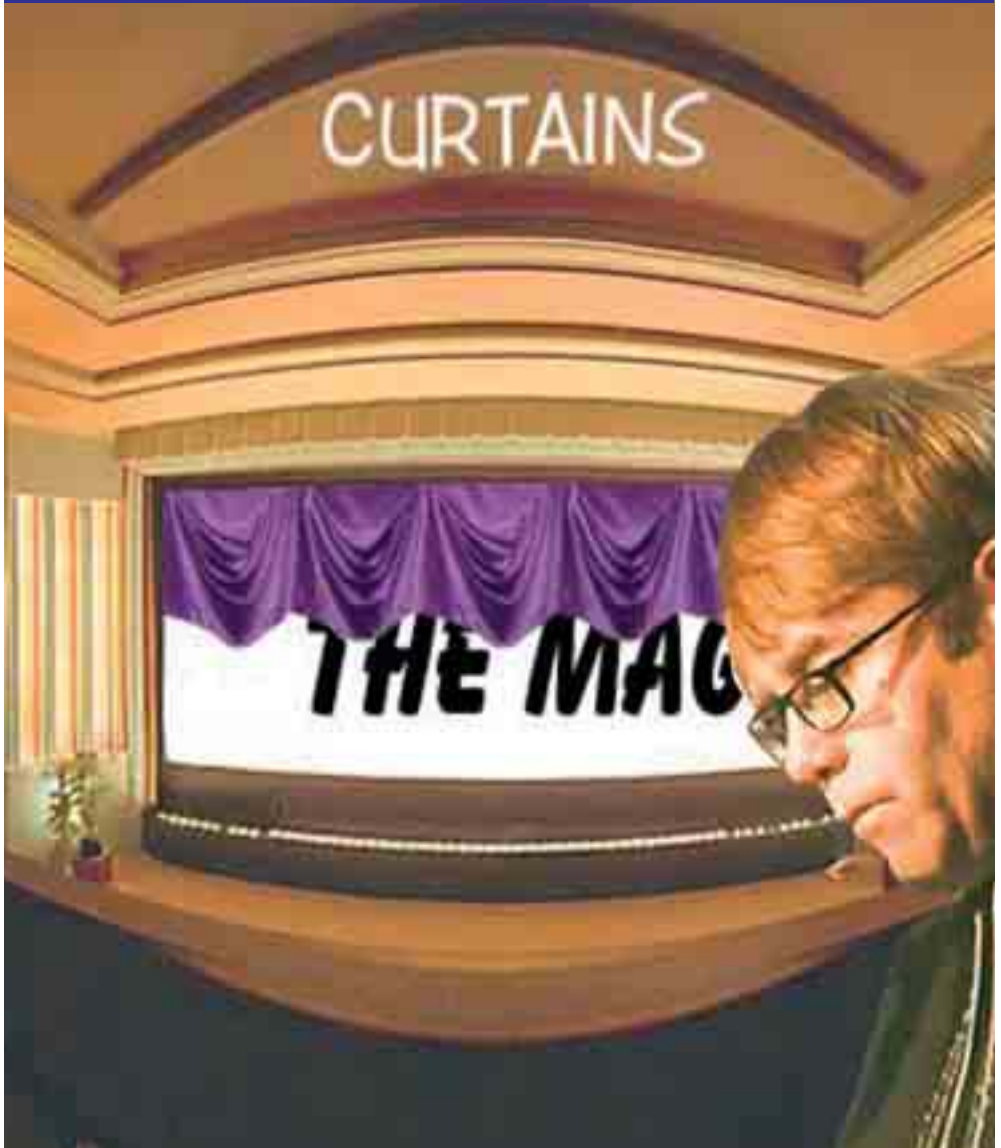


FAREWELL ISSUE



March 2003 Issue No: 61

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MARCH 2003



*Hercules is a registered member
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Fan Clubs*

FAN CLUB INFORMATION

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEMBERS

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

Europe: Euro 20 Rest of the World: Euro 35

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

Annual membership fee for the UK is £14 if paid by Standing Order/VISA/Mastercard. By Cheque/Postal Order it is £15. For the rest of Europe it is £14, and for the USA it is 17£/US\$30. Please note that your renewal date is printed on your address label in European format day/month/year.

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

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

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

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

Editorial Assistants:
Barbara Turner, Michael S English

Design: Turnstyle Design

Translations:
Sabine Asenkerschbaumer
Mireille Mölbert

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PLEASE REMEMBER...

ALWAYS state your membership no. if you send a cheque to Hercules, or pay into one of the Club accounts.

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

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



FROM THE EDITOR...

For the very last time, welcome to the latest issue of *The Mag!* As you will all know by now, the time has come for the paper fanzine to finish, although the Hercules fan club continues to go from strength to strength, with our internet presence and club activities.

This issue of the fanzine is a very different one to usual. We have taken a look back over the past 15 years since the fanzine was launched, and how Elton's relationship with the fans has developed in that time.

We also talk about the future for Elton and the fan club, take a look back over the all the tours and albums which we have reported on, compare the different surveys you have taken part in, and discuss your efforts in fundraising for Elton's AIDS charities.

We hope that you will continue with your Hercules membership by subscribing to our website www.eltonfan.net. If you don't have access to the internet, then we are also launching a new free newsletter service, where your Hercules team will print out copies of the News pages from our website and mail them to you, on request. See page 13 for details.

The end of the paper fanzine in no way reflects a diminishing in Elton's punishing work schedule. He is currently touring the United States with Billy Joel; this latest leg of the Face to Face tour continues during March, April and May. After that, there is also a handful of Elton's acclaimed Solo shows to look forward to in Europe in June and July.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank all of you for your letters, contributions and support of the fanzine over the years. I've made some great friends through Hercules during my years as Editor, and it's always nice to see so many familiar faces at the concerts and conventions. And finally, I'd like to thank Elton for all the wonderful music. Life just wouldn't be the same without you!



GOODBYE TO THE FANZINE

By Stephan Heimbecher

I still remember that day in June 1988 when I was on my way to the offices of composer Alfons Mann in my then-hometown Neuss (Germany) ready to pick up the first issue of the fan club's fanzine, still called Rocket Fan back then. Full of anxiety I opened the box with just over 50 copies of the 20 page, German-only magazine and found myself filled with pride for what my fellow fans and co-founders of the fan club, Sabine Krupp and Holger Wagner, and myself had put together in just a few days since the official birthday of the fan club on May 8, 1988.

Today - fourteen years, six months and 17 days later - while writing these lines on Christmas Day 2002 I am still proud. Proud of what the fan club team and all those loyal supporters (see 'Thanks' on page 25) have achieved in the past 5,344 days. But this pride is superseded with sadness, because the issue you hold in your hand marks the end of an era. What you are about to read is a farewell to 60 fanzine issues, a summary of some 1,700 pages filled with stories about our common denominator, namely Elton John.

But this is not the swan song for the fan club at large which will hopefully continue to exist for many years to come. It's just that - for various, mainly financial reasons - we have to turn away from the paper fanzine, a communication media which has revolutionised the world since Gutenberg perfected letterpress in the 15th century, but seems old-fashioned today. The world we live in is experiencing another major revolution in communication with the Internet being the buzz word. The fan club has always been open to this fascinating way of global networking (see 'The Future For Hercules' on page 12) which now turns out to be the killer of the printed fanzine.

But before we draw the curtain over the fanzine, we would like to invite you to enjoy the retrospect on the following pages. While I was browsing through the fanzine archive over the past few days I got carried away in memories. It's not that I have forgotten any of the experiences of the past fifteen years or so, but there have just been so many stories and anecdotes that some of them had moved into the back of my brain.

Now with it all being pulled back into my long-term memory, it has become clear that it will be impossible to even come close to a full compendium of what has been reported in those sixty fanzine issues. Instead, we would like you to read this as a summary of the highlights and we would like to encourage you to grab those old issues yourself in order to relive the

old days. For your convenience, there are references to the respective fanzine issues in which you will find the full stories. Many back issues are still available at www.eltonfan.net/backissues.shtml.

Back to the first issue published in June 1988: it was put together with a typewriter, and for some of the headlines we simply cut out words and letters from newspapers and magazines and put them together in a new order - sometimes feeling like a blackmailier. This issue was sent free of charge to some 30 German and Swiss fans of the former Elton John Fan Club.

Only four months later (the fanzine was published on a two months cycle in the early days), issue #3 was the first to be accompanied by an English translation. Issue #27 then was the first to be produced as two separate issues - German and English - shortly after French and Italian translations had been added to the list starting with issue #26 in March 1994. That same year also saw the formation of worldwide network of fan club departments with branches in the USA, Japan and many European countries.

In February 1989, the fan club made one of its first major investments by acquiring a computer. Issue #5 was the first to be prepared with the aid of this then-modern piece of technology, but it was barely more than a means of putting together an article step by step, storing it half way through on floppy discs twice the size of a fanzine, and getting a chance of proof-reading before printing ... instead of re-typing a page with too many errors. It would still take a few more years until computers would allow for layout and other fancy things like that.

