

HERCULES

THE MAG



inside this issue:

Exclusive!
Clive Franks
Interview
part 3

Nigel Olsson
talks about
the past year

We talk to
one of Elton's
schoolfriends

**John
Jorgenson**
competition

PLUS:
News, Trivia,
Quizzes,
Your Letters
& more!

Issue No. 54
MARCH 2001



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Fan Clubs*

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Last Stand in Open Country...	
Elton's missing millions	7
Front Row Seats?!	
Here's the secret.....	9
One Day at a Time	
Nigel Olsson talks to George Matlock.....	10
Clive Franks interview	
Part 3 of our exclusive interview with Elton's sound engineer	14
Tantrums & Liars	13
Out of the Closet	
The first day	17
This is my House	
Hercules member Rob Cargill has moved house	13
School Report:	
Teenage Idol	
Elton's school friend talks	20

OFFERS, PROMOS & CONVENTIONS

Hercules Elton/Lennon Weekend	3
Win John Jorgenson's new album	24

REGULARS

Between 17 and 20	
Elton trivia & gossip ..	18
Club Information	2
Letters to the Editor	25
Lyric Quiz	8
News Bullets	4
Small ads	27
Tour Dates	27

FAN CLUB INFORMATION

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.

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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, David Wright. Please understand that we cannot always publish all contributions. All photos will be returned.

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John Jorgenson at Birmingham
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HERCULES Chief Editor
David Wright
100 Winkworth Road,
Banstead
Surrey SM7 2QR, U.K.
HerculesEd@eltonfan.net

Assistant Editor:
Tammi Law

Editorial Assistants:
George Matlock, Barbara Turner

Design: Turnstyle Design

Translations:
Sabine Asenkirschbaumer
Mireille Mölbert

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

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

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

HERCULES USA/Canada
c/o Sharon Kalinski
P.O. Box 398
La Grange, IL 60525, USA
HerculesUSA@eltonfan.net

HERCULES U.K.
c/o George Matlock
P.O. Box 315
Richmond
Surrey TW9 3QX, UK
Fax: 0870 130 7752
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 Scheiviller n.9/A
I-20139 Milano, ITALY
HerculesIT@eltonfan.net

HERCULES Francais
Francoise Linden-Gilles
BP-22, B-4900 SPA
Belgium
herculesFr@eltonfan.net

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



FROM THE EDITOR...

Hello and welcome to another issue.

We have not one but two major interviews this time. Nigel Olsson tells us his latest news, what it's like to back in the band and about his new solo album.

We also have part 3 of the Clive Franks interview.

Mark Giles reports from the third Out of the Closet shop in London.

George Matlock reports on the latest from Elton's 'missing millions' court case.

We have a competition - see page 24 for your chance to win a signed copy of John Jorgenson's brilliant CD Emotional Savant.

Elton continues to be as busy as ever currently with the US leg of the Face to Face tour with Billy Joel, plenty of TV appearances and more Solo dates in Europe. See page 27 for the latest Tour Dates.

One administration note - could I draw your attention to some changes to banking arrangements on page 26.

I hope to see many of you in Liverpool on 24 and 25 March for what promises to be the best ever UK Convention. See the insert and check our website - www.eltonfan.net - for the latest news.

Cheers!

HERCULES ELTON/LENNON WEEKEND

AT CAVERN CLUB, LIVERPOOL

MARCH 24-25, 2001

Don't make this an Empty Garden, as Hercules celebrates Elton's birthday and recalls John Lennon's memory 20 years after his tragic loss.

FOR ONE DAY ONLY

Recent Elton band member
John Jorgenson CONFIRMED

Original Bluesology band - CONFIRMED

More names to follow!

Hercules is proud to announce the March 24, 2001 Convention. The prestigious Cavern Club in Liverpool will play host to these top acts. They will perform live Elton John and John Lennon tributes, and will also take fan questions from the floor on the big day.

The day starts early - at noon, and the fun continues until 10 pm. We will also be serving special Elton John cocktails called Blue Eyes, using the Cavern Club's very own recipe.

And in case you are wondering this is the Cavern Club where The Beatles performed thirty-five years ago. It had to be demolished in 1980, and recreated brick-by-brick in 1983! Using the SAME bricks as the old club, in fact. Elton John has also been inside the club. One great British institution visited another! **T h i s** event is a once-only chance to capture a life and soul of Elton's music, performed especially by John Jorgenson. And coming from Bluesology will be Mick Inkpen and Stu Brown. Other Bluesology members are currently being invited. And if you know where they are, drop a note to event organisers at: HerculesUK@eltonfan.net

There is likely to be an admission charge to all visitors to the convention this year - but we think it will be well worth it! This is no ordinary line up we are offering - with more top names to be confirmed. This is the first time Europe has been able to rival the Elton Expos run bi-annually in the USA, and many fans cannot visit that one.

So, show your Elton colours, and come along! Register your interest by emailing us at HerculesUK@eltonfan.net

Cavern Club Tours Ltd, which operates the Cavern Club, are offering accommodation and tour packages to suit you. Please contact them direct. On March 25, 2001, Elton's birthday, Cavern Club Tours will run a series of tours for those of you interested in seeing The Beatles' Liverpool.

NOT TO BE MISSED!!

STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

To coincide with Elton's Sweden show, Hercules Nordic is holding a fan convention on July 24, 2001 in Stockholm. All welcome. For more details please contact Urpu Kallio, address on page 2.

EJ NEWS BULLETS...



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

FACE TO FACE ...

AROUND THE WORLD!

Elton and Billy Joel kicked off their joint Face to Face tour in the Western part of the USA in January, and at the time of going to press more and more dates are being announced for the two piano men in the Eastern US states. In between tour legs with Billy Joel, Elton will also tour solo again in Europe. In August/September, he is expected to bring Billy along for some European Face To Face shows. After that, the tour is likely to continue in Asia and Australia. Nothing is confirmed at the time of going to press, but we will bring you more news on the tour schedule as soon as possible. (See tour Dates on page 27). If you have access to e-mail, and to ensure you don't miss out on the hot news, make sure to sign up for our free Hercules eNewsletter!

"...IF IT KILLS ME!"

Elton performed his first show of the New Year with a reduced band and bad voice at Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu, Hawaii, on January 12. Elton said, "My management company screwed up so our equipment did not arrive until today, so we rehearsed all day!". He apologised for his voice being worn out due to that day's rehearsals. The band was down to six members following the push (?) of Curt Biscquera, Billy Trudel and John Jorgenson. Just before Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word Elton said: "This should be interesting as well". When he got to the final line he sang 'Sorry seems to be the ...' stopped, then sang the line again in a lower register. Elton apologised many times for his bad voice. His speaking voice was even worse than his singing voice. About midway he said "I will get through this if it kills me!".

ELTON'S BIG PICTURES!

Elton's private photo collection on display at a US museum has proved too explicit for some schools, reported the Press Association January 17. The exhibition in Atlanta includes some snaps of nude men - prompting one education authority to ditch its planned school field trips. The show includes 316 photos Elton has collected. The event is getting rave reviews. "There were just two or three questionable photographs, but the school system felt it was better not to take students to the exhibit," said Cobb schools spokesman Jay Dillon. The museum says it has had no complaints about the display.

ELTON'S TV BLUNDER

CHANNEL 4 has apologised for an on-air gaffe by Elton, according to the Isle of Man newspaper, February 10. Elton claimed during the final edition of UK's Channel 4 TFI Friday, broadcast on December 22, that homosexuality is still illegal on the Island. He joked about it and told millions of British viewers he wouldn't be going to the island on holiday. Island viewers were outraged because his claim was inaccurate. Elton's agent Paul Carey said no offence was meant by the comments.

EASIER TO WALK AWAY

Elton and Billy Joel appeared on Jay Leno's "Tonight Show" (NBC) on February 7, during their USA Face to Face tour. As Jay Leno introduced the two, Billy wheeled Elton out in a wheelchair, due to a sprained calf Elton got from playing tennis. Elton and Billy performed Goodbye Yellow Brick Road and Piano Man.

SECOND ANNUAL

"WITH THIS KISS"

The second annual "With This Kiss" campaign was launched on February 6. Hosted by Yahoo! Auctions and Yahoo! Greetings, celebrities and consumers puckered up to generate contributions for the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Last year, Yahoo!'s "With This Kiss" campaign helped raise more than \$17,000 for EJAF. Consumers were able to bid on-line for original autographed Celebrity Kisses, created using lipsticks donated by MAC Cosmetics.

TV GUIDE NOMINATIONS

TV Guide on January 29, announced the finalists for its third annual awards based on 30 million reader votes. The winners will be announced at a Los Angeles gala on March 7. Elton's One Night Only - Greatest Hits Live is in the running for "Music Special of the Year".

LEGENDARY COVERS

The Big Eye label released a "new" CD with Elton singing 16 cover songs from the "Top of the Pops" (1969 - 1970) era, on February 13. It includes tracks such as Natural Sinner, Spirit In The Sky, Signed Sealed Delivered, and Yellow River. The album is similar to the already released Chartbusters Go Pop.

TWO JOKING PIANO MEN

Elton and Billy Joel skipped the intermission at the fourth show of their Face to Face Tour 2001 in Portland, OR, on January 26. But they didn't skip the fun: Elton laughed his way through You Maybe Right when he first looked up to Billy who had borrowed a giant pair of glasses from the audience. And during Piano Man it was Elton's turn to distract Billy by acting like he is a puppeteer!

EJ NEWS BULLETS...



DIGITAL SHEET MUSIC CATALOGUE

Musicnotes.com, an interactive online sheet music store featuring 10,000 digital titles, has acquired the digital rights from Warner Bros Publishing to an extensive selection of songs by Elton. Musicnotes.com is currently featuring 26 different Elton John classics including Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, Daniel, Bennie and the Jets, Candle in the Wind, and Crocodile Rock. More songs will be added to the site in the near future.

