

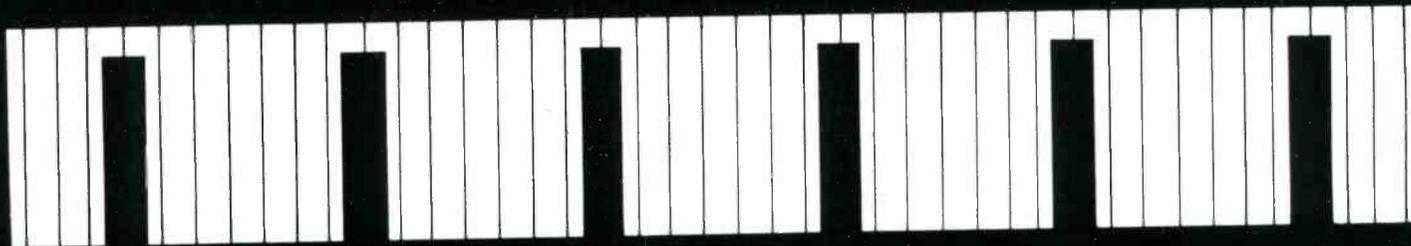
Record World Presents



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ORIGINAL SOUND RECORD CO
73
LOS ANGELES CA
90046
7120 SUNSET BLVD

AN ELTON JOHN SPECTAGULAR

January 31, 1976



This was a **HARD LUCK STORY** of an **EX-TEENAGE IDOL** who made some **HARMONY**. At a **CARIBOU** ranch he met a **CAPTAIN FANTASTIC** who rekindled his **CANDLE IN THE WIND** and made his **BITTER FINGERS SAIL** like a **SKY LINE PIGEON**.

He needed someone to turn to for **SALVATION** and **SOMEONE TO SAVE HIS LIFE** that night. You, **BENNIE AND THE JETS DIDN'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON ME**.

WE ALL FALL IN LOVE SOMETIME and I fell for you, you old **ROCKET MAN**. Whether you were drinking **ELDERBERRY WINE** or **MID-NIGHT CREEPING** you always seemed to **TAKE ME TO THE PILOT OF MY SOUL**.

Elton dear, **YOUR SONG** is always **MELLOW**, your **WRITING** could **BURN DOWN A MISSION** and it will continue to **SAIL** like a **HIGH FLYING BIRD**.

There will never be any **BAD BLOOD** between us because this **BITCH IS BACK** and no longer concerned.

With love, admiration and thanks, your friend always,

**NEIL
SEDAKA**



ROGERS & COWAN, INC.
PUBLIC RELATIONS



Dear Elton:

On behalf of the entire staff of MCA Records, Inc., I would like to extend my congratulations to you.

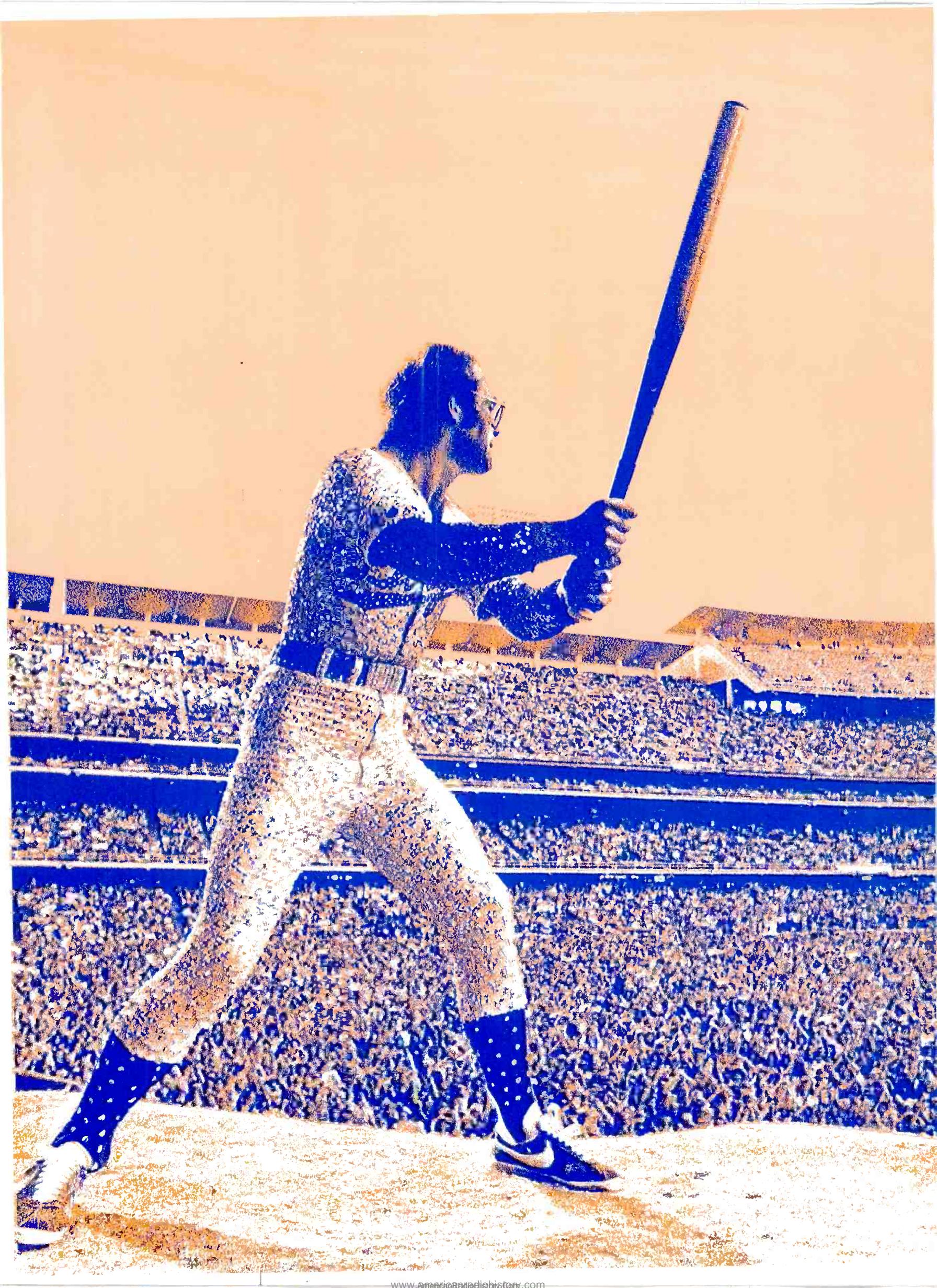
Rarely has any performer made so many important contributions to music and to the recording industry. After investing many years in developing your talents, the hard work and perseverance has resulted in your becoming one of the most outstanding music figures in the world.

We wish you continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike'.

J.K. Maitland



Record World Salutes Elton John

Elton John cannot really be compared to other rock stars. On the surface his accomplishments may seem somewhat similar; he sells an incredible number of records, fills stadium after stadium, has expanded into occasional film and television forays and has his own record company. It is not, however, simply that he's *done* these things or even that he's done them in greater magnitude than those before him. Of equal importance is the way in which he has achieved it all.

The Golden Era of Hollywood is the most frequent analogy to Elton John's style and approach — the sense of grandeur, of living the life of a star for his own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of his fans. In satisfying himself, Elton John has never found it necessary to hurt others. Indeed he has helped launch many careers, and has tried to impart a little of his own magnanimity on some who stand by his side in the pantheon of the popular culture elite.

Yes, it goes beyond "rock star." Elton's appeal so far exceeds the usual boundaries of that idiom that the classification becomes meaningless. And the flair with which he handles himself on stage and off is flashy but never gaudy. Elton takes it all with a grain of salt and, far more than the film stars of the '30s and '40s whom he admires, seems to understand stardom for the public fantasy (still his own, too) that it is.

Elvis, The Beatles, Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones—Elton John just doesn't fit any single mold. In saluting him at this time, Record World can but express the hope that he will continue to flourish, to bring a kind of excitement into the record industry that can only be an inspiration for everyone even remotely associated with the popular arts, business person and fan alike. If any one person has earned the title Superstar of the Seventies it can only be Elton John.





Elton John-Five Years of Fun

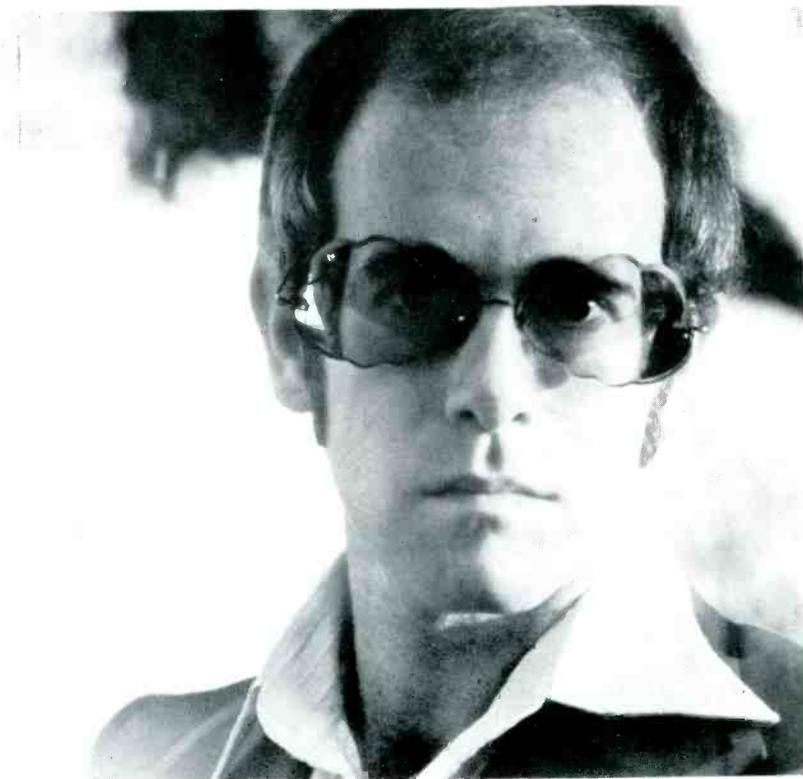
By ROBERT HILBURN

■ Stardom is a word that has been associated with Elton John ever since the English singer-songwriter-pianist made his U.S. debut shortly before 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 1970 at Doug Weston's Troubadour, a West Hollywood club that had already gained something of a national reputation for showcasing important new talent. Lenny Bruce, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Kris Kristofferson, Randy Newman and Laura Nyro were among the hundreds of performers who had appeared on the Troubadour's wooden stage since the Santa Monica Boulevard club opened in 1957. But no one, to my knowledge, created the opening night excitement of Elton John.

In both the formal reviews and in the informal record industry conversation that followed John's opening night show, there were predictions of stardom. But, when applied to someone making his Troubadour debut, it could mean the artist seems to have a chance to someday play one or two nights at the 3,000-seat Santa Monica Civic Auditorium or, if all goes well, a show at the 18,700-seat Inglewood Forum. Either would fit the general definition of a star. In the five years since the Troubadour opening, however, Elton John has virtually rewritten the definition of pop music stardom.

Looking back at the Troubadour opening, it's sometimes difficult even now to realize how far this essentially shy, unabashed fan of pop music has gone. When he sold out the Greek Theater for a week back in 1971, we got a clue to his growing status. When he sold out the Inglewood Forum for four nights, we got another. When he signed an \$8 million contract with MCA Records—the largest ever given a record artist

■ This article was reprinted from "Elton John: Five Years of Fun," which was distributed at Elton's Fifth Anniversary engagement at the Troubadour, a benefit for the Jules Stein Eye Foundation.



at the time, we got yet another. When his "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy" became the first album ever to go to No. 1 in the nation's music trade publications in its first week of release, we got still more. And when he announced in July that he would appear at Dodger Stadium, we got more. But, one senses, the definition is still being written.

One of the reasons he put together a new band (which made its U.S. debut, symbolically, at the Troubadour) was that he felt he had many new facets of his musical personality still to explore. Thus, the three day benefit at the Troubadour for the Jules Stein Eye Foundation was both a sentimental look back at the opening in 1970, but also a start of a second chapter in his career. It's too early to write the Elton John story — the final analysis of his impact on, and contribution to pop music, but it's a good time to look back on the past five years. He, sometimes, seems as amazed at all that has happened as anyone else.

"I always think this is about it," he said, a bit sheepishly during his spectacularly successful 1974

American tour, the one in which he played four nights at the Forum and could even have, according to most observers, sold out a couple more shows there. "It just always amazes me. I'm always ringing up and asking, 'Are you sure we've sold out, are you sure we've sold out?' It's hard to believe it sometimes. When we played the Hollywood Bowl and the Long Beach Arena last year, I figured that was as much as we could ever do, but now look at the Forum.

