royal Albert Hall, London. George Michael also appeared. EJ received some criticism in the British Press the following day for a dance routine involving adult male dancers dressed as Boy Scouts.

EJ LOOK-A-LIKE, RAY AND HERCULES IN TV DOCU-SOAP

A television programme featuring our EJ look-a-like, Ray Johnson and the Hercules fan club, called "The Look-A-Likes Agency", will be screened on the U.K.'s ITV Network sometime late December or into early January 2000. Please watch your tv listings guide - it's a six-part serial. The camera crew were at the Hercules gathering prior to Elton's Leeds Castle show.

THE LION ROARS!

The 1st night audience at London's Lyceum Theatre give the hit musical "The Lion King" a standing ovation on Oct. 19. Elton and Tim Rice were among the guests at the opening night. Advance sales for the London staging have already topped £10 million and the Lyceum Theatre reports bookings for the next few years!

Tickets for the year 2000 are available, priced from £15.00 to £35.00. Check out Ticketmaster UK for reservations.



Also, Walt Disney staged a Gala Charity Preview of "The Lion King" musical in London on Oct. 6. Tickets were from £20 each.

Walt Disney says "The Lion King" will begin performances at Los Angeles' Pantages Theater Sept. 28, 2000 and play a limited engagement through June 30, 2001. The Los Angeles production will be the first U.S. production outside of New York and the fifth production worldwide after Tokyo, Osaka, London and Toronto (opening April 2000).

ELTON'S TWIRL WITH BÉJART

According to Germany's newspaper Berliner Morgenpost of Nov. 13, Elton is involved in a project of choreographer Maurice Béjart for the year 2000. Béjart is preparing a festival in Versailles near Paris. Béjart says the music for the play will be composed by a "very well-known British pop pianist!". He doesn't deny the name Elton John.

THE LION KING SCORE BOOK

The music score to "The Lion King" musical has hit London shops. With 13 entries, the book has all the music and lyric lines, including the three new songs by Elton and Sir Tim Rice - "The Morning Post", "Chow Down", and "The Madness of King Scar." The book is called "The Lion King: Broadway Selections", priced \$19.95 but available as an import in U.K. priced £16.95. Buy it with 20% discount via Amazon.com if you go through link from www.eltonfan.com A spokesman told Hercules there are no immediate plans to receive a score book for the new Elton/Rice joint work "Elaborate Lives: The Legend of AIDA".

ELTON PACKERS THEM IN!

Elton performed a two hour solo show on Oct. 23, at the wedding of James Packer, son of Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer. Elton is said to have been paid \$1.2 million for his performance in Sydney, Australia. More than 650 guests arrived at the multi-million-dollar reception. Elton shared stage with blues legend B.B. King and Australian Band Human Nature.

NEWS BULLETS...

Full details of the following news items have appeared on our Hotline and Web-site

CANDLE BLOWN OUT

After an amazing 111-week stand on Canada's Top 10 singles chart, Elton's "Candle in the Wind" has finally blown out, reported The Ottawa Sun newspaper 5 November 1999.

Elton's tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, in late October hovered in the mid-teens, marking the first significant stretch it has spent outside the SoundScan Canada Top 10 since it was released more than two years ago. Although the single made global history for getting to number and selling well, Candle in the Wind's two-year stretch in the Canadian singles chart is unprecedented.

Yet even though the single sold 1.35 million copies in Canada, it's less to do with Canada's admiration of Diana, and more to do with the tiny local market for CD singles, says Doug Spence, spokesman for the company that charts local music sales. It's not necessarily Canada's affection for the song. It's the fact that there is a very small singles market in Canada, in that very few retailers carry singles. Virtually no mass merchant carries singles, and very few record companies release singles domestically of any quantity." Compared to most CD singles, Candle was produced in vast quantities and was available in virtually every record store, as well as other retail outlets that don't normally carry record sales. Also, the high profile meant people who would normally never be out buying CD singles were out scooping up copies of Candle.

In fact, the singles sales market in Canada is so feeble, a song can often sell a mere 500 copies in a week and still count as one of the best-selling singles in the country. In certain weeks during Candle's run, the song managed to land at the top of the charts by selling only 1,700 copies, says Spence.

IT'S A LITTLE BIT "PFANNI"

It had to happen sooner or later: Food company Bestfoods is using Elton's "Your Song" for its brand Pfanni. New TV commercials in Germany contain the first two lines of the title - sung by an unknown artist. It goes "It's a little bit Pfanni, this feeling inside".

CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE

TONIGHT?

Song publisher Haliwill Music has slapped Elton, his songwriting partner Tim Rice and the Disney company with a copyright infringement suit over the song Can You Feel The Love Tonight from the Disney musical "The Lion King". The lawsuit claims that Elton ripped off the 1993 song Listen To Your Heart by Glenn Medeiros. A spokesman for Elton said "Elton never heard Mr. Medeiros' record prior to composing the music for 'The Lion King'. There's been no copying and we are confident we will win."

While it might happen that one song reminds someone of another recording, Hercules is wondering why it takes this "someone" five years to figure this out...

HARVEY GOLDSMITH IN

RECEIVERSHIP,

ATTEMPTS TO RAISE CURTAIN

German impresario Peter Schwenkow is attempting to negotiate a rescue package for Harvey Goldsmith, whose tour promoting company went into receivership Sept. 30. Schwenkow's Deutsche Entertainment group is in talks to refinance Harvey Goldsmith Entertainments. Goldsmith had been a concert promoter for almost 30 years, including top acts like Elton.

I'M STILL RUNNING....



Rockford I.L USA, Sept '99
Photo: S Kalinoski,

Ever wondered what gives Elton the power to perform three hour shows almost every night? Well, apparently he is doing a lot between concerts in order to stay in good shape: On Nov. 6, Elton became known as "the guy in the purple shirt" when he took part in the Arkansas 20Km Championship race in Benton without most people realising who he was. Raising cash for a charity which provides advocates for abused and neglected children, Elton finished in two hours, one minute and 13 seconds. During the race he told participants he'd finished a half marathon in England two weeks before.

BE PREPARED!

Football's World Cup Inspectors left England on Oct. 26, after Elton, accompanied by actor Hugh Grant and rock stars Mick Jagger and Sting, presented the delegation with a brochure about England's World Cup hopes and preparations, together with a personally signed letter advocating England for World Cup 2006.

NEWS BULLETS...

Full details of these items have appeared on our Hotline and Web-site

BARBIE TROUBLE IN AN

ELTON WORLD!

Barbie Doll manufacturer Mattel Inc. has imposed a ban over a beheaded, blood red painted Barbie for an exhibition organised by Elton. Elton asked 50 artists and designers to create their very own Barbie which will then be auctioned off benefiting the Elton John Aids Foundation. The exhibition took place in London on Dec. 1, (World Aids Day). Guests were asked to appear dressed in pink Barbie-like clothes!

I AM (AT) THE FOX

In a "Chameleon" role, Elton makes a surprise appearance at the Fox theater in Atlanta on Nov. 7, to sing a couple of verses with his close friend Sting! As Sting starts singing his new song Fill Her Up, Elton walks on stage in a white suit and sings the second and third verse. Then, disappears as quickly as he'd appeared.

ELTON'S HEALING HANDS

Mariah Carey, along with Elton and Mia Hamm, will be joining Nickelodeon's The Big Holiday Help-a-thon, scheduled to air Dec. 11. Elton joins the "Team Big Help All-Stars", a series of behind-the-scenes looks at how celebrities got involved in volunteer activities and how their personal causes have made an impact.

CHICAGO - MY KINDA TOWN?

Elton is miffed with the venue in Chicago Nov. 9. After Empty Garden he states he'd rather play 49 shows in Lennon's tomb, or at the Hard Rock, than play at Arie Crown, which he describes as "cavernous" and "terrible". He apologises to the audience for bringing them there.

CHRISTMAS STOCKING FILLERS?

ELTON'S COVER VERSION OF THE SHOW MUST GO ON a tribute to the late Freddie Mercury - is included on the Queen CD, titled "Greatest Hits Vol. 3".

The album was released Nov. 9.