TINA STILL THE BEST FOR ELTON?

It is (just) possible singers Tina Turner and Elton will bury the hatchet of their infamous 1999 bust-up. Following news on December 30, when Tina told fans during her European Tour that she's quitting tours this year, her spokesman said: "Tina might still do the odd Sting gig for the rainforests or an Elton John Aids gig, which she has done in the past, if she is asked."

WHITE MILK, WHITE POWDER?

Elton has shaken the British milk marketing people, by saying no to backing British milk. He's backing US milk instead. A council source said last night: "Elton is an English superstar - not an American one. We tried to lure him twice to appear in the White Stuff campaign, but he said no. You can imagine our surprise when we then saw him promoting milk in America." Marketing manager Andrew Ovens said: "It's a shame. We would still like to work with Elton and are looking into further scripts." Elton appears on billboards across America with a milky moustache next to the slogan "I'm Still Standing". He will be donating his fee for the ad to the Elton John Aids Foundation.

ELTON JOHN DAY ON

RAINBOWNETWORK.COM

RainbowNetwork.com saluted the talents of Elton on Friday January 26. They had a competition to win a Versace three-quarter length coat - "I hope you have as much fun wearing it as I had," Elton passed on to the prospective winner.

COLLECTIVE SOUL AND

ELTON SINGLE

Perfect Day, the strikingly soulful duet between bandleader Ed Roland and Elton, will be released as the second single from Collective Soul's album Blender.

EJ CHAT SHOW?

Elton could be set to front his own chat show, according to Peoplenews, January 8. He has been approached by Britain's Channel 4 Television to host a similar series to TFI Friday. The new show would be aired at 6 pm on Fridays - the same time slot as TFI. Regular readers of The Mag will know that these rumours have surfaced before, but have, so far, come to nothing.

WHITE LADY, WHITE POWDER

The February 2001 edition of Britain's Q Magazine has a special report on the artists, including Elton, who fell victim to hard drugs. The two anecdotes cited are when in summer 1975, Elton swallowed a bottle of Valium tablets, and leapt into the outdoor swimming pool screaming he was going to die. The other tale was when on his wedding night February 14, 1984, Elton took four grammes of Cocaine to help him make it through the night!

ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

The Eighth Annual DuPont World Team Tennis All-Star Smash Hits, hosted by Elton and Billie Jean King, took place at the Philips Arena in Atlanta, GA, on December 14. The event raised approximately \$500,000, with \$172,500 coming from the auction before the event. The money goes to the Elton John Aids Foundation and AID Atlanta. "We've always wanted to bring the event here because I reside here and it's a great tennis town," Elton said. "I'm psyched we're here because I love this town."

ELTON'S CHAT SHOW DEBUT

Elton was a huge success as he hosted the final ever episode of UK Channel 4's TFI Friday, on December 22nd. During the hour-long show, EJ was in a great mood as he joked and chatted to guests, including Victoria Beckham (Posh Spice), and comedian Graham Norton. The show attracted 2.3 million viewers, compared to the show just 2 weeks earlier (hosted by Donna Air and Fun Lovin' Criminals frontman Huey), which only pulled in one million viewers.

THE TIES THAT BIND

Elton spent £7,500 on neckties in a matter of minutes for charity on December 20, 2000. The marathon spend had Elton buying 30 designer ties, at £250 each. David Furnish was by his side. The ties were sold to raise cash for Unicef Gallery boss and art dealer Kapil Jariwala said: "He was in for about 20 minutes and he was absolutely fantastic, totally positive about the whole thing. I asked if they were all going to be used and he said 'yes!'"

EJ NEWS BULLETS...



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

SONG FOR NOBODY?!

Reports in the British press on December 20 stated that Madonna had asked Elton to play Song For Guy as a tribute to her groom, British film director Guy Ritchie, at their wedding at Scotland's Skibo Castle on December 22, 2000. However, Elton put the record straight on TFI Friday, which was aired on the day of the wedding, saying that not only had he not been asked to play the song, but that he hadn't even been invited to the wedding!

NEW ALBUM

At the time of going to press, there is still no official release date for Elton's new album, which he was working on in the studio at the end of last year. Latest indications are that the album will be released worldwide in the summer of 2001.

ELTON AT BRITISH COMEDY AWARDS

The British Comedy Awards show was rounded off with a duet between comedy character Alan Partridge and Elton. The pair sang Don't Go Breaking My Heart while making jokes at each other's expense. Afterwards Elton said it had been a lot of fun working with Partridge - who is played by Steve Coogan - and said he would think about him when he got home that night before he went to sleep.

ELTON IN PARIS MATCH

The French magazine Paris Match (issue of December 21, 2000) featured an eight page article titled "The new drug of Elton John: Photography". Elton talks about his passion for photography and says: "During 20 years, I have been photographed all the time, and I hated that. Now I can accept being photographed even without make-up."

PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM

Elton will christen the Philadelphia's new performing arts centre more than two decades after he had a hit with the song Philadelphia Freedom. He will perform at the opening of the Kimmel Centre for the Performing Arts in December 2001 and will be joined by Bill Cosby, Wynton Marsalis, the Lincoln Centre Jazz Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

ONE NIGHT ONLY

IN HELLO MAGAZINE

The December 19 edition of UK magazine Hello, featured a free VHS video on the making of One Night Only. The video, which runs for 27 minutes, features interviews with Elton and all the One Night Only guests, plus unique behind-the-scenes coverage. (Hercules regrets we are unable to supply copies of this video).

HEY HEY JOHNNY

Elton performed a very emotional version of Empty Garden in Macon, GA on December 8, and received a 2-3 minute standing ovation. He introduced it as the song he wrote for his dear friend John Lennon who was killed twenty years ago that day - telling he would never forget when he learned of Lennon's death while on a plane flight in Australia.

AT LAST!

"Finally I've made it to Johnson City," were Elton's first words after he entered the stage at Freedom Hall in Johnson City, TN, on December 5, 2000. The show had been postponed from April last year.

OUT OF THE CLOSET III

Out of the Closet III, the shop that was only open for three and a half days raised a total of £428,000 for the Elton John Aids Foundation. More than 15,000 items belonging to Elton and David Furnish went on sale at a store in London's New Bond Street in December. "Out of the Closet III" was the most successful of all the clothes sales so far, beating the previous record of £330,000. Elton said: "It's brilliant that the shop raised over £428,000 in less than four days trading and we still have the sale of my Grand Piano featured in the store to come in the spring." (Read Mark Giles' report on page 17)

SHE'LL HAVE TO GO!

During UK's Channel 4 Television quiz show Fifteen-to-One in January, the very first question was: 'Which honky tonk pianist, who had a string of hits over 40 years and was much loved by the Queen Mother, died last month?' The answer was Russ Conway. The elderly contestant answered: 'ELTON JOHN!'

ELTON SINGS BACKING VOCALS

British recording artist Mal Pope's CD Golden Days 21st Century Remix features two songs with Elton on backing vocals (If I Wasn't There and How It Hurts).

SOLO TOUR IN THE USA

Shortly after finishing the European leg of his Solo Tour Elton went back to the USA for a few more solo shows. He kicked off in Bossier City, LA, on December 2, 2000. The set list of these US shows was exactly the same as during the final shows of the European leg, however, American Triangle made it back into the show.

LAST STAND IN OPEN COUNTRY

By George Matlock



In Happier times: after 1993 Bulimia court victory. Clockwise: Elton, Frank Presland, Reid

ELTON'S MISSING MILLIONS BRITISH HIGH COURT ACTION ABOUT OVERSEAS TOURING COSTS CLOSED FEB. 1, AND THE LIKELY VERDICT WAS ON KNIFE EDGE.

At the end of the hearing, Mr Justice Ferris reserved his decision, not expected for several weeks, and had not adjudicated as Hercules went to press.

But not before John Reid, the equally flamboyant former Elton manager, had his stand in court. Mr Reid spoke of Elton's "incandescence" over media leaks, and of the snub over the ceremony which made Elton a "Sir".

Mr Reid was giving evidence at London's High Court on Dec. 4, the 20th day of Elton's missing millions case brought against John Reid Enterprises' (JRE) former managing director, Andrew Haydon, and the rockstar's former accountants PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Mr Reid, 51, who previously settled with Elton in a reportedly £3.4m out of court deal, told the court he agreed to

appear for PwC after the accountants promised not to sue him if they lost the case to Elton, 53.

Elton alleges Haydon was negligent in allowing JRE to charge him most tour expenses. Elton's case is that the "several millions" which he paid out in touring expenses should have been borne by JRE under a revised and agreed management agreement. PwC are accused by Elton of negligence in managing his affairs. Both defendants are contesting vigorously. The case, which began Oct. 30, was expected to last eight weeks but overran.

Describing relations with Elton, Mr Reid said Elton exploded with rage when The Mirror newspaper published a letter from PwC exposing the singer's spending exploits and warning him to cut back. Mr Reid's personal and professional

relationship with his boss crumbled after the publication of the figures in 1998, the court heard.

"He was incandescent with rage and he believed that someone from John Reid Enterprises had sold that information to the newspapers and told me in no uncertain terms to find out how it happened", explained Mr Reid.

Mr Reid hit back in court, after sitting through Elton's own evidence on Nov. 16, when Elton had accused Mr Reid of dishonesty and betrayal, citing that Mr Reid was somebody he trusted, but that he'd been "caught with his hands in the till." Elton was not in court to hear Mr Reid's riposte.

"It wasn't until afterwards that we discovered it had been Benjamin Pell, who claims to have gotten the letter from the rubbish bins," he said. Later, Mr

Reid detailed how Elton had snubbed him by refusing him an invitation to his investiture at Buckingham Palace.

Mr Reid said in February 1998 he was on the same flight to Britain from Los Angeles as Elton, who was travelling to the Palace to be knighted. Mr Reid was returning to London to attend his mother's funeral.

