

Elton John

Sir Elton Hercules John CH CBE (born **Reginald Kenneth Dwight**; 25 March 1947^[1]) is a British singer, pianist and composer. Acclaimed by critics and musicians, particularly for his work during the 1970s and for his lasting impact on the music industry, his music and showmanship have had a significant impact on popular music.^[2] His songwriting partnership with lyricist Bernie Taupin is one of the most successful in history.^[3]

John was raised in Pinner and learned to play piano at an early age, winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied for five years. He formed the blues band Bluesology in 1962, but left in 1967 to embark on a solo career and met Taupin the same year. For two years, they wrote songs for other artists, and John worked as a session musician. In 1969, John released his debut album *Empty Sky*, and a year later formed the Elton John Band, also releasing his first hit single, "Your Song".^[4] John's critical success was at its peak in the 1970s, when he released a string of chart-topping albums both in the US and UK, which began with *Honky Château* (1972) and culminated with *Rock of the Westies* (1975).^[5] His success continued in the 1980s and 1990s, having several hit singles and albums in both decades,^{[6][7]} and he has continued to record new music since.^{[8][9]} John has also had success in musical films and theatre, composing music for *The Lion King*, *Aida*, and *Billy Elliot the Musical*. John's final tour, Farewell Yellow Brick Road (2018–2023), became the highest-grossing concert tour of all time.^[10] His life and career were dramatised in the 2019 biopic *Rocketman*.

John is an HIV/AIDS charity fundraiser and has been involved in the fight against AIDS since the late 1980s.^{[11][12][13]} He established the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992, which has raised over £300 million since its inception, and a year later he began hosting his annual AIDS Foundation Academy Awards Party, which has since become one of the biggest high-profile Oscar parties in the Hollywood film industry.^[14] John was the chairman and director of Watford F.C. from 1976 to 1987, and again from 1997 to 2002, and is an honorary life president of the club.^{[15][16]} From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, John developed a severe addiction to drugs and alcohol, but has

Sir Elton John CH CBE



John at Glastonbury Festival 2023

Born	<div>Reginald Kenneth Dwight</div> 25 March 1947 <div>Pinner, Middlesex, England</div>
Alma mater	<u>Royal Academy of Music</u>
Occupations	Singer · pianist · composer
Years active	1962–present
Spouses	<div>Renate Blauel (m. 1984; div. 1988)</div> <div>David Furnish (m. 2014)</div>
Children	2
Musical career	
Genres	Rock · pop rock · glam rock · soft rock · blues
Instrument(s)	Vocals · piano · keyboards
Discography	<u>Albums</u> · <u>singles</u>

been clean and sober since 1990.^[17] In 2005 he entered a civil partnership with his long-term partner, the Canadian filmmaker David Furnish. They married in 2014, when same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales.^[18]

John has more than fifty top-40 hits on the UK Singles Chart and US Billboard Hot 100, including nine number ones in both countries, as well as seven consecutive number-one albums in the US.^{[19][20]} He has sold over 300 million records worldwide, making him one of the best-selling music artists of all time.^[21] He is the most successful solo artist in the history

of the US Billboard charts.^[22] His tribute single to Princess Diana, "Candle in the Wind 1997", a rewritten version of his 1974 single, sold over 33 million copies worldwide and is the best-selling chart single of all time.^{[23][24][25]} In 2021, he became the first solo artist with UK Top 10 singles across six decades.^{[26][27][28]} Among John's numerous awards, he is one of 19 entertainers to win the EGOT, which includes an Emmy Award, five Grammy Awards, two Academy Awards, and a Tony Award.^{[29][30]} He also won two Golden Globes, a Laurence Olivier Award, and the Kennedy Center Honor. He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1992 and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, and is a fellow of The Ivors Academy. He was knighted by Elizabeth II for services to music and charity in 1998 and was appointed a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in 2020, being invested at Windsor Castle in 2021 by the Prince of Wales.^[31]

Labels	<u>Philips</u> · <u>Congress</u> · <u>DJM</u> · <u>Uni</u> · <u>Paramount</u> · <u>MCA</u> · <u>Geffen</u> · <u>Rocket</u> · <u>Island</u> · <u>Mercury</u> · <u>Island</u> <u>Def Jam</u> · <u>Interscope</u> · <u>Virgin EMI</u> · <u>EMI</u>
Member of	<u>Elton John Band</u>
Website	<u>eltonjohn.com</u> (<u>http://eltonjohn.com</u>)

Early life

Elton John was born Reginald Kenneth Dwight on 25 March 1947 in Pinner, Middlesex (now part of the London Borough of Harrow), the eldest child of Stanley Dwight (1925–1991) and only child of Sheila Eileen (née Harris; 1925–2017).^{[32][33][34]} He was raised in a council house in Pinner by his maternal grandparents. His parents married in 1945,^[35] when the family moved to a nearby semi-detached house.^{[36][37][38]} He was educated at Pinner Wood Junior School, Reddiford School and Pinner County Grammar School, until he was 17, when he left just before his A-Level examinations to pursue a career in music.^{[39][40][41]}

When John began to consider a career in music seriously, his father, who served in the Royal Air Force, tried to steer him toward a more conventional career, such as banking.^{[42][39]} John has said that his wild stage costumes and performances were his way of letting go after a restrictive childhood.^[41] Both his parents were musically inclined, his father having been a trumpet player with the Bob Millar Band, a semi-professional big band that played at military dances.^[41] The Dwights were keen record buyers, exposing John to the popular singers and musicians of the day.

John started playing his grandmother's piano as a young boy,^[43] and within a year his mother heard him picking out Waldteufel's "The Skater's Waltz" by ear.^{[39][40]} After performing at parties and family gatherings, at age seven he began formal piano lessons. He showed musical aptitude at school, including the ability to compose melodies, and gained some notoriety by playing like Jerry Lee Lewis at school functions. At age 11, he won a junior scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. According to one of his instructors, John promptly played back, like a "gramophone record", a four-page piece by George Frideric Handel after hearing it for the first time.^[40]

For the next five years, John attended Saturday classes at the Academy in central London, and he has said he enjoyed playing Frédéric Chopin and Johann Sebastian Bach and singing in the choir during Saturday classes, but that he was not otherwise a diligent classical student.^[40] "I kind of resented going to the Academy," he said. "I was one of those children who could just about get away without practising and still pass, scrape through the grades."^[40] He has said that he would sometimes skip classes and ride around on the London Underground.^[40] Several instructors have attested that he was a "model student", and during the last few years he took lessons from a private tutor in addition to his classes at the Academy.^[40] He left the Academy before taking the final exams.^[44]



Elton John (known then as Reg Dwight) studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London for five years.

John's mother, though strict with her son, was more vivacious than her husband, and something of a free spirit. With Stanley Dwight uninterested in his son and often absent, John was raised primarily by his mother and maternal grandmother. When his father was home, the Dwights had vehement arguments that greatly distressed John.^[40] When he was 14, they divorced. His mother then married a local painter, Fred Farebrother, a caring and supportive stepfather whom John affectionately called "Derf" ("Fred" backward).^[40] They moved into flat No. 3A in an eight-unit apartment building called Frome Court, not far from both previous homes. There John wrote the songs that launched his career as a rock star; he lived there until he had four albums simultaneously in the American Top 40.^[45]

Career

1962–1969: Pub pianist to staff songwriter

At age 15, with his mother's and stepfather's help, John was hired as a pianist at a nearby pub, the Northwood Hills Hotel, playing Thursday to Sunday nights.^{[46][47]} Known simply as "Reggie", he played a range of popular standards, including songs by Jim Reeves and Ray Charles, as well as his own songs.^{[48][49]} A stint with a short-lived group called the Corvettes rounded out his time.^[40] Although normal-sighted as a teenager, John began wearing horn-rimmed glasses to imitate Buddy Holly.^{[50][51]}

In 1962, John and some friends formed a band called Bluesology. By day, he ran errands for a music publishing company; he divided his nights between solo gigs at a London hotel bar and working with Bluesology. By the mid-1960s, Bluesology was backing touring American soul and R&B musicians like the Isley Brothers, Major Lance and Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles. In 1966, the band became Long John Baldry's supporting band and played 16 times at the Marquee Club.^[52]

In 1967, John answered an advertisement in the British music paper New Musical Express, placed by Ray Williams, then the A&R manager for Liberty Records.^[53] At their first meeting, Williams gave John an unopened envelope of lyrics written by Bernie Taupin, who had answered the same ad.^[54] John wrote music for the lyrics and then sent it to Taupin, beginning a partnership that still continues. When the two first met in 1967, they recorded the first John/Taupin song, "Scarecrow". Six months later, John began going by the name Elton John in homage to two members of Bluesology: saxophonist Elton Dean and vocalist Long John Baldry.^[48] He legally changed his name to Elton Hercules John on 7 January 1972.^[55]

