

# HERCULES

# THE MAG

**GUS  
DUDGEON  
TRIBUTE  
ISSUE:**

Exclusive: The  
last interview

Your memories  
of Gus

A look back at  
his career

**AND**

European Tour  
review and Set  
List

An interview  
with Bernie

Elton: "I've no  
plans to slow  
down"

*Plus*  
News, Lyric Quiz,  
Your letters,  
Small Ads,  
Cartoons, Photos,  
Tour Dates  
and more!



**Issue No. 60**  
**SEPTEMBER 2002**



*Hercules is a registered member  
of the National Association of  
Fan Clubs*

## FAN CLUB INFORMATION

### IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEMBERS

From 1st January 2002, membership rates will be charged in Euro. Fees will be:

Europe: Euro 20 Rest of the World: Euro 35

Please be sure to change any standing orders accordingly if you are paying into one of our accounts.

**Annual membership fee** for the UK is £14 if paid by Standing Order/VISA/Mastercard. By Cheque/Postal Order it is £15. For the rest of Europe it is £14, and for the USA it is 17£/US\$30. 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.

**Web site**  
<http://www.eltonfan.net>

COPYRIGHT: HERCULES

**HERCULES Chief Editor**  
**Tammi Law**  
**49 Horseshoe Crescent**  
**Peatmoor**  
**Swindon SN5 5AX**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**  
**HerculesEd@eltonfan.net**

*Editorial Assistants:*  
Barbara Turner, Michael S English

*Design:* Turnstyle Design

*Translations:*  
Sabine Asenkerschbaumer  
Mireille Mölbert

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

**HERCULES Coordination**  
c/o Stephan Heimbecher  
Berg-am-Laim-Str. 87  
D-81673 München,  
GERMANY  
Tel. +49 (0)89 48900369  
Fax +49 (0)89 48900370  
stephan@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES Fan Adviser**  
c/o Mireille Mölbert  
Albrechtstr. 32  
D-80636 München,  
GERMANY  
Tel. +49 (0)89 3244146  
HerculesFA@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES USA/Canada**  
Barb Crowley  
PO Box 692392  
ORLANDO  
FL 32869-2392  
HerculesUSA@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES U.K.**  
c/o David Wright  
100 Winkworth Road  
Banstead  
Surrey SM7 2QR  
UNITED KINGDOM  
HerculesUK@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES Benelux**  
c/o Tim Blezer  
Pastoor Pendersstraat 8  
6262 PA banholt  
NETHERLANDS  
Tel. +31 (0)43 4571703  
Herculesblx@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES Italy**  
c/o Luca Zerbini  
Via Scheiwiller n.9/A  
I-20139 Milano, ITALY  
HerculesIT@eltonfan.net

**HERCULES Nordic**  
Urpu Kallio  
Uudenklänpolku  
05200 Rajámaki  
FINLAND  
email: urpu@eltonfan.net

## CONTENTS

### FEATURES

**Gus Dudgeon**  
Personal tributes .....9  
Brief Biography .....12  
talks to Hercules .....14

**European Tour**  
review .....20

**Talking Taupin** .....22

**No plans to slow down...**  
...yet .....23

**Take a long look into the sky**.....24

### REGULARS

**Club Information** .....2

**News Bullets** .....4

**Lyric Quiz** .....24

**The Future of Hercules** 25

**Letters to the Editor**.....26

**Small ads** .....27

**Tour Dates** .....27

**PLEASE REMEMBER...**

**ALWAYS state your membership no. 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.



## FROM THE EDITOR...

**As most of you will know by now, some very sad news happened within the last few weeks. Gus Dudgeon, Elton's extremely talented record producer, was tragically killed, together with his wife Sheila, in a car accident in July. In this issue of The Mag, we pay tribute to the memory of Gus by running the remainder of the exclusive interview that Gus gave to Hercules just weeks before he was killed.**

As members of the fan club, we are all lucky to be able to remember that Gus had a refreshing attitude towards the fans, and always made a point of being accessible to us all – he seemed to appreciate who the fans are, and how we play our part in the success of any great music artist. He attended several fan conventions and Expos over the years, and it is interesting to note that the final interview he ever gave turned out to be when he invited Hercules into his home, and spoke to the fans.

Thank you all for your comments and memories of Gus – I know that a lot of you drew comfort from contacting us and each other after the shocking news. As one member said to me "We shouldn't ever underestimate the importance of Gus in Elton's songs – the music was created by Elton, Bernie AND Gus." We have printed a selection of your comments about Gus on page 9.

After the success of the European Tour with the band in May, June and July, Elton took a well-deserved holiday in July and August, spending several weeks at his home in the South of France. The European tour included shows in Italy, France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, the UK and Ireland.

An eye-witness review of every show in Europe was on the Hercules website ([www.eltonfan.net](http://www.eltonfan.net)) within hours of Elton coming off stage, complete with set-lists. These fan reviews will remain on the website for several months so don't worry if you haven't had chance to read them yet. A review of one of the UK shows in Birmingham, plus the set list, can be found on page 20.

Refreshed after his holiday, Elton started work again at the end of August with a handful of shows in Canada. The next leg of the tour takes in the USA for the rescheduled Face to Face dates with Billy Joel during September and October.

As mentioned in previous issues of The Mag, this is the last proper issue of the fanzine. There will be a special farewell issue in December to ensure that we go out with a bang! You can read all about the changes to the fan club on page 25.

Thanks for all your comments and photographs of Elton. Keep them coming and we'll see you in December.

*Veronica*





## A Tragic Accident...

**IN THE EARLY HOURS OF SUNDAY 21 JULY, GUS DUDGEON, WITH HIS WIFE SHEILA, DIED IN A TRAGIC ROAD ACCIDENT.**



*Gus and Sheila Dudgeon*

**S**ometime after 4am, returning from a party, their Jaguar XK8 veered off the M4 motorway between Reading and Maidenhead ending up on its roof. They were pronounced dead at the scene.

A Thames Valley Police spokesman said: "The car was spotted overtaking and moments later it was seen leaving the carriageway between junctions 10 and 8/9 of the motorway near Reading.

"Although the accident was reported as soon as it happened, both occupants of the car died instantly. It took almost an hour for fire-fighters to release their bodies from the wreckage."

### **The Funeral**

The funeral took place on Thursday August 1st at St Andrew's Church near Gus and Sheila's home in Cobham, Surrey.

Elton, speaking to a packed congregation, described his friend

and former mentor as the "the greatest producer of a generation".

"In 1970, I had my first hit and it was all down to Gus - that was my career, he was a loving and inspiring man and between 1970 and 1975, we made 17 albums together. I can't remember a happier time."

He also read a message from Bernie Taupin. Elton's moving tribute gave way to tears when High Flying Bird was played out to the packed church.

Among the mourners were Davey Johnstone, Nigel Olsson, Sir Cliff Richard, Paul Gambacini, The Zombies, Joan Armatrading and John Reid.

Outside the church, amid a mountain of floral tributes, was a bouquet of white lilies. A note attached read: "Thank you for the glorious times. May you be in Heaven together forever, love Elton."

The couple, who did not have



*Elton outside the funeral*

children, left behind Gus's brother, Murray, and Sheila's brother, Edward Bailey, who both gave readings at the service. Gus and Sheila lived in a beautifully restored cottage in Cobham, where they were able to indulge in their shared passion for gardening. They were buried in Cobham cemetery.

A full page tribute to Gus from Elton and Bernie appeared in USA's Billboard Magazine after the accident. With a black and white photo of the trio at work behind a studio production board in the 1970s, the message at the bottom read: "You will be missed. All our love, Elton and Bernie."

---

### **TRUE LOVE**

Elton says he will leave his huge fortune to his partner David. Elton is currently worth £150 million. Elton told German magazine Bunte: "I know I am as rich as a king and love being able to buy nice things and give them as presents. But I'll leave everything behind for David." Elton insists he has found true love with the 39-year-old and will never stray. The recovering alcoholic said: "It would be like taking a drink for me, it would destroy everything. David and I are very romantic and I think we will be together until the end of our lives."



## JAGGER/JOHN

Mick Jagger's daughter, Jade, is to turn lyricist when she writes the words for an Elton tune. The collaboration has come about after Jade's jewellery company, Garrard, bought an original Elton number for £150,000 at an auction at Elton's White Tie and Tiara Ball in June. They want to use the tune as the centrepiece of the launch of their new Mayfair store on September 12, and have decided that Jade should write some words to go with Elton's tune. "Jade has the freedom to do whatever she likes, we won't make her do a corporate song or anything like that," said a spokesman. Although it is thought that Jade will sing her own words, Elton will unfortunately be unable to supply the musical accompaniment as he will be performing in Florida.

## JANDRE AGASSI GRAND SLAM

Several of entertainment's brightest stars will gather on September 28 to perform in the 7th Annual Andre Agassi Grand Slam for Children. Held annually in Las Vegas by the Andre Agassi Charitable Foundation (AACF), the benefit concert has become one of the most anticipated entertainment events each year.

Headlining this year's concert at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, are Elton, Babyface, Robin Williams, Martina McBride, Dennis Miller, and Carlos Santana.

## ELTON AND DAVID -

### THE GODFATHERS

Elton and David Furnish are amongst the SIX Godfathers for Elizabeth Hurley's son, Damian Charles. Actors Hugh Grant and Denis Leary; Elton and David, New York financier Teddy Forstmann and British noble Henry Dent Brocklehurst were all on hand for the christening on July 6, in London. Other guests included actress Patsy Kensit, model Elle Macpherson, and former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham and her husband, soccer star David Beckham. Damian's father, real-estate heir Steve Bing, did not attend.

## DOCTOR SIR ELTON

### HERCULES JOHN!



After three decades as one of the biggest stars in the world, Sir Elton has finally graduated from the music school he dropped out of 40 years ago. Elton, who left the Royal Academy Of Music before his final exams to pursue a showbiz career in 1964, went back on July 3, 2002, in a graduation gown and, accompanied by his mother, to pick up a doctorate in an official ceremony.

"I wasn't a very good student," he said. "When I didn't practice, I used to go round on the Circle Line and then go home." Sir Elton's mother, Sheila Fairbrother, described the ceremony as very exciting. "I've seen him in a frock before," she said, "but I never thought I'd see him in one of these gowns."

Elton was first enrolled at the Royal Academy at the age of 11, when he was still Reginald Dwight. He won a one-day-a-week scholarship to learn piano on Saturday mornings. Current Royal Academy principal Professor Curtis Price said there were good memories of Sir Elton's talents. "Elton, by all reports, was some sort of a child prodigy," said the professor. "He had a very successful time here, although as he looks back on it

now he thinks perhaps he was a bit insecure and not as good as some of the other high-fliers."