"He didn't invite me to go with him, which upset me," Mr Reid complained.

Although he later learnt of pop fanatic Pell's claims in court, Elton already began to lose faith in Mr Reid.

After the knighthood ceremony, the gulf between the two men continued to widen even as Elton began a tour of Australia with Billy Joel. Mr Reid told the court: "Things by this time were really frosty and had heard that Elton had been asking if people thought I was dishonest.

Mr Reid added: "So I went to his suite and asked him ... He said no, he didn't think I was dishonest, but he was concerned about where all his money was going and he had appointed KPMG to do an audit. I told him I was pleased he was doing that and if there was any discrepancy in our conduct, I was responsible - because I was responsible for the company."

Mr Reid explained that he had made arrangements to fly back to the UK that day (March 18, 1998). "That was the last time I spoke to him and the last time I saw him," Mr Reid said.

Around the time of Hercules' 10th birthday on May 10, 1998, Elton and Mr Reid parted company with a £5m severance agreement. Since then Mr Reid has disposed of three of his properties in St John's Wood, London, New York and St. Tropez for almost £10m in total.

Contradicting Elton's genteel version of the St. Tropez meeting at which Elton agreed more generous remuneration

terms for JRE in 1984, Mr Reid said Elton had countless heated meetings with Mr Reid as they thrashed out a new management agreement.

The pair, who were lovers from 1970-75, also rowed over who was to pay for hiring tour promoters.

But several news reports in December vainly pointed to a victory for Elton: Reportedly, Andrew Haydon's barrister Andrew Fletcher told the court Mr Reid had eventually backed down and agreed to pay for tour promoters, although he had no recollection of it. It remains an issue whether that was then written into the contract, but certainly undermines much of JRE's protests about tour expense liability. But Elton's dispute includes producers, accountants, and other tour costs - not just promoters. Mr Reid's lack of memory may also help Elton - as the onus is on the defendants to disprove Elton's claims, not for Elton to prove them.

Earlier in the day, Mr Reid admitted under fierce questioning he had difficulty remembering details of his management agreements at that time because he had "serious" drug and booze problems. Elton and Mr Reid had helped each other through addiction to these vices. He also accepted he was often "volatile", "foul-mouthed", had in the past been violent and was "keen on money".

Nevertheless, under cross-examination from Elton's QC, Gordon Pollock, Mr Reid contradicted Elton's earlier evidence, insisting they had an agreement that tour expenses would always be paid by Elton, leaving the verdict on knife edge.

Further detail on this case is contained on page 4 of Hercules 52 (Dec. 2000)

JUST FOR FUN

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 And check out the show
twice nightly
Oh, 'cause I'm on the stage
tonight
- 2 And from those agile angels
We knew the tide was
turning
- 3 Cryin's not a bad thing
And worrying no sin
- 4 I stuttered out my answer
and hung
My head in shame
- 5 When your back's against
the wall
And darlin' then I'll just
pretend
- 6 They'd turn a full-blooded
city boy
Into a full-blooded city man
- 7 Oh I've had me fill of
cocaine and pills
For I lie in the light of the
Lord
- 8 How I've struggled for my
money
Sweated blood to get us by
- 9 Long-haired ladies well they
look so fine,
Locked in my cellar full of
cheap red wine
- 10 It takes two to execute
One to leave with
innocence and one to live
with guilt
- 11 You went from lamé suits
right down to tennis shoes
To peanuts from the lion's
share
- 12 I'd rather have ham in my
sandwich than cheese
But complaining wouldn't
do any good

Front Row Seats?! Here's the secret...

After embarking on the first leg of the Face to Face tour, Billy Joel had some interesting things to say about ticket allocation in a recent interview.....

QUESTION

Do you meet a lot of women when you're on the road?

ANSWER

You know, we have a policy: We don't sell the first couple of rows of our shows. I got really sick and tired of the scalpers always getting the best tickets and selling to the fat cats who pay stupid money, sit in the front row with their gold chains and wives with beehive hairdos. They don't move because they paid a thousand dollars, so they just sit there like an oil painting. So we hold the tickets for the front rows, and we give the tickets to the roadies, who go to the worst seats in the house and give those people the front-row seats. Now, most of the roadies are guys, so who do you think most of those tickets go to? Cute girls.

So we're looking down, and we're seeing all these cute girls jumping up and down. It turns the show into a whole new dynamic. It's like sex.

QUESTION

How does Elton John feel about this policy?

ANSWER

When we started touring with Elton, we explained this to him, and he thought it was a great idea. One night I saw a little lightbulb go off over his head. The next night, in all the seats in front of him were these good- looking young guys. And his show got better.

QUESTION

So you might both be married again by the end of this tour.

ANSWER

I doubt it, but I never say never.

Nigel Olsson Talks to George Matlock about the past year of meteoric achievement, from California, January 5, 2001

one day at a time

Nearly 14 months ago, Nigel gave me the pleasure of his first, extended interview for Hercules. He was living on the fast-track with his beloved BMW and Ferrari racing cars, and was in a reflective mood about his musical past in The Elton John Band.

Little did either of us know, that the year ahead would be back in the fast lane, passing a green light on the road to El Dorado, and a few milestones en route. In March 2000 Nigel was backing vocalist for Elton's soundtrack to *The Road to El Dorado*. In October, he was with Elton at the historic Madison Square Gardens *Greatest Hits Live* recording *One Night Only*. And now, packing his bags to join Elton's US tour, with the first of two nights in Hawaii, on January 10.

And then there are Nigel's other projects, such as a solo album out in February.

George Matlock: Let's start with the obvious. So how are you?

Nigel Olsson: I'm nuts! The (solo) album was mastered yesterday, artwork was done today, and I'm leaving next week for the (Elton) tour, and I'm also moving house.

GM: What again? [Nigel already moved once in early 2000!]

NO: I have to keep out of the way of all these people who come looking for me ha, ha! I'm staying in the area, just moving



down the street, better area.

GM: It's been an amazing year for you Nigel. Let's start with the official recognition you bestowed upon your own fan club run by Noreen and Brooke.

NO: They did great work putting it all together. I didn't know anything about it until two years ago when a friend of mine said "You know, you have a fan site." My friend got in touch, and it grew from there. We are looking to launch a merchandise section on the website soon.

GM: We have enjoyed cross-promoting the two fan clubs in the past year! And now you are back in the Elton John Band. How does it feel to be back?

NO: Fantastic. It hasn't sunk in yet. Davey Johnstone contacted me in the summer and asked

whether I would like to work with Elton's new drummer Curt Bisquera, on the recording for the Madison (MSG) gig. I said yes. I thought it would be a one-off. Then Davey told me: "Elton wants you back!" So here I am.

GM: Let's go back to February, when we detected the first thaw in the air. You were assigned to the El Dorado project. How did that happen?

NO: Davey called me and said that the producer, Pat Leonard, wanted to recreate some of the old sound which we made for Elton in the 1970s, and would I come in? Although I was not back as drummer, I really liked that album.

GM: When you came back for El Dorado, did you sense things had changed, or was this just a session?

NO: I thought it was just a one-off thing. Especially, since Elton was touring only solo. I thought the band was finished. Once I got to MSG, I realised from the audience that they were hungry for the band sound to be back.

GM: But El Dorado wasn't the commercial success we all wanted. Why was that?

NO: Not sure. There was at MSG the cult following of youngsters with their Lion King items, and it was surprising that El Dorado didn't do the same.

GM: Elton seemed to put the best into the album artistically, but perhaps it was another example of record company marketing.

NO: Somebody dropped the ball somewhere, for sure. But while artistically it is great, what I

concept to Elton?

NO: It's been put to him a couple of times. I think when we go on the tour it will be mentioned again. I'm hoping. Since we're all on the road, it would be a good way to return to those ways. What's more (producer) Gus Dudgeon has said he'd be happy to come back on those terms and to record using real instruments rather than the synch drums of today.

GM: Has it been thought about for the album in the spring?

NO: That I don't know.

GM: What were your thoughts about the MSG gig? Most of the songs were recreated similarly to the 1970s sound, which probably endeared you as you could recreate your special style of drumming. But fans wanted more

experimentation with those classic old songs, rather than a studio that had been opened up to an audience.

NO: I thought it was a great set. And having Kiki there was brilliant. The venue was trembling from the crowds. And I had not performed at MSG since the John Lennon show in 1974.

GM: Kiki was an old pal of yours. But how was it to perform with newer talent? Ronan Keating, when he came on stage, received only the mild reception you might expect of an artist who frankly isn't known in the US. That's clear on the CD sound too! How did it feel to work with artists that your son had grown up with?

NO: Ronan did very well. He was very nervous.

GM: Elton introduced an unknown quantity when Anastacia came on stage. I had never heard of her, and if I'm critical her voice sounds like a fire siren! How did she end up on stage?

NO: I had never heard of her, unlike my son! It was actually only a few days before the shows that the band learnt who the guests were going to be. The only one whom we knew for sure would be there was Kiki.

GM: There was you and Curt Bisquera on stage. Who was the lead drummer?



would really like is for the band to take a month off, and go to a studio away from the crowds and grow up with the songs, like we used to do on the early albums.

GM: But is that practical in modern times? Wouldn't it be impossible to get everyone to make the time commitment?

NO: You could do it if there was enough advance warning. And Davey would like to do that too.

GM: Well as band manager Davey carries a lot of authority here. So will Davey put this



NO: We both were! We'd met on the El Dorado recording, and got on really well. We didn't want to get in each other's way, and we decided among us how we'd split the repertoire of songs.

GM: You're off to Hawaii on tour with Elton. How many gigs are you doing?

NO: Two nights in Hawaii, and then we move to San Diego to team up with Billy Joel and his band. We are supporting Elton only, although we will jam for some four songs at the end with Elton and Billy. And no, I won't know the song list until hours before the first show so don't ask!