Despite this giant step towards professionalism, we had to accept the fact that we just couldn't keep up with the two months publication cycle (issue #8 marked the switch to a quarterly fanzine), only to find out that 20 pages weren't enough for all the news of a three month period. Hence, issue

- BUT NOT TO THE FAN CLUB

#9 was the first to be extended to 28 pages. With issue #26 we reached 32 pages, then 36 pages with issue #36 and up to as much as 40 pages, where we arrived with issue #35. Back in those days, we had to find a way to keep up with Elton's increase in productivity. Mid 1998, when the fan club established its Internet presence and the website would utilise more and more of the

Rocket companies. So issue #28 was the first to be released under the name of Hercules.

Issue #38 in March 1997 – the fanzine relating to Elton's 50th birthday, packed with Elton's personal birth horoscope, a very detailed Elton "Family Tree" (music-wise) and more - was the first to be published with a colour cover. It was our printer's birthday present to Elton and the fans, but as

contain two more special publications: In October 1992 we celebrated "Four Years of Fun" with 28-page magazine called Rocket Fun. And to mark the fan club's 10th birthday in May 1998, we produced the only A4-sized magazine, Hercules – The first 10 Years, which was accompanied by a special CD (also see issue #41).

Besides the fanzine, the fan club has also produced quite a number of different items of merchandise. The first calendar was available back in 1989 (see issue #3). After a long break, more professional calendars were also available in 2000 and 2001. In September 1989 the fan club created a very special and extremely limited Swiss watch. Only 50 copies have been produced, one of which has been presented to Elton personally in October 1989. In addition, there have been Rocket Fan and Hercules stickers, shirts, coats, umbrellas ... you name it. Most of these items are completely sold out today and constitute a valuable collector's item for those happy owners. However, we still have small quantities of some of this merchandise in stock which we will make available via www.eltonfan.net in the future.

But enough of just the fan club's history. Let's move on to a more exciting retrospection of albums, tours and more. The fan club team has put together a bouquet of stories and anecdotes from the past almost 15 years which we hope you will enjoy reading. Personally, I have tried to retreat from my fan club job many times over the past sixty issues (e.g. see issue #17). But just like Elton has announced his retirement quite a few times over the past 26 years and is still standing, the same holds true for me. And now that the fanzine is backing out, there will be new interesting tasks awaiting me in regard of the fan club's website. Because there is one thing that I have learned: I will never be able to dump my affiliation with the Elton world ... as long as the club shall live.

increasing number of news items, we decided to go back to 28-page fanzine with the publication of issue #43.

Meanwhile, the fanzine had greatly improved in terms of layout and printing quality. In issue #27 we presented our new fan club logo which then had to be changed again only three months later as we had been asked by Elton's management to shed the name Rocket Fan in order to avoid confusion with the official lot of

much as we liked the idea to continue that way, we had to step back to black & white once we had been informed about the additional costs. It would take two more years until we could finally afford this extra feature. Issue #47 not only came along with a complete redesign of the fanzine layout, it also marked the beginning of a colourful fanzine era.

In addition to the sixty official fanzine issues and this farewell issue, a complete Rocket Fan/Hercules collection should also



TOURS

by Mireille

Ever since the fanzine (then *Rocket Fan*) went into publication, the editors have been doing their best to keep up with Elton's never-ending tour schedule. A steady stream of dates has been winding its way through the fanzine since issue No. 5. (The European tour dates for 1989 were announced.) Sometimes, we were even able to offer you the tour dates before they were officially announced. And as soon as we had published those dates, everyone wanted to get hold of tickets. We would have loved to be able to offer you, the fans, special tickets for each and every concert in the World – row No. 1 for every fan. Alas, that was only a dream.

From issue No. 4 on, concert reviews were a constant feature in *Rocket Fan* / *Hercules*. The first ever review we published was an edited newspaper article. In issue No. 5 we were proud to print our first ever full report of the Madison Square Garden Show (October 22, 1988) by a FAN. A tradition of eye- and ear witness reports by fans and the *Rocket Fan*/*Hercules* team started.

Issue No. 6 saw our first major tour report. Stephan not only provided *Rocket Fan* with the first complete set list of the 1989 shows in Germany and detailed show reports, but also with his backstage experiences. Most German fans will remember that Elton played

along with TV station ZDF's April's Fool Joke: Elton (falsely) confirmed that he is going to buy Borussia Mönchengladbach, a popular German soccer club.

Whereas the first show reports we printed were European and US-centred we were later able to publish reports from unusual concert venues such as Japan (issue No. 31) and Brazil (issue No. 35).

Reading through all those reports, you get the impression that not only the number of concert reports has increased during the years but also the quality. Some of you have become great writers! Whereas many early reports almost exclusively consist of phrases like "He was so cute... The greatest night of my life... The music was great...", the more recent reviews offer detailed descriptions of Elton's rendition of the songs, his mood, his clothes, jokes, etc. – certainly always with a complete set list.

Through many editions of *Hercules*, fans have discussed which live songs they liked and which they would love to hear. (See page 21 for the report about *Hercules* Polls.) We certainly have grown more critical about Elton's choice of songs for the concerts.

Many fans travelled all over the World to see Elton in concert, often accompanied by other fans who have become friends. These travels were widely documented in *Hercules*. Along with a concert report

then came hilariously funny descriptions of anything that happens when one Elton fan meets another:

"Once upon a time, three Elton John Fans (Made in Germany) set out to follow an elderly man (Made in England) through Austria and Switzerland. They went by a car Made in Japan." (by Michaela Stürtzer, Rainer Preuss, and Michael Sperken in issue No. 32)

In order to make an attempt at reporting all the fun that goes along with Elton fandom on the road, *Hercules* published several specials, including the notorious *Rocket Fun*.

Another angle of tour reporting came from John Jorgenson, who thankfully allowed us to reprint his online "Reports From The Road" in *Hercules* (starting with issue No. 42). He certainly saw things that a fan will never experience.

Even if Elton was not on tour, *Hercules* had plenty of live shows to report. Elton would not be Elton if he had not filled gaps between tours with special shows such as benefit concerts and other special performances. If no one from the *Hercules* Team was able to see such a special show, then most times there was a member who had attended and provided us with a review.

The first outstanding report about such a special show was "the Swiss Connection's" tongue-in-cheek approach to





Elton's – let's say – under-representation at Knebworth Festival (UK) on May 19, 1990. Thus, in issue No. 12 you read:

"His [Elton's] musical presentation is unbearable. After some keyboard tinkling we recognise Sacrifice. His voice does not sound good, more like hushing or talking. [...] Then follow Sad Songs and Saturday Night's Alright. And that was it. Without a thank you or goodbye, he disappears. What a disappointment!"

What is bright green and warm on a white and icy ground? Just think about Elton at the Top Of The Mountain Concert in Ischgl/Austria on April 30, 1995. Member Roland Eggenberger wrote in issue No. 31:

"I could write that Elton came on stage completely tasteless, in a green latex suit and gaudy red boots. I could also write that it was snowing or raining during the whole open air concert. I could also write that Elton played very well despite the altitude, that his grand piano was flown in especially or that the stage was complete slush..." (This report was about Elton's and Ray Cooper's grimacing during the entire show.)

That afternoon, an important event in the history of Hercules took place: Stephan presented Elton with a cheque of £1.000 for the EJAF. You can marvel at EJ's wide grin upon receiving this on the cover of issue No. 31.

Issue No. 35 included the first member report on the annual Rainforest Benefit Show. This show from 1996 will probably stick in our memory because the finale was starring Diana Ross, Don Henley, James Taylor, Robin Williams, and Elton – the "New Supremes". All the men dressed in black only with long white gloves, except Elton who wore bright pink gloves and fluorescent glasses.

From that year on, Hercules provided a report about the Rainforest Benefit almost every year. The 1997 show was summarised in issue No. 39. The most memorable moment of the 1999 Rainforest Benefit is captured on the cover of issue No. 47: Elton "weds" the veiled Sting to the sound of "Love And Marriage".

With Elton's ever-increasing interest in various charities, he performed more and more benefit shows. Whenever you thought "no tour this year" a not-to-be-missed benefit show was sure to come around the corner. Thus, on July 8, 1997 fans from Central Europe gathered in Aschaffenburg/Germany for Elton's only German show that year – benefiting Unicef. Anyone who was there will remember that Hercules members with a membership pass were allowed on the grounds – i.e. the front row – just before the gates opened officially. Stephan provided an in-depth report about the

circumstances of this show in issue No. 40.

Some fans even managed to gain access to his exclusive Live At The Ritz show in Paris/France on January 14, 1998:

"After the doors had been opened, everything was like a fairytale. Everything was indescribably beautiful. We were led to the concert venue. It was next to the swimming pool."

And after the show: "Hercules had a hard time leaving the place where a dream had come true for us." (Oliver Flous in issue No. 43) Surely an enviable experience.

Unfortunately there is no fan in the World who can possibly be able to see each and every one of Elton's live appearances. That is why we at Hercules have tried to provide fans with impressions of Elton's shows all over the World – "from the end of the World to your town". This was only possible with your help because most of these reports were mailed to the Hercules editors by fans. Thanks to everyone who contributed throughout the years.

But keep in mind: Hercules does not cease to exist with this last issue of The Mag. We still need your help. Keep sending in your concert reports to our website at <http://www.eltonfan.net> Fans from all over the World thank you!

ELTON JOHN – LIVE AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

1 DECEMBER 2002 *by David Wright*

Arguably the most eagerly awaited Elton John concert for years took place at The Royal Opera House on Sunday 1 December.

Elton was only the second contemporary artist to perform at this prestigious venue, following in the footsteps of Bjork.