Sir Elton is one of only two people - Sir Colin Davis, principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra is the other - to receive honorary doctorates in the Royal Academy's 180-year history. Elton announced that he will hold a gala concert on December 1, 2002, at the Royal Opera House with the Academy's Symphony Orchestra to raise money for an endowment fund. "It will provide scholarships for people so that they can come to this wonderful place", Elton explained.

## RIESA AT LAST ... BUT NO

### PLANE'S TOUCHING DOWN

Throughout Europe, airports were deserted and airplanes grounded after air traffic controllers in France and other nations went on strike on June 19. Due to the strike, Elton and the band were stuck in France and were not able to make it to Riesa in time for their show on June 19, and the show was re-scheduled for June 26. The German tour promoter, Peter Rieger Concerts, as well as Elton's management tried to fly in Elton and the band via helicopter, without success. They apologised for the fact that the show had to be shifted at such short notice.

## MY STRONGEST SUIT!

Elton has been crowned the biggest fashion disaster in the male celebrity world. Famous for his elaborate outfits, Elton beat the likes of pop singer Michael Jackson, actor Nicholas Cage and all of boyband 'N Sync to the dubious honour, which was awarded by the American edition of men's magazine FHM.

Writer Simon O'Connell observes, "The list of Elton's fashion mistakes would take weeks to read. From spangly suits to diamond tiaras, there appears to be no hope for the Rocket Man."

# EJ NEWS BULLETS...



Full details of the following news items have appeared on our Website

## THE LION KING'S 2,000TH BROADWAY PERFORMANCE

The Lion King celebrated its 2,000th performance at New York's New Amsterdam Theatre on July 30. Worldwide, the Elton John/Tim Rice musical has won over 30 major awards. Those include six Tony Awards, including one for Best Musical; eight Drama Desk Awards; six Outer Critics Circle Awards; two Sir Laurence Olivier; the Evening Standard Award for Best Theatrical Event; and three Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards.

## JANET RENO

Elton has become the latest of Janet Reno's celebrity friends to help her campaign for governor, agreeing to sing at a September fund-raiser. He will give a solo performance at the private, \$500 per ticket event on September 18 at a Fort Lauderdale hotel. The two met when Reno was U.S. attorney general, and Elton recently invited the Democratic hopeful to his Academy Awards party. "He said he'd do anything to support her campaign," a spokeswoman for Reno said.

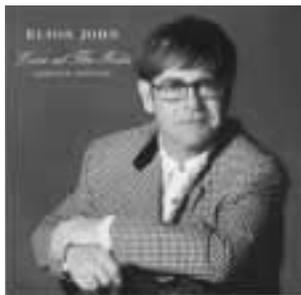
## MULTIMILLION-POUND COURT BATTLE

Elton lost the latest round of a British court fight with his former accountants Pricewaterhouse-Coopers over touring costs he believes he should never have paid, on June 24.

He unsuccessfully asked the Court of Appeal to allow him to reopen his case against the firm for negligence in managing his finances after losing a High Court case.

Lord Justice Robert Walker, one of the three Court of Appeal judges hearing the case, said he had "come to the same conclusion as the High Court judge" who ruled that he did not find the accountants negligent. Elton was refused permission to reopen his suit.

## LIVE AT THE RITZ



A new mini CD was released on August 6, as CD Universal International 111185: Elton John live at the Ritz. It contains the following six tracks recorded live

- Daniel
- Don't Let the Sun to Down on Me
- Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word
- Something About the Way You Look Tonight
- Take Me to the Pilot
- The Last Song

## MTV AWARDS

The nineteenth annual MTV Awards show was broadcast live from New York City's Radio City Music Hall on August 29. Elton served as a presenter, and the video clip for This Train Don't Stop There Anymore was nominated in three categories: Best Male Video, Best Direction in a Video, and Best Art Direction in a Video.

## INDIAN SUNSET

Elton will perform for the first time in India, concert promoters said on August 21. Elton will hold a concert in the southern city of Bangalore in November, said Sukhetu Kohli, manager operations at DNA Networks. The date has yet to be set. Bangalore was chosen to host the concert instead of Bombay, India's film and entertainment capital, because Bombay has a 50 percent entertainment tax and a 10.00 pm curfew for live performances.

## NEW YOUR SONG

Elton has re-recorded his classic hit Your Song as the centre-piece of Sport Relief, a UK national charity to support under-privileged children. Elton has teamed up with opera star Alessandro Safina to perform the rousing duet.

The enhanced CD single, including three different versions of the song as well as the video was released in July. It entered the UK charts at Number 4.

## TECHNICAL TROUBLE IN MUNICH

Elton encountered technical problems during the show in Munich on June 23, but he didn't allow it to dampen his good mood. Dale Sticha (Elton's piano technician) and his crew were fighting problems with Elton's personal monitors (loudspeakers) through the entire show.

It all went wrong from the start when Elton was gesticulating during the opener Funeral For A Friend/Love Lies Bleeding. Both monitor units were replaced before he finished the song. But Elton continued to signal to Dale during Bennie And The Jets. After the monitor units were replaced again during Someone Saved My Life Tonight, Elton said: "I apologise for the technical stuff going on which hopefully is not affecting any of you." It didn't affect us, even when the speakers were replaced again during Rocket Man which again was the highlight of the show. Oh My Sweet Carolina was replaced with Candle In The Wind during the Munich show ... and Elton's loudspeakers were replaced again during American Triangle. When Elton introduced the band right before Holiday Inn (the other highlight of the set), technicians took a chance to replace them again which resulted in Elton commenting: "It's about the 40th one tonight. Great thing they are not sponsoring the tour!" Although Elton never lost his humour despite these continuous glitches, it must have been a difficult show for him to perform.



## ANOTHER DISNEY PROJECT?

When he was in Atlanta last year, Elton dropped hints about a new Disney project he was composing. In August, Disney partially lifted the veil on an animated feature that sounds remarkably like the project Elton was trying his best not to describe. The South American themed feature, "My Peoples," will use the vocal talents of James Carville, Dolly Parton, Lily Tomlin, Lou Rawls and Travis Tritt. It is scheduled for a 2005 release.

## TANTRUMS AND TIARAS ... PART 125

Elton turned nasty on female photographer Lucy George of Big Pictures agency, telling her: "I hope you die of cancer." The outburst came on the doorstep of new mum Liz Hurley's home in London. A posse of photographers was snapping away outside the house as he and David arrived to visit Liz and baby son Damian.

Lucy said: "He was immediately pretty hostile and called the four or five photographers scum bags. Then he started aiming insults directly at me. They were quite revolting. I was so taken aback. He used the c-word a couple of times and then really venomously said, "I hope you die of cancer." Elton apologised for his behaviour in a statement released on June 30.

## NO CONCERT IN BUDAPEST

There were rumours that Elton was to perform an open-air show in Budapest on August 20, which is a national holiday in Hungary. Apparently, the concert was to take place on Kossuth Square in front of the Parliament, and entry was reported to be free. However, it didn't happen: the Hungarian news agency MTI reported that Elton's management asked for a large advance. The Hungarian sponsors, who would have covered the costs of the free concert, had different ideas on the timing of paying the reported HUF 200m (approx. US\$ 800,000) fee.

## ELTON ADDS ANOTHER UK DATE

Elton kicked off the UK leg of his World Tour in Birmingham on July 2 and 3, and was so impressed by the response of the crowd, that he decided to add another show in Birmingham on December 15, 2002, and it will be the final date on his UK arena tour. "You know, I was nervous about performing in front of you guys - but we've enjoyed it so much - we're gonna come back in December!"

## SPECIAL EDITION OF SFTWC

A new edition of Songs From The West Coast was released on July 22 in the UK. The special edition contains two CDs. One is the original Songs From The West Coast, and the other CD contains the following tracks and videos:

1. Your Song (Elton and Alessandro Safina)
2. Teardrops (Elton and Lulu)
3. The North Star
4. Original Sin (Junior's Earth Mix) (edit)
5. Your Song (Almighty Mix) (edit)
6. I Want Love (Video)
7. This Train Don't Stop There Anymore (Video)
8. Your Song (Video)

## ELTON KISSES ANASTACIA

Anastacia thinks Elton has more power than he really has! The American songstress reckons she has been knighted because Sir Elton kissed her navel. She said "He did the proverbial air kissing on the cheeks then got on one knee and kissed me on the midriff backstage after one of my shows. I didn't know what to do - do I kiss his ring, do I kiss his midriff? What level do we take this to? Ever since then I've been telling everyone I've been knighted by Sir Elton John. It's an American knighthood as far as I'm concerned."

## SIR ELTON SINGS AT

## SOMERSET HOUSE



*Elton with Camilla Parker Bowles at the charity event*

Elton performed a charity concert at London's Somerset House to an exclusive audience of millionaires and celebrities. He played for 45 minutes on July 11 and was expected to raise up to £3m. Among the 200 guests were Prince Charles and his partner, Camilla Parker Bowles, who was greeted with a kiss from Elton. Each guest paid an undisclosed sum to attend the event, which was in aid of Somerset House and the children's charity Absolute Return For Kids (ARK).

The evening included an auction; amongst the prizes were a day's pheasant and partridge shooting at Ashcombe, the £9m Wiltshire estate of Madonna and Guy Ritchie, and the chance to play tennis doubles against Elton and Guy Forget.

Speaking beforehand, Elton said: "I was asked to perform by Lily (Safra) and I said yes because she's been so supportive of my charities. And when Lily asks you to do something, you do it. Anyway, it's a wonderful charity to be supporting. ARK helps youngsters who are the victims of abuse, disability, illness and poverty."

# EJ NEWS BULLETS...

Full details of the following news items have appeared on our Website



## WHITE TIE AND TIARA BALL



Elton's fourth White Tie And Tiara Ball, attended by hundreds of celebrities, took place on June 27, in the grounds of his UK home Woodside, with live entertainment from Craig David, Sting, Westlife, Ronan Keating, Lulu and Elton himself.

The ball - which raised £1.2 million for the Elton John Aids Foundation last year - had a Gosford Park theme, with Elj's house being decorated in the film's Thirties style. The £1,000-a-head party started with drinks in the garden followed by a four-course meal and an auction of prizes, including the chance of having your lyrics set to music by Elton, a weekend stay at Elton and David's house in Nice, a football lesson with David Beckham, a yoga lesson with Sting and a photo session with David LaChapelle. Most of the party took place in a marquee decorated with oil paintings, sumptuous carpets and extravagant place settings. The 450 guests included David and Victoria Beckham, Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall, Elizabeth Hurley, Hugh Grant, Kate Winslet, the Duchess of York, Elle Macpherson and Naomi Campbell. Elton has said of his decision to make the annual fundraiser: "We live in such a casual age. I wanted an event that people could really dress up for and feel special, and as I'm away on tour so much it was a chance for me to see a lot of my friends in a relaxed setting."