The team of John and Taupin joined Dick James's DJM Records as staff songwriters in 1968, and over the next two years wrote material for various artists, among them Roger Cook and Lulu.^[56] Taupin would write a batch of lyrics in under an hour and give it to John, who would write music for them in half an hour, disposing of the lyrics if he could not come up with anything quickly.^[56] For two years they wrote easy-listening tunes for James to peddle to singers. Their early output included a contender for the UK entry for the Eurovision Song Contest 1969, for Lulu, called "I Can't Go On (Living Without You)". It came sixth of six songs. In 1969, John provided piano for Roger Hodgson on his first released single, "Mr. Boyd" by Argosy, a quartet that was completed by Caleb Quaye and Nigel Olsson.^{[57][58]}



The 1910 piano on which John composed his first five albums

1969–1973: Debut album to *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*

On the advice of music publisher Steve Brown, John and Taupin began writing more complex songs for John to record for DJM. The first was the single "I've Been Loving You" (1968), produced by Caleb Quaye, Bluesology's former guitarist. In 1969, with Quaye, drummer Roger Pope, and bassist Tony Murray, John recorded another single, "Lady Samantha", and an album, *Empty Sky*. For their follow-up album, *Elton John*, John and Taupin enlisted Gus Dudgeon as producer and Paul Buckmaster as musical arranger. *Elton John* was released in April 1970 on DJM Records/Pye Records in the UK and Uni Records in the US, and established the formula for subsequent albums: gospel-chorded rockers and poignant ballads. The album's first single, "Border Song", peaked at 92 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. The second, "Your Song", reached number seven in the UK Singles Chart and number eight in the US, becoming John's first hit single as a singer.^[59] The album soon became his first hit album, reaching number four on the US *Billboard* 200 and number five on the UK Albums Chart.^{[59][60]}

Backed by former Spencer Davis Group drummer Nigel Olsson and bassist Dee Murray, John's first American concert took place at the Troubadour in Los Angeles on 25 August 1970, and was a success.^[61] The concept album *Tumbleweed Connection* was released in October 1970 and reached number two in the UK and number five in the US.^[59] The live album *17-11-70* (titled *11-17-70* in the US) was recorded at a live show aired from A&R Studios on WABC-FM in New York City. Sales of the live album took a blow in the US when an east-coast bootlegger released the performance several weeks before the official album, including all 60 minutes of the aircast, not just the 40 minutes selected by Dick James Music.^[62]



John at the Musikhalle Hamburg, in March 1972

John and Taupin wrote the soundtrack to the 1971 film *Friends* and the album *Madman Across the Water*, which reached number eight in the US and included the hit songs "Levon" and the album's opening track, "Tiny Dancer". In 1972, Davey Johnstone joined the Elton John Band on guitar and backing vocals. Released in 1972, *Honky Château* became John's first US number one album, spending five weeks at the top of the *Billboard* 200, and began a streak of seven consecutive US number-one albums.^[63] The album reached number two in the UK, and spawned the hit singles "Rocket Man" and "Honky Cat".^[64]

In 1972 John performed at the Royal Variety Performance, where he was upstaged by the dancing of "Legs" Larry Smith, the drummer with the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band.^[65] Smith was invited to join John's second US tour; Smith later said: "I suggested adding in various other bizarre elements like me doing "Singin' in the Rain" as a song and dance act with Elton playing piano. Kubrick's Clockwork Orange film had recently featured that song. Plus I designed crazy, over-the-top costumes and giant stage sets – known as 'Legstravaganzas'. Elton loved all of it."^[66]

The pop album Don't Shoot Me I'm Only the Piano Player came out at the start of 1973 and reached number one in the UK, the US, and Australia, among other countries.^[59] The album produced the hits "Crocodile Rock", his first US Billboard Hot 100 number one, and "Daniel", which reached number two in the US and number four in the UK.^{[59][67]} The album and "Crocodile Rock" were respectively the first album and single on the consolidated MCA Records label in the US, replacing MCA's other labels, including Uni.^[68]

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, released in October 1973, gained instant critical acclaim and topped the chart on both sides of the Atlantic, remaining at number one for two months.^[69] It also temporarily established John as a glam rock star. It contained the US number 1 "Bennie and the Jets", along with the hits "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road", "Candle in the Wind", "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting" and "Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding".

1974–1980: The Rocket Record Company to 21 at 33

John formed his own label, The Rocket Record Company (distributed in the US by MCA and initially by Island in the UK), and signed acts to it—notably Neil Sedaka (John sang background vocals on Sedaka's "Bad Blood") and Kiki Dee, in whom he took a personal interest. Instead of releasing his own records on Rocket, he signed an \$8 million contract with MCA. When the contract was signed in 1974, MCA reportedly took out a \$25 million insurance policy on John's life.^[70] In 1974, MCA released Elton John's Greatest Hits, a UK and US number one that is certified Diamond by the RIAA for US sales of 17 million copies.^{[59][71]}



John on the piano during a live performance in 1975

In 1974, John collaborated with John Lennon on his cover of the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", the B-side of which was Lennon's "One Day at a Time". It was number 1 for two weeks in the US. In return, John was featured on "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night" on Lennon's album Walls and Bridges. Later that year, in Lennon's last major live performance, the pair performed these two number-one hits, along with the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There", at Madison Square Garden in New York. Lennon made the rare stage appearance with John and his band to keep the promise he had made that he would appear on stage with him if "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night" became a US number-one single.^[72] Caribou was released in 1974, becoming John's third number one in the UK and topping the charts in the US, Canada and Australia.^{[59][73]} Reportedly recorded in two weeks between live appearances, it featured "The Bitch Is Back" and "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me".^[73] "Step into Christmas" was released as a stand-alone single in November 1973, and appears in the album's 1995 remastered reissue.^[74]



Influenced by the glam rock scene in the UK, John (pictured left on the Cher show) often wore elaborate stage costumes, including platform boots (right).^[75]

Pete Townshend of the Who asked John to play the "Local Lad" in the 1975 film adaptation of the rock opera Tommy, and to perform the song "Pinball Wizard". Drawing on power chords, John's version was recorded and used in the movie. The song charted at number 7 in the UK.^[59] John, who had adopted a glam aesthetic on stage, would later state glam rock icon Marc Bolan "had a great effect on me."^[76]

The 1975 autobiographical album Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy debuted at number one in the US, the first album to do so, and stayed there for seven weeks.^[77] John revealed his previously ambiguous personality on the album, with Taupin's lyrics describing their early days as struggling songwriters and musicians in London. The lyrics and accompanying photo booklet are infused with a specific sense of place and time that is otherwise rare in his music. The hit single from this album, "Someone Saved My Life Tonight", captured an early turning point in John's life. The album's release signalled the end of the Elton John Band, as an unhappy and overworked John dismissed Olsson and Murray.^[78]

According to Circus, a spokesman for John's manager John Reid said the decision was reached mutually via phone while John was in Australia promoting Tommy.^[79] Davey Johnstone and Ray Cooper were retained, Quaye and Roger Pope returned, and the new bassist was Kenny Passarelli; this rhythm section provided a heavier backbeat. James Newton Howard joined to arrange in the studio and to play keyboards.^[80] In June 1975 John introduced the line-up at London's Wembley Stadium.^[80]

The rock-orientated Rock of the Westies entered the US albums chart at number 1, as had Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy, a previously unattained feat.^[77] John's stage wardrobe now included ostrich feathers, \$5,000 spectacles that spelled his name in lights, and costumes such as the Statue of Liberty, Donald Duck, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.^[81] In 1975, he received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.^[82] The album features his fifth US number one single, "Island Girl". To celebrate five years since he had first appeared at the venue, in 1975, John played a two-night, four-show stand at the Troubadour. With seating limited to under 500 per show, the chance to purchase tickets was determined by a postcard lottery, with each winner allowed two tickets. Everyone who attended the performances received a hardbound "yearbook" of the band's history. That year, he also played piano on Kevin Ayers's Sweet Deceiver and was among the first and few white artists to appear on the African-



John receiving his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1975

American television series *Soul Train*.^[69] On 9 August 1975, John was named the outstanding rock personality of the year at the first annual Rock Music Awards in Santa Monica, California.^[83] In May 1976, the live album *Here and There* was released, followed in October by the album *Blue Moves*, which contained the single "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word". His biggest success in 1976 was "Don't Go Breaking My Heart", a duet with Kiki Dee that topped a number of charts, including the UK, the US, Australia, France and Canada.^{[59][84]}



John performing live in Dublin with Ray Cooper in 1979

Besides being John's most commercially successful period, 1970–1976 is also held in the highest regard critically. In the three-year span from 1972 to 1975, John saw seven consecutive albums reach number one in the US, something that had not been accomplished before.^[69] All six of his albums to make *Rolling Stone*'s 2003 list of "The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time" are from this period, with *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* ranked highest at number 91.^[85] Between 1972 and 1976 he also had six singles reach number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100.^[86]