ROSIE O'DONNELL HAS PRODUCED A SEASONAL ALBUM "A ROSIE CHRISTMAS"

featuring duets with Elton (White Christmas), Billy Joel (Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas), and others. Released by Columbia Records Nov. 2. The ABC Television Network will air an hour-long "A Rosie Christmas" holiday special on Dec. 5. Proceeds from the album will be donated to the "For All Kids Foundation", founded by Rosie.

THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EDITION OF "FOR OUR CHILDREN"

was released Oct. 19. The album - benefiting the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation - contains the track "The Pacifier" by Elton, as well as songs by other artists.

THE OFFICIAL ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION CHRISTMAS CARDS

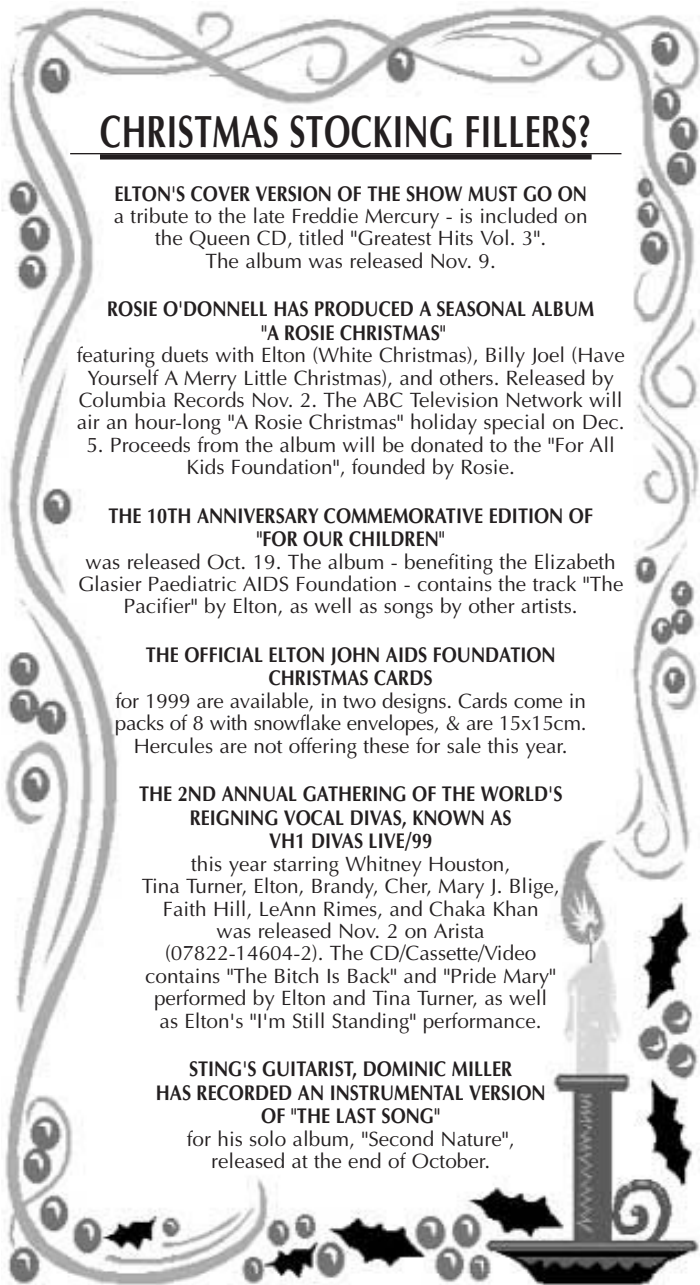
for 1999 are available, in two designs. Cards come in packs of 8 with snowflake envelopes, & are 15x15cm. Hercules are not offering these for sale this year.

THE 2ND ANNUAL GATHERING OF THE WORLD'S REIGNING VOCAL DIVAS, KNOWN AS VH1 DIVAS LIVE/99

this year starring Whitney Houston, Tina Turner, Elton, Brandy, Cher, Mary J. Blige, Faith Hill, LeAnn Rimes, and Chaka Khan was released Nov. 2 on Arista (07822-14604-2). The CD/Cassette/Video contains "The Bitch Is Back" and "Pride Mary" performed by Elton and Tina Turner, as well as Elton's "I'm Still Standing" performance.

STING'S GUITARIST, DOMINIC MILLER HAS RECORDED AN INSTRUMENTAL VERSION OF "THE LAST SONG"

for his solo album, "Second Nature", released at the end of October.



At last, this is what we'd all been waiting for! Elton was bringing his triumphant Solo tour to the UK, and the excitement of seeing him again after too-long away was at a peak. These were always going to be special shows, not least because of the amazing venues which Elton had chosen - open-air in the grounds of two magnificent ancient buildings, Harewood House and Leeds Castle.

SUMMER OF

We had all been worried about Elton and his health, since these UK shows had to be postponed due to his pacemaker operation. The shows had been re-scheduled for just 6 weeks after he left hospital. Would he be well enough to perform to his usual high standards?

Hercules UK had a special treat in store for members - we had secured group-allocation tickets for the premium priced seats for the UK shows. On the day of the first show at Harewood House, Hercules had organised a convention before the concert at a nearby pub. As we arrived mid-afternoon we could hear Elton's voice drifting across the tree-tops as he rehearsed "Talking Old Soldiers" - oh, the anticipation of it all!

And what fun we had. Hercules had booked EJ

impersonator Dieter Graham to perform an outdoor concert as a "warm-up" to the main event. The pub garden was crowded with people - we met lots of old friends, and made new ones. Dieter even brought the traffic to a standstill as he belted out "I'm Still Standing" over the PA system - we could see coaches of fans driving into the gates of Harewood House singing and clapping along!

Upon arriving at the venue, I couldn't believe how close the seats were to the stage; the whole thing had a very intimate feel. The stage was much lower and the piano far closer to the fans than I had ever seen before at all the EJ shows I've attended over the years. Our Hercules group were in the 3rd row.

When Elton ran out on to the stage to thunderous cheering and applause - the crowd of Hercules members held up individual



Dieter Graham entertains straight from the heart. (Photo: G Matlock)



Harewood House, August 1999
Photo: Mark Swinden



Leeds Castle, September 1999



Fun

banners proclaiming "Elton's Hercules fan club". They stopped Elton in his tracks - a massive grin, he pointed at each one, gave a thumbs up and mouthed "Thank you!" He pointed at me, gave a bow, and then a thumbs up. It felt fantastic - and he hadn't even started playing yet!

And wow! What a show. If any of us had any doubts about Elton's health - he blew them away within minutes. His voice was the best I've ever heard it - his energy left us all breathless. Even the rain downpour didn't dampen his enthusiasm. Whilst the roadies covered the beautiful black piano in waterproof sheeting, Elton treated us all to an impromptu chorus of "Singing in the Rain". He took a quiet moment between songs to tell us he was feeling fine, to apologise for "mucking you all about", and to thank us for the Get Well messages we all sent him.

Rocket Man was amazing - they way he played it was like hearing it for the first time, even after all these years.

We had the usual battles with stewards, who made us sit down every time we tried to get closer to the stage. That particular aspect of seeing Elton live is getting a bit annoying. But it was certainly worth it. We were able to get so close to EJ, who took the time to shake our hands, sign programmes and accept gifts. And he seemed genuinely pleased to be doing it. The Hercules banners were very much in evidence, member Karen Cully placed hers on the stage which made Elton smile.

The following day, we met up at the pub again before the show. Some non-members who had been at the previous night's concert came along too - they wanted to be part of the Hercules "road-show".

Tonight we were sitting in the 5th row. The stewards were a little more relaxed with us, and we were able to stand in front of the stage for all the encores. It was obvious that Elton enjoyed seeing the



'All together now...'
Photo: B Turner



Elton signing 'The Mag' for Tammi
Photo: C Smedley

summer of fun

familiar faces of Hercules members, together with the now-famous banners.

EJ was in a great mood all evening, again signing programmes and CD covers for the fans in front of the stage - he even signed a copy of the June issue of Hercules' The Mag for me.

At one point, whilst a large crowd of us were singing along with Crocodile Rock at the front of the stage, club-member David Wright grabbed my arm and shouted "This is SO great!!". It was like being at the best party imaginable.