## A STAR IS BORN

Robert Hilburn, the LA journalist who wrote the infamous "A Star is Born" review in August 1970 which helped launch Elton's career, recently commented: "I think it is so sweet of Elton to keep mentioning how I did the first review of him ever in this country and how it helped make him a star. I really was impressed by that show, and I was shocked by how important that review seemed to be in attracting attention for him in this country. The funny thing is I got a pretty big head for a few weeks there. I had just started at the paper and I started thinking, 'Wow, I can really make stars.' So, I started searching around for someone else to 'make a star.'"

But I really do appreciate Elton's remarks. I have kept pretty close to Elton (and Bernie) all these years and felt their last album was their best in years. I think it would have been a much bigger hit if it had come earlier in their career. Sometimes, people feel they have enough albums by a certain artist and that there is nothing new to learn from them - and this may be a problem facing Elton. Shame, because he (and Bernie) are immensely talented."

## ELTON SETS SASKATOON RECORD

Tickets sold out in just over an hour on July 13 for Elton's concert on August 30, at SaskPlace. Elton's other Canadian stop was at Kelowna's Skyreach Place Aug 28.

Promoter Paul Haagenon of House of Blues Concerts said that playing in a more intimate setting is often a thrill for the performer as well. "There's a fantastic frenzy and an excitement that he doesn't always get if you play only the major markets all the time."

## THE ELTON JOHN SCRAPBOOK

The Elton John Scrapbook by Hercules member Mary Anne Cassata and former East End Lights editor Jim Turano is a guide to Elton's extraordinarily successful career. The 224-page paperback is now available.

## THE CHARLIE MORGAN

### BREAKDOWN ARENA

Elton mysteriously told the Stuttgart audience on June 22 that "It's great to be back in the Charlie Morgan breakdown arena". The riddle was solved when Charlie Morgan himself contacted Hercules and explained Elton's announcement:

"Wow ... he has a long memory, that's for sure. It was in Stuttgart that I decided in 1995 that the life on the road was not for me, and I tendered my resignation. Elton persuaded me to stay on, and even brought his therapist out to Monte Carlo later, to talk to me. Needless to say, I stayed on!!"

I think it is important to mention that I was in a very dysfunctional marriage at the time, and that this was largely responsible for my actions. As a postscript, it might also be worth saying that the inevitable break-up of that marriage was the principal cause of me coming off the road in 1998. I am glad to say that this is all long behind me now, after over 2 years of legal battles, and resettling in the USA.

I also wanted to thank everyone for their continued support and friendship "Post-Elton". Many fans have met my (second) wife, Jerilyn, and judging from the number of great emails I receive after they do, they all seem to understand what I see in her! I am delighted to say we are extremely happy together. All the best, Charlie."

## ELTON AND J-LO!

Jennifer Lopez has announced plans to record a duet with Elton. "We've spoken about it and have a few ideas in mind. Elton says he likes my music and I'm a big fan too," she revealed. Elton has in the past admired Lopez's talent, especially extolling in interviews the virtues of her shapely bottom.

# Personal tributes...

**Gus Dudgeon's untimely death was deeply felt by all Elton John fans. Many had met him and wanted to express their feelings and we are pleased to publish them here.**

My earliest experiences with Elton were his Gus Dudgeon albums. I wasn't quite old enough to be buying LP's until the Madman album and have bought everything since and also before. I've always enjoyed 'hi-fi' even as a small child as it fascinated me how sound was recorded and reproduced.

Gus created a sound for Elton which none of his subsequent producers have done. I know that Elton has had some of the best names in the business work with him, but there was something magical about the collaboration between Gus, Elton and the band. Maybe it was the studios they used, maybe it was the incredible budgets that the record company allotted for their work - I can't say. But with such classic albums from Tumbleweed all the way through Captain Fantastic, there was no one who could approach their output and sheer quality of musicianship. To consider how much time is spent on disks now...years between projects and then to remember that Gus and Elton had put out two albums a year from 1970 to 1976 - awesome. The number of projects is only outdone by the music and productions.

He was as much part of EJ and Taupin in the early days as George Martin was the fifth Beatle.

He will be missed by music fans the world over. Farewell, Gus.

**Tom Hand**



*Gus and Sheila Dudgeon: with thanks to Stuart Epps*

The first time I came into contact with Gus Dudgeon, I did not even realise it was him. It was September 1988 and I was at Sotheby's for the auction of Elton's stage costumes and memorabilia. In front of me sat a chap in a white jacket with a couple of vivid green musical note brooches setting it off. To complete the effect he had on green tinted spectacles. As the day wore on I noticed that he successfully bid on 2 David Bailey pictures taken backstage at Live Aid and the Madman Across The Water denim cushion. Imagine my surprise when I read in the press the following day that the cushion was bought by none other than Gus Dudgeon. 'If only I had realised', I thought to myself, 'I could have had a quick word and got his autograph'. Thankfully, my chance came in later years when I met him at gigs by both John Jorgenson and Kiki Dee. How fortunate and privileged I was.

**John Michie, UK**

I was shocked and saddened to hear of the accident that ended the lives of Sheila and Gus Dudgeon in the early hours of Sunday morning. I am sure those of you who have met Gus would agree with me when I say he will be sorely missed. He was the sort of man who lit up a room just by walking through the door. I will miss his genius, his wit, and most of all his friendship. I always enjoyed working with him. He had the knack of turning work into pleasure. His creativity was responsible for changing the face of the UK Music Industry in a very short space of time. It will be very hard to successfully quantify the impact of this loss to the World.

**Charlie Morgan, Drummer**

Dreadful news. He was a fan favourite because he produced the cleanest, most glamorous sounding recordings throughout Elton's entire career, miles beyond anyone else. It's safe to say that most serious Elton John fans were rooting for his return. In addition, through the interviews on the Hercules website and elsewhere, it's clear that he was like a museum curator of Elton's work - his remasters of the studio records were excellent, the remaster and expansion of "Here and There" was masterful. He clearly cared a great deal about Elton's, and his own, legacy. I always get chills when I hear the magnificent drum sound he created with Nigel on "Captain Fantastic", particularly "Someone Saved My Life Tonight".

Amazing, one of a kind work.

It has been rumoured that he was to compile an archive of Elton's live performances for box set release. What a missed opportunity. An awful loss for Elton's fans as well as Elton himself. I listened today to what I consider his and EJ/BT's masterwork, "Captain Fantastic", and this line from "Curtains" sums up his legacy; what Gus and only Gus has done:

"Cultivate the freshest flowers, this garden ever grew."

**Steve Petran**

I was having some computer problems for a few days and then went to see my family over the weekend for my mom's birthday, July 18th. So I received in the mail Issue 59 of Hercules. It was a very nice issue with the interview with Gus. Then I came home yesterday and found out today that Gus and his wife were in a car accident and died!

That really upset me. He seemed a very nice guy and I love what he did with Elton's music, especially the remasters. No words can express my regret to Gus's family and friends on their lost loved one

**Nancy Roelke, USA**

I had the opportunity to have dinner with Gus and Sheila Dudgeon last month. While I was truly in awe of Gus' talents, I would like to say that it is only when you met Gus in person that you realise his musical integrity was the essence of his genius. When asked about Elton's new music, Gus stood his ground and favoured Elton's older music. Gus felt that Elton's earlier music had more breadth to it. He felt that the newer music lacks freedoms of the heart because much of it is written to an 'electronic beat'. I felt the passion in Gus's conversation as he told stories about his job in the music business. He seemed so proud of his work! In some ways, I thought he didn't realise the impact he made on the recording industry. He seemed like an ordinary guy with an extraordinary talent.

My favourite story was when Gus first met John Lennon. Gus mentioned that he knew what charisma was, but never experienced it until John Lennon walked into the room. Gus described how the aura enveloped him. It's a little bit funny, but I felt that aura when I first met Gus. I'm so happy I was able to experience a few hours with a genius. I cherish those moments especially now that he has left us.

**Michele Millington, USA**

I am so saddened at the news of Gus and his wife's sudden death. It is a terrible time for all fans of the music he produced. He can never be replaced but we are all lucky to have his talents in our record and CD collections.

**Tracey Tims**

I wanted to express my deep sympathy in the tragic passing of Gus Dudgeon. I met Gus at the last Elton John Expo that EEL held in New Jersey. I must say he was quite the gentleman, and very patient with us Elton-ites. He so patiently signed autographs (remember the long line??) and just struck me as such a down to earth gentleman. I remember thanking him for the music, and how he later joked when he overheard my comment to Davey Johnstone about how I always admired his long, blonde hair. I was fortunate enough to have gotten his autograph. Gus has been a cornerstone of the Elton world for so long, and although I only met him once, I feel like I have lost a close friend and someone I have known for years. My sympathy goes out to his family, friends, Elton and the band.

**Miriam Bebitch, USA**

Just like everyone, I was very saddened to hear the tragic news about Gus Dudgeon. I recall meeting Gus at different Elton Expo's and always found him to be openly candid and honest when talking about his experiences with Elton. Gus was the genius behind the early Elton sound that we have come to love. Evidence of his creativity was even more enhanced when he worked on the "remastered" series of Elton albums. My fondest memory was having Gus autograph my Captain Fantastic poster, to which he wrote; "one of my favourite albums - cheap" Gus Dudgeon.

Several years later I saw Elton perform in Toronto, and when he came out for the encore, I went to the stage with my poster, Elton took my poster, read Gus' comments, and broke up laughing, then signed it below Gus' signature.

Elton, his band, and the recording industry, have lost a true master and friend.

**Kevin Bell**

I had the privilege of attending all 4 of the Elton expos. Gus was a special guest at 2 of them. In 1994 those who attended sat in awe as we had the honour to be in the same room with Gus, Nigel and Davey. I remember being in the Atlanta hotel for the first expo playing a beat-up piano during some down-time, I was butchering "Funeral for a Friend". I looked up at one point and saw Gus walking by and felt very embarrassed and wondered how many times he had to hear some of these masterpieces destroyed.

Later that evening my close friend and brilliant piano player, Elizabeth Lowrey entertained the attendees by taking requests. Gus was not there, however his wife Sheila was, she was so taken by Elizabeth's talents that she offered to speak to Gus about her in case she had musical aspirations. Each expo seemed a bit more relaxed as repeat guests became comfortable with familiar faces from the previous years.