GM: Last year, you told me that you'd like bigger typeset in The Mag fanzine and colour inside. We still haven't achieved these aspirations, but what do you think about the fanzine?

NO: I think it's very well put together, and very informative. I always read it.

GM: On Elton's next studio album I know you haven't any details, but let's finally talk about your own solo album.

NO: We started recording on November 6, we recorded it down the road at (Guy Babylon's studios) and the artwork was done today. Everybody in Elton's current band line-up is on the album! It's reminiscent of my 1970s Drum Orchestra and Chorus album where I'm not singing on everything. My brother Kai sings on one song, Ken Stacey and his girlfriend Windy Wagner sing a duet, Kiki Dee, Gigi Worth, and a Japanese 14-year-old girl with a great voice called "i". Then there is also from Elton's band John Mahon, Bob Birch, Curt and I play on one song, Jimmy Z, and Guy Babylon and Davey Johnstone produced it. Kathy Babylon and Guy co-wrote a song called Take A Chance. And there are a lot more to be

announced! There are four or five songs I sing.

GM: So what's the album called?

NO: It will be called Nigel Olsson Moves the Universe and the artist will be called Nigel Olsson's Drum Orchestra and Chorus. It is being released only in Japan by a local label called 81 Records in February 2001, although we are looking for a distributor in the US and Europe as we feel it is a great album. I'm very, very happy with it. There are 11 songs on, and we started by looking at 12 songs. We didn't want to get through 20 songs as it is hard to choose.

GM: So, the song that didn't make it?

NO: I Need You by The Beatles. There are several other cover versions on the album, but I won't tell you them as I don't want anyone else cutting them ha! There is a cover of Goin' Down, the R&B song, Naked Without You, from Roachford, which Kiki sings, Would I Lie to You Baby?, and then there are a couple of Davey songs. The song I wrote was Say You Feel The Same. And Elton's former keyboard player Fred Mandell plays on Goin' Down.

GM: And what's the artwork like?

NO: I wanted it to look like a band record, as I'm terrified of making it look solo. So it looks like a Crosby, Stills and Nash album artwork, with Guy, Davey, Bob Birch and me on the front cover. There is a collage inside of the whole band.

GM: And Elton's contribution?

NO: Elton and Bernie contributed a song which never made it to the Made In England album, Building A Bird. I'm not sure what Bernie was thinking when he wrote those lyrics!

GM: So it is like Solar Prestige A Gammon?

NO: Lyrically, yes! It was really funny how the song came to be chosen. We were being dined by Elton at a hotel in New York after October's MSG show. Davey said he remembered a song called Building A Bird. Elton said he "had no clue" of the song and asked Davey "when did I do that?" Davey explained the song was never recorded, and then asked whether we can use it. Elton replied: "If you can remember it, go for it!" Davey had remembered the song from the sessions, and Davey made the call to Elton's archivist Adrian Collee. It's a great song, a big ballad.

GM: How would you describe the theme and influences of the album?

NO: It's uptempo, mid-tempo, and ballads. It is Beatlesque, rock and roll, and R&B. On a couple of the songs I ripped off every Ringo Starr fill I could remember! There's also the spirit of Dee Murray on the album, and indeed the album is dedicated to his memory. As a big Beatles fan, I wanted Clive Franks to be involved, but he was on the solo tour with Elton. Hence Guy Babylon came in.

GM: So, will you be looking to record another album?

NO: Oh yes!

GM: And what does the year ahead hold in store?

NO: I have no idea! One day at a time!

GM: Nigel, thanks again for your time!

Courtesy of Nigel Olsson's personal office

If you are interested in more information about Nigel Olsson, visit Nigel Olsson Fan Club at <http://angelfire.com/ca/nigelfanclub> > <http://angelfire.com/ca/nigelfanclub>



Tantrums & Liars?

In a recent interview, Elton spoke about his famous reputation for tantrums...

"I think everybody throws tantrums. I may throw glamorous tantrums. I did the Oprah Winfrey show once and she said, 'You know, I've never had a tantrum in my life' and I thought, 'You fucking liar.' I said, 'Not even as a child?' That's the homogenized world of American talk television. Everyone has tantrums in various degrees and I just thought, 'Well, you lying cow.' I wanted to go up to her producer and say 'Has Oprah ever had a tantrum?' Come on. Can you imagine Oprah when she's put on weight, not being able to get into a dress, and not having a tantrum? That's when I've had some of my biggest tantrums. I'm so fat, I can't get into my clothes. Send for the tent maker."

this is my house...

Hercules member Rob Cargill has moved house...

When I had my house built about 15 years ago - I wanted to associate the house name in some way with Elton John, who had provided me with so much enjoyment as I was growing up.

After some thought I was down to two names: Elton Johns Greatest Hits Vol II - or Caribou. It was a difficult decision, but the Royal Mail suggested that just maybe the name 'Elton Johns Greatest Hits Vol II' was a bit of a tongue twister and perhaps 'Caribou' would be more appropriate.

Deal done - I named that House 'Caribou' - God bless it & all who slept in it (UK people will understand this silly joke).

Now, having had itchy feet for about 14 years its time to move on. What - I thought - would I call the new house? - the same perhaps?

I sent my tribe forth to look for a new house that they would be happy with. For the first time in our family life there was unanimity: they had settled on a



house - although I had not yet seen it - if it was good enough for them - it would be good enough for me. OK lets get on with it then I said.

Deal done - I asked the agent for the complete address - so that I could get phones organised etc., They called me back with the full address, amazingly the house name turned out to be "Elton Cross Farm" in a place that also turned out to be called "Elton" in Cheshire.

I could not "BELIEVE" my ears! I just roared with laughter

and informed the rest of my tribe! They were stunned into silence - not something I have witnessed before. Then there was some disbelief & eventual acceptance, that however incredible it seemed - Dad was not lying!

I got on to the telephone company, gave the name of the house for installation to which she dutifully replied "Elton as in Elton John?" - Oh yes! I'm going to enjoy living here!!

Elton's sound engineer Clive Franks talks in the third part of our exclusive interview with George Matlock, about his youth, lifestyle, and showcases his great sense of humour

Clive found his paradise in 1990, far away from glitterati, paparazzi and Elton (!) in New Zealand, an under-populated island.

George Matlock: What attracted you to New Zealand? Some say they are more British than the Brits! They have HP Sauce, Coronation Street on TV, and superior wine.

Clive Franks: I fell in love with a New Zealander. End of story. First time I went to NZ in 1974 I met her. We stayed in touch for 6 years by writing, and then we got together. In December 1989, after my daughter was born, and when my son was about 6, we went to visit my children's grandparents, and escape the British winter. Usually Elton was not touring in December, January and February anyway. We bought ourselves a little colonial cottage. The more I stayed there, the more I wanted not to return to England. Although it's nice to be in England, I didn't want to live here anymore. It was a joint decision, although at my instigation. In fact, she loved the sophistication of London, so different to NZ. We had a house in Richmond...

GM: You're kidding! This is where Hercules UK is based.

CF: We were in Mount Ararat Road, we got married in the registry office on the corner, and Elton was my best man in there. We lived in Richmond 1980-90. I was going to ask my friend to be best man, but when Elton heard, he wanted to take on this role. He insisted. We got married again four months later in NZ when Elton was on tour there, for the benefit of my wife's friends, and Elton was best man again! So you see, I'm still married. I only got divorced once, ha!

GM: And a favourite piece, the Carla Etude, is connected with your wedding.

CF: Yes, the secret's out. The

Carla Suite was written by Elton for us. Actually, I was producing his album (The Fox). He played it to us, and it was lovely. I asked him what it was called, and Elton said he was trying to title it in an anagram of our names. I said 'you're kidding me', and he said 'no, leave it with me for a while.' And Elton is very clever with words, even though he doesn't write lyrics. After 10 minutes he came back into the control room where me and my wife, Carla, were sitting and said: 'I can't get an anagram of your names, so do you, I'm just calling it the Carla Suite!' or whatever it was.

GM: So you've now grown into NZ.

CF: I love it and have no intention of leaving it. I've even adopted a local accent. People ask me what part of Australia am I from. I say 'from the New Zealand part'. My kids have grown up there. My son was 17 today [12 July 2000 – date of this interview]. He reads Hercules too.

GM: Well, wish him our best!

CF: I'm actually looking at my kids, Aaron and Lara. They're the screensaver on my laptop computer. In NZ, I'm by the sea, and that's why I liked Richmond, with the River Thames too. Where I live now in a little village, it's very arty, with lots of musicians, and they're having a better winter now than we are having a summer in Europe this year [2000]. No traffic jams, but a lot of sheep. Good if you like roast lamb! Although not local, I love Kari-Kari, a great beach. I've got a cat at home; it's difficult when I travel. When I come home, she thinks she's a dog and follows me everywhere.

GM: When your kids leave the nest, will you have reason to live so far from the Elton machinery?

CF: That's maybe why I live there, ha! Maybe when they colonise the Moon, I'll go there! No, that's not the reason! I'm not really into



the business, the parties and so on. The only thing I miss is the band – whether I am in England or NZ. I've been close to them for years. Los Angeles (where they are mostly based) is mid way between England and New Zealand, and I stay with them often there. I have few friends in NZ – I don't find it easy to make new friends. I am a bit of a loner. With travel these days, it doesn't take more than 24 hours to get anywhere...

GM: Crikey! You make it sound so persuasive. And a role for the NZ Tourist Board!

CF: Ha! Of all the places I've visited worldwide, NZ has all the best bits. Scenery, climate, wonderful people.

GM: You can even ski!

CF: Just 1 _ hours away you can ski. Last year they lost their tourist season, because the bloody mountain blew up, Mount Ruhapehu. Where I live it is more tropical, never too hot, nice sea breezes. People say to me why don't I move to LA where my friends are. Well, I love visiting LA, but it's too unreal for me. I like the silly things which go with my job, but I also love to get away from it, sit by a fire and have the dog bring my slippers. Not that I have a dog – I must train the cat to do that!