Most nights, EJ says more or less the same things between songs - the stories behind lyrics, or to thank the crowd for our support. But tonight he said something unusual: "Y'know, I really love doing these solo shows, because it means I can get closer to the audience, and actually get to see you, and talk to some of you for a change, which is SO nice for me." He was looking directly at our crowd of Hercules fans as he said it. And Elton, it was pretty damn nice for us too!

Four days back at work between the two weekends, trying to live a normal life, and concentrate in meetings without drifting off into my Elton-world. Very difficult.

The following weekend we had glorious summer weather. I checked into the hotel and again could hear EJ's voice drifting across the Kent countryside as he did his sound-check at about 3pm. The party atmosphere kicked off at the George Inn pub, where a large crowd had gathered for our Hercules get-together, organised by George Matlock. Great entertainment was provided by performer EJ sound-alike Paul Lucas; and amazing look-alike Ray Johnson, who was accompanied by a television crew filming him for a documentary.

We gave Ray and his wife a lift to the venue; his effect on the crowds was amazing. He looks so like EJ, and was dressed for the part. As we walked through the crowds towards the arena in front of the Castle, people were shouting and pointing "There's Elton!" Our little gang moved through the

crowds very slowly, as Ray was constantly being stopped for autographs and photos. He took it all in his stride and was happy to pose for photos. But he drew the line at autographs; instead he just whispered "I'm not who you think I am" to anyone who asked him.

Upon arriving at the ticket-barrier, the officials just stood back and waved Ray through, believing him to be Elton! "No, no! You've got to take my ticket!" he shouted as we all dissolved into laughter. At one point there was even a group of paparazzi following us, all trying to get a picture of "Elton" mingling with his fans, and visiting the hot-dog stands!

As we spent time enjoying that wonderful pre-concert feeling of anticipation, walking through the crowds, enjoying the magnificent spectacle of Leeds Castle, it was so nice to see so many familiar faces amongst the fans. People who had been at Harewood the previous weekend, and people I've known for years within Hercules, have become real friends. In the early 1980's I used to feel I was the only huge Elton-fan in the country - as



Ray Johnson turns a few heads.
Photo: B Turner



Party Time! (L to R: David Wright, Andy Thorpe, George Matlock, Mark Swinden, John Michie and Nigel Coleman)

there were never any familiar faces at concerts, and no-one could understand why I would want to see him 5 nights in a row.

That, for me, is the best thing about Hercules. The feeling of camaraderie amongst the members. Member Andy Thorpe summed it up for me when he quietly said to me, about 2 hours before the show, "Are you beginning to get nervous?" And I was! It was so nice to know that other people understood, because they feel the same way about seeing EJ live.

Leeds Castle was an amazing venue. The castle, on the other side of the moat, was lit up from within for the duration of the show, and was reflected in the water. Truly magical. It was less intimate than Harewood House, with a far larger audience.

Elton was in fantastic form. He pronounced every word and didn't "swallow" the end of sentences like he has done in the past. If anything, his voice was even stronger than at Harewood. Several groups of Hercules banners in the crowd brought waves and

smiles from EJ as he pointed to us all.

Elton's ballads are at their best when it's just him and his piano - he often changed the direction of the music from night to night. Rocket Man was much longer some nights if he was feeling mellow - with Take Me to the Pilot faster and longer other nights if he was really rocking!

Yet again, the battles with stewards, who wouldn't even allow us to stand up to dance in front of our seats. Someone should tell them it's a rock concert! But we wouldn't take no for an answer for the encores, and stormed the stage for Crocodile Rock. This situation improved over the 3 nights, and by the last night we weren't stopped at all; we stood in front of the stage singing and dancing for the last half of the show. What a party!

Hercules was very much in evidence throughout the whole weekend, with our banners, t-shirts and baseball caps shown many times on the big screens.

On the second night, as we were milling around before the show, David Furnish appeared walking through the crowds, totally unnoticed by most people. I'm not quite sure what he was doing in that part of the venue - one theory was he was buying a hot-dog, another that he was buying a souvenir T-shirt!! We took the opportunity to say "Hi" to him, and shook his hand. He was utterly charming, and said that Elton was in a great mood and that tonight's show was going to be really special. He was right, of course.

Before "Carla/Etude" EJ was telling us that he was about to perform a number from the album, The Fox, which "only sold about 4 copies over here". Andy Thorpe shouted "I've got it!", and Elton replied "You've got it have you? I

said The Fox, not The Pox!!". He obviously was in a fantastic mood and was cracking jokes all night.

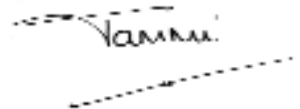
When Elton saw us in front of the stage, he again pointed and smiled - he seemed genuinely pleased to see us. So many of the people which Elton pointed out were Hercules members - Barbara Turner got a special wave from him as he copied her arm movements. As he came forward to shake mine and Andy's hand - Andy shouted "See you tomorrow night, sir!", to which Elton replied "I think you lot are mad!" There's gratitude for you!

On the last night - I presented EJ with red roses. I was amazed at how tightly he squeezed my hand as he said "Thank you..... for everything" - my hand was still throbbing several songs later.

Elton left the Leeds Castle venue each night by helicopter - it was an incredible sight to see, as we were all still cheering and shouting for another encore, flashing lights appeared in the darkness from the other side of the moat, and a sleek helicopter rose up and hovered above the crowd, before disappearing over the tree tops.

All in all, we had a fantastic Elton-week. Not just because of the amazing concerts, which I think were the best ever in all the years that I've seen Elton perform, but because of a "bigger picture". The relief of seeing him well again; the venues themselves; the recognition and appreciation that Elton showed towards Hercules; and the friendship and party-atmosphere of sharing the whole experience with fellow Hercules members!

Here's to the next time!



Paul Lucas 'live' at the George Inn
Photo: B Turner

summer of fun

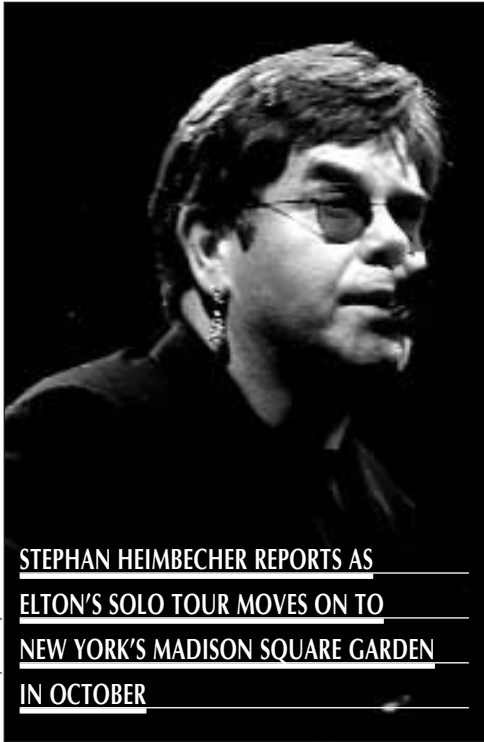


Photo: Lynne Sykes

STEPHAN HEIMBECHER REPORTS AS ELTON'S SOLO TOUR MOVES ON TO NEW YORK'S MADISON SQUARE GARDEN IN OCTOBER

Elton then took his fantastic Solo show to America and Canada. Stephan Heimbecher was at New York's Madison Square Garden shows on October 15th and 16th, and reports the following from the States:

These were Elton's 48th and 49th shows at the Garden, i.e. the next time he will play the Garden, it will be the 50th show!

The stage set was new (to me). It was "Medusa" all over the place, with a chandelier-like light construction in the middle of the stage, being covered by something similar to a circus tent top. The "chandelier" moved up and down during the show, it could also move its "arms" like an octopus.

Both nights, "Empty Garden" was the emotional highlight of the show. A wonderful solo version by Elton sung at the place where 25 years ago John Lennon had his final live appearance - together with Elton. "Rocket Man" was extended again, compared to the solo versions he played during the European leg of the solo tour. Elton performed very powerful solo parts during "Honky Cat", "Burn Down The Mission" and "Take Me To The Pilot". "Philadelphia Freedom" was a very cool and groovy version that reminded me a bit of the "Stones Throw From Hurting" atmosphere.

The second night, Elton was a bit less concentrated: he screwed up the lyrics during "Better off Dead", and played a little "strange" during "Tonight". During the intro to "Take Me To The Pilot" he lifted his right leg like a dog!