In New York in September of 2000 I met Sheila on the streets after having attended Aida, part of the expo package. Sheila was a big fan of Les Miserables, and spent time telling me why that was such a work of brilliance, as well as her thoughts on Aida. She was an absolute delight! She asked me "Have you met Gus?" I said no, and couldn't believe she was asking.

She took me by the hand and personally introduced me to him. One of her favourite songs was Skyline Pigeon, the next day she sat by Elizabeth once again to hear this, one of her favourite songs played by one of my best friends.

**Bruce Dill**

As a fan of Elton's music for almost 30 years, I am deeply saddened by the death of Gus and his wife Sheila. Gus Dudgeon was my favourite producer of Elton John's music. I enjoyed, and still enjoy, the wide-open, clean, expansive sound quality that is the hallmark of his collaborations with Elton. He will be missed!

**Jack Atiyeh**

Gus Dudgeon probably wouldn't have preferred all the attention that his death now ensures he will receive. He was the kind of person who never sought the spotlight. Gus felt at home offstage, behind the scenes, where his touch was always barely perceptible to most of us. That's how he worked for the early part of Elton's career, and that's how he helped Elton put together so many of our favorite songs; so, in a way, our memories inspired by the music have as much to do with Gus as with Elton.

It's safe to say that much of Elton's early songs would have been profoundly different without Gus behind the control desk. From what I understand, the soft-spoken record producer was also the quintessential English gentleman. He was a simple man, always smiling, and I would have liked to have known him, if for no other reason than to thank him for all the songs he helped Elton create that still serve as souvenirs of my life.

"It seems to me a crime that we should age - these fragile times should never slip us by," Elton once sang, in a song called "Friends." Gus Dudgeon really was a friend to all of us, whether we'd met him or not. His gift was his song, and making life wonderful while he was in the world. All that's left for us now is to say goodbye. And thank you.

**Andy Meek, USA**



Left to right: Charlie Morgan, Gus Dudgeon, Roger Pope together in June 2002. Photo by Rob Cargill

Barely a month after John Entwistle's untimely passing whilst preparations for a new Who album are finally underway, comes the truly devastating and tragic news of the death of Gus and Sheila Dudgeon.

As shown on the recent DVD/TV series of "Classic Albums", Gus was still at the peak of his prime, and it was clear by the reaction to his work from Elton, Bernie, Nigel and Davey, that another Gus produced Elton album was not out of the question.

Despite most of Gus' artists obvious American rock and roll influences - particularly Elton - one his main talents was to project a unique Englishness out his performers. Even on something like "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters", there is an extremely quaint English quality to the singing, playing and production, in spite of the strong patriotic New York based subject matter.

What Gus will mostly be remembered for of course is his peerless work with Elton. With the Elton John album, Dudgeon proved that his gift to kick start the careers of potential superstars was intact. When "Your Song" hit the top ten in February 1971, it was clear the success of the production brains behind "Space Oddity" was not a one-off.

The element of Gus' work that fans probably will remember and treasure the most was the method in which Gus was able to get the best possible performance and skill out of each musician. Elton's singing technique developed to new heights on "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" ("I've seen that movie too" and "Roy Rogers" are two obvious examples). Throughout his years of producing Elton, Gus never forgot his awesomely inventive piano playing, demonstrated on the pioneering and ghostly tragic "Ticking".

The same went for Elton's band. At a recent concert in Liverpool Elton acknowledged that Davey had never played an electric guitar prior to joining Elton's band. Now Davey is widely known as one of the world's greatest and inventive guitarists, touring with Alice

Cooper and Meatloaf as well as Elton for 30 years. Gus played an instrumental part in Davey's development as rock and roll player. Proof of this can be found on "Don't Shoot Me I'm only the piano player", where on "Blues for baby and me" Mr Johnstone is playing a coral sitar with a wah wah pedal. Elsewhere on this colourful album Davey's tear jerking harmonics grace the unbearably poignant "High Flying Bird".

We now live in an age where computers and sequencers provide 'beats' which as Sheryl Crow reluctantly admitted is 'what the public are buying'. We now have to rely on Ryan Adams and David Gray and other new kids who were so influenced by those records Gus produced. Britney, N-sync et al will come and go but the inestimable contribution to music Gus left us with will never ever be forgotten.

**Matthew Isaacs, UK**

I did not know Gus that well, but had met him a few times - once at the Cropredy Festival when I was playing with the Hellecasters (I guess he liked the set as he hired the rhythm section for a project just after!) and again at the Borderline, where I was so honoured to have him come down to hear my band. He and Sheila were both such warm, positive and enthusiastic people that it was a pleasure to be in their company.

There is not much I can add to what will be said of the amazing catalogue of music that will be Gus's legacy. Suffice it to say he worked with some of the world's greatest artists, and he succeeded in getting their best out of them, creating masterful works that have and will continue to stand the test of time. He will be missed.

**John Jorgenson, Guitarist**

**Thank you to all the fans who took the time and trouble to write to us at Hercules.**

# GUS - A BRIEF BIO

By Reggie Zippo

**B**est known for his collaborative ties to Elton John, Gus Dudgeon was among the most successful music producers of the twentieth century. Getting his start at Decca Records in the early '60s, Gus was given the rare opportunity to work closely with such now legendary recording artists as the Zombies, John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Tom Jones, Lulu, David Bowie, and The Rolling Stones to name just a few. After a 5 1/2 year career as a Decca studio engineer, Gus stepped out on his own to pursue a career as a freelance producer. With such hits as David Bowie's 'Space Oddity' and John Kongos' 'He's Going To Step On You Again', it was soon evident that this career move was a step in the right direction. The very fiber of his reputation, though, was to be discovered within the creative partnership that he established with Elton John in 1969-70. In later years, this team would be a comparable match to George Martin and The Beatles.

In reflecting on his work with Elton over the years, Gus had said that many of the song tracks he produced for Elton were solely based around live studio takes with Elton playing piano right alongside a drummer, bassist, and the other band members. He felt that it was clearly the only way to capture the feel of a band performance. Gus had also revealed that every mix he did was in trying to get the whole song in one shot, knowing full well that the chance of getting it absolutely right all the way through was fairly slim. It would usually take about 8 to 10 mixes then combining all of the best elements before he was completely satisfied.

In the early part of the '70s, Gus, Elton, and a few close business partners joined forces to establish Rocket Records Ltd., a record label that reintroduced Neil Sedaka, Kiki Dee, and Cliff Richard to the music world. This partnership, however, ended in 1976 with the release of Elton's 'Blue Moves' album, with "creative differences" noted as the main cause. Although Gus re-emerged in Elton's camp in the mid '80s to produce the 'Leather Jackets', 'Ice On Fire', and 'Live In Australia' albums, the magic it seemed had waned and record sales took a plummet. It wasn't until the late '90s that Gus was given

another chance to work on Elton's material. This came in the way of an offer to handle the ardent task of remastering all of Elton's back catalogue for CD release. The albums had been the victims of a shoddy original transfer to the digital domain and Gus was very passionate about putting the albums back on the right track.

Another fine distinction that Gus held in life was being listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the recognized pioneer of sampled music, for his work on John Kongos' 'He's Going To Step On You Again'. The whole song was built around a loop of music lifted from an African tribal dance recording. Even though he was not a fan of most modern sample-based music, he was quite proud to be listed in the record book as the first person to utilize the art of sampling.

Gus had always made it clear that he was not a prima donna or a control-freak producer because being at the top of his profession never meant that he would inevitably choose big, high-profile projects rather than working with new talent or in project studios. "This industry has provided me with a bloody good income. I'm not worried about making money. What I'm more concerned about is working and enjoying it!"

In recent years, Gus had worked with an eclectic selection of artists which included the likes of XTC, The Frank and Walters, Fairpoint Convention, and Menswear. He had also been busy remixing an old single by Bonzo Dog Band drummer "Legs" Larry Smith, who provided the tap dancing sequence on Elton's song 'I Think I'm Going To Kill Myself' from the Honky Chateau album. Two other current projects of Gus' had been as producer of a live album recorded at a tribute concert for Burt Bacharach and as a manager of a new band called Slinki Malinki.

At the time of his death, Gus and his wife resided in an immaculate sixteenth century Surrey house in the UK. He was an active member of the Music Producers Guild and was on the panel for the guild's "Making Music" lecture tour. His absence will be sorely missed.

I am devastated by the tragic news about Gus Dudgeon. He was an incredibly talented producer and a very dear friend for many years. I will miss him terribly.

*Elton John*

With Gus and Sheila gone we have not only lost a timeless couple who treated a very naive country boy with great courtesy in his younger days, but also an extraordinary talent without whose imaginative production skills and brainstorming ideas our early records would never have taken on the legendary status they have been so fortunate to attain. They will be sorely missed by a legion of fans and a saddened lyricist.

*Bernie Taupin*

Gus was a marvellous producer who was responsible for many great records. And it was just as sad to hear his wife was with him - Sheila was a very nice person. We will all miss Gus terribly. His death is a great loss to the music industry.

*Richard Branson*

When David Bowie recorded an acoustic version of Space Oddity for the comedy TV show, The Kenny Everett show in 1978, he released it as the b-side for the single Alabama Song. Inscribed in the vinyl lead out were two little words 'Sorry Gus'.

## Gus Dudgeon produced...

...18 Elton John albums, amongst them the early albums widely regarded as Elton's "classics":

Elton John

Tumbleweed Connection

17.11.70

Friends

Madman Across the Water

Honky Chateau

Don't Shoot Me I'm Only the Piano Player

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road

Caribou

Elton John's Greatest Hits

Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy

Rock of the Westies

Here and There

Blue Moves

Greatest Hits Volume 2

Ice on Fire

Leather Jackets

Live In Australia



The fans offer Elton roses in Stuttgart, July 2002. Photo by S Heimbecher



Shaking hands with fans in Helsinki, June 2002: Photos by T Saavalainen.



Dramatic overhead lighting on stage, Divonne, July 12: Photo by P Andrey

# Gus Dudgeon talks to Hercules

INTERVIEW BY DAVID WRIGHT

In April Gus kindly invited Hercules into his Surrey home where, in his study surrounded by awards and gold discs from a successful career, Gus gave what turned out to be his last interview with the fans. We published part one in our June issue, and here we bring

you the rest of this important interview.



David Wright: The songs on the Friends album are different versions to those in the movie. What happened to the versions that were in the movie, will they be released in any form?