In November 1977, John announced he was retiring from performing; Taupin began collaborating with others. Now producing only one album a year, John issued *A Single Man* in 1978 with a new lyricist, Gary Osborne; the album produced no singles that made the top 20 in the US, but the two singles from the album released in the UK, "Part-Time Love" and "Song for Guy", both made the top 20 there, with the latter reaching the top 5.^[59] In 1979, accompanied by Ray Cooper, John became one of the first Western artists to tour the Soviet Union and Israel.^{[87][88]} John returned to the US top ten with "Mama Can't Buy You Love" (number 9), a song MCA rejected in 1977, recorded with Philadelphia soul producer Thom Bell.^[89] John said Bell was the first person to give him voice lessons and encouraged him to sing in a lower register.^[90]

A disco-influenced album, *Victim of Love*, was poorly received. In 1979, John and Taupin reunited, though they did not collaborate on a full album until 1983's *Too Low For Zero*. *21 at 33*, released the following year, was a significant career boost, aided by his biggest hit in four years, "Little Jeannie" (number 3 US), with the lyrics by Gary Osborne.^[91] In May 1979, John played eight concerts in the Soviet Union; four dates in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) and four in Moscow.^[92] At the same time, John collaborated with the French couple France Gall and Michel Berger on the songs "Donner pour donner" and "Les Aveux", released together in 1980 as a single.^[93]

1981–1989: *The Fox* to *Sleeping with the Past*

John's 1981 album *The Fox* was recorded during the same sessions as *21 at 33* and included collaborations with Tom Robinson and Judie Tzuke. On 13 September 1980, with Olsson and Murray back in the Elton John Band, and joined by Richie Zito on lead guitar, Tim Renwick on rhythm guitar, and James Newton Howard on keyboards, John performed a free concert to an estimated 400,000 fans on The Great Lawn in Central Park in New York.^[94] He played part of the set dressed as Donald Duck.^[95] The album *Jump Up!* was released in 1982, the biggest hit from which was "Blue Eyes".^[96]



John performing in 1986

With original band members Johnstone, Murray and Olsson together again, John returned to the charts with the 1983 album *Too Low for Zero*, which included the singles "I'm Still Standing" (No. 4 UK) and "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues", the latter of which featured Stevie Wonder on harmonica and reached number four in the US and number five in the UK.^{[59][84]} In October 1983, John caused controversy when he broke the United Nations' cultural boycott on apartheid-era South Africa by performing at Sun City.^[97] He married his close friend and sound engineer, Renate Blauel, on Valentine's Day 1984; the marriage lasted three years.^[98] In 1984, he released *Breaking Hearts*, which featured the song "Sad Songs (Say So Much)", a number five hit in the US and number seven in the UK.^[59]



John costume from the 1986 Tour de Force Australian concerts, on display in the Hard Rock Cafe, London

In 1985, John was one of the many performers at Live Aid, held at Wembley Stadium.^[99] He played "Bennie and the Jets" and "Rocket Man"; then "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" with Kiki Dee for the first time since the Hammersmith Odeon on 24 December 1982; and introduced George Michael, still then of Wham!, to sing "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me".^[99] John also recorded material with Millie Jackson in 1985. Towards the end of the year, John released "Nikita" from the album *Ice on Fire*, which had a music video directed by Ken Russell. The song reached number three in the UK and number seven in the US.

John's highest-charting single of the decade was a collaboration with Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder called "That's What Friends Are For". It reached number one in the US at the beginning of 1986; credited as Dionne and Friends, the song raised funds for HIV/AIDS research.^[84] In the same year, a live orchestral version of "Candle in the Wind" reached number six in the US. He also played piano on two tracks on the heavy metal band Saxon's album *Rock the Nations*.^[100]

In 1987, John won a libel case against The Sun, which published false allegations that he had had sex with rent boys.^[101] In 1988, he performed five sold-out shows at Madison Square Garden in New York, giving him 26 for his career.^[102] Netting over \$20 million, 2,000 items of John's memorabilia were auctioned off at Sotheby's in London.^[103] He also released "I Don't Wanna Go On with You Like That" from the album *Reg Strikes Back*, the single reaching number two in the US in 1988.^{[59][84]} His albums continued to sell, but of those released in the latter half of the 1980s, only *Reg Strikes Back* (number 16, 1988) placed in the top 20 in the US.^[84]

1990–1999: "Sacrifice" to *Aida*

In 1990, John achieved his first solo UK number one hit single, with "Sacrifice" (coupled with "Healing Hands") from the previous year's album *Sleeping with the Past*; it stayed at the top spot for five weeks.^[104] The following year, "Basque" won the Grammy for Best Instrumental, and a guest concert appearance at Wembley Arena John made on George Michael's cover of "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" was released as a single and topped the charts in both the UK and the US.^[105] At the 1991 Brit Awards in London, John won Best British Male.^[106]

In 1992, John released the US number 8 album *The One*, featuring the hit song "The One".^[107] It was his first album recorded entirely sober. As John recalled in 2020, "I was used to making records under the haze of alcohol or drugs, and here I was, 100% sober, so it was tough. But I managed to come up with a good

song, which was the title of the record."^[108] He also released "Runaway Train", a duet he recorded with his longtime friend Eric Clapton, with whom he played on Clapton's World Tour.^[109] John and Taupin then signed a music publishing deal with Warner/Chappell Music for an estimated \$39 million over 12 years, including the largest cash advance in music publishing history.^[110]

In April 1992, John appeared at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium, performing "The Show Must Go On" with the remaining members of Queen, and "Bohemian Rhapsody" with Axl Rose of Guns N' Roses and Queen's remaining members.^[111] In September, John performed "The One" at the 1992 MTV Video Music Awards and closed the ceremony performing "November Rain" with Guns N' Roses.^[112] In 1993, he released Duets, which featured collaborations with 15 artists, including Tammy Wynette and RuPaul. This included a new collaboration with Kiki Dee, "True Love", which reached the Top 10 of the UK charts.^[113] In the same year, The Bunbury Tails, a multi-artist charity album, was released, which was the soundtrack to the British animated television series of the same name. "Up The Revolution" was John's track, alongside contributions from George Harrison, the Bee Gees and Eric Clapton. The album was issued briefly, and only in the UK.^[114]

Along with Tim Rice, John wrote the songs for the 1994 Disney animated film The Lion King. At the 67th Academy Awards, three of the five nominees for the Academy Award for Best Original Song were from The Lion King soundtrack. John won the award for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight".^[116] Both that and "Circle of Life" became hits.^{[117][118]} "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" also won the Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance at the 37th Annual Grammy Awards.^[119] The soundtrack for The Lion King remained at the top of the Billboard 200 for nine weeks. On 10 November 1999, the RIAA certified The Lion King "Diamond" for selling 15 million copies.^[120]

"For myself as well as for many others no-one has been there more for inspiration than Elton John. When we talk of great rock duos like Jimmy Page and Robert Plant, John (Lennon) and Paul (McCartney), Mick (Jagger) and Keith (Richards), I like to think of Elton John and Bernie Taupin. Also tonight I think that Elton should be honoured for his great work and contribution in the fight against AIDS. And also his bravery in exposing all the triumphs and tragedies of his personal life."

—Axl Rose speech inducting Elton John into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.^[115]

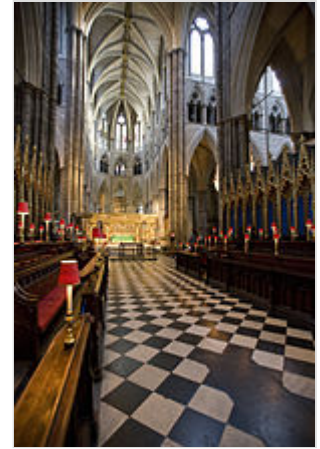
In 1994, John was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by Guns N' Roses' frontman Axl Rose.^[121] In 1995, he released the album Made in England (number 3). The title track is an autobiographical recounting of parts of his life. The album also featured the single "Believe".^[122] John performed "Believe" at the 1995 Brit Awards and won the Outstanding Contribution to Music prize.^[123]

A duet with Luciano Pavarotti, "Live Like Horses", reached number nine in the UK in December 1996.^[59] A compilation album, Love Songs, was released in 1996.^[124] Early in 1997, John held a 50th birthday party, costumed as Louis XIV of France, with 500 friends. He performed with the surviving members of Queen in Paris at the opening night (17 January 1997) of Le Presbytère N'a Rien Perdu De Son Charme Ni Le Jardin De Son Éclat, a work by French ballet legend Maurice Béjart that draws upon the AIDS crisis and the deaths of Freddie Mercury and the company's principal dancer, Jorge Donn. Later in 1997, two close friends died: designer Gianni Versace was murdered on 15 July, and Diana, Princess of Wales died in a Paris car crash on 31 August.^[125]



John with [Luciano Pavarotti](#) in Modena, 1996

In early September, John asked Taupin to revise the lyrics of their 1973 song "Candle in the Wind" to honour Diana, and Taupin agreed.^[126] On 6 September 1997, John performed "[Candle in the Wind 1997](#)" live for the only time at [Diana's funeral](#) in [Westminster Abbey](#).^{[127][128]} The song became the fastest and biggest-selling single of all time, eventually selling over 33 million copies globally.^{[120][129]} The best-selling