"Sure you get excited by your own success," he continued frankly. "But that doesn't mean you're satisfied. All you have to do is see somebody on television you really like and you start thinking 'God, I wish I could play like that.' There's always something to strive for. A lot of people (in pop and rock music) just don't have any ambition any more. It's just, 'Oh well it's time to tour again. Let's go.' And that's not the point at all.

"The whole reason to tour is to strive for something better. Forget about the costumes and staging. It's the music that counts. If you don't keep improving, you're

wasting your time. I've said it before: I don't want to end up like Chuck Berry or Little Richard—and I don't mean to degrade them, but I don't want to be playing 'Crocodile Rock' badly 10 years from now. That would be a nightmare."

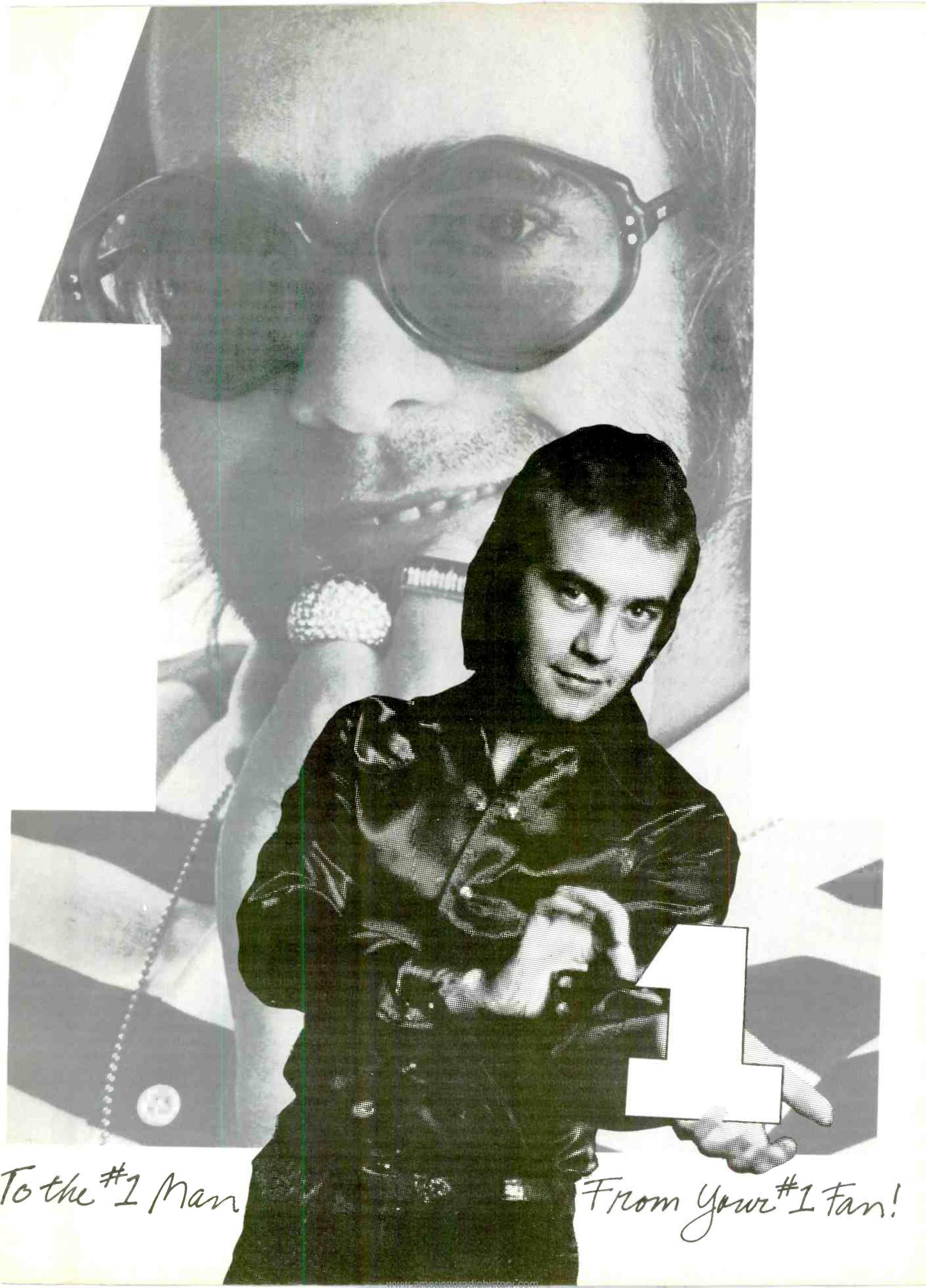
Though Elton John was all but unknown in this country at the time (his first English album—"Empty Sky"—wasn't even released here because of its apparently limited potential), the Troubadour was filled on Aug. 25, 1970 with writers, disc jockeys, agents, record executives, concert promoters and others in the pop music business. They had come to the Troubadour that night for various reasons.

For one thing, the club was as much a social meeting place in 1970 for the record industry as it was a place to actually listen to music. It was a place where business deals were made, news stories were found, gossip exchanged. But they also came because Elton's first U.S. album (titled simply "Elton John") was beginning to attract some attention and because his record company (now known as MCA Records), through Russ Regan and its Uni division, had done a sensational job of promotion.

"We've got something big this time," was the kind of message that was spread in dozens of phone calls from the record company offices in the weeks before Elton arrived. And the record industry, in the summer of 1970, was in the market for something new and important. It was a period of relative inactivity in pop music. The Beatles had broken up. Some of the great bands from the 1960s—The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Band, Creedence Clearwater Revival—were still around, but nothing new had arrived to excite more than a segment of the massive pop audience.

There were, to be sure, some tentative moves into theater rock (e.g. Alice Cooper), some basic southern rockers (e.g. the Allman Brothers), the start of heavy metal

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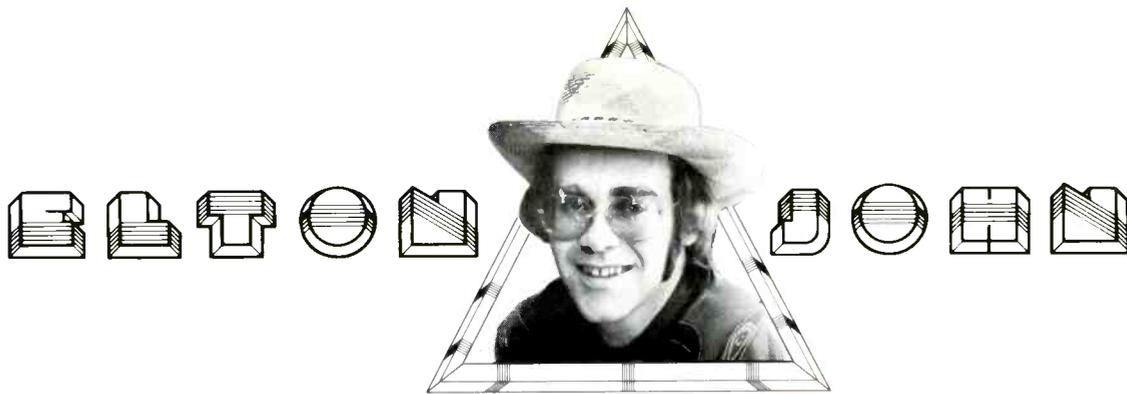


To the #1 Man

From your #1 Fan!







Elton John: Past to Present

By ERIC VAN LUSTBADER

■ Now he comes to town and they are waiting for him at the airport, wriggling their way through barriers, surging past jumpsuited roadies. They rush the limo as he climbs in, the slowly rolling car leaving them like surf in its wake. They are waiting for him outside the hotel and as he disappears inside, they rush to phone booths to call his room, their flushed, transfigured faces pop-eyed and sweating. "Is this Elton John? No? D'you think he could come to the phone?"

Upstairs, within the elegant white-and-gilt suite, Elton raises his eyes to the ceiling and moans in awe, "How did they find out where I was staying? I didn't even know until two hours ago."

But in the end it's a charade because no pop superstar is as close to his fans or as finely attuned to their wants and needs as is Elton John. He makes it his business to know them and therein lies the key to the longevity of his astounding success.

17 With A Bullet

Later, amidst the grey-painted concrete blocks backstage, he leans back and smiles, fluorescent light winking off the star lenses of his glasses, cherishing a moment in time. "I remember, years ago, sitting in the Dick James offices on Broadway, and seeing that we (the 'Elton John' lp) were 17 With a bullet in the charts, one above CSN&Y's 'Deja Vu'—which was on its way down, mind you—but God, that was exciting!"

From the outset Elton strove for and achieved excitement. To begin with he seemed to be constantly in the right place at the right time. Oh yes he spent his years in the English group Bluesology, and he ran from session to session in London to add his voice to the background of records too numerous to mention, and he sweated out his writing failures at Dick James Music and the commercial failure of his first album, "Empty Sky." He withstood the rejection of virtually every American record company, watched his critically-acclaimed single "Lady Samantha," released on Congress Records, slide into obscurity.



"I don't think I've really begun yet. Which is a slightly ludicrous thing to say seeing as how we can't go further than Number One on the charts. But I'm just a baby. The Beatles have been around for ten years and McCartney has just had a Number One album. He's still making good music. We've been together five years and I honestly believe that we've only just started. As long as I believe that . . ."

—Elton John.

But it happened that Congress (a small offshoot of Kapp Records) was in the process of folding while the larger Uni label was being formed. "Border Song," Elton's next single, was finally released on Uni and, in the end, achieved sizable airplay and a modest run up the charts.

Thus the giant engine of Elton John's success was set in motion, and inexorably, undeniably it began to lap at the shores of America.

Excitement. He generates it like an electric circuit. How many neon signs he lights! But then he always did, from the moment he set foot in America in 1970. One sensed, even then, his specialness—the unique qualities that made him a total entertainer, not just a performer or another singer-songwriter. He played the Troubadour in L. A. and the critics fell all over themselves, superlatives dripping. So he took southern California by storm and then, slowly, cautiously moved eastward, warily circling New York. MCA finally brought him in to play at a special press luncheon at the Playboy Club. Two other

new acts were on the bill and, it being a working day, many of the writers left before he got on. The sound was so bad that afterwards he was beside himself, tears of rage in his eyes.

Yet in many ways it was one of his most revealing professional moments. The sound was atrocious, the atmosphere bad, the audience tired and a bit bored by what had gone before. And still, he was electrifying. Through it all, his innate musicianship, his immense good humor and, especially, his singular personal magnetism marked him as a potential messiah for rock, particularly live rock. The show was not good but Elton's greatness was as irrefutable as a lighthouse in dense fog.

Halloween in Boston

In the months that followed the excitement flared, building with explosive force. In Boston on Halloween weekend he danced onto the stage in top hat and black cape, asked for the lights to be doused and, pulling a chain at his crotch, caused a plastic clown's head to light up. He destroyed four audiences, the music

cascading over them in tumultuous disarray, the sweat pouring off him like rain.

He went to MIDEM, headlining the Galas and in true Gallic tradition disaster struck. Eric Burdon did his best to upstage Elton, disrupted the early show, which was being televised throughout Europe. But even this could not stop Elton and returning for the late show he played one of his finest sets, bringing the tuxedoed and gowned audience to its feet.

Guardian angels. That was one important cornerstone to Elton's early meteoric success in America. Russ Regan was surely one. David Rosner was another. He was then the head of Dick James Music in this country and he too recognized and believed in Elton's potential.

The First Tour

Elton was ill-prepared for America when he came. Besides the band he had one roadie and one "tour manager." Both were British and never had been to the States before. Even though Rosner was strictly a publisher, he saw immediately the problems Elton faced touring this vast country and, stepping into the breach, he took care of all the dates, hassling with promoters about pianos, tuning, sound systems. He accompanied the band on most dates to insure personally that everything ran smoothly.

It was he too who arranged for the live concert Elton performed that was broadcast over WPLJ. Perhaps one hundred music business people jammed the small studio to provide the live feel. The atmosphere was electric and there appeared to be little doubt that something memorable was about to occur.