This was Elton's first performance with an orchestra in the UK for over 30 years. After that occasion, at the Royal Festival Hall in 1972, he criticised the attitude of the orchestra and said he would never do that again. Well, he did it again, but not until 1986 and that was in Australia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for a 27 date tour; the tour which produced a wonderful live album despite his deteriorating voice.

Tickets were priced from £100 to a terrifying £500 in the stalls. Rocket seats were in the Amphitheatre, the highest level but with an excellent view of the stage.

Being a black-tie event, this was the first concert for which I have had to hire an outfit. Meeting friends outside the venue was strange – not an Elton John t-shirt nor pair of jeans to be seen! Television cameras and a red carpet added to the sense of excitement; this was going to be a special evening.

There were plenty of

celebrities there. Elvis Costello shied away from the media and entered through an adjacent door. Former England football manager Glenn Hoddle was there and told reporters he is a big fan. Graham Norton, on whose chat show Elton was a guest in 2001, proved that celebrities didn't have to wear black tie. Also present were Princess Margaret's son Viscount Linley and several British TV personalities. Special mention goes to Lulu, a real Elton fan who doesn't need the possibility of a camera to get her to come and see him.

Our own Elton celebrities were around too. Sound engineer Clive Franks, author of *His Song* Elizabeth Rosenthal and Laura from eltonjohn.com were all mingling before the show.

Having bought our programmes it was time to take our seats. This involved an escalator and a brief glimpse of some very plush restaurants – there was no refusing this with Wembley Arena!

The show started with Elton alone at the piano for *Skyline Pigeon* and *Border Song*. He was then joined by Davey and John for *Mona Lisas*. The rest of the band came on stage for five more songs - the highlight being *Circle of Life* with the choir.

After an interval came the

main event. The familiar opening chords of *Sixty Years On* came from behind a slowly opening curtain, which revealed the 100-piece orchestra on tiered seating behind Elton. The orchestra, conducted by former band member James Newton-Howard, really came into its own with *Carla Etude* leading into *Tonight*. A personal highlight was *Have Mercy On The Criminal*; wonderful throughout the band tour, but taken to a new level with the orchestra. *Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word* was beautiful, and it was a joy to hear *Believe*, surprisingly a rarity in Elton's set list.

On a poignant note, the sound was to have been produced by Gus Dudgeon. Elton dedicated the concert to Gus and Sheila and, introducing *Your Song*, said "I would not be here without the skill of Gus as a producer, an editor and a friend."

Speaking with other fans after the show, it was clear that this would be remembered by many as their favourite Elton John concert. Highlights of the concert have been screened in several countries but as yet, surprisingly, there is no word of an official DVD release.



Hercules members John Michie, Mark Giles, David Wright (UK Manager) and Rob Cargill at The Royal Opera House. Not a pair of jeans in sight!



THE SET LIST:

Solo

Skyline Pigeon

Border Song

Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters
with Davey Johnstone and John Mahon

With the Band

Tiny Dancer

Original Sin

Holiday Inn

Someone Saved My Life Tonight

Circle Of Life with choir

Interval

*With The Royal Academy Of Music
Symphony Orchestra*

Sixty Years On

I Need You To Turn To

The Greatest Discovery

Carla Etude – Tonight

Take Me To The Pilot

This Train Don't Stop There
Anymore

Have Mercy On The Criminal

Sorry Seems To Be The
Hardest Word

Believe

Philadelphia Freedom

Burn Down The Mission

Don't Let the Sun Go
Down On Me

Your Song

Saturday Night's Alright
For Fighting

Tell Me What The Papers Say

This was easily the most enjoyable and most satisfying live performance I've seen from Elton John. First, it continued the trend away from the piano-stomping rock'n'rolling towards something more dignified. Second, the venue was magnificent and played its part in creating the best sound reproduction I have heard at any pop concert, anywhere, ever. And third, he was accompanied by the Orchestra and Choir of the Royal Academy, was added drama, depth and sheer spectacle to this sumptuous show.

Daily Telegraph

The huge orchestra added another dimension as well as spectacle. Its performance on complex instrumental Carla Etude allowed John to show off his compositional skills to full effect, and the combination of dramatic strings and electric guitar on Have Mercy On The Criminal made it a perfect candidate for a James Bond theme. Electrifying versions of Philadelphia Freedom and Burn Down The Mission should have successfully put bad ideas into the heads of all the music scholars present: study hard, and you too could be a rock star.

Evening Standard
About The Royal Opera House

THE HERCULES INTERVIEWS

As well as countless exclusive articles and reviews on Elton himself, Hercules has been proud to provide many exclusive interviews over the years with band members and those who have influenced Elton's career. We have also acquired other interviews which have been in the public domain and we have been able to share with Hercules members.

When we started to look through our archive of interviews over the years, the list was so overwhelming that we have decided to simply tell you which interviews we have brought to you over the years, together with the issue number, so you can order that particular issue from us if you missed it at the time!

- Issue 4: Bernie Taupin part 1
- 31: Signing session with Elton and Bernie in LA
- 36: Interview Long John Baldry
- 38: Interview Hugh Nicholson (Blue)
- 39: 30 years of Elton John and Bernie Taupin (star registry)
- 42: First part of series "John Jorgenson online diary" (until Issue 48)
- 44: Interview with Davey Johnstone and John Jorgenson; report Farmdogs show (June 6, 1998)
- 47: Interview Charlie Morgan; interview John Jorgenson
- 48: Part 2 Charlie Morgan
- 50: Interview with Nigel Olsson; Charlie Morgan article
- 51: Part 2 Nigel Olsson
- 52: Interview with Clive Franks
- 53: Part 2 Clive Franks
- 54: Interview Nigel Olsson; part 3 Clive Franks
- 55: Interview Roger Pope; Interview Kiki Dee; Interview Bluesology; report John Jorgenson show in London (November 20, 2000)
- 56: Review Nigel Olsson CD "Move The Universe"
- 57: Interview Bernie (LA Times)
- 59: Interview Gus Dudgeon
- 60: Part 2 Gus Dudgeon; special Gus issue; Interview Bernie (Radio Times)

Our thanks go to all those who have taken part.



ALBUMS

by Mireille

Rereading all reviews of Elton's Albums released during the publication of *Rocket Fan/The Mag*, I cannot resist the feeling that we have grown much more critical of Elton's work. That does not mean we are not fans anymore, but I rather think that we are not in a stage of "Everything that he does is great" anymore. I think this is good.

Some opinions about songs and albums that we voiced in the fanzine may have changed over the years. This probably happens to every fan: Some days, you just love to listen to "Candy By The Pound" while on other days you compare it to "This Train Don't Stop There Anymore" and find it's complete trash.

In the following paragraphs, you will find quotes from reviews that were published in *Rocket Fan/Hercules/The Mag*. They do not necessarily reflect the current opinions of the Hercules Team or the fans but are just a plain overview of reviews.

Reg Strikes Back:

In the very first issue of *Rocket Fan*, the album is considered as his best in many years. *Town Of Plenty* is called "The Crocodile Rock of the Eighties" and voted best song on the album. Great pop music, even with one sure disco hit: *I Don't Wanna Go On With You Like That*. (review by Rainer Nagel)

Sleeping With The Past:

For the first time, the *Rocket Fan Team* received a demo tape from Phonogram Germany before the release date. Only because of this generous gesture, *Rocket Fan* was able to feature a review of an album that was to be released two weeks after publication of the fanzine's issue No. 8.

Opinions of the *Rocket Fan* team members included the following quotes: "Healing Hands – strong chorus, that's

how you make a hit single"; "Stone's Throw From Hurtin' – is someone else singing this?" "Sacrifice – a kingdom for a surgeon who will remove this song from my record". In issue No. 9 the readers' opinions of the album were published. Mixed feelings for everyone.

Two Rooms:

This is not really an Elton John album in the classic sense but since it was a tribute album by music's biggest names, this album received an extensive feature in *Rocket Fan* issue No. 17. Opinions about the different interpretations of the songs differed then and now.

The One:

For the first time, *Rocket Fan* did not feature a review by the team or the fans but the reprint of a very well-balanced newspaper review (in issue No. 20).

Duets:

Even within the *Rocket Fan* team, opinions about this album went as wide apart as possible. The result in issue No. 25 is two reviews – positive and negative, just like a duet.

"If I was not a fan, I would not become one because of this album. [...] The duets were probably meant to 'sweeten up' the wait for the next tour. Unfortunately, way too much sugar was added." (review by Mireille)

"This album has something for everyone. Starting with romantic pieces like *True Love* [...] through vocally unrivalled duets like *Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing* [...] to the dancefloor track *Don't Go Breaking My Heart*." (review by Holger Wagner)

The Lion King:

For the first time in many years, Elton has written the soundtrack for a movie. Certainly the occasion for *Rocket Fan* to publish a review of both soundtrack and movie under the headline "How a warthog and a green monkey made Elton No. 1 in the US". (review in issue No. 28 by Stephan)

Made In England:

The Hercules team was once again able to listen to the album before the official release date. Every team member stated his/her view in brief bullet points and an overall impression (in issue No. 30).

General comments were: "May many more Elton albums like that follow because this music is really unique." (Holger Wagner). "You have to take your time for this but after each song you fall in love with it more and more." (Luca Zerbini). "When I heard *Pain* for the first time last year, I hoped that I would love the rest of the upcoming album just as much – and that has happened!" (Mireille). "Elton in the right direction, back to the Seventies." (Stephan).