Interior of [Westminster Abbey](#) where John performed "[Candle in the Wind 1997](#)" live for the only time at [Princess Diana's funeral](#)

single in UK chart history,^[130] and the best-selling single in *Billboard* history, it is the first single [certified Diamond](#) in the US where it sold over 11 million copies.^{[120][131]} The 2009 *Guinness World Records* states it is "the biggest-selling single since UK and US singles charts began in the 1950s, having accumulated worldwide sales of 33 million copies".^[25] The song's proceeds of approximately £55 million were donated to Diana's charities via the [Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund](#). It won the [Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance](#) at the [40th Annual Grammy Awards](#) in 1998.^[129] The song "[Something About the Way You Look Tonight](#)" was released as a [double A-side](#).^[128]

On 15 September 1997, John appeared at the [Music for Montserrat](#) charity concert at the [Royal Albert Hall](#), performing three songs solo ("Your Song", "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" and "Live Like Horses") before finishing with "Hey Jude" alongside [Paul McCartney](#), [Eric Clapton](#), [Phil Collins](#), [Mark Knopfler](#) and [Sting](#).^[132] Two months later he performed on the BBC's [Children in Need](#) charity single "[Perfect Day](#)", which reached number one in the UK.^[133] John appeared as himself in the [Spice Girls](#) film [Spice World](#), released in December 1997.^[134]

[The Lion King](#) musical debuted on Broadway in 1997 and the [West End](#) in 1999. In 2014, it had grossed over \$6 billion and became the top-earning title in box-office history for both stage productions and films, surpassing the record previously held by [Andrew Lloyd Webber's](#) 1986 musical [The Phantom of the Opera](#).^[135] In addition to [The Lion King](#), John composed music for a Disney's musical production [Aida](#) in 1999 with lyricist [Tim Rice](#), for which they received the [Tony Award for Best Original Score](#) at the [54th Tony Awards](#),^[136] and the [Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album](#) at the [43rd Annual Grammy Awards](#).^{[137][138]}

The musical had its world premiere at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre and went on to Chicago and eventually Broadway. John released a live compilation album, [Elton John One Night Only – The Greatest Hits](#), featuring songs from the show he did at [Madison Square](#)



John (second from left) alongside British Prime Minister [Tony Blair](#) (left), singer-songwriter [Stevie Wonder](#) and U.S. President [Bill Clinton](#) at the White House, February 1998

Garden in New York City that same year. A concept album of songs from the musical *Aida*, *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida*, was also released and featured the John duets "Written in the Stars" with LeAnn Rimes, and "I Know the Truth" with Janet Jackson.^[139]

2000–2009: *Billy Elliot the Musical* and 60th birthday

By this time, John disliked appearing in his own music videos; the video for "This Train Don't Stop There Anymore" featured Justin Timberlake portraying a young John, and the video for "I Want Love" featured Robert Downey, Jr. lip-syncing the song.^[140] At the 2001 Grammy Awards, John performed "Stan" with Eminem.^[141] One month after the 11 September attacks, John appeared at the Concert for New York City, performing "I Want Love" as well as "Your Song" as a duet with Billy Joel.^[142] In August 2003, John's fifth UK number one single, "Are You Ready for Love", topped the charts.^[143]

Returning to musical theatre, John composed music for a West End production of *Billy Elliot the Musical* in 2005 with playwright Lee Hall. John had been moved to write the musical after seeing the 2000 British coming-of-age film *Billy Elliot*, saying of the titular character, "he's like me".^[144] Opening to strong reviews, the show won four Laurence Olivier Awards, including Best New Musical. The 12th-longest-running musical in West End history, the London production, which featured Tom Holland as Billy for two years, ran through April 2016, with 4,566 performances.^[145]

As of December 2015, *Billy Elliot* has been seen by over 5.25 million people in London and nearly 11 million people worldwide (on Broadway where it won the Tony Award for Best Musical, in Sydney, Melbourne, Chicago, Toronto, Seoul, the Netherlands and São Paulo, Brazil etc.), grossed over \$800 million worldwide and won over 80 theatre awards internationally.^[146] John's only theatrical project with Taupin is *Lestat*, based on Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*. It received negative reviews from critics and closed in May 2006 after 39 performances.^[147] John featured on rapper Tupac Shakur's posthumous single "Ghetto Gospel", which topped the UK charts in July 2005.^[59]

In October 2003, John announced that he had signed an exclusive agreement to perform 75 shows over three years at Caesars Palace on the Las Vegas Strip. The show, *The Red Piano*, was a multimedia concert featuring massive props and video montages created by David LaChapelle. Effectively, he and Celine Dion shared performances at Caesars Palace throughout the year; while one performed, the other rested. The first of these shows took place on 13 February 2004.^[148] In February 2006, John and Dion sang together at the venue to raise money for Harrah's Entertainment Inc. workers affected by the 2005 hurricanes, performing "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word" and "Saturday Night's Alright (for Fighting)".^[149]

The Walt Disney Company named John a Disney Legend for his contributions to Disney's films and theatrical works on 9 October 2006.^[150] Also in 2006, he told *Rolling Stone* that he planned for his next record to be in R&B and hip hop. "I want to work with Pharrell Williams, Timbaland, Snoop [Dogg], Kanye [West], Eminem and just see what happens", he said.^[151] West sampled John's "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" on his 2007 song "Good Morning" and in 2010 invited him to his Hawaii studio to play piano and sing on "All of the Lights".^[152]



Advertisement for John's award-winning West End musical *Billy Elliot* on a Routemaster bus in London, 2007



John has had two residencies at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas. The first, *The Red Piano*, ran from 2004 to 2009, and the second, *The Million Dollar Piano* (sign pictured) ran from 2011 to 2018.

In March 2007, John performed at Madison Square Garden for a record-breaking 60th time for his 60th birthday; the concert was broadcast live and a DVD recording was released as *Elton 60 – Live at Madison Square Garden*,^[153] a greatest-hits compilation CD, *Rocket Man—Number Ones*, was released in 17 different versions worldwide, including a CD/DVD combo; and his back catalogue—almost 500 songs from 32 albums—became available for legal paid download.^[154]



John on piano at the Concert for Diana, commemorating the 10-year passing of Princess Diana, at Wembley Stadium on 1 July 2007

On 1 July 2007, John appeared at the Concert for Diana at Wembley Stadium in honour of Diana, Princess of Wales on what would have been her 46th birthday, with the concert's proceeds going to Diana's charities as well as to charities of which her sons Prince William and Prince Harry are patrons.^{[155][156]} John opened the concert with "Your Song" and closed it with "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting", "Tiny Dancer", and "Are You Ready For Love".^[155]

On 21 June 2008, John performed his 200th show at Caesars Palace. A DVD/CD package of *The Red Piano* was released through Best Buy in November 2008. In a September 2008 *GQ* interview John said, "I'm going on the road again with Billy Joel again next year", referring to "Face to Face", a series of concerts featuring the two. The tour began in March.^[157]

In 2009, John accepted Jerry Cantrell's invitation to collaborate with his band Alice in Chains.^[158] John played the piano in the song "Black Gives Way to Blue", a tribute to the band's late lead singer, Layne Staley, which was the title track and closing song of the album *Black Gives Way to Blue*, released in September 2009.^[159] The first concert Staley attended was one of John's, and his mother said he was blown away by it.^[159] Cantrell added, "Elton is a very important musical influence to all of us in varying degrees, and especially to me. My first album was *Elton John's Greatest Hits*. And actually, we were reminded by Layne's stepfather that Elton was his first concert, so it was all really appropriate."^[160] John said he had long admired Cantrell and could not resist the offer.^{[161][162]}

2010–2018: *The Union to Wonderful Crazy Night*

John performed a piano duet with Lady Gaga at the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards, which consisted of two songs of Gaga's, before culminating in "Your Song".^[163] On 17 June, and 17 years to the day after his previous performance in Israel, he performed at the Ramat Gan Stadium; this was significant because of other then-recent cancellations by other performers in the fallout surrounding an Israeli raid on Gaza Flotilla the month before. In his introduction to that concert, John said that he and other musicians should not "cherry-pick our conscience", in reference to Elvis Costello, who was to have performed in Israel two weeks after John did but cancelled in the wake of the aforementioned raid, citing his conscience.^{[164][165]}

John released *The Union* on 19 October 2010. He has said the album, a collaboration with American singer, songwriter and sideman Leon Russell, marked a new chapter in his recording career, saying: "I don't have to make pop records any more."^[166] He began his new show The Million Dollar Piano at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, on 28 September 2011,^[167] and performed it there for the next three years. He performed his 3000th concert on 8 October 2011 at Caesars.^[168] Also in 2011, John performed vocals on "Snowed in at Wheeler Street" with Kate Bush for her album *50 Words for Snow*.^[169] On 3 February 2012, he visited Costa Rica for the first time, performing at the recently built National Stadium.^[170]