GM: Sounds like you appreciate the country.

CF: Yes, I'm not a City person. But I like a bit of life, walking around

Two rooms at the end of the world

Clive with Elton in 2000

Photo: B Halley



shops, although I'm not a shopaholic, I'm not into material things at all. So I like bush walks and the beach in NZ.

GM: Tell us about Aaron and Lara.



Clive with his daughter Lara

CF: Well, Lara is 12 and a half, and Aaron just passed his driving test. Their names were chosen by my wife. Both doing well at school. Aaron is actually a very good drummer. He wants to be a movie director and idolises Stephen Spielberg. He knows loads about every film. So focussed. After *El Dorado* I got a Spielberg autograph through Elton (apparently a first because Stephen doesn't give autographs) which I must give Aaron! Aaron has joined me at the mixing desk when I'm on tour with Elton, and he helps me mix. But he's a bit of a traitor. He now prefers to be involved with the lighting. Last time, our lighting director was Steve Cohen, from Billy Joel, and Steve had him with him the whole show, and gave him a section of concert to mix. More than half the show!

GM: So it's a family thing! How about Lara?

CF: She plays piano. And drums. She sings and writes songs. And knows how to use the computer to overdub. Kids have no fears of computers. I wish I had that confidence when I was young.

GM: Take us back to where you were born.

CF: I was born in Hammersmith, west London, 3 January 1950.

GM: You're kidding. I spoke last year with Charlie Morgan, who was born at Hammersmith Hospital, as was I!

CF: I was born at the other local hospital, Queen Charlotte's. As was my son! Like me, Aaron and Lara were born in England and have dual citizenship. Lara was born in Hendon, north London. I was brought up for the first three years in Brixton, south London. In those days, it was a quiet area. My dad was a pharmacist, and he managed to open his own business in Stanmore, north London, and we lived above the shop. When I was nine, we stayed in the Middlesex area, moving to Edgware, and I went to Edgware Junior School. We moved to a nice three-bedroom semi-detached house in Edgware, and we stayed there a long, long time. In fact, even when I was with Elton. As I was away so much, there was little point having a flat. I was at home until about 22. Then Carla came over and we

moved in together for a while. Then she went back to sort things out, and we corresponded for years.

GM: Long distance is tough. How did you keep it alive?

CF: I telephoned her lots, and wrote a lot at the beginning. There was a magic there, and there still is, and we both know that.

GM: So you're still good friends.

CF: She lives a quarter mile from my house. We see each other often. Anyway back to the 1970s, my first flat was in Stanmore. When Carla came back in 1978, we got a place in Taplow, Maidenhead, for a year, not far from Elton's place. We had a Thames river mooring we rented. And that was when Elton and Ray Cooper decided to do this world duo tour, in Russia and other places. I was really worried about mine and Carla's relationship, because she had only been in the country for a few months, and then I was due to go off for 14 months on tour. Elton had met Carla several times, and knew she was a good make-up artist. Elton had never used make-up, nor had a hair-dresser for stage shows at that time. It was outrageous costumes instead. He called me up and said: 'listen I've decided that because it's only me and Ray on this tour, I want to be more theatrical and I need make-up. Do you think Carla would come out on the road and do my make-up?'

Two rooms at the end of the world



I was knocked out! He felt for me, and it just seemed a little bit coincidental. Maybe I am dreaming that bit! I've never spoken to Elton about it, and he probably wouldn't tell me. So she came on the road for that whole tour. It was wonderful, just me, Carla, Bob Halley, Elton, and Ray. When we got back in 1980 someone suggested living in Richmond, which I had never visited. We bought the house. We got married middle of 1980, stayed until end of 1989, moving to NZ. We used to dine at Mrs Beeton's on Richmond Hill, [made more famous by nearby residents Jerry Hall and Rolling Stone Mick Jagger] and although not a pub-goer, sometimes went down the hill to a pub on Richmond Green [made famous by Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood who was evicted by his neighbours for loud parties a few years back]. I visited our old home two years ago, and it seemed reclaimed by London, busier streets, and I realised we made the right decision to bring up the kids in a cleaner environment in NZ.

GM: Close to where I live is the studio of band member Hugh Nicholson from Rocket Record signing Blue. I interviewed them for Hercules in 1996. Do you recall them?

CF: Very much. Me and Elton had a great time producing them. I visited them a few years back and Hugh played me some of his stuff. They repackaged the album on CD, and having only had the vinyl copy, I got some CDs. It's funny because after you've produced something, you get so close to it, you're sick of it. I never played it since I produced it. But when I heard it again, wow! The recording was open, very basic, organic, but there were three great songs on there. I loved their harmonies and ideas. Shame they weren't more successful. We had a mini-hit with Capture Your Heart. None of the band played real piano, so

Elton made some appearances. You know Elton didn't want to be credited as Elton John. The band had a Budget rent-a-van outside the studio. He decided to be called Redget Buntavan as opposed to Budget Rentavan – I told you Elton was good with words! And that's how his guest artist entry is on the album Another Night Time Flight.

GM: We too have fond memories of Blue. They kindly post-mastered the Hercules 10-year CD in 1998. They were really easy to work with. Finally, tell us about The Claggers.

CF: Ha! When I worked at Dick James Music, started as a tea boy, worked my way up. But before I could get into the studio, Dick said I had to find a replacement! My best friend, who was in our school band, Stuart Epps – whose name you will see on many Elton albums and now working for Bill Wyman several years, worked also with Jimmy Paige, and Gus Dudgeon – is someone I've known since he was 11, and me 13. He's the longest friendship I've still got going. I got him in to replace me. Then when we both moved up, Stuart chose Jeff Titmus (his uncle a famous cricketer) to replace him. Funny really, as we all went to the same school, Spur Road School in Edgware, although I only knew Jeff from the playground. The three of us started mucking around in the studio in "downtime". Jeff played drums, Stuart acoustic guitar and piano, and I played acoustic, piano, and bass guitar. Then a guy joined DJM, Kaplan Kaye. He's the son of an English comedian, Davy Kaye, who recently died. Kaplan came in, playing piano, writing songs and singing. Suddenly, this band came together in our spare time! We produced a lot of stuff. One day Dick walked in, and we freaked, because really we shouldn't have been doing our own stuff. And he asked 'What's that?' We were lost for words. He asked whether we have any

more, and we said a tape. He loved it. He wanted to release it! We couldn't believe it. We weren't serious, just for fun. So he asked what we were called. We didn't have a name. Caleb Quaye had a skill for finding colourful words for ordinary things. Caleb once had an unfortunate case of haemorrhoids, and would say: 'Man I got a severe case of clagnuts!' One of us told Dick we'd be called the Clagnuts. I said: 'we can't be called the Clagnuts!' So it got abbreviated to The Claggers.

GM: And I thought it had something to do with the BBC kids programme, The Clangers.

CF: Some people asked us that. Dick liked our material. We put together an album, and they released a couple of singles, which actually got quite a bit of radio airplay. The singles sold a few, one called Train Song. And the album had a daft name too. When younger I read an English schoolboys' book in which the character was called Chumley. Meanwhile, Caleb used to use a very British expression: 'Get your laughing gear around this'. So we called the album Chumley's Laughing Gear. Ridiculous. The album cover was a caricature of



Clive relaxes on the road

OUT OF THE CLOSET... the first day...

By Hercules member Mark Giles

us four. From the waist upwards they were drawings if us on springs like Jack-In-The-Boxes, and for some reason in Dick Turpin-style clothes, ruffled short sleeves and collars. A lot of the songs were jokes. The guy that publishes The Beatles wants to release in 1969 an album by The Claggers called...! Seemed a little odd to us at the time. We sold a few copies [which is a few copies more than he said of The Fox in an interview for Hercules in July 1997!].

GM: I'll look for it in the second-hand record stores.

CF: Ha! Stuart's got one, but I lost mine in the move. There were several guest spots. Caleb played a lot on there, as none of us were much good on lead guitar, and Elton's first drummer Roger Pope, and Nigel Olsson played tambourine. That era at DJM, which we refer to as "the gaif", was a fun time, 1967-72.

GM: And while in England, you are teaming up with another chum next week?

CF: That's right. Tomorrow I travel to Liverpool for Elton's show up there, and then down to Cornwall to see Joe Partridge, Kiki Dee's guitarist, and briefly in the Elton John band – for one night only! He was in Davey Johnstone's band China, who opened for Elton, and then supported during the show. It was Empire Pool, Wembley, November 1977, and Elton made one of his famous resignation announcements. So his first gig as second guitarist was his last! He's a wonderful guy, and has a studio. I shall see him before our Port Talbot gig [Margam Park] next week.

Clive Live Part 4: Cage The Songbird, the final part, in which perfectionist Clive comments on concert venues and relates times he wanted to quit, follow on the Hercules website in March, and in The Mag in June 2001.



NOVEMBER 29TH 2000.

It was an early start to the day, with a 5.30am train ride into London and a brisk walk to New Bond Street which saw me arrive at my destination at around 7.30am. I had bought items at both of Elton's previous "Out of the Closet" shops in London, but this would be the first time I had attended on the opening day. Although the shop

would not open to the public until midday, Elton and David Furnish were arriving at 9am to host a breakfast reception for friends and supporters of the Aids charity.

I arrived along with fellow Hercules member Tony Marshall and we found ourselves at the front of the queue, second only to a fan from Glasgow who had arrived at 5.30am.

Out of The Closet... the first day (continued)

On what was to be a morning of changeable weather our first impression was that this shop would be much larger than the previous two. It wasn't long before there was frantic activity around the area with the erection of barriers, staff arriving and workmen surrounding the main doors with Christmas pine, decorated with fresh apples and small baskets of walnuts.