There was a lot to say about this album so issue No. 31 featured several more reviews by fans and team members. Everyone seemed to be happy with Elton's latest work.

The Big Picture:

The Hercules team reviewed this album in issue No. 40. We agreed that it was a very good album but also very different from *Made In England*. Some examples:

Long Way From Happiness: "A great start! A very beautiful ballad." (Luca Zerbini); *Live Like Horses*: "I am happy that Pavarotti does not sing along." (Mireille); *The End Will Come*: "Misleading title!" (Sharon)

A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM A FAN

Kalinowski); Big Picture: "An influence of A Dandelion Dies In The Wind [...] can be detected." (George Matlock); Recover Your Soul: "Eats itself into your ears." (Holger Wagner) January: "Great piece! Reminds me of Philadelphia Freedom." (Sabine Asenkerschbaumer).

Aida:

For the review of Aida in issue No. 46 the Hercules team had Elton's demos of the original songs as basis of judgment. For the first time, the reviewers had to give each song points depending how much they liked it. The Messenger ended up as loser (with only 26 points) whereas the best-loved My Strongest Suit and How I Know You scored a whopping 81 and 78 points.

Since Aida is not just an album but also has an interesting story, this issue of Hercules also featured a summary of the plot.

The Road To El Dorado:

Again not a "classic" Elton John album. Thus we decided to treat it the same way as Aida: Team review plus plot summary (in issue No. 51. This time, the three most popular songs came in very close: The Panic In Me, El Dorado, and Someday Out Of The Blue

Songs From The West Coast:

Thanks to eltonjohn.com, some Hercules team members were able to attend a playback session of this album in a London studio, well ahead of the release date. In issue No. 56 the attendees reported that the audience broke into spontaneous applause after they had first heard Elton's latest work. This is reflected in the review: Everyone seems to be very happy with this album – unanimity at last.

Hard to believe the time has come to say goodbye to the Hercules fanzine. It's been, to quote Elton's beloved lyricist, "a time we never can or shall erase." Since 1988, the magazine has served as a gathering place for the far-flung legions of Elton fans by providing an entirely underrated service, that of always bringing us enough fodder to last till the next album, the next concert, the next talk show appearance, whatever space it was in Elton's career that needed to be filled.

For 14 years, the magazine has filled those spaces in earnest, and the capable staff have consistently volunteered their time and talents toward capturing all of Elton's magic that they can for us on the printed page.

The previous issue of Hercules is a good example, which ran an interview with Elton's ex-producer Gus Dudgeon right before he died in a car accident. Nowhere else would we have been able to share such an intimate conversation with a member of Elton's closest circle. That's what made the magazine so special, and it's a sad to see something like that come to an end.

Now, though, we turn the page on an important part of our story as Elton John fans. Like all good things, the magazine had a brilliant beginning and a poignant end. "Seasons change," Elton once sang. "The circle turns again." The focus of the magazine has always been on him, the man who wrote the soundtrack to our lives; the magazine may be gone, but the soundtrack is still being written.

We owe the staff of Hercules all our thanks for letting us share some of the moments in Elton's life we might not otherwise have been a part of. As the last issue of the magazine comes to a close, a fitting farewell image can be found at the end of the Captain Fantastic album, in the last song, Curtains:

***"But that's okay,
There's treasure children always seek to find
And just like us
You must have had
A once upon a time."***

It seems fitting to let the curtains close on the magazine with such a personal statement from the songwriters, who continue to remain so close to our hearts. For me at least, it's something I learned as a child and then forgot along the way.

Thank you Elton and Bernie, and all the staff at Hercules, for making me believe in "Once upon a time" again.

Andy Meek, USA

THE FUTURE FOR HERCULES: *the internet*

When the fan club was formed in May 1988, the Internet already existed with some 50,000 Internet hosts worldwide, but it was still far from being what we refer to as the Internet of today. In 1991, the World Wide Web (www) was born, but it wasn't until 1993 before it became more widely used with the help of Mosaic, the first graphic-based web-browser. Traffic on the Internet expanded at an alarming growth rate of 341,634% year on year.

The first mention of the www in the fanzine can be found in issue #29, published in December 1994. In that same year, the Rolling Stones broadcast the Voodoo Lounge tour over the Internet, Marc Andreesen and Jim Clark formed Netscape Communications Corp and Pizza Hut accepted online orders for a mushroom, pepperoni with extra cheese.

But the Age of the Internet only arrived in 1996 when users in almost 150 countries around the world were connected and the number of computer hosts approached 10 million. As the Internet celebrated its 25th anniversary, the military strategies that influenced its birth became historical footnotes. Within 30 years, the Internet had grown from a Cold War concept for controlling the tattered remains of a post-nuclear society to the Information Superhighway.

Just as the railroads of the 19th century enabled the Machine Age, and revolutionised the society of the time, the Internet takes us into

the Information Age, and profoundly affects the world in which we live.

The fan club has been travelling this Information Superhighway from very early on. In issue #32 (September 1995) you will find an article about 'Elton Goes CompuServe'. Our first fan club homepage launched in April 1996 at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/sheimbecher> (see issue #35). With more and more Elton John fan sites going online in the following months, the fanzine started the new column 'Take Me Down To The Ocean' (a reference to 'surfing the net') reviewing Elton-related websites with issue #42 in March 1998. Only a few months later, the fan club launched its new website, www.eltonfan.com, on May 8, 1998 – the fan club's 10th birthday (see issue #43).

The Hercules website was completely re-launched in early 2000 (see issue #50) as Elton John Portal on www.eltonfan.net albeit a little bit behind schedule. Within days, the new website reached an average of 500 and more unique visitors per day. That number has increased since, despite the launch of the official Elton John website, www.eltonjohn.com, on March 25, 2000 (see issue #51 & #52). In early October 2000, the fan club added more features to its website (see issue #53) making it even more attractive to Elton John fans from all over the globe.

Nobody in the fan club team was aware, however, that the

Internet would become so popular in such a short time that it would actually displace the traditional printed fanzine, of which we are so proud. But that exact news was the result of a member survey which we conducted in September 2001 (see issue #56), which made the fan club team vote for an end to the printed fanzine with the publication of issue #60 in September 2002.

We are aware that - despite the popularity of the Internet at large – this decision is not very popular amongst what we refer to as 'offline fans', i.e. those Hercules members who do not yet have Internet access. The simple fact is that we can no longer afford publicising a printed fanzine for an ever-decreasing number of readers. So our decision was more a vote for the continuation of the fan club, rather than a ruling against what has been our figurehead for more than a decade.

Just as most of us use the telephone today, the Internet will also become an integral part of our daily routines in a short time, much shorter than many of us will anticipate. It's our strong belief that our 'offline fans' will come aboard soon. But for the meantime, we don't want to leave you out in the cold, i.e. if you don't have Internet access at home, at the office or at a friend's place and if there is no Internet café nearby, we will be happy to feed you the latest Elton John news by mail (see box opposite for details).



And, as for our avid readers with Internet access, we invite you to visit the Hercules website at www.eltonfan.net and to continue your membership online at a reduced rate of only Euro 10 per year. We will try to revitalise the spirit of the printed fanzine as part of the protected member area.

The Hercules team would like

to thank you for your continuous support of the Hercules website, www.eltonfan.net. On January 26, 2003 our counter reached 1,000,000 hits! It all began less than three years ago when the Hercules website was completely re-launched in early 2000. Since then, an average of 1,000 fans visit our web pages on a daily basis!

NEWSLETTER SERVICE.

If you do not have internet access, and would like to receive the latest news about Elton, we are offering a new newsletter service, by post. Members of our Hercules team will print out the last few pages of news from our website and mail them to you, on request. Please note that these will NOT have the appearance of a designed fanzine, but will be a black and white printout from our web site.

This up-to-date list with Elton news can be obtained by sending an self-addressed envelope to one of the following Hercules departments:

FOR FANS IN GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA, FRANCE:

Hercules Fan Adviser, c/o Mireille Mölbert, Albrechtstr.
32, D-80636 Munich, Germany

Please include one International Response Coupon (IRC)!

FOR FANS IN THE UK, REST OF EUROPE:

Hercules UK, c/o David Wright, 100 Winkworth Road,
Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2QR, UK

Please include UK postage for a standard letter or one International Response Coupon (IRC) if you live outside the UK!

FOR FANS FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD:

Hercules US, c/o Barb Madruga, P.O. Box 692392,
Orlando, FL 32869-2392, USA

Please include US Priority Mail stamp or one International Response Coupon (IRC) if you live outside the US!

IN MEMORY

*To forgive and be forgiven
If it's the last thing I can do
Then in death's release I
may find the peace
That in life I never knew*

*(from A Simple Man; Elton
John/Gary Osborne)*

While most of the past 14 years had been lots of fun, there also were those moments of sadness and mourning. Here, we would just like to remember a few of those moments which meant difficult times for Elton as well as to his fans.

The first tragic loss which the fans shared with Elton was the death of **Dee Murray**. The bass player and member of Elton's original band lost his battle against skin cancer on January 14, 1992. On March 15, 1992 Elton honoured his longtime musical companion with two solo shows in Nashville/US, Murray's hometown since 1985. For these shows, Elton especially rehearsed "That's What Friends Are For", a song he had never played live and solo before.