John on World AIDS Day in Sydney, Australia, on 1 December 2011

On 4 June 2012, John performed at Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Concert at Buckingham Palace, playing a three-song set.^[171] On 30 June, he played in Kyiv, Ukraine in a joint concert with Queen + Adam Lambert for the Elena Pinchuk ANTIAIDS Foundation.^[172] An album containing remixes of songs that he recorded in the 1970s, *Good Morning to the Night*, was released in July 2012. The remixes were conducted by Australian group Pnau, and the album reached number one in the UK.^[173] At the 2012 Pride of Britain Awards on 30 October, John along with Michael Caine, Richard Branson, Simon Cowell and Stephen Fry, recited Rudyard Kipling's poem "If—" in tribute to the 2012 British Olympic and Paralympics athletes.^[174]



John performing at the Allstate Arena, Chicago, in November 2013

In February 2013, John performed a duet with singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran at the 55th Annual Grammy Awards.^[175] Later in 2013, he collaborated with rock band Queens of the Stone Age on their sixth studio album, *...Like Clockwork*, contributing piano and vocals on the song "Fairweather Friends". He said he was a fan of frontman Josh Homme's side project, Them Crooked Vultures, and had phoned Homme to ask if he could perform on the album.^[176] In September 2013, John received the first Brits Icon Award for his "lasting impact" on the culture of the United Kingdom.^[177] Rod Stewart presented him with the award on stage at the London Palladium before the two performed a duet of "Sad Songs (Say So Much)".^[178]

John's 31st album, *The Diving Board*, produced by T-Bone Burnett, was released in September 2013 and reached number three in the UK and number four in the US.^{[59][179]} In October 2015, it was announced he would release his 32nd studio album, *Wonderful Crazy Night*, on 5 February 2016. It too was produced by Burnett.^[180] The album's first single, "Looking Up", was released in the same month. This album marked John's first full album recorded with his touring band since 2006's *The Captain & the Kid*.^[181] He also had a major role, as himself, in the action movie *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*, which was released in September 2017.^[182]

On 26 January 2017, it was announced that John would compose the score for the Broadway musical version of the novel *The Devil Wears Prada* and its film adaptation, with Kevin McCollum as producer and Paul Rudnick writing the lyrics and story. The timeline for the musical is yet to be announced.^[183] In June 2017, John appeared in the award-winning documentary *The American Epic Sessions*, directed by Bernard MacMahon. In the film, he recorded live on the restored first electrical sound recording system from the

1920s.^{[184][185]} John composed and arranged a lyric by Taupin, "Two Fingers of Whiskey", written specially for the film, live on camera with the help of Burnett and Jack White.^{[186][187]} Danny Eccleston in *Mojo* pointed out that "in one of the series' most extraordinary moments, Elton John arrives toting a box-fresh lyric by Bernie Taupin and works it up in an instant, the song materializing in front of the viewers' eyes before John and Jack White go for the take. There's the magic right there."^[188] "Two Fingers of Whiskey" was released on 9 June 2017 on *Music from The American Epic Sessions: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*.^[189]



John performing a tribute to George Michael at Twickenham, London, in June 2017

2018–present: Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour, biopic, and more

On 24 January 2018, it was announced that John was retiring from touring and would soon embark on a three-year farewell tour. The first concert took place in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on 8 September 2018. John cited spending time with his family as the reason for his retirement: "Ten years ago if you asked me if I would stop touring I would have said no. But we had children and that changed our lives. I have had an amazing life and career but my life has changed. My priorities are now my children and my husband and my family."^[190] Consisting of more than 300 concerts worldwide, the tour ended in Stockholm on 8 July 2023 following rescheduled shows due to the covid pandemic and health issues.^[191] In September 2018, John reportedly signed an agreement with Universal Music Group (UMG) to represent his new music "for the rest of his career" in addition to his work from the last 50 years.^{[192][193]}

A biopic about John's life from his childhood to the 1980s, *Rocketman*, was produced by Paramount Pictures and released in May 2019.^[194] It was directed by Dexter Fletcher, who had also co-directed *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and stars Taron Egerton as John.^{[195][196]} John had previously appeared as a fictionalised version of himself alongside Egerton in the film *Kingsman: The Golden Circle* (2017). John and Egerton performed a new song written for *Rocketman*, "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again", which premiered on BBC Radio 2 in 2019.^[197] The song would see John win the Academy Award for Best Original Song for the second time.^[198] In October 2019, John released what he described as his "first and only autobiography", *Me*.^{[199][200]} The audiobook of *Me* was narrated by Egerton, with John reading the prologue and epilogue.^[201]



John performing in Tampa, Florida in November 2019 during his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour

As part of his farewell tour, in June 2019, John was presented with France's highest civilian award, the Legion of Honour, by President Emmanuel Macron during a ceremony at the Élysée Palace in Paris. Macron called John a "melodic genius" and one of the first gay artists to give a voice to the LGBT community.^[202] On 16 February 2020 his first show at Mount Smart Stadium in Auckland, New Zealand was cut short. He had been diagnosed with walking pneumonia, and lost his voice during the show.^[203] He was cleared to perform the next show on 19 February.^[204] John played at the Western Sydney Stadium on 7 March before the remainder of the tour were postponed indefinitely on 16 March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^[205] In early 2020, John played piano on Ozzy Osbourne's rock ballad "Ordinary Man", released

on Osbourne's album of the same name.^[206] On 29 May, his duet with Lady Gaga, "Sine from Above", from her album *Chromatica*, was released.^[207] John released *Regimental Sgt. Zippo* on 12 June 2021. Recorded as his debut album in 1968, the album was shelved in favour of 1969's *Empty Sky*, and released vinyl-only in 2021 for *Record Store Day*.^[208]

On 1 September 2021, John announced his new collaboration album *The Lockdown Sessions* which he made during the first *COVID-19* lockdown, which was released on 22 October 2021. Artists he collaborated with on the album include *Eddie Vedder*, *Miley Cyrus*, *Dua Lipa*, *Lil Nas X*, *Nicki Minaj*, *Young Thug*, *Stevie Wonder*, *Rina Sawayama* and *Stevie Nicks*.^[209] In a statement on the project, John explained: "I realised there was something weirdly familiar about working like this. At the start of my career, in the late 60s, I worked as a session musician. Working with different artists during lockdown reminded me of that. I'd come full circle: I was a session musician again. And it was still a blast."^[210] "Cold Heart (Pnau remix)", a collaboration with *Dua Lipa*, was released on 13 August 2021 as the album's first single. It peaked at number one in the UK in October 2021, becoming John's first UK number one in 16 years since 2005's "Ghetto Gospel".^{[211][212]} With this hit, he became the first solo artist to have top 10 singles in the UK in 6 different decades.^[213] "Cold Heart" also peaked at number 1 in Australia in November 2021. At 74 years, 7 months and 14 days, John became the oldest artist to hit the top of the *ARIA* Singles Chart.^[214] John contributed to the charity tribute album *The Metallica Blacklist*, released in September 2021, by backing *Miley Cyrus* on a cover of the *Metallica* song "Nothing Else Matters".^[215]

In December 2021, "Merry Christmas", John's festive duet with *Ed Sheeran*, was released. The song's music video sees the duo re-create a scene from the festive romantic-comedy film *Love Actually* in which they pay homage to scenes from British Christmas hits from the past, including "Last Christmas" and "Merry Christmas Everyone".^{[216][217]} All of the UK profits from the song went to the *Elton John AIDS Foundation* and the *Ed Sheeran Suffolk Music Foundation*.^[217] The song topped the UK Singles Chart on 10 December to become John's ninth UK number one.^[218] Later that month, John and Sheeran collaborated with *LadBaby* on their 2021 Christmas single "Sausage Rolls for Everyone", a comedic version of "Merry Christmas" with a sausage roll theme.^[219] The song debuted at number one on the UK Singles Chart and gave John his first Christmas number one, John's third number one of 2021, and 10th UK number one overall, making him joint ninth on the list of artists with most number-one singles on the UK Singles Chart (with *Calvin Harris* and *Eminem*).^[220] In January 2022, John continued his farewell tour for the first time since the start of the pandemic, with his first show back taking place in New Orleans, Louisiana. John had to temporarily postpone two shows in Dallas after testing positive for *COVID-19* and experiencing mild symptoms, and resumed the tour again after making a full recovery.^{[221][222][223]} To celebrate his 75th birthday, John released a digitally remastered version of his *Diamonds* compilation album on streaming platforms.^{[224][225]}

John performed "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" at the memorial service for Australian cricketer *Shane Warne* on 30 March 2022.^[226] On 4 June 2022, John was projected on to the facade of Buckingham Palace playing "Your Song" (pre-recorded at *Windsor Castle*) at the *Platinum Party at the Palace* to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.^[227] In August, John collaborated with *Britney Spears* on the song "Hold Me Closer".^[228] The same month it was announced that John had written the music for a new musical about the life of televangelist *Tammy Faye Messner*, with book by playwright *James Graham* and lyrics by *Jake Shears*. The musical, titled *Tammy Faye*, opened at the *Almeida Theatre* in London in October 2022.^[229]