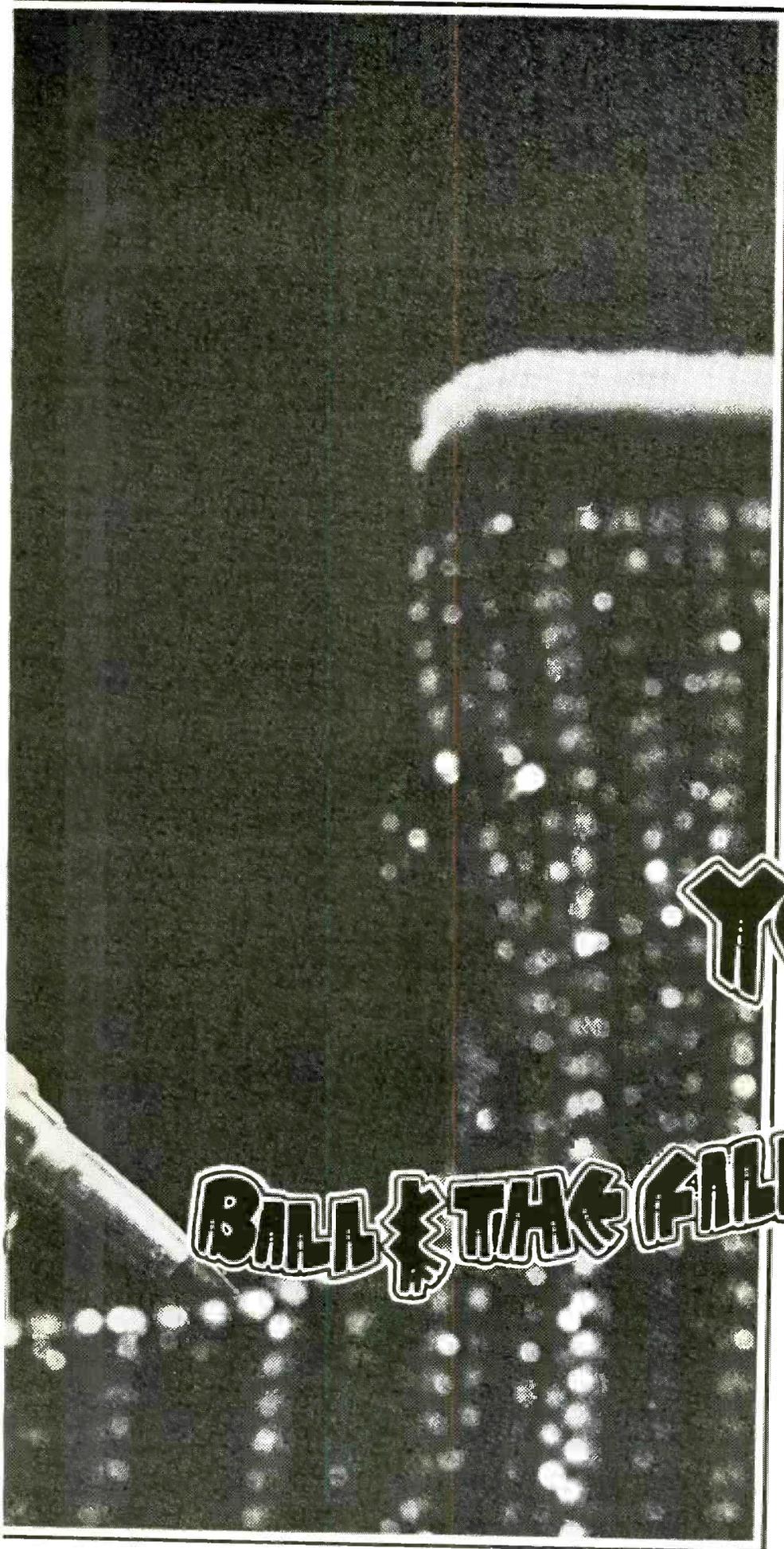
So much is made now of the first Troubadour gig that the importance of this night to Elton's career sometimes gets lost. Almost no one there had ever seen him perform or even knew much about him. Therefore they expected the ordinary — another new act like so many new acts they saw each week. Most perhaps were aware of the L.A. reviews but in all honesty they didn't give them much credence.

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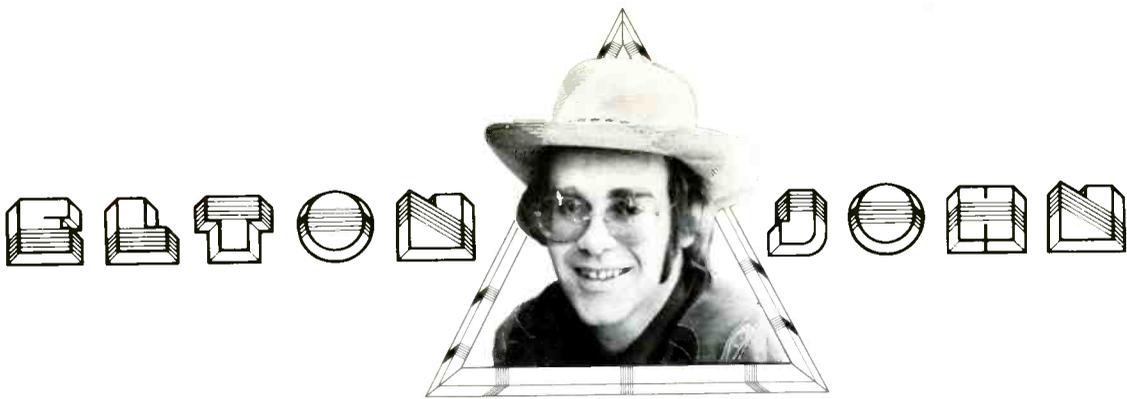
To E.J.
"Sheila's son,
John's best friend
and our favorite
piano player."

Love, Mitzi
and Barney





**WE LOVE
YOU MADLY
CHEERS,
BILL & THE FILLMORE FAMILY**



Elton's Singles:

The Best Rock Has To Offer

By ROBERT ADELS

■ HOLLYWOOD—One only has to look to Elton John's singles discography for living superstar proof that the sometimes flip-pantly-evaluated 45 is as valid a speed as the more stately 33 1/3 when it comes to the true telling of an artist's musical worth and lasting impact. The most commercially successful of the lot speak for themselves of course as all true superhits do. But these chart-toppers are also preceded by, interspersed and coupled with tracks never made available on albums—we'll call them "the collectibles"—which just as accurately exemplify the prolificness and vitality of Elton The Record-Maker.

Happily, all of Elton's singles treasures, including his very first U. S. release, are still readily available on MCA Records. Being the first A-side, "Lady Samantha" (originally Congress 6017 and re-issued as MCA 60172) holds special interest.

Historically, "Lady Samantha" represents the triumphant new turns all subsequent Elton John/Bernie Taupin collaborations were to take after they had together scrapped some two dozen predecessors. Musically, "Lady Samantha" is Elton at his early rockin' best, particularly on the choruses. There is unmistakable power here which even at this point is rather well developed.

Being guitar-dominated, "Lady Samantha" gives little evidence of Elton's keyboard genius to come. Nor do these early lyrics of Bernie Taupin's anticipate the richness of word pictures which EJ would later explore in multi-layered performance. But there is little distance placed between the lyrics (which do serve the song well) and Elton John the entertainer—a characteristic of all his subsequent work.

Both "Lady Samantha" and its flip "It's Me That You Need" are "collectibles," the first of an amazing string. The B-side here is Elton's first ballad to see U. S.

release, and as such its failures to equal a milestone like "Your Song" are forgiven. "It's Me . . ." bears traces of Jacques Brel drowning in a sea of French horns. But it does contain all the essential elements of pathos of the first order. Elton's own sense of majesty which would later put all the pieces properly together would develop from this somewhat hesitantly original beginning.

Elton John's second U. S. single became his first major chart item—"Border Song" (Uni 55246/MCA 60161). It brings into focus several EJ trademarks for the first time: a distinctive and rich piano intro, the building of momentum as flourish is stacked atop flourish in a gradual fashion, and throughout, a voice capable of giving a believable perspective to the word "I" and thus an entirely personal slant to all it tackles. These in turn combined to whet appetites for Elton John's first album which was to contain both "Border Song" and its even more impressive followup, "Your Song."

In addition to being one of the earliest B-side collectibles, "Bad Side Of The Moon" backed "Border Song" as some first-rate star gazing fraught with fury and featuring a mysterious multi-syllabic chorus in the hypnotic repetition of "hoo-sa-ma-la." Or something akin to it. (Unlike most collectibles, "Bad Side . . ." did find its way onto an album in another form—a live version one year later.)

"Your Song" (Uni 55265/MCA 60047) scaled the very top of The Singles Chart in 1971, and made it very much The Year of EJ. It also made the album a major event—and while its cover features a striped scarf as our man's most outrageous garment, its music is unmistakably that of the Elton of some five years hence. With a convincing "ha!" right in the middle of a love vow, Elton reinforces the mood's one-to-one reality rather than destroying it. While a lesser vocalist would surely have taken to whispers to

convey the song's sense of the fragile, EJ employs a full range of vocal dynamics. His flowing keyboards provide yet another essential piece of the magic monologue.

On the B-side, "Take Me To The Pilot" shows Elton John's clear-cut refusal to be typecast as a balladeer with its gospel-infused thrust and soulful flight path. At this point it becomes clear that EJ's world would assume proportions dictated by a geometrical rather than linear growth pattern.

The two sides culled from the motion picture "Friends" (Uni 55277/MCA 60162) again saw Elton's talents move in opposite directions, both under the common umbrella of soundtrack music. The gentle title tune A-side graced the charts in Spring of '71 as a logical progression of "Your Song" while the flip "Honey Roll" provided a sneak preview of the nostalgia in "Crocodile Rock," with a mythological base in hard-

driving dance music taking on shades of reality.

With the release of "Levon" (Uni 55314/MCA 60163) from his "Madman Across The Water" set, Elton truly came into his own as an artist capable of cinematic character depiction through sound. Animating a father-son conflict situation with a delivery as carefully structured as the lyric, Elton John's vocals comfortably straddle the line separating top 40 entertainment from artistic accomplishment.

"Levon" was tastefully backed with the "coda" cut from the same album, "Goodbye."

"Tiny Dancer" (Uni 55318/MCA 60164) at an uncompromising 6:12 proved that another portrait in sound—this one about an L. A. seamstress of rock—could be as unique and as successful. "Razor Face," a tale of rough exteriors, became the tactile B-side.

(Continued on page 70)



MCA RECORDS

Dear Elton,

Your music has given pleasure
to millions around the world.
We pray that our donation
to the Jules Stein Eye Clinic,
made in your name, will
give sight to one child.



J. K. Maitland

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John Reid Tells His Story

By ELIOT SEKULER

■ *With but three years on the periphery of the music business in London, John Reid took on the assignment of Elton John's management. Then 21 years old (in 1971) Reid grew into the job rapidly, helping establish Elton's name around the world. His success in coordinating the many aspects of Elton's career is enviable. In the following interview, Reid discusses the development of his and Elton's friendship and career, the formation of Rocket Records and the decision-making process that has resulted in a rock star of previously unfathomed magnitude.*



John Reid

Record World: How did you come to manage the most important artist in the record business at such a tender age?

John Reid: Well, at the tender age of 18 I went to London to seek my fortune. I had really left Scotland without knowing what I was going to do and London was as far as I got. I had a taste for travelling because my family had lived in New Zealand, of all places, for three years and I went to school there before studying marine engineering in Glasgow, where I got bored halfway through. London was initially a stepping stone to wandering and as it was Christmas, I found a part-time job in a clothing store. I liked it, I liked London and I would go around to the record companies because I used to deal with them in college in Scotland.

RW: In what capacity did you deal with the record companies in Scotland?

Reid: I used to run the school's dances and discos and was also in a couple of groups. My brother and I were the Scottish answer to the Everly Brothers. In London, eventually I got a job with Ardmere-Beechwood, which was EMI's only publishing interest at that time. The first day I started, they sent me to the airport to meet Seymour Stein.

RW: Weren't you involved with Motown Records in the U.K.?

Reid: I was EMI's label manager for Motown, which involved choosing the records to be released out of the piles that came in from America and promoting the product that we decided to work with. It was interesting and I really enjoyed it. Martha and the Vandellas, for example, were enormously successful for two years after their last American chart record because we kept releasing old "B" sides and album cuts in the absence of any new material. So I was getting along very well and at about that time, I met a musician who used to come up to EMI to scrounge singles. He was friendly with the Bell label manager who worked next door, David Crocker, and his name was Elton John. One day, not long after "Your Song" had been released in America, I told Elton that Stevie Wonder and Martha and the Vandellas were coming into Britain for a tour. I asked if I could borrow his car to meet them at the airport because mine was out of commission at that time and Elton wound up coming to the airport with me to meet Stevie. When I introduced them, Stevie asked, "Are you the Elton

John who sings 'It's a little bit funny . . . ?'" and he started singing the song. That started off their relationship.