Elton and David arrived on time to be greeted by a large press gathering. With so many TV cameras, interviewers and photographers around (some standing on step ladders) it made it impossible to hear or see any of the brief opening ceremony. At this stage they heavily outnumbered the fans. After Elton cut the ribbon and spoke briefly to the press, he quickly retreated into the shop followed by the TV crews. David remained outside talking to other media. Slowly the area began to clear and we decided to leave our position behind the barriers and stood as near to the main doors as possible.

Eventually we were rewarded when all media was satisfied we approached David. He seemed only too pleased to sign firstly Tony's 1977 Tour programme and then my "One Night Only" CD

...(with love, David Furnish). It was the first time I'd spoken to David and I was really impressed with his amicable nature. David then joined Elton in entertaining their guests inside, probably the most well known being supermodel Elle Macpherson who left with a bag of goodies.

Whilst guests arrived and departed, we were treated to the hilarious sight of Elton's car being moved on again and again by a persistent traffic warden. A game of cat and mouse resulted, despite the protests of the chauffeur, with the warden hiding behind a TV van just waiting for the opportunity to get his victim. He was unsuccessful.

After around 1½ hours inside, Elton and David emerged from the shop to cut another ribbon. Elton quickly signed a couple of items (including Tony's programme) and after saying that he had to catch a plane for the U.S. and that his tour was going very well, they were driven away.

Having now decided to rejoin the queue it was good to be joined by other Hercules members including, George Matlock, Andy Thorpe, and, right at the front from the U.S., was Sharon Kalinoski.



Just after midday the doors opened for the public. A bigger shop meant that 60 at a time were allowed in, and unlike previous shops, no time limit for browsing, enabling a more relaxed atmosphere and the chance to take photos. My first impression, with the light coloured walls, wooden floor, tasteful Christmas décor and helpful and friendly assistants, that this would be a "classy" charity shop. Many of the items

BETWEEN 17 AND 20 · BETWEEN 17 AND 20

ANOTHER VERSE OF OUR REGULAR COLUMN FEATURING TRIVIA AND

HERCULES

Elton's first live performance after his throat operation in January 1987 was an AIDS benefit show in London in April - only four months after surgery.

HERCULES

In June 1969 Elton sang the song 'From denver to LA' on the soundtrack of the Michael Winner film 'The Games'. The track was later released as a single in the US in 1970, subsequently to be withdrawn. Copies of the single are very rare and collectable.

HERCULES

Elton's first UK tour started in January 1971 in Birmingham.

Did you know Elton was refused admission to Disneyland because he had patches on his jeans. (October 1991)



line from that song. I bought Rocket Man and The Last Song but I wished I could have afforded the set.

More expensive items including a Medusa jacket, a rack of stage clothes, a large print of Ray Cooper (sold for £2,800) the oriental style electric blue and purple coat and jump suit from the 1986 Tour was priced at £25,000 and the red boiler suit, as seen on the One Night Only CD had a price of £1,200.

At the back of the shop was another room, decorated with a ceiling high Christmas tree, and contained Elton's grand piano which he'd bought in 1974, and was now up for auction. Earlier in the day he'd signed "Enjoy this as much as I have Elton

John" on the piano's interior. It was from this piano where he had conducted that morning's TV interviews, so I was really pleased when a lovely assistant offered to take my photograph whilst I "played" it.

Having spent around an hour in the shop, I left with my purchases. A Versace jacket and pair of trousers, a pair of shoes (bargain at £40) and the two ties. I'd definitely parted with more money than I intended, but at least I knew it would all go to a good cause. But that was nothing compared to Sharon's large boxful of goodies, George being her knight in shining armour in helping her load up the awaiting taxi. It was no surprise that the Closet sold out in 3 _ days raising £425,000!

A great day out...well worth the early start and having to dodge the rain.

BETWEEN 17 AND 20 · BETWEEN 17 AND 20

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

HERCULES

Elton and Renate married just before he was due to start a world tour. Their honeymoon was delayed until August, six months after they were married.

Elton filmed the video for 'Passengers' in St. Tropez (France) during his honeymoon.

HERCULES

Did you know that the 'Breaking Hearts' single was released on St. Valentine's day (14 Feb 1985) - also Elton's first wedding anniversary.

HERCULES

Elton's London house 'Queensdale' used to be a cardboard-box factory before it was transformed into a Scandinavian inspired space by interior designers Andrew Protheroe and Andrew Cooper-Grig.

SCHOOL REPORT: *Teenage Idol*

As part of our celebration of Elton's birthday, his schoolmate Dick Morgan recounts to George Matlock "when we were young, and simply childish". First of new series.

Dick aged 19



Welshman Dick Morgan may have known the father of new talent David Gray (oft described as a modern-day Elton John with his pioneering White Ladder album and facial appearance), but he has a greater story to share. Dick was born in Pinner, Middlesex, in the vicinity of Elton, and now lives in his own father's west Wales. He's hoping to get a chance to meet Elton backstage, having seen the piano maestro at Margam Park, South Wales, last June.

George Matlock: What did you think of the show?

Dick Morgan: It was amazing. I'm not ashamed, but I had never seen Elton in concert until then for a variety of circumstances. Never got it together. My sister has always been a great Elton fan. She's been to at least one concert from each tour he's done. Staging was superb. It was the first time on the UK Tour it hadn't rained! I also went with my brother to the Highclere Castle show, and with my sister to Hylands House.

GM: So, take us back to the early years. How did you first meet Elton?

DM: On a (subway) tube train! We were both Junior Exhibitioner Scholars, as it was called in those days. For all kids in the Home Counties area



Dick in 1988

around London the scholarships were offered to study music on Saturday mornings, in school term time. I actually got a place on the third attempt. Kids travelled in from all around London and converged on the Royal Academy of Music in Marylebone Road. We studied 9am to 2pm.

GM: What age would that be?

DM: It varied. I was 13, in 1960, and Elton is the same age as me, I was born the end of January 1947. We were both aged 13 to 16. You studied the instrument from your application, and then other subjects. So I had an hour on violin with my professor, a



Six year old Dick plays violin by the piano Reg used to play when visiting

fearsome woman called Amy Neame, then an hour on the fiddle with a student teacher, a compulsory piano hour, an hour of orchestra and an hour of theory. There was also a choir.

GM: What was your chosen instrument?

DM: Violin. And Elton was piano. As I recall, he was very highly-qualified before he got there. I went in at Grade 4 level, and then did Grade 5 and 6 while there, but didn't cover myself in glory! Elton had Grade 8 piano before he got there. We weren't in the same classroom. He would have been considered an outstanding student, but perhaps motivated in a direction other than the one they hoped for.

GM: Because it classical music, rather than rock-pop?

DM: Yes, it was a total classical musical place. I'm sure it's less narrow-minded place now. I think he started there in 1960 as well. They got him into the choir, much to his disgust! He liked singing, so I think it was

something about the choir! I'd been a church chorister. But with a string instrument, I was in the orchestra, not choir.

GM: Did he complain about the lessons?

DM: Only that the teachers were despairing of him, that he wanted to rock 'n' roll, and play jazz. They didn't think he took it seriously. That struck a chord with me. My father was like that – his piano teacher refused to teach dad because once he got a piece of music in his ear, he would close the music book and play from memory. That was wrong.

GM: To confuse a title, he was a uniformed rebel! Did you wear uniforms at the Royal Academy?

DM: No. A sweater, casual. But he was formally dressed. Used to wear a jacket. I think I did too, and Cavalry-twilled trousers! And we both wore Suede shoes. It was the youth club culture. Then The Beatles turned it upside down. In 1961-63 it was still a phoney war! Metroland was like in Philip Norman's

book Elton, middle-class respectable, then things let go in the mid-1960s. After my audition on the third attempt, the college principal, Terrence Lovett, invited students and parents to a hall and said: 'Any of you who have ideas about being a professional musician, forget it. It's a hard life, pays badly.' A clever bit of psychology. He knew that some would become musicians, whatever. He was dispelling the myths. One of our contemporaries was percussionist Tristan Fry who later played with John Williams in famous band Sky. We were discouraged, and only if motivation is there you'd do what Reg did.

GM: You were a near neighbour?

DM: Yes, but I knew Reg from the commuting. I'd probably recognised him from the canteen. We tended to get on the same train going home. Then I discovered he lived two miles away and went to the school only half a mile away from me, Pinner County Grammar. I lived in West Avenue.

GM: Turns out you passed a chance to see Bluesology.

DM: I went onto University in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1965, and remember in my second year there Bluesology appearing at a club in the Haymarket, Newcastle. I was tempted to go to the show, but something else came up. Much to my regret. It's funny how you look at things so differently now.

GM: Back to Royal Academy.

DM: Reg was the only real friend I had there. We had very little time between classes. The only time you made friends was on the trains. He would come to our house sometimes and entertain my parents with piano solos, much to their delight. We

had a grand pianola, and he used to visit on his way home and play.

GM: What songs did he play?

DM: He used to play a Floyd Cramer song Last Date, and taught me to play it – badly, very badly! It fascinated me, this Country and Western song. He did it pretty slick. He also did a wonderful Semprini impersonation, playing his music and talking in a fake Italian Semprini voice. There used to be a radio programme called Semprini Serenade, particularly awful! Each song would be introduced by this guy with an Italian accent. Reg also used to play Side Saddle, turning to give this wonderful Russ Conway leer. Conway used to turn to the audience and give this gap-toothed grin (much like Elton), really awful! It's sad that I just read about Russ's death the other day. Reg used to bounce around as he played.

GM: Did you get the impression Reg was going to be a top star, or did you think that despite his abilities, he would end up doing something else?

DM: I remember being in some awe, and depressed! I wasn't a musician of that calibre. He took great delight in entertaining my parents. In contrast, I hated entertaining, although I did play guitar many years later in clubs. I hated performing at Christmas, you can imagine, as did my brother and sister. I couldn't understand why Reg loved it so much.