John is among the people interviewed for the documentary film *If These Walls Could Sing* directed by *Mary McCartney* about the recording studios at *Abbey Road* which premiered in November 2022.^[230]

On 25 June 2023, John headlined the Glastonbury Festival. Performing on the Pyramid Stage, John closed the festival with a two-hour performance which saw "Pinball Wizard" played live for the first time in over 10 years. The event drew in the festival's largest ever TV viewing figures in the UK with a peak of 7.6 million and an average of 7.3 million, the BBC also announced it had almost 50% of all viewers across all stations viewing the event.^{[231][232][233][234]}

On 8 July 2023, John performed the final concert of the tour in Stockholm, Sweden at the Tele2 Arena. Upon opening the show, John said: "Good evening Stockholm, well this is it".^[235] Though retired from touring, John has said that he will continue to "do the odd show" and is also in the early planning stages of recording a new album.^{[236][237]}

Personal life

Sexuality and family

In the late 1960s, John was engaged to be married to his first lover, secretary Linda Woodrow, who is mentioned in the song "Someone Saved My Life Tonight".^{[238][239]} Woodrow provided financial assistance to John and Taupin at the time. John ended the relationship two weeks before their intended wedding, after being advised by Taupin and Long John Baldry. In 2020, John helped pay for Woodrow's medical fees upon her request, despite having lost contact with her 50 years previously.^[240]

In 1970, right after his first US shows in Los Angeles, he lost his virginity to and started his first gay relationship with John Reid, the Tamla Motown label manager for the UK, who later became John's manager. The relationship ended five years later, although Reid remained his manager until 1998.^[241]

John married German recording engineer Renate Blauel on 14 February 1984, in an extravagant wedding ceremony at St Mark's Church, Darling Point, Sydney.^{[242][243]} Blauel said she attempted suicide during their honeymoon in St-Tropez after John told her that he wanted to end the union.^[244] Their marriage ended in divorce in 1988. John stated: "She was the classiest woman I've ever met, but it wasn't meant to be. I was living a lie."^[243] In 2020, Blauel sued John for writing about their relationship in his 2019 *Me: Elton John Official Autobiography*, which she claimed broke the terms of their divorce agreement.^[245] The case was settled later the same year.^[246]

John had come out as bisexual in a 1976 interview with *Rolling Stone*,^{[238][239]} and in 1992 he told *Rolling Stone* in another interview that he was "quite comfortable about being gay".^[247]

In 1993, John began a relationship with David Furnish, a former advertising executive and now filmmaker originally from Toronto. On 21 December 2005 (the day the Civil Partnership Act came into force), John and Furnish were among the first couples to form a civil partnership in the United Kingdom, which was held at the Windsor Guildhall.^[248] After same-sex marriage became legal in the United Kingdom in March 2014, John and Furnish married in Windsor, Berkshire, on 21 December 2014, the ninth anniversary of their civil partnership.^{[249][250][251]}

John and Furnish have two sons.^[252] The elder, Zachary Jackson Levon Furnish-John, was born via surrogacy on 25 December 2010 in California.^{[253][254]} The younger, Elijah Joseph Daniel Furnish-John, was born on 11 January 2013 via the same surrogate.^[255] John also has ten godchildren, including Sean

Lennon, David and Victoria Beckham's sons Brooklyn and Romeo, Elizabeth Hurley's son Damian Hurley, and Seymour Stein's daughter.^[256]

In 2010, some Christian groups in the US criticised John after he described Jesus as a "compassionate, super-intelligent gay man who understood human problems". Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and opponent of gay marriage, responded: "To call Jesus a homosexual is to label him a sexual deviant. But what else would we expect from a man who previously said, 'From my point of view, I would ban religion completely.'"^[257] John stated, in his 2019 autobiography *Me*, that he had received many death threats as a result of his statements. Neal Horsley, a Christian Reconstructionist from Bremen, Georgia, United States, was arrested for making terrorist threats, after posting a YouTube video stating: "We're here today to remind Elton John that he has to die".^[258] The charges were subsequently dropped.^[259]



John with his husband David Furnish at Leicester Square in May 2019 for the London premiere of John's biopic film *Rocketman*

In 2008, John said he preferred civil partnerships to marriage for gay people,^[260] but by 2012 he had changed his position and become a supporter of same-sex marriage in the United Kingdom. John said:

"There is a world of difference between calling someone your 'partner' and calling them your 'husband'. 'Partner' is a word that should be preserved for people you play tennis with, or work alongside in business. It doesn't come close to describing the love that I have for David, and he for me. In contrast, 'husband' does".^[261]

In 2014, he claimed Jesus would have been in favour of same-sex marriage.^[262]

Wealth

In April 2009, the *Sunday Times Rich List* estimated John's wealth at £175 million (US\$265 million) and ranked him the 322nd wealthiest person in Britain.^[263] A decade later, John was estimated to have a fortune of £320 million in the 2019 *Sunday Times Rich List*, making him one of the 10 wealthiest people in the British music industry.^[264] Aside from his main home, Woodside, in Old Windsor, Berkshire, John owns residences in Atlanta, London, Los Angeles, Nice and Venice. His property in Nice is on Mont Boron. John is an art collector and is believed to have one of the largest private photography collections in the world.^[265]



The tree-lined drive to John's home in Woodside in Old Windsor, Berkshire

In 2000, John admitted to spending £30 million in just under two years—an average of £1.5 million a month. Between January 1996 and September 1997, he spent more than £9.6m on property and £293,000 on flowers.^[266] In June 2001, John sold twenty of his cars at Christie's, saying he never had the chance to drive them because he was out of the country so often.^[267] The sale, which included a 1993 Jaguar XJ220, the most expensive at £234,750, and several Ferraris, Rolls-Royces, and Bentleys, raised nearly £2 million.^[268] In 2003, John sold the contents of his Holland

Park home – expected to fetch £800,000 at Sotheby's — to modernise the decoration and to display some of his contemporary art collection.^[269] Every year since 2004, John has opened a shop called "Elton's Closet", in which he sells his secondhand clothes.^[270]

In October 2021, John was named in the Pandora Papers, which allege a secret financial deal of politicians and celebrities using tax havens in an effort to avoid the payment of owed taxes.^[271]

Other

By 1975, the pressures of stardom had begun to take a serious toll on John. During "Elton Week" in Los Angeles that year, he had a cocaine overdose.^[272] He also developed the eating disorder bulimia. In a 2002 CNN interview with Larry King, King asked if John knew of Diana, Princess of Wales's eating disorder; John replied: "Yes, I did. We were both bulimic."^[273] In a July 2019 Instagram post, John stated he had been sober for 29 years.^[274]

At a 2022 concert in Indianapolis, John said he cleaned himself up after spending time with the family of Ryan White. "I knew that my lifestyle was crazy and out of order. ... I cannot thank them enough, because without them, I'd probably be dead."^[275] In a 2014 interview, he also attributed his sobriety to the Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel duet "Don't Give Up" from 1986, in particular the lyric from Bush, "Rest your head. You worry too much. It's going to be all right. When times get rough you can fall back on us. Don't give up." He states, "she [Bush] played a big part in my rebirth. That record helped me so much."^[276]

A longtime tennis enthusiast, in 1975 he released the song "Philadelphia Freedom" in tribute to his friend Billie Jean King's World Team Tennis team, the Philadelphia Freedoms.^[86] King was a player-coach for the team at the time. John and King remain friends and co-host an annual pro-am event to benefit AIDS charities, most notably the Elton John AIDS Foundation, of which King is a chairperson. John, who maintains a part-time residence in Atlanta, Georgia, became a fan of the Atlanta Braves baseball team when he moved there in 1991.^[277]

John has appeared in commercials for Diet Coke (beginning in 1990), the Royal Mail, Snickers and John Lewis & Partners department store, among others. Authors Roger Blackwell and Tina Stephan wrote "the relationship of Elton John and Diet Coke is one of the classic success stories in the role of sponsorship in brand building."^[278] His 2018 John Lewis & Partners Christmas advert shown in the UK, titled "The Boy & The Piano", sees him reminisce about his life and career in reverse, culminating with Christmas Day in the 1950s when he received a piano for Christmas from his mother.^[279]

An admirer of Monty Python, in 1975, he was among a group of musicians who helped finance their film Monty Python and the Holy Grail.^[280] At the 2nd Empire Awards in 1997, John presented the comedy group the Empire Inspiration Award.^[281]

On 22 April 2017, John was discharged from hospital after two nights of intensive care for contracting "a harmful and unusual" bacterial infection during his return flight home from a South American tour in Santiago, Chile, and was forced to cancel all his shows scheduled for April and May 2017.^[282] In October



John wearing a remembrance poppy in 2015

2021, John required hip surgery after "falling awkwardly on a hard surface".^{[283][284]}

On 9 December 2022, John left Twitter, following changes to its rules made by new owner Elon Musk, stating: "All my life I've tried to use music to bring people together. Yet it saddens me to see how misinformation is now being used to divide our world. I've decided to no longer use Twitter, given their recent change in policy which will allow misinformation to flourish unchecked."^[285]