Telling from some microphones that were set up all over the place, I have the feeling that both shows were recorded professionally. I have no word about an official release, however, it is likely that at least a few songs will be used in the future.



Madison Square Garden, Oct 99.
Photo: S Kalinoski



Madison Square Garden, Oct 99.
Photo: S Kalinoski

how the sets compare...

UK SET LIST

Following is the complete song list of the UK shows (August/September 1999)

Your Song
 Skyline Pigeon
 The Greatest Discovery
 Talking Old Soldiers
 Border Song
 Daniel
 Honkey Cat
 Rocket Man
 (Singing in the Rain - 1st night)
 Sacrifice
 Better Off Dead
 House
 I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues
 Ticking
 Carla Etude
 Tonight
 I Don't Wanna Go On With You Like That
 The One
 Blue Eyes
 Song for Guy
 Take Me To The Pilot
 Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word
 Crocodile Rock
 Dont Let The Sun Go Down On Me

 Encore No 1
 Circle of Life
 Bennie And The Jets

 Encore No 2
 Candle In The Wind

USA SET LIST

Following is the complete song list of the Madison Square Garden shows: (October 1999)

Your Song
 Skyline Pigeon
 The Greatest Discovery
 Border Song
 Harmony
 Daniel
 Honky Cat
 Rocket Man
 Tiny Dancer
 Better Off Dead
 Philadelphia Freedom
 Elton's Song
 Sweet Painted Lady
 I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues
 Ticking
 Carla/Etude
 Tonight
 Burn Down The Mission
 The One
 Blue Eyes
 Empty Garden
 Take Me To The Pilot
 Levon
 Crocodile Rock
 Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me

 Encore No.1
 Circle of Life
 Bennie and The Jets

 Encore No.2
 Candle in the Wind

Elton's favourite recipe...

We have been told by someone "in the know" that this is Elton's favourite dessert, and he insists on it every time he visits his home in Atlanta! Give it a try over Christmas and New Year, and let us know how you got on.....

BANANA CREAM PIE

12 oz Pastry Cream
 (or good quality custard)
 16 oz of Heavy Cream
 (Double Cream)
 6 Ripe Bananas
 1 Cup of Sugar
 1 Tablespoon of Banana Liqueur
 1 Tablespoon of Creme de Cocoa
 White chocolate to decorate

Whip the double cream with the sugar and fold into the pastry cream (or custard). Add banana liqueur, creme de cocoa, sliced bananas and mix lightly. Add mixture to a pre-baked pie-crust and chill for 4 hours until set. Decorate the top with shaved white chocolate curls.



Tick(et)ing...

The millennium is just around the corner, and Elton is more active than ever before. What can the loyal fan expect in the next millennium? A not-entirely serious look back, and an attempt at a look into the future. By Stephan Heimbecher

into the next

Millennium, the word of the century... a non-word? Arguably, the upcoming change of the millennium has been with us since the beginning of the 1999 at least. Surely, the number 2000 has something magical about it, and not only because of the Y2K problem which could make some computers sweat on January 1, 2000.

Let's just assume that aeroplanes will not fall from the sky on New Year's Eve, that the power supply will not break down, that phone lines will work on New Year's Day, and that Elton's pacemaker will still serve its purpose in the year 2000.

This leads us to the topic of this article: In my opinion, Elton was not implanted with a pacemaker in July 1999 but a state-of-the-art heart accelerator which makes him run faster and even longer - like the longest-running batteries on the market.

But jokes aside - the situation is serious! I very well remember the first days of my fandom during the early 80s, when Elton - like any other halfway sensible artist - toured with a frequency of every two or three years. But gone are the times of rest in-between two tours, gone are the times of relaxed ticket-buying, and most importantly, gone are the times of anticipation for the next show.

These days, one tour is not yet finished when sales already start for the next - like it happened recently when suddenly and unexpectedly, the sales for Elton's solo shows in June/July 2000 started while he was still playing stadiums in the USA. And last-but-not-least, he

had been on a solo tour in Europe in June 1999 (although put to a stop by his heart operation).... and in November 1998, there had been shows with the band.... another half year before that, we had the opportunity to enjoy seeing him (and in the beginning Billy Joel) in huge stadiums....

Help! Stop! Mercy! Who would be able to cope with all that? Quite a few fans are already down to their last penny because their financial backbone is broken, and most of us know that the purchase of the next ticket bears some similarity to the necessity of the next shot for a drug addict. Are we Elton junkies?

Now I do not want to lose myself in metaphors but we should spend a moment to think how all this will continue in the next millennium. Sure, we are all happy when Elton goes on tour, and it has always been very entertaining... sometimes with the band, then only with Ray Cooper, with Billy Joel, now entirely on his own. (If only he did not play "I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues" every single time!). But does it really have to be that often?

And then there is another important topic, which we have to talk about: Everyone understands why tickets do not cost the same as ten years ago. Everything keeps getting more expensive. The thing I just do not get is why ticket prices for Elton's concerts have almost doubled within the last two years. In this context, it is interesting to note that tickets have become more unaffordable, but at the same

t millennium

time fewer musicians and instruments on stage: With the band, the prices could still be considered normal, the shows with Ray Cooper were more expensive, and for the solo tour, ticket prices have gone up even higher (see box).

We have already experienced over-priced tickets, and I am not talking about scalpers in the US selling tickets for ten times of the original price. No, the magic word is "Silver Ticket", "Golden Circle Ticket" or even "Platinum Ticket".

Who the Hell needs all that? We do not want pseudo-VIPs who for a 200% higher ticket price get a seat cushion as thick as a kitchen towel and a VIP reception from which they arrive half an hour after the beginning of the show so that everyone can see them take theirs seats in the front row. And of course, they just have to leave during the first encore - in order to be the first in line for the after show buffet.

Why do Elton's shows have to be all-seated nowadays? We were able to resist this American trend for so long but somehow they just have to copy everything from the 'land of unlimited possibilities' sooner or later - most of the times in a bad way. And this results in people from the typical "You just have to have seen Elton John!" party who have 'bought themselves' into the concert sitting behind you.

In order to get a halfway realistic price/performance-relation for his or her seat, the person in this party will usually not get up during the entire show. And if anyone in front of him or her should dare to do so,

they immediately protest and threaten to get the security staff - who are nearly always at hand straight away threatening the dancing fan with being kicked out if they do not sit down at once. There is nothing better than a relaxed concert atmosphere (Danger: irony!).

How did I get to talk about all this? Oh yes, the Millennium. For the next Millennium, my wish is that Elton will slow down his pace a little - especially regarding his tour schedule (not to mention the various soundtracks and other projects). No, we ARE thankful for every show he performs. But how long will he be able to continue this? Sure, he looks younger and healthier today than ten years ago, and how he manages to perform three hour long concerts every night is simply admirable.

Still, after a voice operation in the eighties and the heart operation this year (after which he was on stage just four weeks later) the loyal fan asks the question what will happen next. We do not want to imagine that....

How Are Ticket Prices Calculated?

Many fans have told us lately they can't understand why tickets for Elton concerts are continually more expensive. Summer 2000 will be even more expensive. We asked Peter Rieger Konzertagentur - the promoter for Elton's solo shows in Germany next year - and received the following statement:

"Unfortunately, many ticket sellers think that they mainly pay the artist with the ticket price. That is not the case. Because the costs resulting from a big rock'n roll production are immense. Just imagine how many people and technical equipment are involved in such a production, and all this has to be paid for. From the person setting up the chairs (and of course the chair itself!) up to the person driving the crew bus from town to town, and to the people setting up the entire stage, and of course also the people designing the stage for many months, putting together, checking, equalizing lights and sound, the local security staff as well, the ushers, and... and... and...."

Not much remains for the artist (and the band).

In the last few years, Elton and his band have performed in many stadiums where you can count on an average of 60.000 people a night. As well as that, stadiums already have the complete infrastructure like chairs on the sides, bathrooms for everyone, offices for the production, staff restaurants etc. Thus, the so-called 'local costs' for each audience member are much lower.