Things began to happen very rapidly for Elton soon after that. I was in Los Angeles in early 1970 after he had done the Troubadour and had then flown back to the states six weeks later for a short tour. I came back with him the second time on my vacation. Elton wanted to see Reb Foster; he was interested in having Foster manage him.

RW: Were you professionally involved with Elton by that time?

Reid: No, we were just friends. Elton, Bernie and I came over before everybody else on the tour did and stayed at the Riot House. Dick James still had another year with Elton on his management contract and Dick needed to have somebody working here in America. Elton wanted me to do it but I didn't want to. I didn't know anything about management, but I wanted to come along as a friend. We met a couple of people but Elton didn't make any decision for about six months, and all the while he was asking me to do it. I said yes eventually and gave notice to Barney Ales and EMI. Barney called me and said "If you leave here, I'm gonna kill you," and I withdrew my notice for a time. He still threatens, but anyway, Elton's mother finally came to see me and said that Elton trusted me; she was afraid that something might have happened if someone else became involved. By that time it was March of 1971 and things were moving fast.

I started with Elton by working with Dick James, because he still had the management contract. When the contract expired, I would take over. So I stayed with Dick James for about eight months and tried to get myself together. It was ridiculous: I was 21 at the time, I didn't have any money, I had no real experience and I was trying to start my own business. I wasn't going in completely cold, actually, because I had a pretty good grasp of the rudiments of the record business and a bit of grounding in publishing. But it was still a very confusing thing.

RW: Without any experience in booking, how did you handle tour arrangements etc.?

You can't really predict exactly what will happen because by summer we may have taken a different view. Rock & roll changes from minute to minute.

Reid: Basically, I had to place my trust in Howard Rose.

RW: He was involved already?

Reid: Yes, Howard was at IFA and had been involved with Elton from the beginning. There was a good feeling, a basic trust, between Elton, Howard and me so I relied pretty heavily on him and he was very important. He would come up with an itinerary with suggested places and we would take it from there; that's still the way we work.

RW: What were some of the high points and crises that you've met with along the way?

Reid: As I see it, there have been several plateaus, as in a graph, when the line shoots up and then moves along steadily. And there may have also been a few kinks. When I became involved, "Tumbleweed Connection" and "Friends" had been recorded already. As soon as "Tumbleweed" hit, "Friends" was banded out and there was a hell of a lot of unscrambling to do. There was all of that to contend with within one year, plus touring and trying to move on to new things. To a certain extent we've been trying to eliminate the backlog that was created at about that time ever since. It was like a set of dominoes that all fell almost at once.

RW: For a time people were saying that Elton's career would be ruined by over-exposure. Did that just erode by itself or was there a plan on your part to contend with it?

(Continued on page 56)

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

Thanks for the excitement of the last 5 years....

*and being a friend.
HR*

THE HOWARD ROSE AGENCY, LTD.
ARTISTS MANAGER



Bernie Taupin: Songwriter Supreme

■ Since meeting Elton John through a music magazine talent contest in 1968, Bernie Taupin has written lyrics for well over a hundred Elton John songs. It is hard to imagine another pair of songwriters working together so well for so long, and showing so little sign of slowing down. Taupin's time has been taken up even more of late by two solo projects, an album and a book of poetry, both due in the first part of this year. Elton's closest co-worker spoke with *Record World* about his long association with Elton John and commented about those factors that have contributed to their long-term success.



Bernie Taupin

Record World: Describe your procedure, if in fact there is one, as far as the approach to a song is concerned.

Bernie Taupin: Well, as soon as I've written the lyrics, I just give them to Elton. That's all there is to it if you're talking about that, but if you're talking about when I write and in what situations I write, then that's different. Basically I'm a very lazy writer. Usually I only write when the time approaches to make an album. I don't normally find myself sitting somewhere and suddenly say, "Ah, a song has come to me." I normally write under pressure; I get ideas and I jot them down, but I don't put them together until the time comes to do an album. That's when I start work. Every time I've written something, I just give it to Elton and he starts work on it.

RW: And at that point you have no further say in his approach to the lyrics?

Taupin: I don't really need to because basically whatever he does pleases me anyway. I don't have to say, "I think this should be this and that should be that."

RW: With all the stuff you've written, have you ever worked simultaneously on a given piece of product?

Taupin: No.

RW: In other words, the lyrics always come first and the music has always followed?

Taupin: Yes.

RW: Was it you who once said that getting the first line or the title of the song is the hardest part?

Taupin: Well, to a certain degree. The thing is I, in the last few years, in fact, ever since I started writing—I like titles, so I mean most of the time I think of titles before I start the song. Before I start the song, I'll think of something that I like the sound of and work from there. Then sometimes I'll get a line or something that I particularly like and I'll work around that. But otherwise I never just sit around and say I'd like to write a song about such and such or so and so. It's usually titles or a certain line.

RW: Since musical directions have changed so much over the years, is that calculated and discussed or is it a natural evolution?

Taupin: Between Elton and myself? That's a weird question. That makes it sound like we sit down and say "Well the times are changing Elton. I see that such and such is becoming popular. Do you think we should cash in on it?" I mean, I can't answer that. We move along as everybody else moves along; it's a natural progression. You go along with the swim of things.

I normally write under pressure; I get ideas and I jot them down, but I don't put them together until the time comes to do an album. That's when I start work.

RW: Is there any particular musical direction from which you get the most artistic satisfaction? What are your personal musical interests?

Taupin: Well, I grew up like every other kid listening to the radio. The music that was on the radio then was the music that influenced me. When I first started listening to the radio there wasn't a lot of American music on; a lot of it was English copies of American hits done by English people. I grew up for quite a while with English rock acts, then got hip to all of the American people. I just went along with whatever was happening on the radio. I got a tape machine and started taping stuff—becoming more interested. I always loved music, always knew a lot about music, but I don't think it was until I came down to London that I really got very involved with it and became knowledgeable about it.

RW: You once said that films had a strong influence on you when you were growing up. Have films had any influence or effect on the material you've written?

Taupin: Well, that's another thing. I'm a film freak. I love movies and I collect books about film biographies. I'm a book fanatic anyway, so I collect anything. Then again, everybody thought that "Yellow Brick Road" was a very cinematic album and I guess when you look at it, it is in a way. Films don't effect me as far as writing; maybe subconsciously something comes from that interest.

RW: Do you have any plans as far as scoring films is concerned?

Taupin: Hopefully, if I have time, I want to act. That's one of my ambitions, to act.

RW: If the opportunity arose, would you ever consider not only acting in a film, but doing the musical scoring as well, or is that just tackling too much at once?

Taupin: Musical scores bore me. We once scored a film, "Friends," and that was just a pain in the ass. I'd rather be writing or acting than doing the music. If it was totally our film or total control of a film, then I'd do the music too, but that's not the most important part by any means.

RW: Have you ever consciously written a song with the intention of it becoming a top 40 hit?

Taupin: No.

RW: Is there a formula for a top 40 song?

Taupin: If I knew it, I'd be set up for life. I've never really set out unless you're talking about in the really early days, when I had to because that was how we made our money; we had to or we bit our fingers.

I never sit down and say "I've got to write this business; it's got to be a commercial single" because we never know what's going to be a single until it's more or less done.

RW: After you've written a lyric and before you've given it to Elton to put to music, have you had particular feelings as far as hit potential is concerned? Is there some feeling you get from some lyrics that are more commercial or hitbound than others?

Taupin: When I wrote "Island Girl"—that was one of the first songs I wrote for the new album—when I look back at all the lyrics, I knew that that was going to be very commercial and would be the single. I knew it would end up as a single.

RW: Any others?

(Continued on page 62)



Elton John: An MCA Viewpoint

■ LOS ANGELES — Elton John is one of the greatest superstars in the music industry. He has been making important contributions to the music scene throughout the world, paving the way for others and accomplishing what had formerly been impossible.

On June 13, 1974, Elton John signed a long term recording agreement with MCA Records, Inc. The contract is reputed to be the largest with a single artist in the history of the record business. The importance of the event was emphasized by full page ads placed by MCA in both the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. J. K. Maitland, president of MCA Records, Inc., noted, "The record industry has become a sophisticated and powerful and professional industry. We wanted to show in these ads how far this business has come. This was a major financial agreement between one of America's most successful companies and one of the world's most important artists. We wanted to present it in that light . . ."

42 Million Albums

Elton John has sold over 42 million albums and 18 million singles throughout the world, with ten of his albums well over the million mark in the United States alone. His most recent lps, "Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy" and "Rock of the Westies," were certified gold and platinum as soon as they were released in the U. S. "Captain Fantastic" hit all best-selling charts in the number one spot the first week of its release (a first in the recording industry), and Rick Frio, MCA vice president of marketing announced that MCA shipped no fewer than 1,400,000 copies. "Captain Fantastic" was also the first album in history to attain platinum status the day of its release.

Five years ago, when Elton John first signed with Uni Records (merged with Decca and Kapp into MCA Records, Inc.), Russ Regan was its president. Elton's first British album, "Empty Sky," had been released abroad and Elton was looking for a contract here. After being turned down by at least three labels in the U.S.,

Elton finally signed a one-year contract with options for three more years with Uni Records. The singles "Lady Samantha" and "Border Song" were the first American releases by Elton John and they were followed by the lp "Elton John." The album eventually went to the top 10 on the best-selling charts. But it was Elton John's first American appearance that convinced the record industry that he was destined for super-stardom.

Elton admits now that before leaving England for his first appearance here, the one aspect of the trip to America that excited him most was the possibility of buying records. An avid record collector and fan, Elton wanted to buy releases that were not available in England. He did not and could not anticipate the excitement that resulted from his first performance in the U. S. at the Troubadour nightclub in Los Angeles.

U.S. Arrival

Elton, lyricist Bernie Taupin, Dee Murray (bass) and Nigel Olsson (drums) were met at the airport by record company executives who had hired a red double-decker English bus for the occasion.

Rick Frio, who was national sales manager for Uni at that time, recalls going to the Troubadour the afternoon before the performance. Elton, Nigel and Dee were rehearsing and Frio's first reaction when he heard the fullness of the

sound was that the three performers had tapes to back them up. When he discovered that the music was indeed all theirs and there were no gimmicks, he knew that Elton John was destined to become something special.

Troubadour

Elton John's performance at the Troubadour is remembered well by everyone who attended. Critics raved about him. Russ Regan recalls, "It was probably one of the most electrifying evenings ever to happen at the Troubadour . . . within about 45 minutes . . . we had a superstar." And Mike Maitland remembers, "It was one of the most spectacular openings for an unknown artist I've ever seen."

Elton John did not remain an unknown for long. He returned to the United States soon after his debut for a tour covering primarily major cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. His single, "Your Song," moved to the #4 spot on the best-selling charts. In New York he played at the well-known Fillmore East.

"Tumbleweed Connection," Elton's second American lp was released in January of 1971 and it hit the charts, with bullets, in the top 20s. Not long afterward, his first two albums were in the top five. Later in the year, both albums were certified gold by the RIAA. Elton returned to the United States for a ten week tour, hitting 55 cities. 1971 was the year in which Elton John sold out the

Greek Theatre in Los Angeles for one full week. People began to learn about Elton's passion for elaborate costumes and outlandish eyeglasses. Elton's antics on stage were also becoming well known.

In May of 1971, Elton's only live album was released. Titled "11-17-70," the album was recorded during Elton's second U.S. tour when he was co-headlining concerts with such acts as Leon Russell, The Byrds, Poco and the Kinks. A radio station in New York asked Elton to appear live on the air before an audience of about 100. The performance was well publicized and many pirated tapes appeared in stores. To combat the illegal records and to put out a legitimate quality product, MCA released the lp.

New Contract

In June of 1971, Elton's contract with MCA Records was renegotiated. Lou Cook, MCA vice president of administration, recalls the meeting in London. This was one of the first business meetings between Cook and Elton John and Cook discovered an extraordinary side of Elton's personality. In addition to being an exceptional musician and performer, Elton displayed a remarkable understanding of the recording industry and of the inner workings of a record company. Lou Cook is still impressed with Elton's business sense, which is backed with a vast knowledge of sales, promotion and marketing.

Elton John's next album was "Madman Across The Water" which included "Levon" and "Tiny Dancer." This is still one of his biggest and most consistent sellers in the United States to date. It was certified gold in 1972. Davey Johnstone played at the recording sessions on this lp and, as Elton commented at the time in an interview, "This album marks the end of my 'strings' period." It was the end of 1971 and Elton was about to embark on a new phase in his career.