Football

John became the chairman and director of Watford in 1976, after supporting the team since his youth. John appointed Graham Taylor as manager and invested large sums of money as the club rose three divisions into the English First Division.^[287] At their height, the club finished runners up in the First Division to Liverpool in 1983 and reached the FA Cup Final at Wembley Stadium in 1984. John sold the club to Jack Petchey in 1987, but remained president.^[288]

Ten years later, John repurchased the club from Petchey and once again became chairman. He stepped down in 2002 when the club needed a full-time chairman, but continued as president.^[288] Although no longer the majority shareholder, John still holds a significant financial interest. In 2005 and 2010, John held a concert at Watford's home stadium, Vicarage Road, and donated proceeds to the club.^[288]

He has remained friends with a number of high-profile players in football, including Pelé and David Beckham.^{[256][289]} From late 1975 to 1976, John was a part-owner of the Los Angeles Aztecs of the North American Soccer League. On 13 December 2014, he appeared at Watford's Vicarage Road with his husband and sons for the opening of the "Sir Elton John stand".^[290] He called the occasion "one of the greatest days of my life".^[290]

John's paternal cousin Roy Dwight was a professional footballer, who scored for Nottingham Forest in the 1959 FA Cup Final before breaking his leg later in the same match.^[291]

Political views

John has performed at a number of events involving the British royal family, such as the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales at Westminster Abbey in 1997, the Party at the Palace in 2002 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Concert outside Buckingham Palace in 2012.^[292] On 4 June 2022, John was projected on to the facade of Buckingham Palace playing "Your Song" (pre-recorded at Windsor Castle) at the Platinum Party at the Palace to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.^[227] In 2008, after United States senator Barack Obama won the 2008 United States presidential election, John called Obama's victory "incredibly moving." He would later meet President Obama in the White House on 6 May 2015.^[293]

"At the 1984 Cup Final, the song 'Abide with Me' was played and that's why I cried. The song evokes my memory of childhood."

—Elton John on his emotions during the FA Cup Final's traditional pre-match hymn.^[286]



John and United States President Barack Obama at the White House, 6 May 2015

In 2013, John resisted calls to boycott Russia in protest at the Russian gay propaganda law, but told fans at a Moscow concert that the laws were "inhumane and isolating", and he was "deeply saddened and shocked over the current legislation".^[294] In a January 2014 interview, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke of John in an attempt to show that there was no discrimination against gays in Russia, saying: "Elton John – he's an extraordinary person, a distinguished musician, and millions of our people sincerely love him, regardless of his sexual orientation." John responded by offering to introduce Putin to Russians abused under Russian legislation banning "homosexual propaganda".^[295] On 24 September 2015, the Associated Press reported that Putin called John and invited him to meet in the future to discuss LGBT rights in Russia.^[296]

During the 2016 United States presidential election, John supported Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, and performed alongside Katy Perry and Andra Day at Clinton's fundraiser concert at Radio City Music Hall. After his performance, John praised Clinton as "the only choice" America has.^[297] John was among 27 artists to have opposed Donald Trump's use of their music at his campaign rallies, and declined an invitation to attend Trump's inauguration in January 2017, stating: "I have given it a lot of thought, and as a British National I don't feel that it's appropriate for me to play at the inauguration of an American President, please accept my apologies." He also exhorted Trump to continue the global fight against HIV/AIDS, and closed his letter by wishing Trump "every success with your presidency." Trump, a fan of John's music, has referenced John on numerous instances, including referring to North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un as "Little Rocket Man" during Trump's first address to the United Nations in September 2017.^{[298][299][300][301]} He also claimed to have given Kim a CD of the song "Rocket Man" that was signed by John,^[302] and to have taken piano lessons from John.^[303]



John performing at Radio City Music Hall during the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign

John announced his intention to vote Remain during the UK's 2016 EU referendum on Instagram, sharing an image with the words "build bridges not walls", along with the caption "I'm voting to remain. #StrongerInEurope".^[304] In 2019, he said the Brexit vote and the way it had been handled had made him ashamed.^[305] In October 2020, John called attention to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.^[306] He said in his Instagram post: "In May 2018, I visited [Armenia] and was overwhelmed with the kindness and humanity shown to me by the Armenian people. Now Armenia and Artsakh are under attack from unprovoked Azeri/Turkish aggression. Civilians are being targeted and there are needless deaths on both sides."^[307] In September 2021, John said that his requests to meet with Boris Johnson regarding Brexit and touring visas for musicians were ignored.^[308]

Philanthropy

John is well known for his philanthropic efforts, being involved in charity fundraising events since 1986.^[309] In 1992, after losing two friends - (HIV/AIDS spokesperson Ryan White and fellow musician Freddie Mercury) to AIDS in the span of a year - John founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation, an organisation which has raised over \$600 million to support HIV-related programs in 55 countries.^{[310][311]}

John was recognised for his services to charity twice, receiving a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II in 1998 and being appointed by her to be a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in 2020.^{[312][313][314]}

AIDS foundation

John has said that he took risks with unprotected sex during the 1980s and considers himself lucky to have avoided contracting HIV.^[315] In 1985, he joined with Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder to record the single "That's What Friends Are For", with profits donated to the American Foundation for AIDS Research. The song went to number one in the United States the following year and won the Grammy Award for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals. In April 1990, John traveled to Indianapolis to be by the side of Ryan White, a teenage haemophiliac whom he had befriended and whose health was deteriorating. On the eve of White's death, he performed at Farm Aid IV, dedicating "Candle in the Wind" to White. He performed his 1968 ballad "Skyline Pigeon" at White's funeral.^{[316][317][318]}

John became more closely associated with AIDS charities following the deaths of his friends Ryan White in 1990 and Freddie Mercury in 1991, raising large amounts of money and using his public profile to raise awareness of the disease. He founded the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992 as a charity to fund programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention, for the elimination of prejudice and discrimination against HIV/AIDS-affected individuals, and to provide services to people living with or at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This continues to be one of his passions. In 1993, he began hosting his annual Academy Award Party, which has become one of the highest-profile Oscar parties in the Hollywood film industry and has raised over US\$200 million.^[14]



John and United States Secretary of State John Kerry discuss AIDS relief and the work of the Elton John AIDS Foundation at the United States Department of State in Washington, D.C., 24 October 2014

To raise money for his AIDS charity, John annually hosts a White Tie & Tiara Ball on the grounds of his home in Old Windsor in Berkshire, to which many celebrities are invited.^[319] The ninth annual White Tie & Tiara Ball took place on 28 June 2007. The menu consisted of a truffle soufflé followed by surf and turf and a giant knickerbocker glory ice cream. An auction followed, emceed by Stephen Fry. A Rolls-Royce "Phantom" drophead coupe and a piece of Tracey Emin's artwork both raised £800,000 for the charity fund, with the total amount raised reaching £3.5 million.^[320] Later, John sang "Delilah" with Tom Jones and "Big Spender" with Shirley Bassey.^[321] The 2011 guests included Prince Andrew's former wife Sarah Ferguson, Elizabeth Hurley and George Michael; the auction raised £5 million, adding to the £45 million the balls have raised for John's foundation.^[319]

On 23 February 2023, The Elton John AIDS Foundation donated \$125,000 via United24 to purchase ten biochemistry analyzers, to help make sure that all Ukrainians living with HIV can continue to access high-quality care and treatment.^[322]

Other charity work

John and his husband [David Furnish](#) founded the Elton John Charitable Trust in 2007, which has supported over 100 charities. In 2014, John launched the Elton John Sports Fund to help citizens with training and competition costs for over 50 sports.^[323]

John performed "I'm Still Standing" during the *One World: Together at Home* television special, a benefit concert curated by [Lady Gaga](#) for [Global Citizen](#) to raise funds for the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund.^[324]

Artistry

Influences

John has said he remembers being immediately hooked on rock and roll when his mother brought home records by [Elvis Presley](#) and [Bill Haley & His Comets](#) in 1956.^{[39][40]} He also stated of when he was growing up: "I heard [Little Richard](#) and [Jerry Lee Lewis](#), and that was it. I didn't ever want to be anything else. I'm more of a Little Richard stylist than a Jerry Lee Lewis, I think. Jerry Lee is a very intricate piano player and very skillful, but Little Richard is more of a pounder."^[325] John has also cited [Ray Charles](#), [the Beatles](#), [the Band](#), [Leon Russell](#), [Aretha Franklin](#), [Joni Mitchell](#) and [Freddie Mercury](#) as influences.^[326]

John has often expressed a great appreciation for the accomplishments of young artists from the 21st century, collaborating with several of them on the 2021 collaborative album *The Lockdown Sessions* and interviewing them on his [Apple Music](#) radio show *Rocket Hour*.^[327] He stated in an interview: "It's wonderful because you think, 'God, they're 16 or 17 or 15 years of age. How do they do that?' It keeps me animated and it keeps me so happy", and that "These are the kind of artists that keep me young. I listen to all new music, I know all the old music but it's the new music in life that keeps me inspired."^{[328][329]}

Musicianship

John has written with [Bernie Taupin](#) since 1967, when he answered an advertisement for talent placed in the popular UK music publication *New Musical Express* by [Liberty Records](#) A&R man [Ray Williams](#).^[53] The pair have collaborated on more than 30 albums to date.^[330] Their method involves Taupin writing the lyrics on his own and sending them to John, who then writes music for them before recording the songs; the two are never in the same room during the process.^[331] In November 2017, John said of their 50-year partnership:

We've never ever had an argument professionally or personally, which is extraordinary because most songwriters sometimes split up because they get jealous of each other. And it's exciting because it's never changed from the first day we wrote songs. I still write the song when he's not there and then I go and play it to him. So the excitement is still the same as it was from day one and that's kept it fresh and it's kept it exciting.^[332]



John with [Bernie Taupin](#) (left) in 1971. They have collaborated on more than thirty albums to date.