The solo tour will mainly take place in public spaces where we have to build an entire infrastructure ourselves: power supplies, miles of cable, audience stands, every single chair, office containers, bathroom containers, crowd barriers, ground fortification for the stage, whole tent cities for catering, showers, lounges, and... and... and... And then these events only have a capacity of about 10.000 people a concert. But those people will be able to enjoy an unusual, wonderful experience of a special outside show."

Pacing 1,040 Miles

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH HERCULES, FOR ELTON'S UK TOUR.

By George Matlock

Every Elton tour is accompanied by a certain amount of hard work by Hercules chiefs. As the fans assemble, we have to make sure things work out - especially so when we offer members tickets, as we did for the first time in the UK in 1999.

Elton's surgery, and the subsequently postponed shows, left us with our own casualties. Some fans wanted to quit the tickets, as they could not fly in from other parts of the world. Complex refunds followed. For others, it was a chance to snap up orphan tickets, and one such lucky member was Jodie Evans who flew from Australia! Some German fans decided to snap up all four ticket allocations we offered. The tickets came with a £4 per ticket discount, at £51 each. So... each of those fans who bought Hercules tickets got their annual £14 subscription back through these savings!

I travelled north to Leeds with a fan from Russia who kinda likes Elton, but quickly wondered whether she was fan enough for the task when we would hours later act like kids in the front row. She didn't like my singing Elton songs in the car; what she failed to grasp is that I was actually trying to stay awake for the long journey!

A highlight of the tour, however, was meeting Hercules' oldest fan...Frances Fitzgerald-Hart, who lives in Yorkshire and turned 86 years in October. Frances joined Hercules a few months back (see picture, that's her seated on the right!). She wrote to me in spring to say she'd heard shows were coming to Leeds Castle in southern England. How she wished Elton would tour the north too. There were plenty of castles and venues. Her prayers were



Hercules' oldest member, Frances chats to George Matlock

answered only two weeks later...as Elton announced Harewood House in Yorkshire, would be added. Sadly, Frances is in poor health herself, and doctor's orders were to stay home. Nevertheless, I resolved to meet her to say an official "hello" from Hercules, and bring her a few gifts.

On the day of the concert, during my visit to her home with her family, I was surprised how much she knows about Elton. She's got loads of his albums. She knew about the Hercules "Steptoe And Son" television connection. "Elton loved that BBC comedy series" she recalled. She also knew where Elton had just been playing...and yet she has NO access to computers and the Internet! She reads a lot of newspapers, and keeps informed with her new companion, Hercules "The Mag" fanzine.

I found the talk thoroughly refreshing, and she put many younger fans, myself included, to shame by her knowledge of Elton. Here's wishing Frances a great Millennium!

heart
(and wallet)
in the
right
place

Following six years of a solid relationship, David Furnish and Elton talk to Canada's The National Post's Linda Frum about heart scares, a new film, and spending cash, on the day of the world premiere of "Women Talking Dirty". (October 99)



David has been comforter and ally to Elton through some recent scary moments.

"They told me I couldn't play tennis for a month," says Elton. "So as I was going into the operating room, I got off the trolley and said: 'That's it! If I can't play tennis for a month I'm not going in there.' Everyone was groaning."

David continues, addressing Elton directly: "I said, 'Get back on the gurney and let's go back upstairs and talk about this.' You know what's right. You always know. I think you were just scared. I think that was fear ..."

"No," retorts Elton, "I was just pissed off that I couldn't play tennis for a month. I wasn't scared. I think you get scared when you don't know what is going to happen. If they do an exploratory operation because they don't know what's wrong with you, then you're scared. I wasn't scared. I was being unreasonable. Which is part of my character."

Now it's a role reversal. It's David's turn to be front and centre and Elton's turn to play the supportive partner. David has just got back from the Toronto International Film Festival, arranging business meetings with distributors, and visiting family in his native Scarborough, Ontario. But now, a few hours before the world premiere of their new movie, "Women Talking Dirty", Elton has arrived to be at David's side.

"I was in a little bit of a panic getting here," explains Sir Elton, who had intended to fly in via the Concorde Thursday night, but whose plans were scuttled by the arrival of Hurricane Floyd. When he learned his plane would be delayed Sir Elton says he told himself: "I cannot let him down. I've got to be there." So we rented a jet and got here at 4 a.m. It was essential that I be here. Yes, you could say it's a role reversal. This was something I had to be here for."

"Women Talking Dirty"

is the first feature by Rocket Pictures, Elton's production company. Starring Helena Bonham Carter and Gina McKee, it's a about a pair of working-class women in Edinburgh, their friendship and the rat-like men who destroy their lives. Elton wrote the score for the film, but otherwise it's David's and his producing partner, Polly Steele's work.

"One of the drawbacks that I'm afraid of," says Elton, "is that people are going to expect so much because the film is getting a lot of attention and it's our first. This is a \$5-million movie. It's a sweet little movie. It's not a blockbuster. There is an expectation and I hope people don't get too disappointed. I think if you stay with it for the whole film, you'll walk out feeling really good."

David says placing the film was hard too. Elton's name wasn't going to sell it. "We've been battling to get this film done for two years. It's been a nightmare," says David. "Nobody gives you the money to make a film just because you are associated with a very famous person."

Famously, Elton relieves the pressure with shopping sprees. And recently Elton fuelled speculation about a possible financial crisis when he took out a \$50-million bank loan.

Elton rebuts: "Well, it's just not true and there's nothing I can do about it except tell people it's not true. Yes, I did have a problem with my former manager. Yes, I am suing Price Waterhouse for a lot of money. But what bank is going to lend me £25 million pounds if I have cash flow problems and no assets?"

Elton's personal fortune is estimated to be \$375-million, and



it doesn't look like he is going broke any time soon. There was some unpleasantness with his former manager, John Reid, which necessitated the loan, "but it's all settled now. It is upsetting when disc jockeys on the radio say: 'Well, it serves him right for spending \$400,000 a month on his credit card.'"

Linda asks: "You are known as somebody who enjoys a good ...", struggling to find the mot juste.

"A good spend?" Elton says.

"Oh, I love it! My theory in life is that I really like to enjoy life and I like to live well."

Good news for Toronto's shopkeepers! A "mooch," Elton's and David's term for an unbridled shopping spree, is on the agenda. "We have to buy things for David's family because there are birthdays coming up," says Elton. "No place is safe from me."

Adds Mr. Furnish: "My level of recognition in Canada has gone up, and I've walked by the Versace shop a few times this week on my way to screenings and there are these three guys, standing out front, waiting. They're poised. They're ready. And as I walk by I can hear them saying: 'Ughh, he's on his own. When is Elton getting into town?!'"

And will Elton disappoint the shops?

"I don't want to spend all day in the hotel room."

The Son of your Father....?!

Hercules' Nordic representative, Urpu Kallio, chats to EJ's second cousin, Ron Dwight

I'm more nervous than ever as I drive on a tiny road in the middle of forest in southern Finland. I hope that this is the right road and that I am going to the right place at the right time. I just keep telling myself that I am going to meet somebody who is Elton's relative.

I remember one day noticing the name Ron Dwight in the phone book. I got interested and found out that he is possibly Elton's second cousin. Why on earth does our Elton's relative live in a place like Finland? I can't stop wondering. Well, I'm soon going to find out. The house is a beautiful large log house. Ron greets me with a handshake and I can see a strong family resemblance, which gets stronger as we start to chat, and he introduces me to his wife.

In the living room, I give Ron a copy of June and September's The Mag. He shows me a photograph of his father, who has a pretty strong resemblance to Elton. He tells me about the way his father used to

pose in very funny ways for photos. I smile - I think I know somebody else who also poses funnily when having his photo taken.

Ron tells me that his sister, who lives in England, was researching the family tree, and that it appears as if Ron is Elton's second cousin. Elton's father, Stanley Dwight, and Ron's father are thought to be cousins. He tells me that he lived in London for 28 years before coming to Finland with his work, in 1970, just before EJ made the big time. Ron enjoyed the place so much that he stayed.

I ask him if there are any musical talents in other Dwight family members he knows. "Good question... no. The only instrument that I play is a record player!" And do his relatives like Elton's music? "I think my sister has couple of his records. She's not a fan as such... but... no, my musical taste is country and western. That's it, I'm afraid... sorry Elton!" When I ask whether any people know that he is Elton's relative, he says no, not a lot. "We have nothing in common... musically. He's more talented than I am... but I'm better looking than he

is!" He bursts to laughter and I can't help laughing either. All the Dwights I know by now seem to have the same great sense of humour.