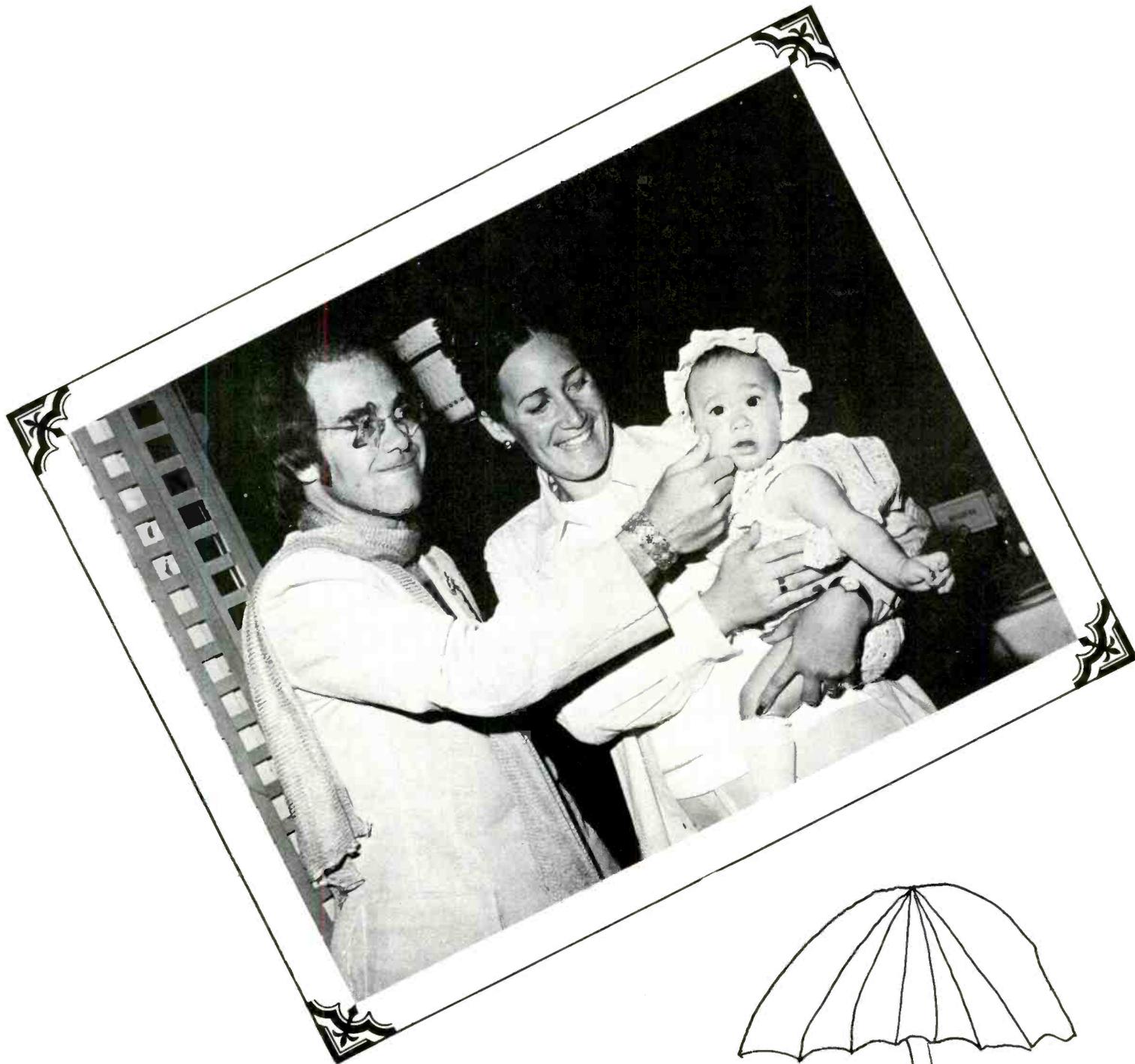
Although he had performed in the United States a great deal in 1970 and 1971, Elton did not return to this country until the fall of 1972, after the release of the

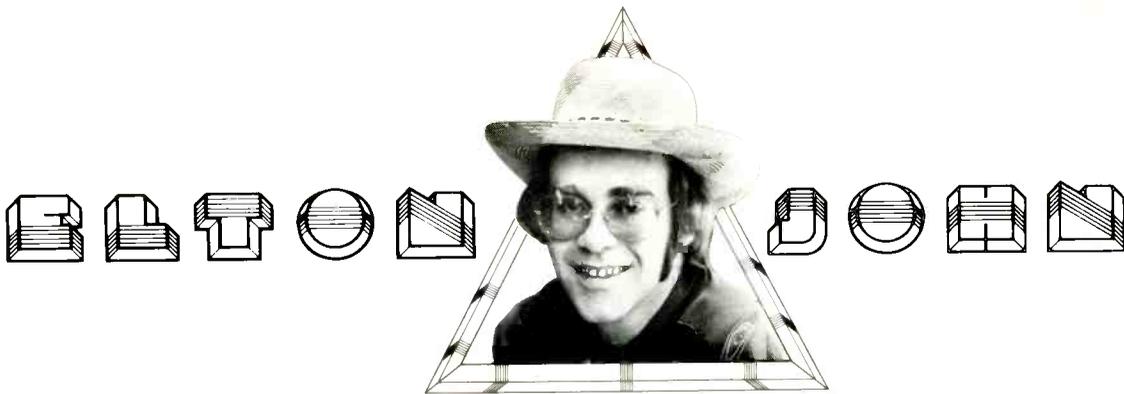
(Continued on page 86)



Elton, Kiki Dee and MCA president J. K. "Mike" Maitland

DEAR GODFATHER





Gus Dudgeon and the Elton John Sound

■ *Gus Dudgeon, Elton John's producer since his breakthrough, has worked closely with Elton in the studio for six years, and shares credit for the inimitable Elton John sound. In this interview with Record World in London, he speaks out about his relationship with Elton and Rocket.*

Record World: How did you first come to start producing Elton John?

Gus Dudgeon: After I left Decca as an engineer, I went into production and I worked with four artists but I only had one hit with each of them. None were artists that I could see had any longevity. The only one I thought at the time could have was David Bowie but I only had a contract to do one single with him and that was "Space Oddity." I had already known Paul Buckmaster for some time because he'd done some arrangements on other singles and I played him the "Space Oddity" track and then while I was routing with David we decided we wanted to use some strings, although we were using mellotron and stylophone, we thought we'd use strings as well so we'd get a blend of all three. He rang me up one day and said "God this is incredible, David's asked me if I'll do that song you played me the other day." I said "Yes, I'm producing" and he said "Oh Christ, I didn't know that."

That all came together and at that particular time Steve Brown who brought Bernie and Reg together in the first place was looking for a new producer for Reg, and I think they just literally looked through the charts and saw "Space Oddity." At that time they were looking mainly for an arranger and then a producer. They saw Buckmaster's name and went to see him and asked him to do "Your Song" and "I Need You To Turn To" which were both on the first album and he was commissioned to do them and then literally as they were leaving the room they said to him "By the way, do you know of any good producers?" and he said "Well have you considered Gus, the guy that we did 'Space Oddity' with" and they said "Oh, I don't know why we didn't think of that" so they came to see me and that was how we came together. So it all resulted from that one record which interestingly enough has just been no. 1 again, five years later.

The reason I haven't got another major act is because although I'm offered such artists frequently I wouldn't get any buzz out of making an album with these people.

RW: So Paul Buckmaster was originally part of the team. At what point did he move on?

Dudgeon: He did the first 3 albums if you count "Friends." He did arrangements for the black one which is called "Elton John," "Tumbleweed Connection," and then there was a mad patch where he had the live album and the "Friends" album which was from the film which Paul also did. In fact Paul wrote about 50 percent of that album because there were only about two and a half bloody songs in the thing and it had to be padded out. The whole album was a complete and utter rip off. It should have been put out as a maxi single with Elton John's songs on it and the rest of it forgotten about really. I know Paul wouldn't thank me for saying that but it wasn't a proper Elton John album, although it was promoted in the States as such and it got a gold record.

RW: What happened to Paul after that?

Dudgeon: Well what happened was very simple really. Paul is a great arranger, he's really original. He's a very classically oriented arranger which is great because he gets the full weight from the chords when he writes a string arrangement and a lot of Elton's chords are very major chords, very classically oriented again. The trouble with

Paul is that he is—and I think he'd be the first to admit it—untogether. He may not be now, I haven't seen him in two or three years, but he was very untogether. He was always showing up for a session where we were supposed to do four arrangements and he only had one done. He always had reasons but they were always a little implausible, a little difficult to take, because you're looking at the clock and looking at the studio, there's two hours to go and he's still scribbling the arrangements down in the lavatory. You're thinking



Elton, Gus Dudgeon, Bernie at Caribou

God this is costing £5,000 or something and we're lucky if we're going to get £1,000 of work out of it. It was also because he wanted to work in the States and he wanted to work with other people and we wanted him to as well.

I haven't ceased working with other acts since working with Elton. The reason I haven't got another major act is because although I'm offered such artists frequently I wouldn't get any buzz out of making an album with these people. I recently turned down Ringo Starr, Barbra Streisand, and all sorts of people. Although I'd learn something from it I know there would be a monster ego problem. I know that we'd crash headlong into each other. I'd like to think that I haven't got an ego problem but I know a lot of these other people have, I've met them.

I'd still much rather work with people that no one's ever heard of. It's very difficult to build up a star to the size of Elton, and to find people that you could put that sort of time and attention into. So I always work with people that hardly anyone's heard of. Paul was offered gigs by The Stones, Leonard Cohen, various other people, and of course he was knocked out, he was flattered like I'm flattered when people ring me and ask if I'll work with them, and he obviously wanted to do those gigs.

The main thing was there was always this problem whether Reg should record with or without his band. I remember sitting in a car with him and talking just before we did "Madman" and I said "Do you think this is the time now to start using the band?" He was always using a band on stage but all they ever did was maybe one or two tracks on an album and some backing vocals, the rest of it was session people. I thought at that time they were ready because I'd seen them play a lot of gigs and I figured they were ready to record and he said "No, I think we should go one more album with Paul. Then I think maybe we should think about it again." Paul was like his session band because Paul and I used to get the musicians together and Paul wrote the charts out. We used to sit down and talk everything out. Every drum fill was worked out, every change—the same sort of thing as you'd work out with a band but we just worked it out with Paul and he put it down on paper and put his own stuff in as well so he was the group in a way, he was backing, he was the band, the studio band, it all came through him.

(Continued on page 84)



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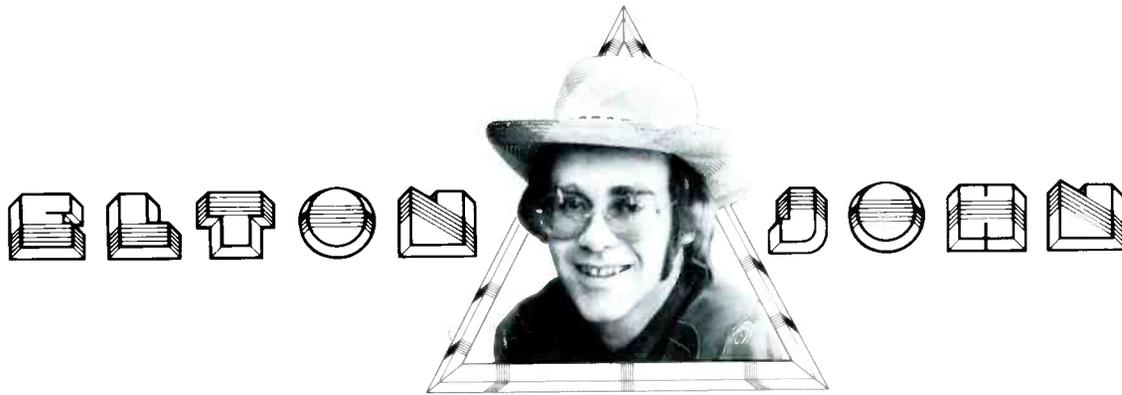
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Tony King Salutes 'A Competent Piano Player'

■ In his long and honorable association with the record industry, Tony King, executive vice-president of Rocket Records, has been several things to several distinguished people. After a six year term with Decca, he became an assistant promotion manager for London/America Records, which he claims was at that time the largest distributor of vinyl in all of England. It was during his assistantship there that his talent and good manners attracted the attention of Andrew Loog Oldham and the Rolling Stones, who retained him to promote The Stones' records and any other acts that Oldham might happen to produce (Marianne Faithful, etc.). He remained with Oldham through the formation of Immediate Records, becoming promotion manager for the label that gave the world the original Small Faces' only American hit ("Itchycoo Park") and several lesser miracles.