GM: Did you meet his parents?

DM: No. Although he used to talk about them endlessly. Well, about his mother at least. And this guy Fred [Fairbrother, stepfather] or "Derf" as he used to call him. He was a window cleaner as I recall. He spoke a lot about both of them.

GM: He's always been close to his mother Sheila. Elton tried to bury a long-standing dispute with his father, just before he died in 1993. Did he ever talk about his real father?

DM: I was aware Fred was his stepfather. The only time I remember Reg talking about his father [Stanley Dwight] was when we went on a hilarious shopping expedition, to the tailors Hornes, in The Strand, London. His father had an account there. His father said he would buy Reg some clothes. Instead of going together, his father said Reg could go into the store and buy them on his father's account. Reg asked me: 'You wanna come?' I said: 'Absolutely!'. I phoned my parents to say I'd be delayed coming home. This was a Saturday lunchtime. We were about 14 years old. He went in store and identified himself, and it was 'yes Mr Dwight, no Mr Dwight, three bags full Mr Dwight'. It was such an off-the-wall experience I will remember it forever! He had a card they hand you in the store. And he just bought stuff and put it on the counter. He bought a fairly outrageous pair of pyjamas. And then a pair of stretched trousers, something I'd never seen before. We were in hysterics. I had my violin case and music case, and he had his music case, and we were walking about this place like a pair of Middle Eastern Bedouins.

GM: And did he buy anything for you, or was it before he became generous, ha?

DM: No Cartier watch for me! We were going to go home when he suggested the shopping diversion.

GM: Was his shopoholicism evident even then?

DM: It was the only time I saw him go shopping, but he was definitely revelling in it! Whether it was because he was getting money out of his father, who knows? It was again a contrast. My father didn't have accounts at clothiers, and I would not have been sent to buy gentlemen's clothes.

GM: And Reg was deciding what to buy, style and colour?

DM: Yes. These were amazing clothes. We weren't flamboyant at that time. Soon after we both got into flared trousers! We had both been conservative dressers up to that point. But he was definitely starting to go for more unusual clothes. And he was a total chocoholic. He used to consume a mind-boggling amount of chocolate. We used to stop at the kiosk on Baker Street, London. I would say 'you can't possibly eat all that!' But he would! A Mars bar, and something else, and something else, just gone like that!

GM: Chocolate is supposed to suppress depression. Was there any innate depression, given the unhappiness surrounding his real father?

DM: He was light-hearted, and good company. My father had strong opinions, like all people of that generation. But apart from being smacked when naughty, I came from a happy family. Had there been any problems in his family, I would have remembered it. But he did seem a bit different. He didn't talk about his stint in the Northwood Hills pub – I found out after the event. He was very modest about his musical ability.

GM: Even now, he's very modest about his achievements when you see him in TV chat interviews, such as the recent BBC Parkinson show.

DM: That was the best interview I have seen him give, and he came over like a nice, ordinary bloke, natural and even caught out Parky on a few occasions. Some of the earlier interviews, when he was taking drugs, he looked uneasy, and putting on a performance.

GM: *No brothers or sisters. Was he shy?*

DM: Very shy. All the more surprising that without much prompting from my parents, he would go into performer mode.

GM: *Music was a form of escapism from unhappiness over his father, later becoming a way of life, and he was destined to play.*

DM: When I lost contact with Reg, when he worked at music publishers [Mills], I'd heard he was in the mailroom, desperate to get into the music business. He was very interested in pop music, but I don't remember him ever saying he wanted to be a pop star.

GM: *When did you last see him?*

DM: Just before university, to read Navel Architecture, summer of 1965. He went to the sixth form for one year, and then left school for Mills. Metroland in London is vast, and it's easy to lose touch with people. I saw him at one or two parties. He had a friend who was a girl, as opposed to a girlfriend. Can't remember her name, I'm sure he does! I went to a flat party, and saw the pair of them. They were real friends and hanged around together. After we both left the Royal Academy, I had in any case only seen him sporadically.

GM: *In adolescence, did he ever talk about girls?*

DM: No, not really. He was rather shy and had this awful

hairstyle, big glasses and chubby build, eating chocolate all the time. He didn't talk about either sex really. And his name was totally out of fashion even then. I knew no one else with that name. Kids can be cruel. But I wasn't aware of him getting bullied for his name. And neither of us had nicknames.

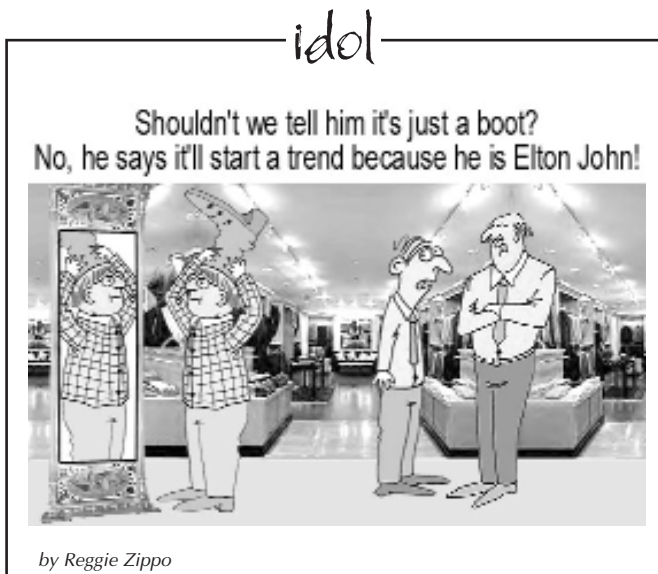
GM: *How about the name to become: Elton John?*

DM: I had a friend from school. When I came back from university, he said: 'have you heard that song Skyline Pigeon by Elton John?' I said yes. He said: 'have you heard Your Song?' I said yes. He said: 'do you know who Elton John is?' I said no. He said it's Reggie Dwight! I said: 'bollocks! That can't be right'. He challenged me to go and check the album sleeve, so I rushed to a record shop. I looked at the cover and was gobsmacked!

GM: *Would you have called yourselves close friends?*

DM: I think for the few years I knew Reg, we were. Every Saturday we were together. How close are friends at that age? Sadly, we didn't take photos. The only time I got close again was around 1974. I was working for P&O Ferries in the City of London. One of the secretaries, Jean Tomlin, was a devoted fan, and a West Ham supporter, going to a benefit night at West Ham, and Elton was going to be there. I don't follow football. I said to her: 'I was a good friend of Elton as teenagers. If you don't believe go up to him and say Dick Morgan sends his regards.' She agreed to do that. She was a lovely girl, maybe I had an ulterior motive! Ha! And I wasn't single by then! She came into the office next day, absolutely speechless! Apparently Elton asked how was I doing?

Special thanks to Dick Morgan. The series continues on the Hercules website, with a second article to appear around March 25, Elton's birthday, and in the fanzine in June 2001.



Listen & Save...



...on John Jorgenson's New Album

In celebration of John Jorgenson's appearance at the Hercules Elton/Lennon Weekend March 24, 2001, John's European record label Assassination Music, is kindly making a special offer to Hercules members on the breakthrough album, *Emotional Savant*.

Until the end of March 2001, you can order John Jorgenson's latest album for just £11.99 - direct from the record label. That price includes postage and packing and is also below the recommended retail price of £12.99.

Emotional Savant is available from:

Assassination Music Promotions Ltd
Tudor House
Pinstone Way
Gerrards Cross
Bucks
SL9 7BJ
United Kingdom

Sterling cheques, sterling postal orders, or bankers' drafts only, payable to "Assassination Music Promotions Ltd".

No credit cards or Eurocheques for this offer. Offer closes March 31, 2001.

John will also be available to sign copies of his album at the Hercules Convention, Cavern Club, Liverpool, England, on March 24.

John Jorgenson Competition

... your
chance to
win the
Album

Hercules is delighted to give you the chance to win an autographed copy of John Jorgenson's superb debut solo album, *Emotional Savant*.

As we all know, John is a talented musician. To have your chance of winning, send us a list of all the instruments John can play.

The longest list of correct answers wins. In the event of a tie the winning entry will be drawn from a hat.

Answers to the Editor at the address on page 2 or by e-mail to HerculesEd@eltonfan.net.

Closing date 15th April.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send or email your letters to David Wright, Editor (address on page 2)

A SMALL PRIZE
WILL BE SENT TO THE
WRITER OF EACH LETTER
PUBLISHED.

Dear Hercules,

Many of us fans who weren't at MSG for that great show last October were even more baffled by Elton's comments about quitting than those caught in stupor in the audience. Sure, it's not the first time he's said this in concert...but the fact he has kept on apologising for this comment suggests there's more to this. In fact, he said earlier in 2000 he was bored of touring and recording and wanted to slip into the film business full-time. He's toyed with other outlets, like television presenting last December.

Elton said he was bored of touring...



But before we despair, here are a few sobering contractual things to bear in mind.

In April 1992 Elton and Bernie signed agreement with Polygram (as was) to commit to 6 albums, and this was followed in Nov. 1992 with a record-breaking advance of £26m from US publishers Warner/Chappell Music contingent upon making those six more albums. The loan was to be deducted from royalties over the next 12 years.

That means that (even counting the June 1992 "The One" release), Elton is looking at two more studio albums, including the one planned for spring 2001 release, and the "One Night Only" release, but excluding the various soundtrack work which I guess doesn't count. If it does, then the only things keeping Elton from retirement are the lingering concerns about his cash:asset ratio following his loan in 1999. And good health - which we all wish him in abundance, although that pacemaker needs a risky new battery every 10 years. I guess we should still see Elton on the road until he is 60!

A. Spriggs, UK

Dear Hercules,

I have a few questions on Road to Eldorado

1/ The album was going to be released in March 2000. I had problems finding it in the stores, and was fobbed off with excuses the album had been put bank to July release. I found three copies in a second-hand record shop in England! The album, when available, was out on July 31, you could only buy it in Virgin Megastores locally. Recently, it's appeared in a few other stores! I think it wasn't well-marketed!