On July 15, 1997, fashion designer and close friend of Elton, **Gianni Versace**, was shot dead in front of his house in Miami Beach. The fan club dedicated issue #40 to Gianni Versace's commemoration.

With that shock hardly out of the minds of Elton and ourselves, tragedy continued with the sudden death of **Princess Diana** on August 31, 1997. Again, the fan club published a tribute (issue #41) in memory of one Elton's close friends.

The latest incident, I assume, will still be in most people's memory as it was issue #60, the last official publication of our fanzine, which was put together in memory of producer **Gus Dudgeon**, who was killed by a car accident on July 21, 2002 together with his wife Sheila.

COVER

All the issues of the fanzine, from Issue 1



ISSUE NO 1



ISSUE NO 7



ISSUE NO 13



ISSUE NO 19



ISSUE NO 25



ISSUE NO 2



ISSUE NO 8



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ISSUE NO 24



ISSUE NO 30

STORY !!

in 1988, through to Issue 60 in 2003!



ISSUE NO 31



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ISSUE NO 43



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ISSUE NO 54



ISSUE NO 60

I REMEMBER WHEN THE FANZINE WAS YOUNG

WE IN ITALY HAD SO

By Luca Zerbini

On a cold Italian morning, a few weeks ago, my clock alarm wakes me up at 7.30am. Hardly I reach my computer, turn it on and in no more than 30 seconds I get my precious tickets for the unique Elton John concerts at the Shepherds Bush Empire in London.

On a very hot Italian morning, about 18 years before, the same clock alarm wakes me up. Hardly I walk to the nearest tube station and only after a three-days-research finally I could get my precious tickets for the unique Elton John concerts at the Teatro Tenda in Milano. What a hard life for us Elton fans at the time! No internet, no e-mail, just a very few news from the media, no fan known to share moments with. Just me, myself, my records and ... his music!

In June 1988 finally the light. An envelope appears on my desk: it's from Germany and I can't wait a second to open it. It's what I have

been waiting for years: an Elton John fanzine!

It's ROCKET FAN! I still remember the moment: simply stunned by that magazine with a part of the photo of the Reg Strikes Back record as front cover.

Wow, unbelievable, a twenty-page



magazine about Elton and his music. Never mind if it's written in German and I don't understand a word!

Without doubt the beginning of 14 years of great fanzine, incredible moments and, mostly, wonderful friends! Simply, the beginning of all! And I can proudly say: "I was there."

Rocket Fan issues #9 and 10 see my very first time "working" for the fanzine. It's October '89, Sleeping with the Past is in the shops and Diego Pedrini, the Mercury Italia label manager at the time, shows a lot of interest in Rocket Fan.

After the huge and unexpected success of Reg Strikes Back in Italy Elton is again very popular: Diego Pedrino calls me one morning and proposes a competition with prizes for the fanzine. In the First Rocket Fan Competition each reader has to vote for his 10 favourite Elton John tracks, 5 best albums and 2 favourite songs from new release Sleeping With The Past. No email, no web page, no computer: simply a post-card addressed to my home address and a block note where to write and update the three Rocket fan Charts.



MUCH FUN



The competition closed in January '90 and great part of issue #10 is dedicated to the final results: Your Song, Goodbye Yellow Brick Road and Blue Avenue are the top of the three charts. Rocket Fan #10 includes also my very first article with a full interview with Mercury manager Mr. Pedrini: well, I start feeling a part of the Rocket Fan family

March '94 is another milestone date. The fanzine is now very professional: great articles, wonderful layout and printing. The fanclub is extremely well organised. The obvious next step is the creation of local national departments and translations of the fanzine in other languages. I am asked to create the Italian department.

Rocket Fan 26 is the first issue with a full 20-page Italian translation included in the international edition: the layout is very simple and seen nowadays makes me smile. The hard translation job is shared with the friend and fan Massimo Morichelli: Rocket Fan Italia is born.

The following issues definitely show the growing of

the Italian department: from fanzine #27 the so-loved Hercules Italia Pagine Locali appear. In few numbers these local pages become very popular: thanks to the new technology and, mostly, to the wonderful Italian fans

creativity, the Hercules Italia fanzine reached a peak of 36 pages in issue 36 in September 1996. It's a huge success, totally unexpected to me!

Maestro Morichelli is now writing pearls of wisdom in his famous articles about Elton music and Bernie lyrics ("Il Punto e La Nota"). The hard and annoying translation job and fan correspondence are now held by two new member of the Hercules Italia team: Orsola Nizzero and Max Pollavini. But we would not be there without Beppe and his Collectors Corner articles, Luca and his charts and live reviews, and then Alberto and his long-awaited article on the Elton remixes, Valeria, Fabiola, Vittorio and many others.

But all the good things finish: in December '97, after 16 fanzines produced in 4 years, Hercules Italia closes up the publications of the Italian part of the fanzine. It's a sad moment but the memories of those wonderful days are inside the pages of these 16 fanzines and will stay with us forever!

***I never knew a better time
And I guess I never will***

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 Almost formal, too respectful
Never takes romantic leads
- 2 Now look and see the lilac tree
The lily pond the skylark's song
- 3 I still believe
I still put faith in us
- 4 After everything we've been through
What's left to prove
- 5 Now the road is ended
In your arms I'll sleep
- 6 And the eagle still flew in the sky
Hearts filled with national pride
- 7 And, oh, the shame
Thoughta changin' my name
- 8 There isn't much I haven't shared
With you along the road
- 9 Dillinger's dead
I guess the cops won again
- 10 We were crazy, wild and running
Blind to the change to come
- 11 Some Park Lane lady in a shady bar
Took a fancy to the watch I wore
- 12 I think it's time that you and I
Arranged a heart to heart

LYRIC QUIZ

MEET *the* team

The Hercules fan club is run by a dedicated team of volunteers, who have never received any payment for their work in bringing Club Members news of Elton over the past 14 years. As there is a lot of work involved, in countries all around the world, the Team is split into various departments to ensure the smooth running of the club. Here you can find out who does what behind the scenes!

STEPHAN HEIMBECHER



What is your role in Hercules?

I am the Hercules Coordinator and webmaster of the Hercules website at www.eltonfan.net.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

I am one of the co-founders who started the fan club on May 8, 1988.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

I became a devoted fan in 1983 when on a trip to Hastings (England) a jukebox kept on playing "I'm Still Standing" instead of the choices I had made. I liked the song and got myself the "Two Low For Zero" album as soon as I got back home. Some "Best of" albums immediately followed and I discovered that I knew quite a lot of Elton John songs already, but I never had any idea they are all from the same guy. I am pretty sure that most Elton fans - except for those who became fans in the early Seventies - have made the same experience.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

That's probably one of the toughest questions ever. I usually reply that "Ticking" has always been in my Top 3 of Elton John songs. As far as albums are concerned, I don't even know. Definitely many of the Seventies albums, but I don't really have a particular favourite.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

There are quite a few in the meantime, especially after those 15 years of running the fan club. But the personal meeting at his house in London in April 1997 (also see page 24) has to be the most memorable one.

TAMMI LAW



What is your role in Hercules?

Chief Editor of the fanzine. I'm responsible for the content of The Mag for all countries, and have been since June 1998. I write, collate and edit the articles and pics. Then, together with David, the UK Manager, I handle the distribution, envelope stuffing and mailing to Hercules members all over the world.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

I became a member of Hercules after seeing a card advertising the fan club in the very first Out The Closet shop in London in December '94. As I worked in marketing, design and print, I offered to help with the fanzine if it was ever needed. A short while later, the then Editor, Sabine, decided to take a break, and I was approached by the Team and asked if I would like to take over as Chief Editor. In at the deep end!

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

Since 1975 - at the age of 5 years old! My older brother bought me Tumbleweed Connection for my 5th birthday - because he wanted it! It backfired on him though - I fell in love with it instantly and he never got to listen to my copy!

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

Favourite Album is Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy. It's that mixture of classic, beautiful songs and personal teenage nostalgia! At the moment, Original Sin is my favourite song. When I first heard it, I remember thinking, "This is it. This is the song I've been waiting to hear all my life." It still blows me away every time I hear it.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

So many good memories. I met Elton backstage during an after-show party at Wembley Stadium after the Summer of '84 concert. A lot of his celebrity friends were there, but he was kind enough to chat to me about his forthcoming holiday to the South of France. He also asked me if I would like to see his car and took me to where it was parked! Bernie was there too. I was a totally besotted teenager, and Elton was very drunk! Good fun though. And during the UK solo tour of Stately Homes in the summer of 2001, I was fortunate enough to see 14 shows that tour. By the time he played Highclere Castle, Elton had seen us at the front for several nights running and decided to play games with us, constantly posing for our cameras, pulling faces at us, and deliberately changing the words of songs just to fool us. An unbelievable night, and judging by his laughter at our awe-struck faces, he enjoyed it as much as we did!

HOLGER WAGNER



What is your role in Hercules?

To keep in contact with the German record company

How did you get involved with Hercules?

It was me who contacted Stephan and Sabine Krupp in 1988 to build up what is today HERCULES.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

Since 1983 and a big hardcore fan since 1986.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

My favourite song is The One and my favourite the album is Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

The best memories were the six solo shows at the Royal Albert Hall in 1994. We met Elton every night at the backstage door to talk to him and get photos signed. I was so close to him, shaking hands, asking questions. The best thing was I ask him to play Live Like Horses like he did the shows before in Paris. This evening, he said he can't perform, because he has only a rest of his voice. But the next evening, he changed the set list and included that great song!! That was really really great to hear!!