Gus Dudgeon: I'm not sure that applies to every song, although you wouldn't know because Honey Roll and Can I Put You On are only heard briefly in the movie, coming out of a radio or something.

Basically we did a band session where we did the straight down the line tracks with the band. Then we did the orchestral sessions. The thing is, when you write the music for a movie, you have to pay attention to time, it's crucial. A piece of music has to start exactly on time. You get a rough cut of sections of the movie, and you look at it on the screen while you're recording. A vertical black line wipes across the screen and the point when the line hits the right hand side is the point the music has to start and it has to finish when the black line reaches the side again. So everything has to be tied to time, which makes things awkward.

It was Buckmaster's first movie and it was my first movie. I seem to remember we weren't terribly happy with what we came out with as far as the film was concerned. Because it was tied to the film it meant that certain pieces of music had to be curtailed, so something that might have gone on for another 30 seconds or a minute had to be cut at that particular point. It's a scary process because if something's wrong and you suddenly find it's 30 seconds too long, what do you do? You either do the whole thing at a faster tempo or you have to cut some bars out. Cutting a bunch of bars out with 50 musicians sitting in the studio is difficult. It was a terrible scurrying around

because Paul was altering his chart and having to tell the musicians to cut bars 26 to 30 out, everyone has to get a pen out and cross it out. All of a sudden you're trying to dictate notes to 50 people in a room who can't hear you properly and everybody's talking. Oh God, it's the worst thing!

Once it was decided it was going to be an album we thought we couldn't put out what we did for the movie so we came back and redid it. But whether we redid the band songs I don't know. I don't think we did but you wouldn't notice because you never heard the whole of Honey Roll or the whole of Can I Put You On.

*DW: Of the albums you produced, do you have a favourite?*

GD: Oh Lord, it alters all the time. It's impossible, it's a question of what hits you at a particular point. After I watched the (Goodbye Yellow Brick Road) DVD I said to Sheila "If I hadn't produced that album I'd go out and buy it because it's got some really good songs on it."

I don't play anything I work on, none of us do. You're exhausted with it by the time you're finished with it, plus you're never 100% certain that what you've done couldn't be done better. You always think the vocal could have been a bit louder, that guitar's a bit quiet or you spent so much time doing that little bass run you can't really hear it loud enough. You're never 100% satisfied and it takes a long time for those things to stop bothering you. Maybe about 4 years later you hear something on the radio and think it sounds great and all those little niggly things that pissed you off have just vanished.

So your whole perception of what is a favourite and what isn't changes. Arguably I could say that the Black Album was a favourite because it broke his career, my career and it was the first time I had attempted

something like that. But I could also argue that Captain Fantastic, from a performance point of view, for all the musicians and Elton, and from a technical point of view is easily the best. But then I could also look at Goodbye Yellow Brick Road and say that's the best selling album and probably the one with the most good songs on it.

Do you see what I'm saying? It's impossible.

*DW: I know it's a pig of a question.*

GD: Yes it is!

*DW: What was the most irritating and difficult song to record? Was there one that you didn't want to record and he said, "No, we're sticking with it"?*

GD: Bite Your Lip, but I wouldn't call it irritating other than it was a piece of crap! I wasn't irritated because I was desperately trying to get something out of it because I thought it was great and couldn't get there.

I think I can honestly say that any song that I had any kind of emotional attachment to was pretty much easy to do because when you're emotionally attached to a song, and you really know what you want to do with it, it's incredibly easy to tell everyone else what you want to do, but also if you have a vision and you want to go with it, it's easy.

Grimsby is a piece of crap as well. Solar Prestige A Gammon, I hate that kind of stuff. I call those extremely irritating because I wish they'd never been born, I wish the bloody songs didn't exist. Those are the ones that niggle me, I can't think of a song that everyone would say "really?" Like Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me, I can't say that was difficult to get right because it wasn't.

What I do find a bit of a shame is that the Ice On Fire album is consistently written off by the

fans, particularly on the net, as being an album that nobody likes. It's a bit of a shame because I actually quite like a lot of that album.

*DW: So do I but I think it's because of my age. I first got into Elton when I was 15 in 1984 and my first album was Breaking Hearts, then there was Ice On Fire...*

GD: (laughs) Well if you're going to compare those two, Ice On Fire is going to seem like the Sgt Pepper album!

I really like Shoot Down The Moon, Nikita, I think that's great. That was the song that sucked me into doing the project because I hadn't worked with him in years. When he rang me out of the blue and asked if I would work with him again. I said that I would need to hear the songs first. He said "What? I don't believe it!"

If he had liked me a bunch of songs I didn't like I wouldn't have done the album. I've never, to this day, done any project for the money. The one and only time I've slipped up was when I was being managed by somebody who thought I should go off in a different direction and do some much more 'street cred' kind of bands. I did a couple and all the way through I thought it was a nightmare.

The point is, when I was a recording engineer we could do albums in three days. I could do four hit singles in one week. One minute I was doing The Zombies, then it was Marianne Faithful, then an album with John Mayall, then a couple of singles with Dave Berry or Tom Jones. So I always heard whole songs – within an hour I had heard the whole song, vocals, the whole arrangement, everything. So I fell in love with that whole process of being able to make an instant judgement of "do I really like this song or not?" So the ones I really liked I made that extra effort on as an engineer and truthfully you

should always make an effort no matter what, because your job is to get the best out of anything, and of course you did, but you went that extra mile on a song you really liked.

And I think it became automatic with me that if I really liked a song, I would make that extra effort. There were times when I would be working on a song with some f\*\*king awful singer at Decca with a shitty song, I'd be thinking I'm so bored, I hate this, why do these arseholes even got a deal, what is this crap song we're doing, how come they're all so enthusiastic? So it wasn't very many sessions into my career that I became very picky about what I did. I think I learned then that the ones that you really love are the ones you get the best out of.

When I was working with Elton and got presented with something like Grimsby I thought, what the f\*\*k can I do with this? You would just hope that someone else would have an inspired guitar solo. The brain just doesn't kick in; it's a bit like digging a road then.

*DW: I know what you mean. When we have our fan social gatherings we often discuss what we don't like. It's easy to sit around saying isn't Madman a great album, but it gets boring to talk about how wonderful everything is. Sometimes it's quite fun to tear apart something you didn't like. Victim Of Love, why did he even make that album?*

GD: You've got to remember that drug habit lasted a long time and was big, it was scarily big. I remember there were a couple of times I was concerned about his ability to survive. That whole drug thing affects your perception about everything; about music, yourself, the situation you're in. It's not worth doing.

*DW: What caused the gap between Blue Moves and Ice On Fire?*

GD: I quit. We had an Annual General Meeting of the company (Rocket). It was on the day of the release of Blue Moves, that evening there was a press reception. Everyone was going to be in the country at last, Bernie, John (Reid), Elton, all the directors of the company. There were a lot of things about Rocket that I really didn't like so I let one particular person know, a good month before the meeting, that there were a lot of things I was very upset about and that unless they were taken care of I was going to have to quit. I couldn't exactly say that and not quit, could I?

So the meeting took place and we went through the normal business and it was all a bit nervous because everyone knew what was coming. The person I told, I didn't tell him to tell Elton, John and Steve that this is what I'm going to do, I just knew if I told him, he would tell them. I didn't need to tell him to pass the info on. So John said at the end of the meeting "Gus, I understand you've got a couple of things you want to say." So I laid them out, this should happen and that should happen and I don't like the way that happens and I want that changed and so on. Unless those things happen I'm going to have to get out of here. And they weren't going to change anything. It was to do with the way we were signing and treating artists, financial things, all kind of things.

Plus the whole drug thing, it really... I was going to say it got up my nose! Not really the ideal term to use.

*DW: That was fairly new then, wasn't it? Wasn't it 1975 he started?*

GD: I don't know. It's difficult to say. His behaviour was becoming extremely erratic. They all were, the whole shooting match.

I made my stand. Either they changed these things or I would quit. They weren't going to



change them so I had to quit.

*DW: Was the drug use open? For example would he be sitting there snorting in the studio?*

GD: No. It was almost kept out of my sight because he knew I had a thing about it, the whole band did.

I've never done coke, plenty of dope yes, loads of it but not coke ever. Dope is it, I don't really drink either.

*DW: I was told that during the Rock of the Westies tour the band would leave the stage and Elton would do a piano solo. They were standing behind James Newton Howard's keyboard all snorting in the middle of the set.*

GD: Probably! We used to call him tootin' Newton!

*DW: I used to get the impression that, with Elton, there was the booze and drugs but when it came to making an album or doing a tour then he was professional and stopped the drugs.*

GD: No f\*\*king way. He is lucky to be alive. He pushed himself way beyond the point that many people have died. I don't know how he got away with a lot of things.

*DW: When, leading up to Ice On Fire he called you and asked you to come back, was that a difficult decision?*

GD: Not when I heard the songs, that's why I'm disappointed by people's reaction to them. I like things like Candy By The Pound and quite a lot of those tracks. There's a couple that aren't great.

Wrap Her Up was a bit of a weird one. It was only because George (Michael) said he would sing on it that it got moved into pole position. I think it might have been left out otherwise.

*DW: And then Leather Jackets which is not regarded well.*

GD: That I can understand. It was done under the worst possible circumstances. There were a few left over tracks from the previous album for a start. He was only going to be available for something like 10 days because he was going to be off to the wedding. To me, that was the height of it, the coke thing really went mad. It was f\*\*king ridiculous. I hate to see someone do that to themselves.

*DW: Do you think you would work with him again?*

GD: Well, that's another question I get asked a lot.

*DW: Do you have a relationship with him now?*

GD: Not really, no. The last time I saw him was just over a year ago at the Ivor Novello Awards. He came swanning in and everyone was bowing and scraping. The Ivor Novellos is a very big deal, justifiably so, and everyone is doodied up. The only reason I spoke to him was because I hadn't been getting my royalties. I hadn't been getting much joy since the new people had taken over after John left. When John was there I had no problem getting my royalties, they always turned up on time. But I think, and this is only a theory, because John was ostensibly fired over not looking after Elton's money the way he should have been, I think the people who took over are super sensitive over money and they get over protective and they just weren't paying my royalties for whatever reason.

I got a bit pissed off with it so I eventually wrote to Elton asking "Would you mind putting your tiara on and throwing a tantrum on my behalf?" but I still didn't

get a response. As it happened, a month or so later the Ivor Novellos took place, and I didn't even know if he had got the letter – when he went into the London clinic I sent him a card saying "What the hell are you doing to yourself, this is terrible" and never got a response – so I thought he hadn't got the letter. I thought that this was a time to ask him, and he did get the letter and had passed it on, and sure enough about three weeks later the money came through.