He has known that he's a relative of Elton's for about 15 to 20 years. "People who get to know that I'm Elton's relative usually ask if I know him, and they are surprised when I have to say no. It's an accident of birth, not designed... I think we would get on pretty well if we met but our interests are certainly different."

What does Ron think about Elton having changed his name. "Well, it's his own affair... most showbusiness people do change their names. I'm not sure that Reginald Dwight would have been a very successful stage name." I ask what does he think of Elton's pacemaker operation. "The pace of life that the guy lives...- he ought to relax more. Flying to Finland for a three hour concert and then off again, rushing around... it's not a thing that a fifty year old guy does. The pacemaker thing did not surprise me at all. The guy just has to slow down and live more."

When I thank them and leave, Ron and his wife let me know that I would be welcome to see them again - and of course they tell me that Elton will also be welcome at their house any time!

BETWEEN 17 AND 20 · BETWEEN 17 AND 20

ANOTHER VERSE OF OUR REGULAR COLUMN FEATURING TRIVIA AND

HERCULES

Elton John, Neil Young & Rod Stewart were in Pollstar's top 10 list of most expensive concert tickets this year.

Did you know that Bernie wrote "Snow Queen" about Cher and it made her mad? EJ didn't know it was about her until several years later.

HERCULES

Did you know that EJ's name did not appear on the credits of Neil Sedaka's "The Hungry Years" album? Credit for the "Bad Blood" background vocals went to "Ann Orson", which was one of EJ's aliases.

HERCULES

BBC1's heavyweight discussion programme Question Time is considering Elton as a future panelist. One person ruled out was Liz Hurley as she was deemed too lightweight and lacking in any firm political opinions.

HERCULES

Apparently, when Elton couldn't find Diet Cherry Coke in France he had it flown in to him especially by Sonic Air Service.

Elton 2000 Candles

now available

Prestigious interior design and home fragrance house Slatkin & Co, have launched the latest candles in the 'Elton' range of scented products. Hercules are delighted to offer the new ELTON 2000 collection to all HERCULES club members at a substantial discount from retail prices.

Hercules donates all profits to the Elton John Aids Foundation. We have already raised \$1000 for Elton's charity from candle sales in 1999.

The ELTON 2000 collection consist of 2 different candles;

The deluxe candle is solid white, packaged in a 4 inch tall octagonal glass jar with a silver metallic lid. The outer packaging is mainly white with the logo ELTON 2000 printed in metallic silver. The box has photos of EJ himself. The scent is, in our opinion, the best so far of the EJ candle lines.

Slatkin describes it as "base notes of white musk/precious woods, mid notes white lily/peony/cyclamen, top notes armoise/aquatic accord/iced pineapple leaves".

Also in the ELTON 2000 candle line is a shorter, clear gel candle packaged in a tin. The paper covering the tin has the photo design like the Deluxe candles. Inside, the candle is in a clear glass jar, the wax/gel is also clear with bubbles in it.....very pretty.



Elton 2000 deluxe candles:

Retail\$54
Hercules members\$35

Elton 2000 clear gel candle:

Retail\$30
Hercules members\$21

Shipping costs per order:

Within USA\$4
Canada\$6
Outside North America
for first item\$15
each additional item\$5

Please allow up to 6 to 8 weeks for delivery. Order soon! Stocks won't last long!

Orders are handled by our HERCULES USA/Canada department.

**Order from Sharon Kalinoski,
P.O. Box 398, La Grange, IL
60525, USA directly, or send
your order to:
sharonk@maxi-signal.com.**

**Payment is accepted via
VISA, Mastercard, or cheque
(made payable to Sharon
Kalinoski and sent to
HERCULES USA).**

BETWEEN 17 AND 20 · BETWEEN 17 AND 20

GOSSIP ABOUT ELTON - FOUND OF COURSE, BETWEEN PAGES 17 AND 20!!

HERCULES

An Australian reporter tells Hercules that Goodbye Yellow Brick Road album wasn't only available in yellow. It was also pressed in Australia, as a limited edition, in red and also in blue vinyl, especially for the New Zealand market. One copy recently sold to an Italian fan for A\$500, about £200. The yellow vinyl is fairly common and sells for around £30 - £40.

HERCULES

Did you know that when EJ recorded the vocals for "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" he kept singing both his part and Kiki's part (she added her vocals at a later recording session). Everyone kept telling him that if he sang it that way that it wouldn't end up as a duet, but merely him up front with Kiki doing background vocals.

HERCULES

Did you know that EJ says "1, 2, 3, 4" at the beginning of Ringo Starr's rendition of "Snookeroo" on his "Goodnight Vienna" album?

HERCULES

Did you know that EJ's 1996 "Love Songs" album wasn't the first of his albums to have that title? In 1982, Rocket released an earlier version of "Love Songs". It featured a number of "Blue Moves" tracks, as well as "Strangers", which has been the only "official" album release of that particular recording.

conventionally speaking

FORTHCOMING HERCULES CONVENTIONS

We have a lot of Hercules conventions and parties planned for the Year 2000. We're celebrating Elton's birthday, the European summer shows and more. Read on for more details.....



USA

Fifth annual EJ fan party near Chicago, Illinois USA. Saturday, March 25, 2000. Please leave a message on the Hercules USA hotline if you want an invitation....if you attended last year, you will automatically get an invitation.

Phone 815-293-3843....regular phone rates apply.



UK

March 25 2000: Hercules UK will go ahead with the annual event free to members, £1 to non-members, at the ANNA Hotel, Queensborough Terrace, London, on Elton's birthday, building on the success of the open-air conventions of summer 1999!



LAS VEGAS:

The first ever Hercules International Fan Convention that is planned for Las Vegas in the middle of September, 2000. Please see the enclosed supplement and order form for full details. If you have not received a supplement and would like more details, please contact Stephan Heimbecher (address on page 2).



GERMANY:

As part of Elton's solo tour in the year 2000, Hercules would again like to stage a half-day fan convention in Germany on the day of one of the concerts. This time it will take place on 23 June 2000 from 12 noon to 6pm at the Hotel Schweizer Hof, Wilhelmshöher Allee 288, in Kassel, Germany.

Why in Kassel? Well, there are several good reasons: Firstly, the concert in Kassel is taking place right in front of the Herkulesstatue (Hercules statue), so we felt it was very appropriate for our fan meeting! Furthermore the concert in Kassel happens to be on a bank holiday, which will make travel arrangements easier for you. And finally Kassel is situated centrally in Germany.

We have reserved several rooms at the Schweizer Hof hotel, which you can book yourself by calling +49-561/9369-0 quoting "Hercules". Rates for single rooms are DM 165, double rooms DM 215 including a welcome drink and breakfast buffet.

You can easily walk from the hotel to the concert by foot! Free car parking facilities are situated directly at the hotel (follow signs: Boarding House), and the ICE railway station Wilhelmshöhe is only 400 metres away! If you prefer to stay in a different hotel or would like to get to the convention from elsewhere, you can take tram line no. 1, which stops right in front of the hotel.

Further information on the convention as well as an application form are going to be published in the March issue of The Mag.

JUST FOR FUN

LYRIC QUIZ

Have a go at this festive version of our popular lyric quiz. We give you a line - see if you can name the song!
(Answers on page 26)



- 1) He was born a pauper
To a pawn on a Christmas day
- 2) You tell me there's an angel in your tree
Did he say he'd come to call on me
- 3) Now the old fat goose is flying cross the sticks
The hedgehog's done in clay between the bricks
- 4) When the snow falls
And Central Park looks like a Christmas card
- 5) If we can help to entertain you,
Oh, we will find the ways.
- 6) It was the lure of the tropics
That I thought might heal the scars
- 7) I see a red flag burn
Yeah now we need a Santa Claus
- 8) I won't see you till Christmas
I breathe coal dust,
I get blisters
- 9) Little satellite
Brightest star tonight, oh my love
- 10) On my roof there's thumping sounds
And bells inside my head.