BARB C. MADRUGA



What is your role in Hercules?

HERCULES USA/Canada department.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

In 1997, I invited Elton fans from around the World to Houston, Texas, for a week-long Eltonfest, centred around Smash Hits. We had a fabulous turn-out, and a wonderful time. I've been involved

in the club since then.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

Since I first heard Your Song when it was first released.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

If I had to choose one and only one favourite song, it still might be Your Song, or maybe Live Like Horses, which left a huge impression on me. (Then again, Funeral For A Friend / Love Lies Bleeding is at the very top, as well...) If I could take one album to survivor island, it would be Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

Flying across the U.S. (Orlando, Florida all the way to Seattle, Washington) to see Elton in concert; enjoying time there with fans from around the World. This club has given me golden friendships.

DAVID WRIGHT



What is your role in Hercules?

UK Manager and was Editor for a year.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

I became a member in 1996 as soon as I heard of Hercules, which came from Alan at Wrap It Up, having found him from the CD sleeve on Chartbusters Go Pop. This was before I had internet

access. I went to the London conventions and have made some very good friends through Hercules. In 2000, I was asked by Tammi to take over as Editor for a year.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

Since 1984. Sad Songs was my first single and Breaking Hearts my first album – I was hooked! Then it was Greatest Hits before I started buying the back catalogue.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

My favourite song is Someone Saved My Life Tonight and favourite album is Elton John – a masterpiece.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

Getting autographs at the stage was something I never thought would happen and first became possible for me because of tickets arranged by Hercules. My proudest moment was interviewing Gus Dudgeon last year but meeting John Jorgenson and Charlie Morgan several times has been a real pleasure as well, and the weekend at the Cavern Club in Liverpool with Bluesology, John Jorgenson and Roger Pope was special.

SABINE ASENKERSCHBAUMER



What is your role in Hercules?

Translating and typesetting of German issue of The Mag.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

I met members of the club after Elton's concert in Frankfurt in 1993 and joined straight away.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

Since 1984, when I first heard I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

Currently The Ballad of The Boy in the Red Shoes and Blue Moves.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

Shaking his hand at the Royal Albert Hall in 1994.



What is your role in Hercules?

Manager of the Italian department and editor of the Hercules Italia from March '94 to December '97.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

In 1988 I read on a music magazine the ads of the Rocket Fan club. I immediately got in touch with Sabine, Stephan and Holger and became a member. In October '89 I wrote my very first article for the fanzine and in March '94 I was asked to create the Italian department.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

I started to like Elton in '79 at the Song For Guy time. I bought the single and then the LP. I got some records and tapes. But it was with Jump Up and the recording of the Moscow concert with Ray Cooper that I went crazy with his music!!!

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

Well, that's a tough question!! My favourite album is definitely Madman Across The Water. I cannot tell you my favourite song, it depends on the moment: I would tell you Indian Sunset, Levon, The Greatest Discovery, Sweet Painted Lady and, in his most recent ones, Believe.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

I have been lucky enough to travel and see Elton concerts all over the world for quite a long time. I have had plenty of fun, unbelievable, crazy and impossible memories. The one I remember right now happened in '98 during the Big Picture Tour: I was in NYC with my friend Arjen and our hotel was just in front of the Madison Square Garden where Elton was playing for 4 or 5 nights in a row. Neither of us had tickets but we could always get front row. One night we could not find front floor tickets and we decided not to go to the concert, so we went back to our hotel room, had a huge pizza, watched TV and had some cookies as if Elton was not playing 50 metres away from us!

Then 5 minutes before everybody came out from MSG we walked to the bar of the band's hotel where we stayed till early in the morning! Well, that night we had some beer. Every time I drank a Bud I still remember Billy Trudel saying to us "Oh my God, two Europeans drinking an American beer!!!" I think I have a couple of shots of that night but looking at our faces I still have to decide who drank more.



What is your role in Hercules?

Fan Adviser and translator of German issue.

How did you get involved with Hercules?

At the concert in Frankfurt on April 15, 1989, Holger handed me a Rocket Fan flyer. He said: "You have to join the fan club".

Why? Because I was wearing a self-designed and self-knit Elton jumper.

How long have you been an Elton John fan?

1985 – when Nikita was in the charts but not because of that song, I wish to emphasise. I just happened to realise that so many songs that I liked were by the same guy.

What is your favourite Elton song and album?

From the older albums: Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy. From the more recent albums: Songs From The West coast. Song: Skyline Pigeon.

What is your favourite Elton memory?

During the concert in Munich on July 8, 2000, I gave Elton a Ken doll (Barbie's boyfriend) dressed in traditional Bavarian drag complete with a bunch of yellow Barbie-size roses. When I watched the "One Night Only" at Madison Square Garden (October 2000) backstage report, I saw that this exact doll was sitting on his dressing room table. He had kept it!

WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US.....

...results of the surveys!

Our understanding of the fan club is being your eyes and ears and acting as an interface and a voice between you and Elton John. In that sense, we have always been open to your feedback, ideas, requests, criticism and opinions.

Member surveys have always played an important role in this regard. And if they concerned Elton related matters rather than boring club affairs, your cooperation has usually been high.

Our first survey was conducted in late 1989 with the results being published in issue #10. Back then, your Top 10 of Elton John songs read like this:

1. **Your Song**
2. **Candle In The Wind**
3. **Rocket Man**
4. **I'm Still Standing**
5. **Daniel**
6. **Tonight**
7. **Saturday Night's Alright**
8. **I Guess That's Why ...**
9. **Ticking**
10. **Sorry Seems To Be ...**

And your favourite Elton John albums were:

1. **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**
2. **Too Low For Zero**
3. **Sleeping With The Past**
4. **Captain Fantastic**
5. **Live In Australia**

Three years later, we repeated the exercise (see issue #22). This time it was a lot more representative as our membership had increased a lot in the meantime. The results in March 1993 were as follows:

Top 10 Elton John songs:

1. **Your Song**
2. **The One**
3. **The Last Song**
4. **I'm Still Standing**
5. **Candle In The Wind**
6. **Tonight**
7. **Rocket Man**
8. **Sacrifice**
9. **Daniel**
10. **Skyline Pigeon**

Top 5 Elton John albums:

1. **The One**
2. **Sleeping With The Past**
3. **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**
4. **Too Low For Zero**
5. **Captain Fantastic**

And this time, we also let you vote your most wanted live songs. Back then, the fans asked for these songs to be performed by Elton:

1. **Ticking**
2. **Tonight**
3. **Empty Garden**
4. **Skyline Pigeon**
5. **Healing Hands**
6. **Cry To Heaven**
7. **Crocodile Rock**
8. **Come Down In Time**
9. **Elton's Song**
10. **Levon**

Frequent concert goers will notice that many of these songs appeared in the set lists of subsequent Elton John tours. It could have been a lot better, however, as we learned about an 'Unplugged Show' which was planned to be held at London's Royal Albert Hall on May 11, 1993. According to some members of the band, they had rehearsed the above Top 10 of most wanted live songs for that special show. Unfortunately, Elton pulled out of the production at the last minute as he did not want to be compared to Eric Clapton who had just won six Grammys for his Unplugged album. What a disappointment!

At the end of 1998, we asked you for your favourite live tracks again, this time online via the Hercules website. The results were published in issue #45. Your most wanted live songs were as follows:

1. **Tonight**
2. **Someone Saved My Life...**
3. **Healing Hands**
4. **I'm Still Standing**
5. **Club At The End Of ...**

We also let you point your thumb down in regard of those songs you could no longer stand in live concerts. Late 1998 these songs were:

1. **I Guess That's Why ...**
2. **Daniel**
3. **Tiny Dancer**
4. **Can You Feel The Love ...**
5. **Honky Cat**

As another four years have past since this latest survey, we plan to give you a chance to vote again shortly. Meanwhile, other polls can be found on our website at <http://www.eltonfan.net/poll/>.

In addition to these polls and surveys, the fan club has also hosted another interactive event for the fans: the songwriter competition. In part one, we called for your lyrics in the style of Bernie Taupin (see issue #27). Once three winners had been chosen, the music talents amongst our membership were asked to turn at least one of these lyrics into an Elton-like song (see issue #29). We weren't able to collate the songwriter team of the future, but at least we all enjoyed an interesting competition and the winners received a copy of the book 'The Complete Lyrics' signed by Elton as well as a unique CD with their song (remember that this was 1994 and CD writers weren't as common as they are today).

HERCULES AND AIDS FUNDRAISING

by *Stephan Heimbecher*

A long time before the public at large became aware of Elton John's commitment in the fight against AIDS, and many years before the Elton John AIDS Foundation was established in 1992, the fan club tried to contribute to the creation of AIDS awareness and to the collection of financial aid.

The article 'Funeral For A Friend', an extensive report of the Ryan White story, in issue #11 (June 1990) was the first time we put our readers in touch with HIV and AIDS. Only 6 months later, we launched 'Rocket Fans against AIDS', an initiative benefiting the German AIDS Foundation (see issue #13). An auction of collectible items donated by our membership raised Euro 2.000 in March 1991 (see issue #14).