That's the extent of our relationship at the moment, I ask him to get my royalties for me!

*DW: Were you surprised when John Reid was sacked?*

GD: I didn't really have any thoughts one way or the other. What I didn't think was that John had done what he was being accused of doing. I had dinner with John shortly after it all happened and he told me the whole story. Now, every story has two sides so everything he said I had to balance with what Elton would have said, but what Elton wanted to say was all over everywhere. He'd made his feelings quite clear. As far as he was concerned John was the devil incarnate. He just absolutely loathes the guy now which, after 27 years, is a shame.

I just didn't believe that what John was being accused of, in the papers at least because there's always a difference between what you read and reality, that he was responsible for doing what he apparently had done. But he did admit to having made some bad mistakes to me.

I spoke to Steve Brown about it, and Steve said he didn't believe that John was guilty of what he was being accused of having done. I said neither did I and he thought I might be siding with Elton. He said "It doesn't strike me as the sort of thing John would do."

John laid out the story as he saw it and in fact he made a couple of comments; "When it goes to

court, they won't find anything then either. I'm squeaky clean right now." He admitted he owed Elton some money but he wrote a cheque there and then for the money he owed him and actually squared the deal with Elton.

So, was I surprised he got kicked out? I can't remember. I just didn't think John had done what he was being accused of.

*DW: You were involved with the remastering of the back catalogue onto CD. Was this something you enjoyed doing?*

GD: Oh God yes, I'd been wanting to do it for ages!

*DW: It wasn't a headache having worked on those albums for months at a time years ago?*

GD: Are you kidding? No, it was something I'd wanted to do from the word go because as soon as I heard the first CDs that came out, they were so terrible.

When I got my first CD player there was nothing to buy. Of course there was the Superior Skip of Elton John, and we'll skip past that – not one of my great moments. There was that John Mayall album I referred to earlier on, with Eric Clapton on the front reading The Beano, it's considered to be one of the all time seminal British Blues albums. I saw it in Virgin and paid £20 for it, because it was an import from Japan, and I thought great, I can finally listen to something I have done. It was before Elton's stuff came out. So I got it home and played it and the only difference between it and the album was it had no hum or crackle, it's just clean that's all. I then played the album and CD back to back, switched between them and the CD was actually quieter than the album.

I thought it was a disgrace. If you're trying to introduce a new thing to people to buy into, you're asking them to buy all new equipment, this was supposed to be the greatest thing since sliced bread, it should sound brilliant, especially at £20 a shot.



So when Elton's stuff finally came out, which I had nothing to do with, I went out and got a copy and thought it sounded shit as well. It didn't sound anywhere near as good as it should. I began to learn that when you put something on digital you should use up all the bits. The classical people were the first people to use CD seriously because it meant they could record something with very quiet sections of music on it and you would not be listening through the hum, it would be really dynamic, more dynamic than ever before. In fact the way the piece was originally written.

I thought surely pop music should sound brilliant on CD. It doesn't, it sounds crap, then the Elton stuff started to come through and I thought it was disastrous. On 17-11-70, where the applause ends side one, and then starts side two, the whole thing goes completely out of phase.

Then I began to find out how it was done. People would look for the loudest peak, bring it down about 5 or 6 db to give a safety measure, then push off and have a cup of tea! Nobody was sitting there listening to it, mastering for CD. Plus they weren't necessarily coming from the master tapes.

Finally, after a lot of banging my head against a wall, I had a meeting with some people in America about it and a fellow at MCA finally asked if I would be interested in doing them. I asked how much money they wanted to spend and they didn't want to spend a fortune so I explained that to do this properly would take time. I had no idea, when I started doing the job, whether I

was going to get as much time as I wanted or not. Even during it I was being hustled to some degree because sometimes it would take me three days to do one whole album.

The thing that I learned that was so great about mastering for digital is that you can look at one section of a song, and say I was never happy with this, the voice goes under at this point, or it seems the guitars are a little out of balance, and you can correct all these things. Good mastering, even with brand new stuff, from tape to CD is a real art. A lot of people thought I had remixed some of it but I hadn't. The difference is that I am using the state of the art equipment.

When you cut an album in those days you had to roll off all the hefty low end, anything below a certain frequency. And it was the same at the top because there was a chance you would blow the cutter head, and they are very expensive. They were about £2,000 a shot. That expression 'too much top' – what is too much top? That's down to personal taste.

You were always dealing with the fact that you were dealing with a groove, and this groove is going to have another groove to the immediate right of it so each groove can't have any massive transients in it otherwise it will break into the wall of the next groove.

There's another thing, you've got a level problem. As you cut a vinyl album, let's say you opened with a really big beefy track, if you put that track as the last on that side, you would have to cut it about a third less loud because the closer you get to the centre, the curve that the needle is trying to travel is getting tighter.

So you have all those massive compromises you have to make when you cut a vinyl album, most of which pissed me off. Now with CDs you can do anything you like.

*DW: What about remastering the albums you didn't produce. How did that feel?*

GD: I didn't really want to do that, but I was asked to do it and it seemed that Chris (Thomas) wasn't particularly interested in doing it himself. I said I would only do it if I could go back to the original tapes, as I did with my stuff.

Before I did the remastering, the first thing I did was to find the original masters. So I went down to Belsize Park where they have a big archive and I found about 600 tapes with Elton on the side. There should have been 16 or however many albums I've done, but there were cassette masters, 8 track cartridge masters and copies of this and that. So I chucked a load of them out, put a razor blade through them so that the wrong ones couldn't be used again. The ones kept are the actual masters.

In fact the master for Rock of the Westies has gone. Nobody knows where it is. The tape I worked with is one I've got in my loft and it happens to be low level, which is why it's a bit hissier than it should be. And one half of Tumbleweed Connection had disappeared as well.

All the work I did on the remastering is now in one form in one studio in London and from now on that's what everyone should work from.

Even when they did the Love Songs album, after all the work I put in, they didn't go and use the remastered version, which is why it doesn't sound right.

*DW: When Blue Moves came out on CD it was a single CD with tracks missing.*

GD: There literally physically wasn't room so they came to me. They thought it wouldn't sell as a double because it would be too expensive. I had no problem telling them what

should come of it because I just took my least favourite tracks off. (laughs) I didn't like those tracks so they came off! It's not like I mercilessly took the tracks off because I didn't like them, they wouldn't physically fit on.

One thing that people have pulled me up on was not including Snow Queen on any of the remasters. It was because I know it was written about Cher and about a year afterwards he said he wished he'd never written that song because he likes her. So because of that, I left it off. It was on the list of bonus tracks but I spoke to the guy who had hired me to do the job and explained the reasons why I didn't want to use it and he said OK, take it off. I didn't like the song anyway.

DW: *Do you have any unreleased gems of Elton John songs that you are sitting on?*

GD: No. There's an unfinished version of a song called Duck Tailed Jiver. It hasn't got guitars on it and it was never completed. I put it to one side because I thought it wasn't anything terribly special, I think it was one of the Caribou albums.

The only other thing is the one he wrote for the wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, which I happen to have a copy of because I mixed it for him. That was never meant to be released because it was a present to them, so that stays in the vaults. I've heard it sneaked out somewhere but not from me.

DW: *What are your thoughts on Songs From The West Coast?*

GD: I don't think it's that great. Whenever I say that about something he's done without me, it sounds like sour grapes and I have to counteract it - Blue Eyes, Kiss The Bride, I'm Still Standing, Passengers - there have been quite a few

records that he made that I thought were quite good.

I just don't think this album is what he purported it to be. But then I'm not really surprised. You asked me a question earlier on which I didn't answer, which was would I ever work with him again. I don't think that the circumstances under which I would want to work with him again would suit him. Which would be effectively that he would go nowhere near a drum machine throughout the entire writing process, and that we would only use any kind of technology that was necessary, when the situation called for it. I just don't think the songs are as adventurous in construction as a result of writing with drum machines. He will put a drum machine on and leave it running for an hour, and he's writing at the same tempo. When he was writing in the old days, he would try a bit of a verse, then he might construct the bridge, and if he didn't like it he would try it in a different key, then he'd work on another bit and eventually there would be a breakthrough. As soon as you start the drum machine it dictates the tempo, the feel and it makes you want to keep going.

DW: *Do you think that's how he wrote Songs From The West Coast?*

GD: I think so. I know he used a lot of technology that was completely unnecessary. When we did the early albums there was little technology so we dealt with what was around and you used your imagination more.

We discovered one of Nigel's favourite things, which was ambience on his drums. We discovered it because he was playing, I think, the beginning of Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me, and he was playing the straight symbol. I wanted to get this thing

where I heard the up close sound but also the sound I hear when I'm down the other end of the room which is this slight delay bouncing off the walls. So I put a mic down there, cranked the mic up and it sounded really great but it wasn't as long a delay as I wanted. Eventually I climbed a ladder and put the mic in the corner as far as I could away from the drums.

In Better Off Dead, we had this early piece of technology. It was a really crude piece of equipment, it distorted and glitched and did all sorts of shitty things. Nigel was playing his part and I wondered what this machine did so I had the engineer play the drum part through this machine and wow it was great! That's the way it was done.

Now you spend time planning what the technology is before anything else; what about recording the song and worrying about how good is the arrangement? That's what I'm interested in. Hearing people play with feel, when do you hear a record played with feel nowadays? You can't programme feel into a drum machine.

DW: *Elton's famous for his sense of humour. Are there any gems you can remember?*

GD: He's done all sorts of things that, if they were repeated in print, people would freak. I can think of a million and one things that happened but if you ask what he actually said or sang I couldn't tell you. It's all a stream of consciousness, it just comes out. When he gets on a roll he's hilarious. If you think he's funny, you should see him when he's around some pals and he's not worried about repercussions later. You haven't seen a fraction of his humour. He probably could have been a comedian if he'd wanted to.

# EUROPEAN TOUR

Report by Tammi Law

**F**resh from his honorary doctorate ceremony, Elton was in fine form and in a fantastic mood for his second, and last, night at the NEC in Birmingham. Unusually for a UK crowd, Elton and the band received a standing ovation after every song, with the entire centre floor section getting to their feet to dance to Philadelphia Freedom.

The set list was the same as the night before, but Elton's banter and mood seemed even better. He made us all laugh by introducing Holiday Inn as "This next song is from the album Holiday Inn... oh shit, I've bugged that up! What a w\*nker!" Then "You'll have to forgive me, I've been in Germany for the past few weeks, and my brain hurts. Thank God they didn't win the World Cup!"