His pursuit of destiny next led him to become promotion manager for (and later in the publishing interests of) Air London. That fledgling concern—created by noteworthy English producers George Martin (Beatles), Ron Richards (Hollies), John Burgess (Peter & Gordon, Manfred Mann) and Peter Sullivan (Tom Jones, Englebert Humperdinck)—provided him with plenty of nice records to be associated with, and an introduction to a chubby record fanatic who will figure quite prominently in the later stages of our story. He assisted The Beatles in their Apple experiment, doing promotion until they one day saw in him the qualities of leadership and bravery requisite to the general managership of their American operation. He remained general manager of the Apple outpost "until, at John Reid's insistence, I became tea-boy for Rocket Records;" lured, no doubt, by the opportunity to work with people he believes in, and the promise of a substantial lunch hour.

RW: Under what conditions did you first encounter Elton John?

Tony King: We met, in '68 I think, in Dick James' office. He was a budding songwriter, and I was the promotion manager for Air London. At that time I had an arrangement with a product director friend of mine whereby we'd get the American top 100, which was fine because most of them got immediately added to my collection. Every time I'd get a new batch of American records there'd be this bespectacled beggar sort of trailing after me saying, "Oh what have you got, what have you got?" Elton, being a record freak, knew me as The One Who Had The American Records. One day, when I was in one of my celebrated bad moods and he asked me what I had, I clutched the records to me, turned and said, "Mind your own business." We laugh now because he says that he regarded me as quite a ferocious person. Then we got to know each other and I enjoyed his company because he was obviously so keen on music; he was as keen as I was. We used to listen to things and talk about the people we liked, favorite artists and producers and what studios were doing what. We formed what was basically a record business friendship. I used to listen to him play, but I must be honest with you, I thought of him more as a talented pianist. I never thought he was going to become ELTON JOHN. But I thought that he was a very clever keyboard player, so I'd help him get session work. I got him work with the Hollies and a pop group called the Baron Knights, and he did a couple of demos on songs that we had to do. Jerry Lordan, who wrote "Apache," had written this song that he couldn't sing because it was too high and Elton, who was playing keyboard on the demo, asked to have a crack at it. I remember thinking, "I'm not sure about this . . ."—but he did it and it turned out fine. We basically talked about music all of the time; that was our friendship. I was amazed, and slightly annoyed with myself, when he suddenly became a major artist.

RW: Well, based on the criteria for what was star material at that time, he was definitely not star material.

King: Definitely. I had been working around The Beatles, The Hollies and The Stones, and he didn't fit into that sort of category.

RW: What allowed him to overcome the obstacles to get to the position he's in today?

King: I think he had a lot of talent, a lot of help and a lot of good fortune. The good fortune was running into Bernie through a newspaper ad; that was like a gift from heaven. He's had the help of people who believe in him. Steve Brown and Dick James spent a lot of money on that "Elton John" album, and he was then fortunate enough to have someone like Russ Regan sitting in the chair at Uni Records; a music man who recognized something good and went out and worked his balls off to break it. He had a combination of things going for him but, more than anything else, he had talent.

RW: After working with The Beatles, who were the definitive sixties phenomenon, and then going to a company with Elton John, who is the definitive seventies phenomenon so far, what are the differences you see between Apple and Rocket?

King: Elton is an artist/businessman much more than the Beatles were. Paul McCartney was probably the one of the Beatles who had the best business sense, but they were always primarily artists and Inspired People. Outside of producing the artists and putting the records out their interest kind of died off and, unfortunately, for a period of time they didn't have the correct people taking care of the business end of things and that's where things got a little messy. Elton is much shrewder. He's very aware, for instance, of the American radio situation. It's a vast amount of knowledge to assimilate, but he knows every facet of American radio. He takes an active participation in the way that Rocket goes. In the case of Neil Sedaka and Kiki Dee, when he was touring in '74 he went and did radio interviews, promoting them more than himself. He knew that he didn't have to sell himself, so he was out there to promote Rocket artists and knew that that was one way it could be done. Normally artists will get interested in sales figures about every three months. He's concerned right from the beginning, which I think is tremendous.

(Elton) had a lot of talent, a lot of help and a lot of good fortune. He had a combination of things going for him but, more than anything else, he had talent.

RW: It has often been the case that an artist who submerges himself in a business venture will do so to the neglect of his art, yet this doesn't seem to be true with Elton.

King: Because he's surrounded himself with good people in the right jobs, he can leave everybody to do what they're best at doing. Bernie is the lyricist, so he doesn't need to be with Bernie. Gus is the producer, so he doesn't need to be with Gus. John is the manager, so he doesn't bother John. The same applies to his record company. He and John pick out people who they feel can handle certain jobs, and they more or less leave it to them. A wise policy, I think, and so far it's worked pretty well. At least until I came along . . .

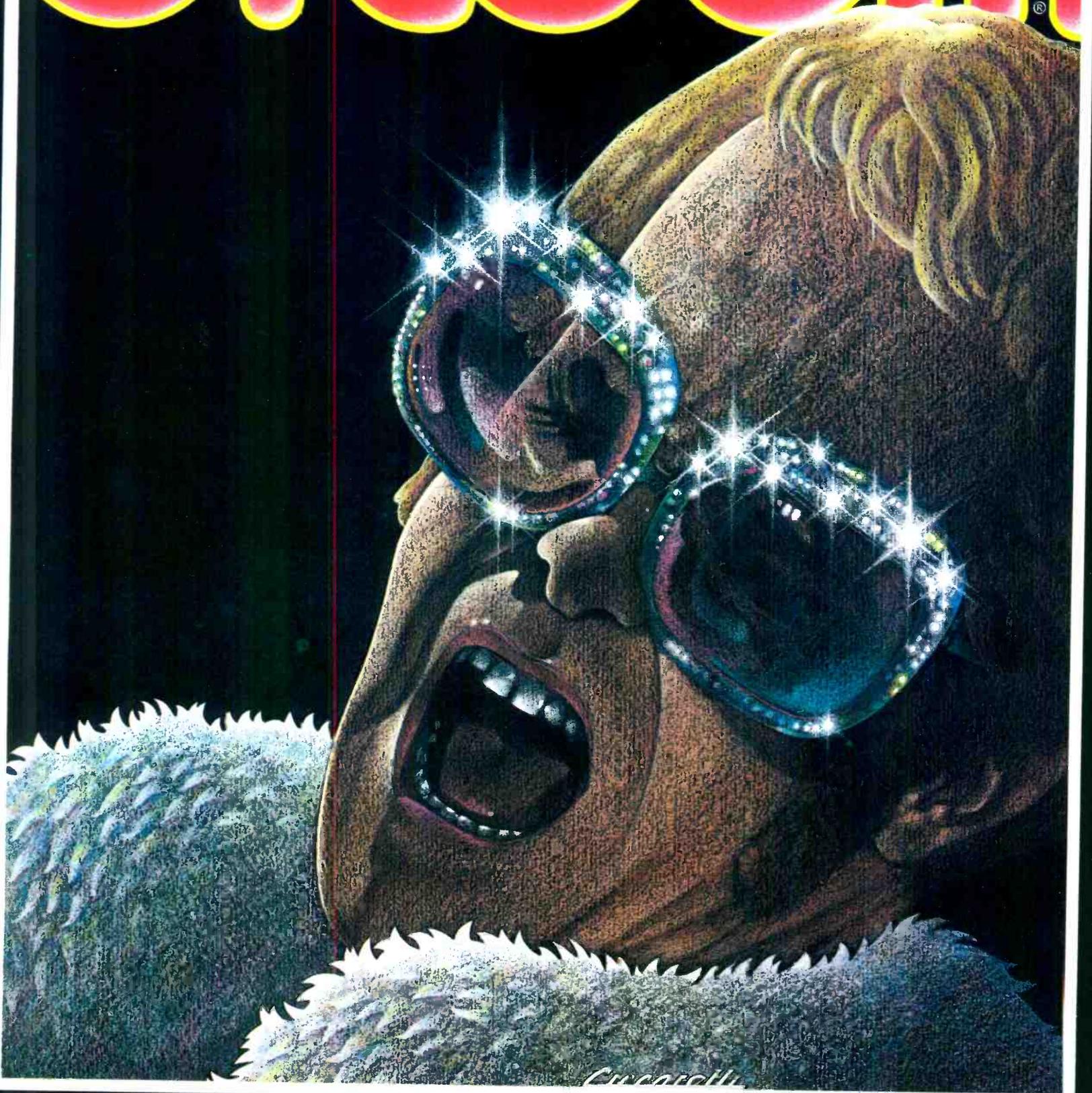
RW: It's also often been true that when an artist starts his own company, its basic product will consist of solo albums from the people within his immediate musical orbit, yet Rocket is a real record company in every sense of the word.

King: Elton, being the professional that he is, knows that if a label is to succeed, it's got to have an across-the-board artist roster. Some artists are encouraged from one area, and some are encouraged from another. Bernie found the Hudsons. Elton is obviously responsible for Neil. Kiki Dee was John Reid, because of his past association at Motown. Solution, coming up this year, are Gus Dudgeon's project. It was Robert Appere who encouraged Brian and Brenda Russell. So it doesn't always come from Elton, you see.

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America's Only Rock 'n' Roll Magazine

CREEM





The Songs of Elton and Bernie: A Musical Monument to the '70s

By ERIC VAN LUSTBADER

"It is the job of an artist to be a barometer of his period."
—Marcel Carne.

1. *"If anyone should see me makin' it down the highway
Breakin' all the laws of the land
Well don't try to stop me . . ."*
—Rock And Roll Madonna.

For five years the American music scene has been dominated by one artist. After "Lady Samantha" had died still-born, after "Border Song" had broken down some of the resistance all new artists are subject to, it was "Your Song" which launched Elton John and Bernie Taupin as songwriters. The similarity of effect between "Your Song" and The Beatles' "I Want To Hold Your Hand" is remarkable. Both are love songs, true, but more important, in both cases the universality of the lyrics combined magically with the melodies to create songs that were "something new." Both gripped the ears of the public in precisely the same manner.

In the half-a-decade that has followed, the songs of Elton John and Bernie Taupin have bestrode the airwaves of the seventies in the same way that the music of The Beatles did the sixties. Still, it is there that the similarities end, primarily because the music of Lennon-McCartney was so blueprintable. Countless groups listened to their music and copied and incorporated. And rock music moved into high-gear. But this is another era and John and Taupin are different writers, and while their songs appeal to the widest spectrum of people imaginable, their music is more of a monument—constantly admired but rarely copied.

2. *"Can I still shoot a fast cue,
Has this country kid still got his soul."*
—Tell Me When The Whistle Blows.

Indisputably, the key to the John/Taupin writing team is Bernie Taupin—"I can't write one note without his lyrics," Elton says. "They really get me going, the energy starts flowing and I rip off songs as fast as he can deliver the lyrics. Until then . . ." He shrugs, "both of us write very quickly." He laughs, "like just before an album is due. I mean all our Chateau albums ('Honky Chateau' through 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road') were done in a frenzy. We'd write at the Chateau, Maxine (Bernie's wife) rushing the lyrics to me upstairs as soon as they were done. I'd write the melody and then take the song in to the band to work up an arrangement. It was very hectic, but fun. Nowadays, though, we tend to take more time writing and recording. We're trying to slow down a bit, write more consistently throughout the year, which we were never able to do before. But it's really Taupin who comes up with the ideas." He smiles impishly. "He's a lazy sod, but he comes through in the end, old Taupin."

Still, what is it that makes the John/Taupin combination so special? An impossible question to answer? Perhaps not. The key comes when one discovers that, in the strictest sense of the word, Taupin is no lyricist.

"Don't I know it!" laughs Elton. "Sometimes he hands me a piece of paper without any verses or chorus. 'Ticking' for example was just line after line. Now it's pretty easy; I've gotten so used to splitting things up into sections I don't even think about it anymore. It helps that I can sometimes say eight words in one line, whereas earlier in the song where it's the same melody, I've said only three. It's just a matter of—I think I'm an expert on squeezing words into lines."

It's a fascinating idea: those rich, swirling melodies, so different, so singular, were created by shaping and stretching the music to fit the peculiar non-symmetrical word-patterns that Taupin, the poet,

composed. The notes, surely, are Elton's, but his method of composition—taking in stride all the idiosyncrasies inherent within the structure: the first line of verse one has twelve syllables; the first line of verse two has four—caused their unique blending. How dismal a failure for these two would be the true collaboration of the Tin Pan Alley-ists, sitting over each other's shoulders!

3. *"Turn on the T.V. Shut out the lights—
Roy Rogers is riding tonight."*

—Roy Rogers.