In 1992, along with Taupin, John was inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame. He is a fellow of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors (BASCA).^[333] His voice was once classed as a tenor prior to his throat surgery; it is now a baritone.^[40] His piano playing is influenced by classical music and gospel music.^[49] Paul Buckmaster did orchestral arranging for his studio albums during the 1970s.^[334]

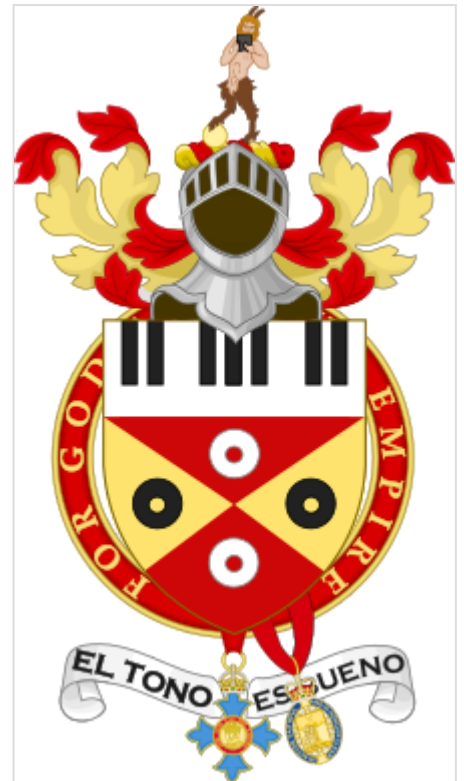
Honours and awards

John was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility in 1994. He and Taupin had already been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1992. John was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1995.^[336] In October 1975, John received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.^[82] For his charitable work, John was knighted by Elizabeth II on 24 February 1998 for services to music and to charity.^{[312][313]} In the 2020 New Year Honours, he was appointed Member of the Order of the Companions of Honour (CH) by Queen Elizabeth II for services to music and to charity.^[314]

John was awarded Society of Singers Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.^[337] He received a Kennedy Center Honor in 2004 and a Disney Legends Award in 2006. In 2000, he was named the MusiCares Person of the Year for his artistic achievement in the music industry and dedication to philanthropy.^[338] In 2010, he received the PRS for Music Heritage Award, which was erected on The Namaste Lounge Pub in Northwood, London, where John performed his first gig.^[339]

In 2019, President Emmanuel Macron appointed John a chevalier of the Legion of Honour.^[202] In 2019, John featured on a series of UK postage stamps issued by the Royal Mail.^[340] In 2022, after John performed at the White House, President Joe Biden surprised him by presenting him with the National Humanities Medal.^{[341][342]}

Music awards include the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" from The Lion King, the 1994 Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" from The Lion King, and the 2000 Tony Award for Best Original Score for Aida, all of which he shared with Tim Rice. The 2019 Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song and Academy Award for Best Original Song both went to John for "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again", shared with Taupin. He has also received five Brit Awards, including the 1991 award for Best British Male, and awards for Outstanding Contribution to Music in 1986 and 1995. In 2013, John received the first Brits Icon award in recognition of his "lasting impact" on UK culture, which was presented to him



Sir Elton John's coat of arms. Granted to him in 1987, the shield includes piano keys and records. The Spanish motto, *el tono es bueno*, combines a pun on Elton John's name with the translation "the tone is good".^[335] The black, red and gold colours are also those of Watford F.C. The steel helmet above the shield faced forward and with its visor open indicates that John is a knight.

by [Rod Stewart](#).^{[177][343]} In 2024, John became the 19th person to achieve [EGOT](#) status after winning the [Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Variety Special \(Live\)](#) for *[Elton John: Farewell from Dodger Stadium](#)*.^[344]



John after being awarded the [National Humanities Medal](#) in September 2022, pictured with [Furnish](#), [President Biden](#) and [Jill Biden](#)

Rankings

- "[Your Song](#)", and "[Bennie and the Jets](#)" are listed in [The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's 500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll](#).
- In 2000, VH1's "100 Greatest Rock Songs" included "[Your Song](#)" at number 70.^[345]
- In 2003, *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Albums of All Time included [Goodbye Yellow Brick Road](#) at number 91,^[346] [Greatest Hits](#) at number 135,^[347] [Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy](#) at number 158,^[348] [Honky Chateau](#) at number 357,^[349] [Tumbleweed Connection](#) at number 463,^[350] and [Elton John](#) at number 468.^[351]
- In 2004, *Rolling Stone's* [The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time](#) included "[Your Song](#)" at number 136, "[Rocket Man](#)" at number 242, "[Candle in the Wind](#)" (original) at number 347, "[Goodbye Yellow Brick Road](#)" at number 380, and [Tiny Dancer](#) at number 387.^[352]
- In 2004, *Rolling Stone* ranked John number 49 on their list of the "100 Greatest Artists of All Time".^[353]
- In 2010, John was ranked number 28 on VH1's "100 Greatest Artists of All Time".^[354]
- In 2013, *Ultimate Classic Rock* website ranked "[Rocket Man](#)" number 37 in their Top 100 Classic Rock Songs chart.^[355]
- In their 2019 list of the "Greatest Artists of All Time", *Billboard* ranked John the top solo artist in US chart history (third overall behind [The Beatles](#) and [The Rolling Stones](#)).^[356]
- In 2023, *Rolling Stone* ranked Elton John at number 100 on its list of the 200 Greatest Singers of All Time.^[357]

Discography

Studio albums

- *[Empty Sky](#)* (1969)
- *[Elton John](#)* (1970)
- *[Tumbleweed Connection](#)* (1970)
- *[Madman Across the Water](#)* (1971)
- *[Honky Château](#)* (1972)
- *[Don't Shoot Me I'm Only the Piano Player](#)* (1973)
- *[Goodbye Yellow Brick Road](#)* (1973)
- *[Caribou](#)* (1974)
- *[Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy](#)* (1975)
- *[Rock of the Westies](#)* (1975)
- *[Blue Moves](#)* (1976)
- *[A Single Man](#)* (1978)

- *Victim of Love* (1979)
- *21 at 33* (1980)
- *The Fox* (1981)
- *Jump Up!* (1982)
- *Too Low for Zero* (1983)
- *Breaking Hearts* (1984)
- *Ice on Fire* (1985)
- *Leather Jackets* (1986)
- *Reg Strikes Back* (1988)
- *Sleeping with the Past* (1989)
- *The One* (1992)
- *Made in England* (1995)
- *The Big Picture* (1997)
- *Songs from the West Coast* (2001)
- *Peachtree Road* (2004)
- *The Captain & the Kid* (2006)
- *The Diving Board* (2013)
- *Wonderful Crazy Night* (2016)
- *Regimental Sgt. Zippo*^[358] (2021)

Collaboration albums

- *Live in Australia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra* (1986)
- *Duets* (1993)
- *The Union* (with Leon Russell) (2010)
- *Good Morning to the Night* (with Pnau) (2012)
- *The Lockdown Sessions* (2021)

Soundtrack albums

- *Friends* (1971)
- *The Lion King* (1994)
- *Aida* (1998)
- *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida* (1999)
- *The Muse* (1999)
- *The Road to El Dorado* (2000)
- *Billy Elliot* (2005)
- *Lestat* (2005)
- *Gnomeo & Juliet* (2011)

- *Rocketman* (2019)

Tours

Filmography

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.eltonjohn.com>) 
- Elton John (<https://archive.org/search?query=Elton+john>) on the Internet Archive
- Elton John (<https://www.facebook.com/EltonJohn>) on Facebook
- Elton John (<https://www.instagram.com/eltonjohn/>) on Instagram

- [Elton John \(https://open.spotify.com/artist/3PhoLpVuITZKcymwpck5b\)](https://open.spotify.com/artist/3PhoLpVuITZKcymwpck5b) on [Spotify](#)
 - [Elton John \(https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0005056/\)](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0005056/) at [IMDb](#)
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 - [Commentary by Elton John \(*The Guardian*\) \(https://www.theguardian.com/profile/eltonjohn\)](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/eltonjohn)
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