Between songs, Elton spent more time than usual walking around the stage to acknowledge the crowd in the tiered sections. He seemed genuinely pleased to be there and enjoyed the interaction with the audience: "Sorry if I keep getting up to walk around and say thanks to you all – all my life I've wanted to be Mick Jagger or Rod Stewart so I could strut about – instead I'm stuck behind this 9ft coffin!"



Photos by Rob Cargill, UK tour, July 2002

# REVIEW

**BIRMINGHAM NEC  
3RD JULY 2002**

When introducing This Train Don't Stop There Any More, he told us "This is the second song I wrote for the album, and it's one of my favourites". When playing the final note of this beautiful song, he dropped his head and said quietly, almost to himself, "I love that one."

Elton was obviously very happy up on that stage - in fact, after playing Take Me to the Pilot, he said "Y'know, I can't

think of another period of my life where I've enjoyed playing live so much. It's so nice to feel comfortable in my own skin."

Towards the end of the show, Elton said, as he often does at the start of a UK tour "Thanks so much for being such an appreciative audience. I was really nervous about playing in the UK again - it's been such a long time since I was here with the band. I really was nervous about how you guys were going to be, but we've enjoyed the last couple of nights so much that we're gonna come back in December!"

As Elton left the stage for the final time, something happened that I've never seen before - he was overcome with emotion at the cheering, shouting, ecstatic crowd. As he waved goodbye - his eyes filled with tears and his face started to crumple. And then he was gone, leaving us all wanting more. Elton, we enjoyed it too!



## SET LIST:

Funeral For A  
Friend/Love Lies  
Bleeding

Bennie And The Jets  
Daniel

Someone Saved My Life  
Tonight

Ballad Of The Boy With  
The Red Shoes

Philadelphia Freedom  
The Wasteland

Rocket Man

I Guess That's Why They  
Call It The Blues

I Want Love

This Train Don't Stop  
There Anymore

Take Me To The Pilot  
Sacrifice

Sorry Seems To Be The  
Hardest Word

Oh My Sweet Carolina  
American Triangle

Have Mercy On The  
Criminal

Holiday Inn

Tiny Dancer

Original Sin

I'm Still Standing

Crocodile Rock

Pinball Wizard

Don't Let The Sun Go  
Down On Me

Your Song

# talking taupin



**S**ince he and Elton responded to the same "talent wanted" record company ad in NME 35 years ago, Bernie Taupin has written the lyrics to some of pop music's most enduring songs. But Bernie says he doesn't want to live in the past, and does not want to be involved in today's pop scene.

"Pop has become an abused word, it's become so anaemic," he tells us from his Californian stud ranch. "I get approached by all kinds of people wanting me to write songs that'll be hits, and I say, "I don't know why you're calling me." I'd rather go and work on the fringe – people like Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett and their kind of subject matter are tailor-made for me. Modern country music is what pop was."

Bernie, now 52 and an American citizen, says that he likes his work to speak for him. So he was persuaded to take us through the stories behind a few of his favourite lyrics.

## **YOUR SONG (1970)**

***So excuse me forgetting but these things I do***

***You see I've forgotten if they're green or they're blue***

***Anyway the thing is what I really mean***

***Yours are the sweetest eyes I've ever seen***

"I'm thrilled this was so central to the film *Moulin Rouge* – it's beginning to seem like it's indestructible. I've always written what's in my heart and on my mind and the thing about *Your Song* is that it was born of absolute naivety. I was only 17 at the time (Bernie was sharing a flat with Elton in Pinner, UK). I'd experienced nothing and never been in any kind of substantial physical relationship. You can't

fake that kind of naivety and it's what makes it work. These days the person who wrote *Your Song* no longer exists, and I have no relationship with it whatsoever. All I'd say is: nice song."

## **GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD (1973)**

***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***

"You could point out that owls don't howl, but I love the way the words sound together and that's as important as anything. The song is a thinly veiled reference to the simple life and going back to your roots. I come from a country background, (deepest Lincolnshire) and when the pressure has got too much, I've gone there or elsewhere out in the country where I can find solace. I'm now on different soil and, after years of living in America, my ranch is where I'm rooted. I'm enjoying writing more than I ever have before, but I'd still rather paint than write. What I love most of all is riding – and at the moment I spend 80 per cent of my time on a horse."

## **WRITING (1975)**

***I know you and you know me***

***It's always half and half***

***And we were oh oh, so you know***

***Not the kind to dawdle***

***Will the things we wrote today***

***Sound as good tomorrow?***

"I guess the answer is "yes", they do! Although this is from a mid-seventies concept album, it's about when we started out in the late sixties, surviving writing in that Tin Pan Alley of Denmark Street in London. I'm very happy that our songs have lasted and become part of modern culture – it's the biggest compliment you can get. Even though I like to think that whatever I'm doing now is better than I've done in the past, I'd never complain about people being interested in the old songs. If we did anything, we made the pop record a bit more interesting.

## **SOMEONE'S FINAL SONG (1976)**

***He died when the house was empty***

***When the maid had one***

***He put a pen to paper for one final song***

"This album was horribly depressing from a personal point of view. It was the last before Elton and I first went our separate ways, which we had to do, or we'd have gone down in flames together. The song is about a suicidal writer, but although it was a very bad time I was never suicidal. There's a fraction of me in the song, but when I'm writing I take my experiences and ideas and

# No plans to slow down...



stretch them, and I've never had a problem with allowing other people to be my vocal point. With Elton there are times when I've totally used his voice to broadcast my feelings, sentiments and possible political views. But at the same time, I've counteracted it with songs written more for him."

**AMERICAN TRIANGLE (2002)**

*Lyrics omitted from recorded version:*

*Long straight road to this old town*

*Friendly ghosts nowhere in sight*

*Black beaver hats and red plaid shirts*

*A John Wayne moon up there tonight*

"My working process with Elton is now the closest it's ever been. In the seventies there was a lot more distance: I'd send the words to him. He'd work on the melody and we'd get together in the studio. He might play me something and say, "Listen to this," but I didn't think I was musically valid and I was reluctant to comment. Over the years it's impossible not to pick up some musical capability, and now I give him much more direction. I do tend to overwrite which gives him the option of choosing one verse over another. Sometimes it's heartbreaking – I really liked this verse, and maybe if we'd talked about it I could have changed it."

**Interview with Bernie from UK magazine, Radio Times, August 2002. Hercules regrets we are unable to supply original copies of this magazine.**

**Elton has revealed the secret of a long career - learning how to play the piano. At 55 years old, Elton went into battle in August against the new generation of pop stars with three MTV Music Video Award nominations to his credit, while most of his contemporaries - including Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart - were nowhere to be seen.**

But Elton admits he despaired when the opposite was true. He says: "I'm not a singer, I'm a musician, and I used to envy singers. All my peers - Mick Jagger, Rod Stewart, Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Freddie Mercury and people like that - were frontmen and they could move around the stage, and I always thought ... 'I'm stuck at this piano'.

"I can stand on it, I can sit on it, I can do handstands off of it, but there is not much else I can do with it. I can't really set fire to it, although there were times when I wanted to. But now that I'm 55, I'm glad I'm stuck behind nine feet of wood, because it's harder when you get into your 50s to sort of carry that solo singer off."

Elton has played more than 200 shows around the world in the past few years - but he admits to missing a few of his favourite things. In fact, he even takes photographs of David, his dogs and his houses to put by his bedside when he is on tour. He says: "I complain about being away, but I'm not really away from home very long. I take my photographs with me on the road, of the dogs, David and the houses. I miss the dogs. David and I are thinking of putting microchips in them so we can take them to Europe with us, because the laws have changed."

Despite that, though, Elton has no plans to lighten his workload. He says: "I am a workaholic. I'm 55, but I'm still really enjoying it, the live shows especially, so it's frustrating for David. He says ... 'God, are you ever going to come off the road?'. I say I will - and I would like to spend more time at home - but at the moment, I've got so many things to do."

# ...yet!!

## LYRIC QUIZ

Have a go at our popular lyric quiz.  
We give you a line - see if you can  
name the song!  
(Answers on page 27)

- 1 Give me more cash, bring me  
sour mash  
Peel me a grape and fetch my  
stash
- 2 Boogalooin' with my friends  
In that erotic way
- 3 Van Bushell saw the hook  
Which replaced Joseph's hand
- 4 I wonder if those changes  
Have left a scar on you
- 5 Call me a common rodent boy  
Sitting here safe and sound
- 6 Some men are better staying  
sailors  
Take my word and go
- 7 And just for the sake of all  
these reasons  
Rains wash out the fires within
- 8 Everyone's got an angle  
Little lies get spread around
- 9 Goes to the church to pray for  
Lucifer  
She milked the male  
population clean
- 10 Please put your tears away  
So nobody can see
- 11 There's nothing to steal  
So there's not a great deal of  
crime
- 12 I got a fringe front on my  
buggy  
I got a frisky little colt in a  
hurry

## LYRIC QUIZ

# Take a long look into

**I recently bought two of the singles from Elton John's latest album, *Songs From The West Coast*, which was released almost eight months before this article was written.**

They were the CD singles for "I Want Love" and "This Train Don't Stop There Anymore," and I bought them as import copies, very much under the assumption that they would live up to the shining light of promise I saw in Elton's new album. The CDs also included two unreleased songs - "Did Anybody Sleep With Joan of Arc" and "North Star," both of which are the subject of this piece.

*Songs From The West Coast* came out during a pretty terrible time for me, as I was living in a state of tension and found myself torn between the rapture of freedom and anguish over my girlfriend leaving for college. When it was released, I instantly saw the album as one of modern rock's proudest products and an artist's brilliant return to something that was once unspeakably great. It was a complete, fully-realized statement in my mind, a clarion call that needed no amendment or addition to assure its perfection. For me, the album soon assumed the status of a gentle beacon of hope and unbridled optimism, offering an escape from the ugly chaos of the real world.

And then I found these two unreleased songs. I assured myself, though they were not included on the album, that they would sound as thrilling as the others, full of the same soul, vitality, and joy that has for so long fused the words and music of Elton John and Bernie Taupin into an impressive catalog of song. One of their traits that continues to impress and inspire me is that, for as long as I've been a fan of the pair, they've always had the practice of writing and recording more

songs than necessary for an album, odd, quirky songs, and beautiful, fantastic ones that, for whatever reason, don't make it onto the final track list, but quietly end up as B-sides. It's a practice that quite often leaves buried treasures lurking for the true fans to find, like the soulful Elton singing "Did Anybody Sleep With Joan of Arc," or the haunting, more contemplative Elton asking if the "North Star" is still shining in the sky.