To a country boy from the green hills of Lincolnshire the twenty-foot images flitting across a silver screen in a small, dark theatre, were magnetic indeed: To ride the openness of the great American plains, driving herds of dusty cattle or chasing would be rustlers, coming in to town at trail's end, the body parched for whiskey and women. Above all to experience the power and mystique of the gunman who was beyond the law. Fairly romanticized stuff, but we were all raised on it.

Like the best artists, Taupin ingested all these images, took what he wanted from them, and forged his own universe of symbols and characters. The outlaw has been a subject that he has returned to time and time again. And while the settings and time periods may change, his concept of the essential nature of the young man living outside the law, remains unchanged. In "Tumbleweed Connection" witness "My Father's Gun": "From this day on I own my father's gun/ We dug a shallow grave beneath the sun . . . Oh I'll not rest until I know the cause is fought and won/From this day on until I die I'll wear my father's gun." But there is a desolate irony to the narrator's words because he is a Confederate soldier in the Civil War and more than likely will never get his wish "To watch the children growing and see the women sewing."

"Indian Sunset" (from "Madman") continues the bleak theme: "I've learned to hurl the tomahawk, and ride a painted pony wild . . . And now you ask that I should watch the red man's race be slowly crushed!" And the ending is now made explicit: ". . . and peace to this young warrior comes with a bullet hole."

But Taupin's most mature and wide-ranging statement on the subject comes in "The Ballad of Danny Bailey" (from "GYBR"), a 1930s saga of a young gun-runner, shot down in the center of the city: "We're running short of heroes/Back up here in the hills/Without Danny Bailey/We're gonna have to break up our stills." And finally Taupin's message is clear: the young country folk hero's death lies in the web of urban sprawl. The stench of coal engines and the haze of gasoline fumes were the death of Danny Bailey and the free spirit he stood for: "He found faith in danger/A life style he lived by/A runnin' gun youngster/In a sad restless age."

All of Taupin's heroes struggle with every last ounce of strength to maintain their way of life against an inevitably encroaching society. The inexorability of the tide against which they fight makes their lives no less important. In fact quite the opposite, because they fight with honor and die with honor. This is most important. They have what the Japanese call "the nobility of failure," the primary feature of their long line of legendary folk heroes who, by the manner of their deaths as well as the manner of their lives, were ennobled. The essence of the samurai warrior, *bushido*, which formed the backbone of Japanese culture from the dawn of their history through the period of the

(Continued on page 52)



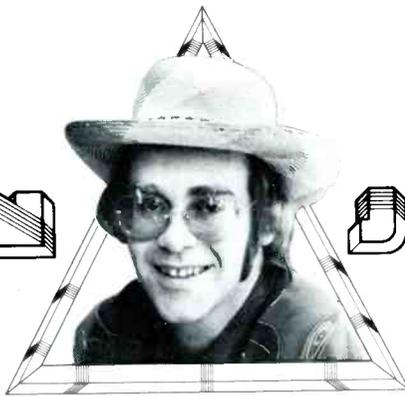
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Five Years of Fun

(Continued from page 6)

(Black Sabbath), but nothing with the kind of universal, across-the-board appeal that was necessary to stir the full pop music consciousness. The specific word on Elton was that he was a young singer-composer with a gentle, easy listening style of rock. One of his most impressive calling cards was that his music publishing was handled by Dick James, the man who also represented Lennon-McCartney.

Unanimous Reaction

Whatever brought the audience to the Troubadour that night, the reaction seemed unanimous. Much of the audience was still socializing in the Troubadour bar when Elton, accompanied by bassist Dee Murray and drummer Nigel Olsson, walked on stage and began going through his songs in a somewhat distant, businesslike manner. He looked scared, keeping his eyes on the piano and microphone in front of him.

Distinctiveness

I don't remember now what the first song was that he did that night, but it was probably from the "Elton John" album. But I do recall that it, along with the other tunes he sang, represented the kind of distinctiveness, the kind of personal vision and refusal-to-follow - in - whatever - is - the - popular - trend - of - the - days independence that you look for in a new pop act. It was clear from that first show that Elton was not working within the narrow confines of a given musical field (e.g. strictly blues or strictly rock or strictly pop), but was creating his own mixture. His songs and arrangements touched upon the various strains of pop (both musically and, surprisingly, visually) in a way that both summarized what had gone before him and yet was strikingly original. Pop-rock is the word everyone later began to describe the balance between the traditional polish and accessibility of pop and the raw, intense spontaneity or rock, but then it was simply something fresh—something that was appealing melodically and worth considering lyrically.

The impressive thing about the music was that the strengths of



Bernie and Elton

the various songs were quite different. The songs, for instance, that hit me the hardest that night were "Your Song," a gentle tale of romantic affection; "60 Years On," a touching look at the loneliness of old age; "Country Comfort," a country-flavored, sentimental song about going home, and "Burn Down the Mission," a raucous, straight-ahead rocker.

Balance

Significantly, there was something to note with interest in the melody and lyric of each song. There was a balance between the two, a balance that is so often missing from contemporary pop music. Bernie Taupin, who it turned out was Elton's lyricist, was originally interested in writing poems. The songwriters he most admired were people like Bob Dylan, Robbie Robertson and Leonard Cohen, who tried to say something in their lyrics. Like them, he seemed to put something of himself in the words rather than just turn out something catchy. And he wasn't afraid to take chances.

'Your Song'

In "Your Song," for instance, Taupin—who was just 20 when Elton, then 23, made his Troubadour debut—came up with the kind of hesitant, uncertain lyrics that most writers would discard as a bit too dangerous for mainstream pop:

Anyway, the thing is, what I really mean

Yours are the sweetest eyes, I've ever seen.

In "Sixty Years On," meanwhile, Taupin and John showed a willingness to tackle subjects that were equally distant from the commercial motherlode of pop: *Who'll walk me down to church
When I'm sixty years of age?
When the ragged dog they gave me
Has been ten years in the grave.*

'Country Comfort'

"Country Comfort" is another example of Taupin's ability to treat a serious, worthy topic—the adjustments to social change—fit into the limits of pop:

*Down at the well they've got a
new machine
Foreman says it cuts manpower by
fifteen
But it ain't natural, so old Clay
would say
He's a horse-drawn man until his
dying day.*

When applying the melodies and, ultimately, his vocal/instrumental interpretations to the lyrics, John captured the essence of Taupin's words without the slightest hint of a false note. They were marvelous blended works.

But just when—on that first Troubadour night—you were thinking about John as this seri-

ous, sensitive new artist, he plunged into "Burn Down the Mission" with the kind of fury that made you realize he knew that rock 'n' roll and pop were more than anything else a joyous, outgoing celebration. He even kicked the piano stool away—ala Jerry Lee Lewis—and urged the audience to sing along. It was a finale that got the Troubadour audience on its feet in ovation.

After the show, some talked most about the ballads, others liked the antics surrounding "Burn Down the Mission." The important thing there was a little bit of something for almost every taste. Each element—lyrics, melody, vocal, arrangement—fit together. The hardest thing, in a way, was realizing that all these diverse songs came from the same person. A lot of people in the audience returned for a second and third time that week and most came away even more impressed with each new viewing.

The night after John opened, Bill Graham, the influential owner (then) of the Fillmore East in New York City, called to offer John the largest amount (\$5,000) ever paid to a new act at the rock ball-
(Continued on page 54)



An early gold album presentation with, from left: Nigel Olsson, Elton John, Bernie Taupin, Davey Johnstone, Dee Murray and (kneeling) John Reid and Rick Frio.

Congratulations to
H.R.H. E.H.J.

Love
Miss P.



Dick James:

Paving a Path for Elton's Success



Dick James

■ Throughout his long career Dick James has remained one of the most important and influential men in the music business. James, who once recorded as a solo artist for Decca and EMI, entered the publishing business in 1953 in partnership with Sidney Bron. In their eight years together, they had 28 hits, including five number one songs. In 1961, James formed his own music publishing company and in the following years has published and represented, among others, Lennon and McCartney, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Roger Cook and Roger Greenaway. James spoke with Record World in London and recalled the early developments that led to Elton's phenomenal success with Bernie Taupin as a composer, and alone as a superstar.

"Originally I met Elton via a number of people who were writing a variety of material—I can't remember all the names. There were in fact a couple of the guys from the Hollies, who with Elton were trying to write songs together, and we put their songs into an associated company at that time, and there were a couple of others who were collaborating with Elton in writing songs. Although we were doing demos and odd things with them, unfortunately nothing came to light at that time. The whole thing laid an egg. I'm going back to '65, maybe '66.

"Then around '67 Elton came in and said he'd like to work with me and he was looking for a collaborator to write lyrics and did I have any ideas. At the time there weren't many good lyric writers lying around doing nothing. He came in a few weeks or a few months later and said he was linking up with this boy Bernie Taupin who he had met through some sort of advert. I think this was when some record company had advertised for writers and they met but nothing developed out of that contact with the record company. I wound up meeting Bernie Taupin, and Elton and Bernie said they'd like to sign with me and wanted me to develop their songs. They were looking for a retainer, so I started off by giving them £10 a week each to keep body and soul together (it was a bit cheaper to live then).

"Elton used to go into the studio and demo the songs, and then we'd be listening to the songs and get some ideas of showing them around to artists, but of course some of these songs at that time one would have regarded as progressive—today they're pop—but at that time they were quite progressive. Not many people saw the depth of Bernie's lyrics as being right for pop songs. There was much more imagination about them—there always has been.

"At that time the thought of the artist was not in consideration because he was going into this 'Mickey Mouse' studio we had here that was merely a demo studio. It's capable of a lot more now, but then it was merely a demo studio. But whenever we sat down to listen to Elton's material it was quite obvious that his talent was much beyond making a demo. We got the idea within a short while that nobody was going to sing these songs better than he was singing them himself, because he was getting right inside them.

"So it became quite obvious that he was so capable of performing

these songs so professionally and so well, and it was coincidental that at that time I had a record company with Larry Page called Page One Records. We had a very good relationship and we were into quite a few successful things, including The Troggs, Plastic Penny, etc. I'd been with Larry by that time, three or four years I believe. I think it was becoming apparent that Larry wanted to stretch his imagination individually, his way, and it was in the cards that we were going to part company and go our own ways, in the nicest possible way of course.

"It was about this time that Stephen had the ambition to set up our own label, feeling that a lot of things he was doing were going into the Larry Page influence. Not that there was anything wrong with that, but Larry had his image of where he ought to go, so there were two different roads to go, so I believe it was on or about January 1, 1968 that we set up This Record Company, a production company; we didn't have the DJM label, and we started to produce Elton John and they went out under a deal that Stephen developed with Philips Records and a single went out on Fontana. Then we set up the DJM label and the first artist we in fact signed was Elton John.

"Of course we weren't immediately successful, and we suffered for quite a little while. However, we were getting a modicum of success via the BBC, what one would term a turntable hit, but we just couldn't sell the records. Then in 1970 we had the opportunity of sending Elton to the States; by then we'd got Russ Regan (who was then in charge of the Uni label at MCA), interested, and he signed Elton to the original licensing agreement from us to MCA's Uni label.

"I believe that was in '69, and then we sent Elton to the States in 1970. We sent him to The Troubadour. We gambled on a total budget of around \$10,000 which at that time was a lot of money—it's a lot less today, but at that time it was about £4,000, purely to send him and his band, Nigel and Dee, to The Troubadour for a week. It was The Troubadour in San Francisco and The Troubadour in L.A. San Francisco was a warm-up and there was nothing overly special about it, people liked what they heard and they warmed to it, but the L.A. was Pow—that was it, it started happening from there and everything boomeranged back into the U.K.

“ (Of) all the composers I've worked with, Elton John must stand as one of the greatest. ”

"Before that I could not really envisage the level of success he has since achieved, you never can. It was the same with The Beatles, in the early days when I had 'Please Please Me,' 'From Me To You' and even 'She Loves You,' they were great songs and they were great records and we were getting number ones, but it was impossible to envisage at that time that they were going to be the greatest thing ever to happen in show business. The incredible thing that I believe, with not too much fear of contradiction, is that Elton has outsold The Beatles on lps. The Beatles outsold Elton, I believe, on singles, because Elton, although he does sell a lot of singles, it's not astronomical. Where his sales are astronomical is with lps. The 'Greatest Hits' in the States alone exceeded four million on lp disc. With tape we haven't managed to add it all up yet, but it's well in excess of six million.