A second auction undertaken two years later (see issue #22) even resulted in Euro 3.500, including a high bid of Euro 1.500 for an original pair of Elton John's glasses kindly donated by Elton's management.

Encouraged by the success of these two early events, the fan club continued to raise money, mainly organising auctions. For example, during an Elton John exhibition presented by the fan club alongside the start of "The Lion King" in German movie theatres, we raised another Euro 1.500 (see issue #28), an additional Euro 1.000 was raised by auctioning off 10 signed concert posters (see issue #32), etc.

When the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) began to license more and more official merchandise, such as the candles, watches, credit cards etc., the fan club tried to support their worthy work by continuously reporting about the latest EJAF matters in the newly created column 'Livin' And Lovin'" which was started in issue #33 (December 1995).

Of course, we also reported about the 'Out Of The Closet' shops in London

(November 1994, see issue #29), Atlanta (June 1996, see issue #36), London (November 1997, see issue #42) and London (November 2000, see issue #54).

But Elton's commitment and my involvement with the fan club has also influenced some AIDS related activity on a much larger scale: when visiting Elton's Earls Court shows in May 1993 I noticed the Red Ribbon, the global symbol for AIDS awareness, which was distributed by the volunteers of the EJAF. Since that symbol was completely unknown in Germany at the time, I decided to establish Red Ribbon Germany (see issue #23).

This organisation got started with the support of many Elton John fans and fan club members who helped folding Red Ribbons and distributing them at Elton's open air show in Nuremberg in May 1993.

To this day, Red Ribbon Germany has distributed more than 10 million Red Ribbons in Germany and has raised more than Euro 150,000 in face-to-face campaigns, i.e. by personally talking to people and that way raising awareness and money at the same time. If you are interested in learning more about Red Ribbon Germany and its project 'Artists About AIDS' which also includes Elton, see www.artists-about-aids.com.

Finally, we would like to thank all fans and members who have supported 'Rocket Fans against AIDS' and 'Hercules against AIDS' in the past ... and who will do so in the future!

FANS & FAN MEETINGS

by Mireille

For many fans, the chance to meet other fans was, and is, the main reason they join a fan club. Rocket Fan/Hercules always stressed that this is also an important goal for us by organising fan meetings all around the World.

It all started modestly in an apartment in Cologne where 15 fans met on April 8, 1989 (report in issue #6). They did what fans have been doing during each and every fan meeting that followed: talk about Elton, his songs, his albums, his concerts. Anyone who has ever attended a fan meeting, knows that these get-togethers usually tend to be hilariously funny. After all, you are meeting people who are just as crazy as you are – Elton fans. Even for this small meeting, people from Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, and the US made their way to Germany. An example that set the standard for all future meetings.

The Swiss fans certainly followed the German example and organised a fan meeting for September 9, 1989 (report in issue #9). Many meetings have since followed in the alpine state. One of those happened on November 8, 1997 and was summarised in issue #42.

The 2nd international club meeting in Germany from May 11 to 13, 1990 will surely stick in the memory of every one who attended. For this get-together, a

It all started modestly in an apartment in Cologne..

house in central Germany was rented, and 48 fans partied for 48 hours. It is no understatement to say that everyone had HUGE fun. For a detailed – and very entertaining – undercover report about this unforgettable weekend, please have a look at issue #11.

Another club meeting in the same venue happened one year later. Once again, around 40 fans laughed their heads off and made lots of friends (for a full report, see issue #16).

The tradition to link club meetings to Elton concerts started with the 4th meeting in Switzerland. The number of fans attending was so large, that they needed a bus to get to the show in Lausanne (the hot concert). The fans spent at least two days with two great shows together, the latter one taking place in Basel (the wet concert). (See issue #20 and the special edition Rocket Fun)

The proceedings at the club meeting that went along with the "An Evening With Elton John And Ray Cooper" (Royal Albert Hall, London, December 1994) shows even needed a Hercules special edition AND a report in issue #30.

In the years that followed, many local conventions were organised by hard-working members and department chiefs. Among others, Elton fans met in the US, the UK, Switzerland, Germany, and Finland.

The largest fan convention organised by Hercules happened in the Millennium year. The location (Hard Rock Café, city (New York City), and circumstances (Elton shows in Madison Square Garden) could not have been better. This was also the first meeting with a real star guest: John Jorgenson surprisingly popped in before soundcheck. 80 fans had a great time even before another great

show started in the evening. (See issue #53 for a full report).

The certainly most unusual fan meeting happened in March 2001, celebrating Elton's 54th birthday, in the legendary Cavern Club, Liverpool, UK. For one unique gig, the remaining members of Bluesology reunited to play exclusively for Elton fans. And our "old friend" John Jorgenson showed his ongoing support for the fans by playing some songs from his album Emotional Savant live. No Elton show this time but surely a not-to-have-missed weekend. If you were not there, read issue #55.

On March 25, 2002 fans around the world celebrated Elton's birthday in parties of different sizes, creating the charitable "Lunch Around The World". The report in issue #59 reveals the sum that was raised for the Elton John AIDS Foundation: more than \$6400!

If you were not able to meet other fans at conventions, you were still able to get to know them through Rocket Fan / Hercules. As early as issue #2 members had the chance to introduce themselves in a regular feature called "In the Club" and later "Tell Me What The Members Say".

Other fan clubs came and went. Rocket Fan established partnerships with "Harmony" and "Tumbleweed Connection" (both US-based) which both sadly are no more.

But Hercules does not cease to be! We will continue to bring fans together. Even though the club will from now on "only" publish a website, we will still organise fan meetings and even the fantastic over-the-top international convention which we have been planning to hold since 2000 (see issue #49) is bound to take place any time soon.

HERCULES AND ELTON'S MANAGEMENT

By Stephan Heimbecher

The collaboration with Elton John's management has been a roller coaster ride since the very beginning. Not only because we have had to adapt to three different managers over the years, but for the simple fact that we have been stuck in an undefined status somewhere between acknowledgement as an official fan club, and the possible threat of closure ever since we founded the fan club.

If you have been a shareholder in the past few years, you will be able to appreciate what we have been experiencing for almost 15 years. But I don't want this to sound too negative. In fact, I am very thankful for the support we have received from Elton's managements, but we are also disappointed by some of the things that never happened.

We first tried to make contact during a trip to London in July 1988 (see issue #2). But we only got as far as the intercom of the then-office at 51 Holland Street. Back then, nobody cared about a "German" fan club. When we added the English translation to our services with issue #3 things got better. In fact, we received a copy of issue #3 signed by Elton in early 1989 (see issue #5). And when we requested an interview with Elton shortly thereafter, we made it as far as backstage at the Cologne show in April 1989, but the interview never took place as Elton was running late (see issue #6 & #7).

Anyway, it all seemed very promising from the start, although we have to point out that we are still waiting for that interview to happen. But there were other highlights to report: in October 1992, the management contributed an original pair of Elton's glasses to our 2nd 'Rocket Fans against AIDS' auction (also see page 22) and the fan club was presented with a double gold award for The One (see issue #22). We also got first row

tickets for the special AIDS benefit show in London on December 1, 1994 as well as early access to the first 'Out Of The Closet' shop (see issue #29). And that's just naming a few of the things we have to thank the managements for.

We also know that the fan club hasn't always been angelic. There have been times of misbehaviour for which we have apologised and would like to apologise for again. But whatever we did – good or bad – we always did it with good intention.

But then in 1995, some strange behaviour of a French fan club, which used to be part of the Hercules fan club network at the time, precipitated a crisis. We'll spare you the details, but it took the effort of some members of the Hercules team seeking a clarifying conversation between the management and all parties involved, which took place in London mid July 1995 (see issue #32). As a result of that meeting, Hercules, with me in particular, became a kind of official interface between the fans and the management.

With Hercules having managed to survive the 1995 crisis with a strengthened position, we were more than happy to pay back, e.g. by helping to sell Elton's personal cassette collection (see issue #36).

But the heyday was still to come when on April 3, 1997 – just a few days after Elton's 50th birthday – I was invited to Elton's London house for a personal meeting (see issue #39). I took the chance of personally delivering to Elton the fan club's birthday presents (including an International Star Registry certificate) as well as lots of gifts from members. We could tell that he was thrilled not only by his immediate reaction, but also because of the fact that quite a number of fans received personal

thank-you notes from Elton in the days shortly after the meeting.

When the John Reid Enterprises era came to an end in 1998, we tried to carry over our good relationship to the new management. Fortunately, some of the staff members in the background remained, but the man on top was changed. In October 1998, Stephan had a promising kick-off meeting with then-manager Colin Bell in New York (see issue #45). But he was only in charge for less than a year before being replaced by his successor Frank Presland.

Today's relationship with Frank and his team at Twenty-First Artists can be described as positive, although it is sometimes frustrating that there is silence for many months of unavailing requests for feedback regarding certain matters, until all of a sudden there is liveliness again when there is something they need from us. Without trying to seem unappreciative, quite frankly we have to say that in some cases we cannot resist the impression of being exploited.

For sure, Elton John is a trademark, a brand that needs to be promoted and fostered. The official website at www.eltonjohn.com is just one of the tools set up for this purpose. Understandably, it is all about commerce, a big business which is making a living for a number of people. And from this point of view it becomes clear that the management has other priorities than to deal with the fan club at regular intervals.