JUST FOR FUN

take.me.down/to/the.ocean

a.web.surfer's/guide/to.finding/ej/on.the.net

by Reggie Zippo (rszippo@iname.com) All websites are rated from 0 to 4 Royal Waves.

Please keep in mind that this review does not reflect the opinions of HERCULES or its supporters.

REAL ELTON JOHN IN REAL AUDIO

<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Location/3797/index.html>

When I saw this site listed on the Internet, my first thoughts were "FANTastic! Someone has finally set up a website where fans can download rare and obscure EJ recordings to add to their growing collection." However, the download offerings were rather lackluster.

Instead of what was expected, I was met with "Duets" and "Captain Fantastic", along with the promise of "Honky Chateau" in the near future. Two questions immediately came to mind. "Doesn't every EJ fan already have these albums in their collection?" and "Why would we want to download something that we already have?" It would have been far more thrilling to download an obscure or rare song, such as "Red", "Up The Revolution", "The Measure Of A Man", or "Indian Maiden".

Perhaps the webmaster, Dmitry Zakharoff, is living in a country where the songs that he did upload are considered hard-to-find. On that premise, I'll not judge too harshly on his choice of download selections. I was impressed that he included every song from the albums and not just a few of them. At the very beginning, Dmitry acknowledges that his website is rather plain looking and lacks a lot of graphics. In his own words, "You will not find there any "cool" web-design, because this page created only for listening wonderful music." The site lives up to that promise. I have always



said that too many graphics can diminish the true content. Even though this site is hosted by GeoCities, that pesky GeoCities popup window did not appear across the top of my computer screen as expected.

The format used for the downloads is RAM, which was a disappointment. MP3 is the fastest growing format in popularity and the "RealJukeBox" is capable of recording and playing songs in that format. Chances are that Dmitry is not aware of MP3 yet. Finally, what really bothered me the most about this site is the fact that "Real's" company name was used

twice in this website's own title, but there are absolutely no links to the "Real" website. What's a person to do if they don't have a RealPlayer or a RealJukeBox? Probably quickly move on to another website. There are certainly a few bugs to work out here, but once completed, this site could garner a lot of traffic. Until then, it earns 1 Royal Wave.



LETTERS TO THE

Send your letters to Tammi Law, Editor (address on page 2) or e.mail her at HerculesEd@aol.com.

It's not been very easy to get 'decent' seats for Elton's concerts. Even when a fan is first on the 'phone - it seems all the best seats had already gone! (How this happens is always a mystery.) This time, however, Hercules managed to come up with some of the very best seats in the HOUSE for Leeds Castle and Harewood House. This letter need not dwell on what a difference the best seats made, but thanks all those involved.

At events such as these a lot of 'informal' and 'unplanned' incidents happen - I want to share some of them with Hercules members - many of whom were there on the night, but may not know of them.

Ray, the fantastic Elton John look-alike was a star before the show, after the show and what some people don't know - also DURING the show. Before the show, along with many of us, Ray was down by the front of the stage soaking up the atmosphere. Those of you that have seen Ray will know just how uncanny it is to see him. For many it IS Elton John standing in front of them. Ray was chatting to all sorts of people at the front, in fact, quite a crowd had gathered around him in this very relaxed and easy going venue (Leeds Castle - Saturday Night). Ray was very popular with people having their photos taken and chatting away - all good fun.

Having taken his seat, George Matlock felt another 'photo opportunity' coming on strong. He asked Ray to stand on his seat and hold up a Hercules Fan Club Banner. All those to the rear of Block A suddenly roared with laughter and gave a rapturous applause at 'Elton' standing on his seat in the middle of the crowd!

This extra FREE entertainment of Ray hanging around the stage and then on his seat certainly helped to warm up the crowd. When the 'mad-dash' to the stage was complete our Ray managed to get himself right in front of the piano. Quite what Elton made of this is not yet on record - but.... and being one of the very few fans that did not race to the front on

this night, I had a great view of the proceedings from behind.

All of a sudden, during one of the songs, the most amazing thing happens..... our Ray is on the video screens singing his heart out! The crowd, recognising him from standing on his seat earlier shrieked with laughter and about 14,000 people were all pointing up at the screens where Ray was giving it his all. What a wonderful experience and a great bit of fun! Sorry to say that because most of the fans were tapping on the stage - they were too far forward to see this extraordinary sight.

It doesn't stop there either: the next night I had a conversation with someone that went like this:-

Them: Elton came out to meet people last night you know
Me: What? where?? (a sense of panic that I may have missed something!)

Them: Right here by the stage
Me: Really? Jeez! What time was THAT because we all saw him leave after the show in the Helicopter.

Them: No, no. This was BEFORE the show.

Me: When, what time before the show?

Them: About an hour before the show, Elton was out front here - having photos taken and chatting to the crowd

Me: Well I was here at the side of the stage about 1.5 hours before the show and I didn't see him

Them: Oh! yes - I heard all about it but I wasn't here myself.

Me: Oh you daft XXX that wasn't Elton..... it was RAY!!

(I swear I had this conversation!)

Rob Cargill, UK

I am livid and still fuming with Entertainment Weekly's (USA Entertainment magazine) new issue which named the Top 100 performers of all time. They snubbed EJ and the computers are buzzing in the States via e-mail attack on the Editor, who wanted any feedback at Letters@ew.com. I sent them a piece of my mind as did other EJ fans. Please post this message in the next issue of The Mag so the rest of the world of avid Elton fans can tell this Editor to "get with it!". Where have they been for the last 30 years, on Mars?!

Richard Georgeou, USA

Hi Tammi, it's me Jodie, from Australia. I'm just writing to thank you - I'm very grateful to have gone to the Leeds Castle concert, and to sit so close to the stage was fantastic. I have been to a lot of concerts but this was special - Elton was great, it was like he was playing just for me! I am so glad to be part of the Hercules club and to have met other members who I could talk to about Elton. Everybody was so friendly and looked after me so well. It was worth the long trip over - thanks to people like you and George (Matlock) and the rest of the Team. Without Hercules, people like me would be isolated from such events and information so keep up the great work!

Jodie Evans, Melbourne, Australia

I would like to say that I think John Reid is responsible for the pacemaker for Elton. I took one look at him and knew he was no good for Elton. I think that some of Elton's health problems were due to being under the stress and strain. I wish Elton good luck in the years to come.

Shannon Duhon, Louisiana, USA

In answering your question about whether drugs affected Sir Elton's performances, I think they did. For me, Elton used to have much less voice, it wasn't as warm and strong as it is now. Secondly, his eyes looked lost for some reason. He didn't spend so much time signing autographs and joking with his audience.

Therefore, I'm really happy that Elton has "recovered his

soul" and has become sober and clean. He didn't concentrate enough on human aspects of life, such as fighting his health war, or dignity war, but you need to make mistakes to avoid them next time, don't you? Elton is an example to us all, as there are times when we all need help.

Carla Zuntini, Italy

Many thanks for your efforts in organising the tickets (for UK show) and pre-show get-together on Saturday. Both myself and my father enjoyed the whole day immensely. I've been taking my Dad along to Elton shows for around ten years and our seats on Saturday were the best we've had.

Andrew Rowley, UK



&



POEM FROM A FAN

I wrote these thoughts down after returning from the Leeds Castle concert, which was absolutely fantastic!

Vivien Heather, UK

How can we begin to thank you
for the concert of our lives
or tell you of the admiration
your performance so inspires?

We live daily with your music
and Bernie's wonderful words
but - tonight - like Leeds Castle
they were truly 'the loveliest in the world'

You mesmerise us with sweet melodies
filling the night air with magic
then excite us to our feet
with the thrill of rock 'n' roll classics

We sing along with all our favourites
while your fingers interpret them anew
and listen entranced to the less familiar
in your voice so clear and true

We have been so concerned for you
in all the recent weeks
we are delighted just to SEE you
but you are absolutely at your peak

Then the rapturous ovation
the chanting of your name
which you reward by returning
to play for us once again

We'll never let the sun go down
on the living legend you've become
you enrich our lives with all you do
for us, Elton you simply are The One



photo: Lynne Sykes



Goodbye Yellow Brick Road

(BT's First Farewell To EJ?)