2/ Is it true new producer Pat Leonard has no interest in Elton's current band? Is that why John Jorgenson left the band?

3/ Thirdly, no grumbles: just wanted to thank Hercules for the Raby Castle ticket I bought last year. I know that few members took up the offer on that particular venue, most choosing more southern based shows in 2000. But I had a ball! I rushed up to Elton, and he signed my copy of Road to Eldorado. Been a fan for nearly 30 years. It was the first time I had anything signed by Elton! Thank you so much Hercules!

Nigel Coleman, UK

Dear Hercules,

I'm Jim from Austria and I'm a great fan of Elton John. It's really fantastic for me, to see, that Nigel Olsson is back in Elton's band.

I love his playing style and I think, Nigel and his drum-playing makes Elton's compositions unbelievable. Listen to "Troubadour Club 1970" - unbelievable.

Hope to see Nigel in Elton's band as long as I'm living. Jump up and best wishes

Jim, Austria



Photo: J Collins

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO HERCULES BANKING

HERCULES HAS CHANGED ITS BANKING DETAILS FROM MARCH 1, 2001.

To reduce confusion for fans, if you pay by cheque, you no longer need to write "Hercules UK". From now on, just write "Hercules".

So, whether you are in the UK, USA, or elsewhere, it's just "Hercules".

Eurocheques no longer accepted by UK banks

If sending a payment to the Hercules UK office, we no longer accept Eurocheques – even if made payable in sterling. Sadly, this flexible means of payment is no longer accepted by British banks.

We welcome cheques payable in Euros

If you have a Euro Currency Account, you can now pay for Hercules that way. If you are in the UK or Europe, normal subscription of £14 is EUR22. If you live outside of Europe, but have a Euro Account, your normal subscription of £17, or US\$30, can be paid as EUR27.

US\$ checks, German DEM, sterling banker's drafts, sterling postal orders, VISA/Mastercard credit cards, still ok.

We still accept US\$ checks, which must be drawn on a US-based bank, the rate being \$30, and also sterling banker's drafts, and British postal orders are acceptable, all payable to "Hercules". You can also pay by VISA or Mastercard credit cards. German DEM payment to Hercules Co-Ordination, in the normal way.

UK Standing Orders will also remain valid.

Hercules is committed to ensuring membership payment to the fan club offers convenient options, but we encourage use of credit card payment or Standing Orders (UK only) wherever possible.



Photo: J Collins

PLEASE REMEMBER...

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

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

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

SMALL ADS

Free to Hercules members. Send yours to David Wright, Editor, 100 Winkworth Rd, Banstead, Surrey SM7 2QR, UK, or e-mail him at HerculesEd@eltonfan.net

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TICKETS FOR BERCY

The following have tickets available for the Paris-Bercy show on April 3.

Thierry Keller kellerthierry@bluewin.ch has one ticket.

Agnès Blondeau shimmy@club-internet.fr has two tickets.

ELTON MEMORABILIA

For Sale: Various Elton memorabilia. Vinyl, Rare CDs, Videos, Cassettes,

Pictures, Books, Magazines, Contact Danny Hayes, 62 Swinley House, Redhill Street, London, NW1 4BB, UK.

Tel: 0207 387 0082 or e-mail: Dannyhayes@aol.com for list.

LYRIC QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1 Ego
- 2 Michelle's Song
- 3 A Dandelion Dies in the Wind
- 4 Ballad of a Well-Known Gun
- 5 Gypsy Heart
- 6 All the Nasties
- 7 Rotten Peaches
- 8 Hard Luck Story
- 9 Midnight Creeper
- 10 Rope Around a Fool
- 11 Idol
- 12 Roy Rogers

TOUR DATES

ELTON JOHN SOLO TOUR 2001

DATE	CITY	VENUE
03-Apr-2001	Paris, France:	BERCY
04-Apr-2001	Nice, France:	S.A. NIKAIA
05-Apr-2001	Nice, France:	S.A. NIKAIA

ELTON JOHN & BILLY JOEL FACE TO FACE TOUR 2001 (CONT.)

DATE	CITY	VENUE
09-Apr-2001	Denver, CO:	Pepsi Center
12-Apr-2001	Kansas City, MO:	Kemper Arena
14-Apr-2001	Memphis, TN:	Pyramid Arena
17-Apr-2001	New Orleans, LA:	New Orleans Arena
19-Apr-2001	Charlotte, NC:	Charlotte Coliseum
21-Apr-2001	Nashville, TN:	Gaylord Entertainment Center
24-Apr-2001	Atlanta, GA:	Philips Arena
26-Apr-2001	Louisville, KY:	Freedom Hall
28-Apr-2001	Greensboro, NC:	Greensboro Coliseum
03-May-2001	Montreal, Canada:	Molson Center
05-May-2001	Syracuse, NY:	Carrier Dome
09-May-2001	Chicago, IL:	Allstate Arena
13-May-2001	Cincinnati, OH:	Fistar Center
15-May-2001	Minneapolis, MN:	Target Center ★
16-May-2001	Minneapolis, MN:	Target Center ★

ELTON JOHN SOLO TOUR 2001 (CONT.)

DATE	CITY	VENUE
12-July-2001	Bremen, Germany:	Galopprennbahn
14-July-2001	Würzburg, Germany:	Residenzplatz
15-July-2001	Berlin, Germany:	Waldbühne
21-July-2001	Riga, Latvia:	Skonto Stadium
22-July-2001	Tallin, Estonia:	Lauluväljakul ★
24-July-2001	Stockholm, Sweden:	The Globe

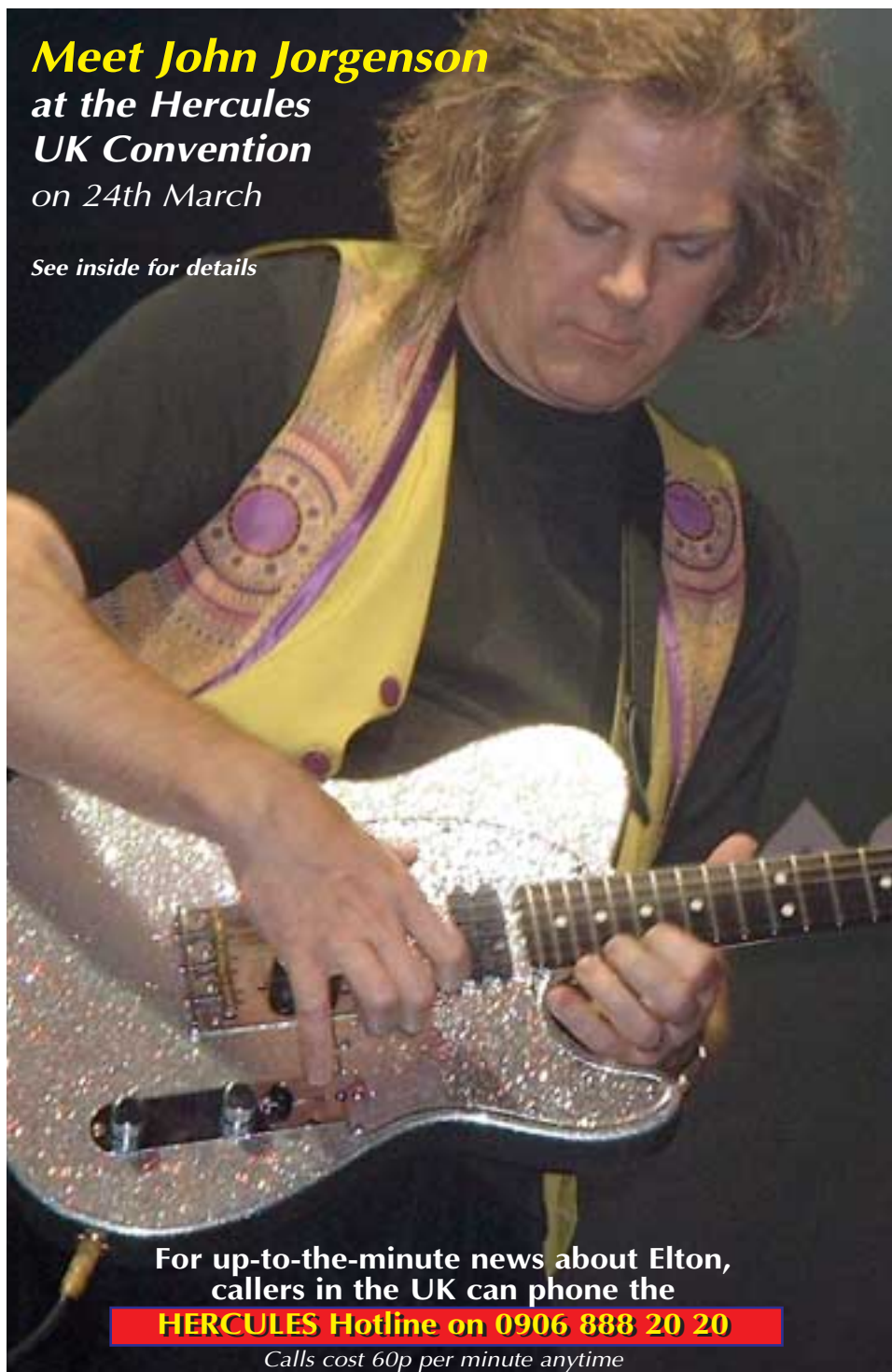
Fan Tickets are available for shows indicated ★. Please refer to www.eltonfan.net/tournews.shtml for further details and ticket prices.

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

2001

Meet John Jorgenson
at the Hercules
UK Convention
on 24th March

See inside for details



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

HERCULES Hotline on 0906 888 20 20

Calls cost 60p per minute anytime