But on the other hand the fan club also plays an important role in the machinery that helps keeping the brand Elton John afloat. And maybe that role is much more important than many people want it to be. The approach of a fan club, especially of one that has been in business for almost 15 years, is far more non-commercial and a

lot closer to fan level than any well oiled official website apparatus will ever be.

www.eltonjohn.com will always be a lot closer to Elton himself and such – at first look – will always be attractive to the fans. But even the official website has failed to keep up with the frequent personal video messages from Elton, his regular album reviews or other special treats that were on the agenda in the early days.

The Hercules fan club might never be able to offer any of these sweetmeats, but it has another valuable advantage: we speak the language of the fans, we do understand their needs, and we know what they want and do not want. Hence, a fan club should always be attractive to the artist's management, because the fan is the regular customer who keeps the business alive. And the fan club is a multiplier and promoter for the product, in this case Elton John.

With that being said, I am looking forward to a fruitful collaboration with Elton's management in the future. Now that Hercules will be concentrating its power on the online presence, it becomes even more important for www.eltonfan.net and www.eltonjohn.com to complement rather than to compete with each other. By combining our areas of expertise, we can best serve our prime customer, which is the same for both of us: the Elton John fan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hercules Team would like to thank the following people for their invaluable contribution to the fan club over the past 15 years.

Alan McCormick	Imke Schumacher: <i>Mercury Germany</i>
Alessandro Ragni: <i>Universal Italia</i>	Iris Ohm: <i>Phonogram</i>
Alessandro Ragni: <i>Polygram Italy</i>	James McKay: <i>The 22nd Row</i>
Alexander Pfund: <i>Polygram Switzerland</i>	Jim Turano: <i>East End Lights</i>
Alexander Pfund: <i>Polygram Switzerland</i>	John Jorgenson
Alexandra Schär: <i>Former Swiss contact</i>	John Reid: <i>JRE</i>
Alexandra Schär: <i>Member</i>	Kirsten Czastrau: <i>Peter Rieger Concerts</i>
Alexei Davydow: <i>Member</i>	Laura Croker: <i>eltonjohn.com</i>
Alfons Mann: <i>Printer</i>	Luca Cremonese: <i>Member</i>
Alfons Mann: <i>German printer</i>	Lynne Dicks
Alies Boesjes: <i>Phonogram</i>	Maddalena: <i>D'Alessandro & Galli</i>
Athena Carscadden: <i>Member</i>	Marco Dietiker: <i>Member</i>
Barbara Czeslik: <i>Mercury Germany</i>	Mark Giles: <i>Hercules member</i>
Barbara Turner: <i>Picture Editor</i>	Mark Norris: <i>East End Lights</i>
Barrie Marshall & Team: <i>Marshall Arts</i>	Massimo Morichelli: <i>Hercules member & Hercules Italia translator</i>
Birgit Wortmann: <i>Phonogram</i>	Max Pollavini: <i>Hercules member & Hercules Italia translator</i>
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Charlie Morgan	Orsola Nizzero: <i>Hercules member & Hercules Italia translator</i>
Christine Höflmeier/Wimmer: <i>Member</i>	Peter Kraus: <i>Member</i>
Cliff Roles: <i>Phonogram</i>	Peter Neitzel: <i>Member</i>
Clive Franks & band members	Peter Wiget: <i>Member</i>
D'Alessandro & Galli team	Rainer Nagel: <i>Member</i>
David Furnish	Robert Key: <i>JRE, EJAF</i>
Derek Robinson: <i>Member</i>	Roger Pope
Dr. Ulrich Heide: <i>German Aids Foundation</i>	Sabine Krupp: <i>Hercules Team</i>
Elena: <i>D'Alessandro & Galli</i>	Sam Power: <i>Mercury UK</i>
Elton John	Sol Lam: <i>JRE</i>
Eriko Iwasaki: <i>Member</i>	Susanne Hofrichter: <i>Phonogram</i>
Frank Presland	Thomas Ekstroem: <i>Member</i>
Fritz Rau: <i>Mama Concerts & Rau</i>	Tom Stanton: <i>East End Lights</i>
Gabriele Hardy: <i>JRE</i>	Tony Iannou: <i>Phonogram</i>
George Matlock: <i>Hercules Team</i>	Virginia Banks: <i>EJAF USA</i>
Graham Turner: <i>Fanzine Designer</i>	

... and everybody who has supported Rocket Fan/Hercules since our launch in 1988. Even if we have forgotten to mention you in the above list, we have not forgotten your contribution.





IT'S SAD, SO SAD.....

The fan club has served the Elton community for almost 15 years. We have also done quite a lot of promotional work for Elton himself, on a voluntary basis and free of charge. Now that the fanzine is finishing, we were hoping that he would find the time to prepare a short contribution for this final issue, or at least a message for you, the fans. We have been contacting the management regarding this since March 2002, i.e. for almost a year. Unfortunately we have heard nothing from Elton, and we are sure you are as disappointed as we are that there is no farewell message from Elton himself.

YOUR LETTERS

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

Dear All at Hercules,

Many thanks for Hercules 60, a most fitting tribute to Gus Dudgeon.

Although I don't have a PC at home I am able to use the internet at work and most lunchtimes will find me at eltonfan.net. I prefer it to eltonjohn.com by some considerable distance.

Wishing you well and many thanks for the efforts of yourself and the team which are much appreciated.

Michael Stafford, UK

'You Give Me Education'

Who knew that the sampled music trend began with Gus Dudgeon? (The Mag, September). Or that Bernie Taupin paints? Even with oodles of Elton John items online and off, there's always more to learn, thanks to Hercules and The Mag.

Cheryl A. Herman, U.S.A.

Thank you Hercules!

As the era of The Mag draws to a close, I would like to thank Hercules for a consistently enjoyable read.

How different and dull history would have been had the pub pianist and the poet not been introduced all those years ago.

Most average talented lads (or creative knights-to-be!) interpreted songs as nearly all ridiculous signs of egotism. But Elton was different and we should all give thanks for that!

Thank you Hercules. I will miss The Mag but I'm glad the website will live on.

S Morris, USA

SMALL ADS

MASSIVE ELTON COLLECTION

For Sale: Massive Elton collection to clear. Rare CDs, Vinyl, Tapes, Videos, Mags/books & pictures. For list, contact Danny Hayes at: Dannyhayes@aol.com or tel - 00 44 207 387 0082.

CDS & COLLECTIBLES

I'd like to let you know the new address of my new website, where you'll find many CDs and other collectibles. Here it is: <http://digidlander.iol.it/eltonjohn>. I look forward to your visit! Alessandro Perfumo.

REGGIE ZIPPO'S

AMAZING COLLECTIBLES

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

LYRIC QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1: A Step Too Far
- 2: Lady What's Tomorrow
- 3: Someday Out of The Blue
- 4: Please
- 5: The Messenger
- 6: Texan Love Story
- 7: Hakuna Matata
- 8: Friends Never Say Goodbye
- 9: The Ballad of Danny Bailey
- 10: Mansfield
- 11: You're So Static
- 12: I Just Can't Wait to be King

TOUR DATES 2003

ELTON AND BILLY JOEL, FACE TO FACE, 2003

21-Feb	Birmingham, AL	Jefferson Civic Center Arena
24-Feb	Houston, TX	Compaq Center
26-Feb	San Antonio, TX	SBC Center
28-Feb	Dallas, TX	American Airlines Center
02-Mar	Oklahoma City, OK	Ford Center
04-Mar	Indianapolis, IN	Conseco Fieldhouse
07-Mar	Pittsburgh, PA	Mellon Arena
09-Mar	Buffalo, NY	HSBC Arena
12-Mar	Lexington, KY	Rupp Arena
14-Mar	Columbia, SC	Carolina Center
16-Mar	Raleigh, NC	RBC Center
18-Mar	Little Rock, AR	Alltel Arena
28-Mar	Las Vegas, NV	MGM Grand Arena
29-Mar	Las Vegas, NV	MGM Grand Arena
01-Apr	Ames, IO	Hilton Coliseum
04-Apr	St. Louis, MO	Savvis Center
06-Apr	Madison, WI	Kohl Center
08-Apr	Milwaukee, WI	Bradley Center
10-Apr	Chicago, IL	Allstate Arena
12-Apr	Chicago, IL	Allstate Arena
15-Apr	Cleveland, OH	Gund Arena
17-Apr	St. Paul, MN	Xcel Energy Center
19-Apr	Fargo, ND	Fargo Dome
22-Apr	Columbus, OH	Nationwide Arena
24-Apr	Albany, NY	Pepsi Arena
26-Apr	Albany, NY	Pepsi Arena
28-Apr	Toronto, Canada	Air Canada Center
30-Apr	Chicago, IL	Allstate Arena
02-May	Auburn Hills, MI	The Palace
03-May	Auburn Hills, MI	The Palace

ELTON AND BAND 2003

31-May	Chicago, IL	Arie Crowne Theatre
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ELTON SOLO 2003

20-Jun-2003	Bonn, Germany	Museumsmeile
22-Jun-2003	Budapest, Hungary	Hero Square
24-Jun-2003	Moscow, Russia	Kremlin Palace
28-Jun-2003	Sundsvall, Sweden	Park Arena
29-Jun-2003	Trondheim, Norway	Torget City Square
01-Jul-2003	Bergen, Norway	Koengen

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