Reggie Zippo offers his own opinion on the story behind one of EJ and BT's best loved songs

I remember when the now famous split of Elton John and Bernie Taupin was announced after the release of the "Blue Moves" album in 1976. The devastation I felt could not be described through mere words. After all, how could Elton's career possibly continue without the wit and wisdom of Bernie's lyrical magic? For nearly a decade, the two had seemed to be perfectly matched (professionally speaking of course). So the notion of a breakup was unthinkable. The news media, Elton and Bernie, however, all said that the "split" was nothing more than a temporary separation to pursue other interests and that they would most assuredly team up again in the future. Even so, it all

seemed like the Elton party was over forever. Time heals all wounds and the separation was indeed temporary. Both EJ and BT bounced back together triumphantly, but what most fans do not realize is that, if not for sincere reluctance, this "split" could have happened as early as 1973.

Back when Bernie was creating the lyrics for the "GBYBR" album, he included a lyrical letter to Elton that outlined his intent to leave the team. Perhaps Elton was oblivious to the underlying meaning of the words or maybe he simply chose to ignore the situation and let the chips fall where they may. Whichever the circumstance, they remained together at least until 1977. To prove my point, consider the words for the album's title song.

*When are you gonna come down,
When are you going to land?
I should have stayed on the farm,
I should have listened to my old man.*

Bernie felt that Elton's ego trips were more than he could handle or possibly that Elton was spreading himself too thin. The constant regime was obviously taking an exhausting toll on Bernie.

*You know you can't hold me forever,
I didn't sign up with you.
I'm not a present for your friends to open,
This boy's too young to be singing the blues."*

This exposes Bernie's desire for independence and an end to the relationship. Did he feel that Elton only rolled him out as a novelty whenever it suited his needs? This is where he tells Elton that there is a foreseeable life without him.

*So, Goodbye Yellow Brick Road,
Where the dogs of society howl.
You can't plant me in your penthouse.
I'm going back to my plough.
Back to the howling old owl in the woods,
Hunting the horny back toad.
Oh, I've finally decided my future lies
Beyond the yellow brick road."*

Elton's glamorous career moves could be considered by some as the road leading to the Emerald City of OZ. On that road

to success, there most certainly were questionable characters and decisions that lurked in the shadows and Bernie wanted no part of it, nor the fame that came with it. His need for simplicity and a bare bones career structure reflects back to when he and EJ first began their adventure. Everything was less hectic and more for the music than it was for popularity and business dealings.

*What do you think you'll do then?
I bet that'll shoot down your plane.
It'll take you a couple of vodka and tonics
To set you on your feet again."*

What would Elton do without Bernie? That is exactly what Bernie contemplated. Something so drastic as to leave the team would have been a major shock to both Elton and his adoring fans. By 1972, Elton was already on the fast track to drink and drugs and Bernie certainly knew that his resignation might cause him to sink further into that kind activity.

*Maybe you'll get a replacement,
There's plenty like me to be found,
Mongrels who ain't got a penny,
Sniffing for tit bits like you on the ground."*

Obviously, Bernie was not worried that Elton would have the trouble of finding a replacement. Musical history has proven that for every successful songwriter there are thousands of others still waiting to be discovered, some of which will never see the light of day without the shining intervention of a successful personality such as Elton.

If Bernie had followed through with his intentions, we would never have heard Elton sing "Ticking", "Curtains", "Dan Dare", "Boogie Pilgrim", and "Ego". Perhaps Elton did read between the lines and had a long heartfelt talk with Bernie and persuaded him to stay. This scenario is definitely a complete fabrication on my part, but if you look at the words closely enough, you too might have come to the conclusion that Bernie was thinking about leaving Elton as early as 1973. I am very grateful that it never happened at that time.

SMALL ADS

These are free to Hercules members. Send yours to Tammi Law, Editor, 49 Horseshoe Crescent, Swindon SN5 5AX, UK., or e-mail her at HerculesEd@aol.com

ELTON MEMORABILIA

For Sale: Elton Memorabilia Collection. Vinyl, CDs, Videos, Books, Mags, plus huge archive collection. Please contact Danny Hayes, 62 Swinley House, Redhill Street, Regents Park, London NW9 4BB, UK. Tel: 0171 387 0082 for list.

CD-SINGLES WANTED

I am looking for cd-singles. The older the better. I especially am looking for "I Don't Wanna Go On.." For trade I have got some newspaper articles (especially about his heart operation) and the "Made in England" (maxi) single. E-mail to: timhercules@hetnet.nl or write to: Tim Blezer, Pastoor Pendersstraat 8, 6262 PA Banholt, Netherlands

WANTED! ELTON VIDEOS.

Please send description and prices. R A Curlis, 2002 Walnut St., San Angelo, TX 76901 USA



EJ CELS!



Similar to the way animation Cels are made. Matted and presented in shadow box frames. 16 titles available. Some in limited edition! Special free offer! Write to: Cartoon Creations, PO Box 396, Dunedin, FL 34697 USA or visit our website at <http://www.angelfire.com/biz/celebritycel/> Our home since 1996!

WANTED! ELTON PHOTOS

from 1980 to 1990 without hats! These are very rare, I know. Please contact Carla Zuntini, via matteotti 2, 20035 lissone - mi - italia, Italy

idol

I understand that "The Mag" published a photo of Sir Elton John wearing the exact same outfit, but we are NOT going out until you change your clothes!



PLEASE REMEMBER...

ALWAYS state your membership number if you send a cheque to Hercules, or pay into one of the Club accounts.

ALWAYS let us know the expiry date of the card, and the cardholders name.

Please note that if you have paid your Membership Fee by Credit Card, your card will automatically be charged again for the renewal fee, at the end of your membership year. If your card has expired in the meantime, or if you have switched companies, please forward your new Credit Card details to Hercules Coordination in time for your next renewal.

LYRIC QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) Levon
- 2) Burn Down the Mission
- 3) Country Comfort
- 4) Mona Lisas & Mad Hatters (pt 2)
- 5) Step into Christmas
- 6) Cold as Christmas
- 7) Medicine Man
- 8) Durban Deep
- 9) The Big Picture
- 10) Ho, Ho, Ho, Who'd be a Turkey at Christmas

German ticket offer

Hercules was able to secure a number of special fan tickets at a reduced rate for selected shows of Elton's German Tour in the year 2000. Every member was sent an Infoletter about the availability of these tickets during November 1999. The offer is now closed, but if you would like to discuss this further, please contact Stephan, Hercules Coordination (see page 2 for the address).

Fan tickets were available for the shows in

- Kassel (23 June 2000, DM 138)
- Hamburg (24 June 2000, DM 128)
- Cologne (27 June 2000, DM 103)
- Stuttgart (01 July 2000, DM 146)
- Munich (08-July-2000), DM 140)



Ludwigslust June '99. Photo: H Reppel

TOUR DATES PLANS & RUMOURS

SPECIAL APPEARANCES

- 13-April-2000New York, NY
Carnegie Hall (Rainforest Benefit show)
- 30-Dec-99Las Vegas, NV
Thomas & Mack Center

SOLO TOUR 2000

- 07-Jan-2000Honolulu, Hawaii
Blaisdell Center Arena
- 08-Jan-2000Honolulu, Hawaii
Blaisdell Center Arena
- 18-June-2000Prague
Sportovni Hala (postponed from 1998 Solo Tour)
- 23-June-2000Kassel, Germany
Wilhelmshöhe (open air)
- 24-June-2000Hamburg, Germany
Derbypark (open air)
- 27-June-2000Cologne, Germany
KölnArena
- 28-June-2000Coburg, Germany
Schlossplatz (open air)
- 30-June-2000Leipzig, Germany
Völkerschlachtdenkmal (open air)
- 01-July-2000Stuttgart, Germany
Schlossplatz (open air)
- 04-July-2000Mannheim, Germany
Schloss Ehrenhof (open air)
- 05-July-2000Koblenz, Germany
Schlosshof (open air)
- 07-July-2000Künzelsau, Germany
Schlosspark (open air)
- 08-July-2000Munich, Germany
Königsplatz (open air)

1999~2000

This is no official tour schedule,
as it also includes rumoured and unconfirmed dates.



For up-to-the-minute news about Elton,
callers in the UK can phone the

HERCULES Hotline on 0906 888 20 20

Calls cost 60p per minute anytime