The first previously unreleased track I heard, "Did Anybody Sleep With Joan of Arc" tells the story of an unconventional saint who struggled with her religion's hackneyed notions of love and sex. It tells the story, in Taupin's classic style, of a girl who, "at seventeen, became the queen of Orleans," ended up unloved, alone, and cried "by candlelight," a deeply spiritual girl who "swung a sword, rode a horse, and wore her armor for the Lord." It's an interesting concept in light of what's been happening in the Catholic Church these days, where we've seen a few spiritual leaders denying and suppressing their natural impulses and finding themselves falling into regrettable circumstances because of it.

Taupin spends one entire verse sketching out that very idea.

**"She was small and more or less of common breed**

**But saint aside, no stranger to a woman's needs**

**No handsome knights, no random acts of chivalry**

**Her bed remained a simple place for her to sleep"**

To the credit of Elton and the band, the accompanying music - crashing, thunderous guitars and the low, slow thud of percussion

- gives the song power and presence, and Elton's piano pulses with a manic intensity that is mirrored in Taupin's lyric. His voice, almost aching for the long-dead saint, is the centerpiece of the song.

**"They burned her down for her belief**

**They burned her down for her faith**

**They gave her up into the flames**

**Proclaiming she's seen heaven's face"**

The second unreleased track, "North Star," is a bittersweet ballad that reads like a prayer from one lover to another. "I'm still looking for a way out of here," sings Elton. "You can value what you want, but you pay for change / There's full moons, cold, lifeless nights, and tumbled stars spell out your name." Here again, Elton's voice aches with a soulful-ness scarcely heard in modern music. The band provides enough of a contemporary sound to give a little edge to the track, yet still retains all the elements that made Elton's classic 70s records so great.

Elton could easily be singing to himself here, when he sings:

**"I just can't rely on all these twisted signs**

**Too many bright lights turn you blind**

**The history of the blues seems to swim in your eyes**

**Pick yourself up, throw your head back**

**Take a long, long look into the sky"**

These two songs that I discovered through pure serendipity confirmed an old suspicion for me:

Elton and Bernie at their "worst" is still pop music at its best.

What's more, these songs serve as a larger metaphor for what's wrong with pop music today. The fact that Elton and Bernie can write such great music and still not consider it good enough to be included on their albums says a lot about what's being played on commercial radio these days.

Don't believe me? Here's part of a Taupin lyric, compared with two others that are sitting sinfully high on this week's Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. Enough said.

"I need a girl," by P. Diddy:

"I need a girl to ride,

I need a girl to make my wife

I need a girl who's mine

I need a girl in my life"

"Soak up the sun," by Sheryl Crow:

"I don't have digital

I don't have diddly squat

It's not having what you want

It's wanting what you've got"

And, finally, "North Star," by Bernie Taupin:

**"Are you out there, are you listening, am I coming across to you?**

**Is the North Star still shining in the sky outside your room?**

**You can listen, but they're lying, don't let them tell you what you've always known**

**It's the North Star that's the big one, and it's always gonna lead you home."**

## THE FUTURE OF HERCULES

This is a bit of a sad occasion as this is the last proper issue of The Mag, the fanzine of the Elton John Fan Club. We have written in previous issues about the growing popularity of the internet, and how this has meant that the paper version of the fanzine is no longer viable to support, with increasing numbers of our members choosing the internet membership option.

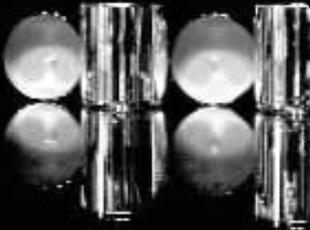
More and more Elton John fans, and over 80% of Hercules members, are gaining access to Elton news via the internet. Our website [www.eltonfan.net](http://www.eltonfan.net) is receiving more than 500 unique visitors each day. Therefore, the fanzine is old news for many of its readership in today's world, where communication has become so fast that we are able to bring you a review and complete set list of a concert within minutes of Elton leaving the stage.

In other words, the fanzine is no longer able to compete with the Internet, and also costs more to produce than it generates in revenue.

Without the help of a sponsor, coupled with higher print and postage costs, it is no longer possible for us to produce the fanzine economically without a huge increase in subscription rates.

In December we will bring you a special souvenir Farewell Issue. It's your last chance to contribute to The Mag – so send your letters and photographs to Tammi – address on page 2.

## SPECIAL OFFER NEW ELTON CANDLES



**BRAND NEW** line of Elton candles made by Slatkin and Co. has just been released. All three of the original scents are available in new modern packaging, with another new scent to be available soon.

These candles are packaged in black boxes and the wax is in a silver-coloured cylinder with lid.

These would make great Christmas gifts and this is your last chance to order these through *The Mag!*

1 original scent of the Elton I candle, blend of four flowers; new candle is hot pink

2 original ginger mango scent of Elton II candle, it is orange in color.

3 scent like the Elton 2000 candle (pineapple leaves/myrtle/peony/musk), medium blue

4 NEW: orchid, licorice, amber, fig. Candle is black.

We can offer these to you at \$10 BELOW RETAIL PRICE. They are \$24 (US \$) each, plus shipping. Email your order to me at

HerculesUS@yahoo.com so that I can compute shipping cost, or write to me: Sharon Kalinoski, P O Box 7745, Romeoville, IL 60446, USA

# YOUR LETTERS

*We always love to hear from you; after all, it is YOUR Elton John fan-club. If you have anything you would like to share with other Elton fans, then please send your letters to the Editor, Tammi Law (address on page 2), or e-mail [tammi@eltonfan.net](mailto:tammi@eltonfan.net)*

### Dear Tammi

I read with great pleasure your review of Elton's show in Birmingham, UK (Hercules website). It sounds like it was wonderful fun and a really good time.

You must have been surprised to see Elton's emotions flow over at the end. How touching and special. I think it's his age in life which makes him appreciate every minute that he's doing just what he wants to do, at the time he's doing it. He's one lucky man to have so much coming back to him from his audiences.

Each time I read another review I'm more and more anxious for my next concerts - I'll be flying over to see him and the Band at Wembley in December. Thanks so much for taking the time to write your review. We really appreciate hearing another fan's take on this great tour.

**Jean "Little Jeannie" Goman  
USA**

### Gus interview

I'm sure I'm one of many people e-mailing you about this subject. I found out about the tragic news today at work.

Please pass on my dearest condolences to all the Hercules staff and especially those involved in the great interview that appeared in last month's magazine, which I really enjoyed.

**Matt Isaacs**

I have spent the last week trying to find a review of the Birmingham NEC, UK concert and finally I found it on the Hercules website. I was one of those fans dancing in the front section and could not have enjoyed the show more. I have been a fan for 30 years but this was the first time I have seen Elton live (live in Scotland and no money!).

I knew it was special though and it is now the best gig I have ever attended. I feel that I have now seen Elton at the pinnacle of his success - combining the brilliant new, with the brilliant old. The set was both interesting and surprising - never expected Take me to the Pilot and was delighted with the opening "boing" of the bell for Funeral for a Friend. This was the first time in a long time I "lost myself" and that shows how good it must have been. Anyway, thanks again for the review. I'm off to record all the songs from my albums in the same order so I can relive the night until the live album comes out - I hope!)

**David Young,  
UK**

### 'From Beyond the 22nd Row

I had always wondered what Elton thought about seeing the "same" front row faces (June issue of *The Mag*). Unfortunately, I am not among them - but would happily remedy that! So to me, his HEAT comments were innocuous.

**Cheryl Herman  
U.S.A.**

## SMALL ADS

...are free to Hercules members.  
Send yours to the Editor, Tammi  
Law (address on page 2), or  
e-mail her at [tammi@eltonfan.net](mailto:tammi@eltonfan.net)

### REGGIE ZIPPO'S

#### AMAZING COLLECTIBLES

You are invited to browse through Reggie Zippo's Amazing Collectibles at <http://reggiezippo1.tripod.com>. Reggie has a lot of cool and unusual movie, TV, music, sports, and various collectible memorabilia for sale. Of course, there are Elton John items as well. Be sure to see the 16 Elton John Celebrity Cels available. To contact Reggie by snail mail, send inquiries to Reggie Zippo, PO Box 894, Lebanon, Ohio 45036, USA. He is looking forward to hearing from you soon!



### LYRIC QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1: Angelina
- 2: Jamaica Jerk-off
- 3: Son of Your Father
- 4: Love Lies Bleeding
- 5: Stinker
- 6: The King Must Die
- 7: Heels of the Wind
- 8: Blue Avenue
- 9: No Shoestrings on Louise
- 10: I've Been Loving You
- 11: One Horse Town
- 12: Susie (dramas)

## TOUR DATES 2002

### ELTON & BAND TOUR 2002

Date	City	Venue
05-Sep	Richmond, VA	Richmond Coliseum
06-Sep	Roanoke, VI	Roanoke Civic Center
07-Sep	Greenville, SC	Bi-Lo Center
10-Sep	Biloxi, MS	Coast Coliseum
12-Sep	Jacksonville, FL	Jacksonville Coliseum

### ELTON & BILLY JOEL TOUR 2002

Date	City	Venue
13-Sep	Tampa, FL	Ice Palace
17-Sep	Atlanta, GA	Philips Arena
20-Sep	Boston, MA	Fleet Center
23-Sep	New York, NY	Madison Square Garden
25-Sep	Uniondale, NY	Nassau Coliseum
27-Sep	Uniondale, NY	Nassau Coliseum
28-Sep	Las Vegas, NV	MGM Grand Garden Arena (Benefit show without Billy Joel)
02-Oct	Rutherford, NJ	Continental Airlines Arena
04-Oct	Rutherford, NJ	Continental Airlines Arena
08-Oct	Rutherford, NJ	Continental Airlines Arena
11-Oct	Uniondale, NY	Nassau Coliseum
13-Oct	Uniondale, NY	Nassau Coliseum

### ELTON & BAND TOUR 2002 (CONTINUED)

Date	City	Venue
01-Dec	London, UK	Royal Opera House
03-Dec	Manchester, UK	M.E.N. Arena
05-Dec	Belfast, Ireland	Odyssey Arena
07-Dec	Glasgow, UK	S.E.C.C.
08-Dec	Glasgow, UK	S.E.C.C.
09-Dec	Sheffield, UK	Arena
11-Dec	London, UK	Wembley Arena
12-Dec	London, UK	Wembley Arena
13-Dec	London, UK	Wembley Arena
15-Dec	Birmingham, UK	NEC

Please note: This is not an official Tour Schedule, as it contains unconfirmed dates at time of going to press.