"It's very difficult to select one outstanding song from the 150 odd I publish because although I like rock, and I like pop, I'm a bit of a sucker for the melody and this is what I usually look for in writing anyway. That applies whether it's rock or pop; if it's got a melodic sort of motive to it I usually go for that rather than just a riff like the

(Continued on page 94)

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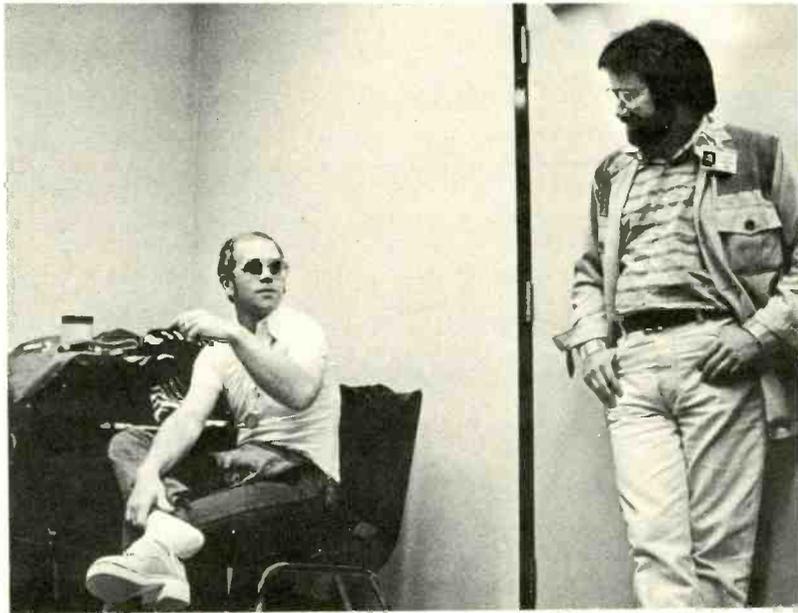
Howard Rose on Booking a Superstar

By BEN EDMONDS

■ LOS ANGELES—Howard Rose, of the Howard Rose Agency, was a booking agent at Chartwell Artists when he first heard the name Elton John. Chartwell at that time had a reciprocal artist responsibility arrangement with England's NEMS agency, and the British concern was featuring a young singer/songwriter they wanted very badly to break in the States. Rose was in on the most formative stages of that campaign. "At that time," he remembers, "I had a meeting with Russ Regan of Uni and somebody from Dick James' office in New York, with the idea of bringing Elton John to the States and hopefully breaking him here."

The story of that first abbreviated tour, the one centered around the Troubadour debut, is now legend, but Rose was also on hand to witness how the momentum snowballed from there. "The second time he was back, I was handling Derek & the Dominos as well, and had Elton on a show with them in Chicago. I can remember Eric Clapton and Bobby Whitlock running around saying, 'God, Elton John's gonna be on this show with us!' All of a sudden, Elton John had exploded, and everybody was excited to find out what he was all about." What triggered this explosion? "The records are the first thing. He made hit records and he made incredible records. But he also put on incredible performances; he's the entertainer. As we played cities over again every nine months, he just became bigger and bigger. It was a coordinated effort."

The exhaustive nature of Elton's tour formula has certainly been one of the keys to his success. And, where the road has been known to permanently disfigure many an overly ambitious performer, he's come through it unscathed. "A lot of artists," according to Rose, "don't particularly enjoy being on the road. It can be unbelievably taxing, both physically and emotionally, if you don't have other interests. But Elton has other interests. So he can go to Chicago and be entertained. He'll go to New



Elton with Howard Rose

York and make the rounds of the record stores, play tennis or just relax and go shopping. He's done this from the very beginning. He's always been able to entertain himself, and that's very important."

When Rose left IFA in November of 1973 and formed the Howard Rose Agency (which now handles EJ, David Crosby & Graham Nash, Queen, Dan Fogelberg, Kiki Dee and Steely Dan), he counted Elton John as not only his biggest supporter but also his first client. "From the beginning, he's been a great friend. He was the best man at my wedding, he's my child's godfather, so what more can I say? He's someone who's always been behind me, a very positive influence. He's very demanding, but the rewards are obviously there. He's the first to say 'good job,' but if it's not done well, he's also the first to be highly critical. He's very knowledgeable; he'll say 'here's an act that you should sign,' or 'this one's really happening.' He's most helpful on all fronts, a tremendous individual to have in your corner."

Though the job of booking an attraction as much in demand as Elton John might seem, from the outside, to be an easy one, there are problems to be wrestled with that only appear once an

artist has reached that lofty plateau. "People think," Rose asserted, "that the sky's the limit. We've had numerous offers, for example, to play the Superdome in New Orleans or the Ontario racetrack; it's gotten to that point. The thing is that you can get huge amounts of money, but they can be the wrong place. Ontario Speedway was the wrong place to play Elton John. There

are other considerations besides money; it's finding a proper venue for an artist. There are certain things you do at a career level to create excitement, to make shows an event." One little-known facet of Elton's ability to make shows an event is the fact that he's never cancelled a show.

In dealing with an artist as creative as Elton John, suitably creative approaches to all aspects of his career must be found. As it relates to his touring, Rose and the EJ organization devised a unique concept during the 1974 tour. Utilizing the services of the Starship, they set up the tour in geographic slices, each of which made use of a central base for that leg of the activity. The crew would fly out to the scene of each concert, and then retreat to the base of operations after it was over. Rose claims that the resulting minimalization of travel aggravation, aside from making the day-to-day business of touring much easier on all concerned, also allowed for the comfortable addition of three or four extra dates. He must be right, because this strategy has become de rigeur for large rock & roll expeditions into the heartland of America.

Tony King (Continued from page 26)

RW: OK, but with all the various projects he undertakes, how does Elton still manage to keep up with all that goes on at Rocket?

King: He seems to've mastered the art of doing a thousand different things within a 24 hour day. He can get up in the morning, read three trade papers, get the sales figures, ask about the artists, do two hours of shopping and have lunch with somebody, play three hours of tennis, watch football on television, go on stage and entertain people for three hours, talk to people after the show and then go to bed. I don't know how he does it, but he does. That's what makes Elton John so successful and unique. He's not having nervous breakdowns every five minutes or being arrested or doing those things that popstars are known to do. And he's criticized by some people because they think of him as being a little cold or something, a machine, but he's not a machine. That's his life, so he leads a very varied life. He likes it to be that way because that's what feeds his artistry. Every area that he's involved in affects his music in some way. Being into football on Saturday afternoons or going shopping or hanging out with Billie Jean King may not be considered proper rock & roll behavior, but he's setting new patterns. He's doing things that no one else in his position has ever done, and that's what makes him so interesting. He isn't like your everyday rock & roll star. He's an intelligent, aware person who's interested in what's going on and then gets out there and into areas outside of his own career. You can get too wrapped up in your own career, and that's where it gets dangerous, especially if you're an artist.

Tommy

Congratulations
&
Best Wishes
from
Robert Stigwood
to the
Pinball Wizard





Connie Pappas: A Constant Level of Enthusiasm

By ELIOT SEKULER

■ Connie Pappas' initiation to the record business was accomplished via a procession of jobs, mostly secretarial, at such establishments as Atlantic Records, Sunset Sound and United Artists, ultimately leading her to destiny in the form of yet another secretarial gig for then-IFA agent Howard Rose. Those readers who still profess faith in the more conventional means of upward mobility may be dismayed to learn that Ms. Pappas, by her own admission, was somewhat less than dazzling as a typist and even less agile with shorthand. Whether by reason of her administrative abilities, a curious fascination for detail, or her efficient-but-charming telephone demeanor, Ms. Pappas nevertheless managed to make herself into a key fixture in the Howard Rose office for a period of two years, a period coinciding with the agent's growing involvement with Elton John.

Because Elton's management in 1972—which was being handled in principle by Dick James, in fact, by John Reid—was based in England and lacked an American liaison, Howard Rose's responsibilities broadened beyond those usually assumed by a booking agent. As Rose's assistant, Connie Pappas was frequently called upon to execute Reid's decisions as they related to tours, relations with MCA Records and other assorted details. When the Elton John Bunch finally opened the American office of Rocket Records in 1973, they chose Connie Pappas to head the new operation. By John Reid's account, Ms. Pappas was the person most familiar with what had to be done and with whom; she had been doing it all along anyway and the choice was a natural one. Ms. Pappas didn't find it so natural: "I couldn't believe it," she claims, "I was totally amazed by the whole thing."

Her amazement was short-lived, curtailed, probably, by Rocket's frenetic activities during that first year and a half of operation. Kiki Dee was breaking, Neil Sedaka had been signed and Elton John was constantly on the road or recording. The expanding roster of the label as well as John Reid's growing management interests led eventually to the formation of a separate company, John Reid Enterprises.

In the following interview, Ms. Pappas talks about the frightening, the exciting and the day-to-day aspects of working with Rocket, Reid and Elton John.

Record World: Despite your prior experience, by most standards you came into this business pretty cold. What was the most difficult aspect of adjusting to managing a record company and several important artists?

Connie Pappas: It was difficult when I started at the label because most of my experience was more management-oriented, a result of what Howard had been doing with Elton. When I came to Rocket, I had to call up and say, "Hi, MCA Records, I'm here and I'll have to tell you what needs to be done," and that was uneasy during the first month or so of our relationship. They were a little bit leery until we finally sorted it out. I was still involved with management while at Rocket, so there wasn't too much of a transition to make when John Reid Enterprises went into effect, but it's still an amazing thing to sit there and have people requesting things from Elton through you. The most unbelievable deals are proposed, the requests go on and on and some of them are hysterical.

RW: Tell us some . . .

Pappas: We get requests for Elton to play at high school graduations, requests for him to perform at prisons and political rallies and those are just the legitimate ones. They all have to be answered personally with apologies for Elton's busy schedule. It's time-consuming.

RW: With which of the John Reid Enterprises clients do you work closely?

Pappas: We have Elton, Kiki Dee, Bernie Taupin and now, Queen: I work with all of them.

RW: At this point, what aspects of Elton's career do you become involved with?

“The most unbelievable deals are proposed, the requests go on and on and some of them are hysterical.”

Pappas: It's everything. Once Elton's decided to go on the road and Howard has booked the dates, we go on from there, just as if we'd rented the various facilities. We always maintain total control over what goes on with the show, from the road crew to staging, the sound, the lights, the security and everything like that. In terms of his recording, I'm most involved when he's working here in America and always in terms of outlining what we want from a promotion and merchandising campaign for the album. When "Captain Fantastic" came out, for example, we planned five months in advance how the ads would be laid out and where we would place them. We worked closely with MCA.

RW: Up until this point, what has Bernie Taupin's management entailed?

Pappas: Recently, Bernie's been recording an album and has been making preparations for the release of his book, "The One Who Writes The Words," which will be out this spring. Until this point, though, Bernie's involvement with Rocket and John Reid Enterprises has been fairly low-key because he and his wife Maxine get themselves where they want to go. They join us for parts of the tours, they come to some of the sessions but usually don't stay for the whole recording. But lately, Bernie's becoming more involved with the label as a director and more and more involved with the band. He came along for the whole tour last year, which is great; the band considers him to be an integral part of the group, which he is, of course, through his lyrics.

RW: You mentioned before that Elton is constantly besieged with requests for benefits by political groups and the like. Why does he shy away from that sort of thing?

Pappas: It's partially because Elton isn't a citizen of the United States and it's awkward for him to align himself with any kind of political group over here. So if we do a benefit, we'll prefer to do it for a health cause, like the Jules Stein Eye Clinic. That was something that Elton really could identify with because he has a valid eye problem and we knew that the money was really going to be taken and put into eye research. We did it as tightly as we could with the result being that the cost incurred to us out of the \$150,000 we raised was very minimal; the Eye Foundation got well over \$100,000 and we were really pleased about it. We worked very hard on it, in many ways harder than we would have worked on a big show. To me it was almost as difficult, in a sense, as the concert we promoted at Dodger Stadium. In working on a small scale with an artist as big as Elton, you have to be cautious and protect him properly.

RW: The Dodger Stadium concert was unique in a way. Was it a high point for you?

Pappas: That was really the ultimate in concerts for us because we actually promoted that, something that we'd never done in America before. We've worked with quite a few promoters in Los Angeles and we respect them very much. We'd worked with Sepp Donahower and with Rissmiller and Wolf and they each did a date along the tour with us. Even Bill Graham wanted the Los Angeles date, though. They all told us that we wouldn't be able to get Dodger Stadium, because that place is like hallowed ground and the Dodgers don't really need the money. They didn't need to have wild rock & roll concerts there.

(Continued on page 94)



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Dave Croker on Rocket's Launching

■ Although his appointment as general manager of Rocket in the UK was made a relatively short time ago, Dave Croker's association with Elton John goes back to the beginning, as he recently revealed to *Record World* in London.

Record World: How did you first become involved with Elton and Rocket?

Dave Croker: Six years ago I worked in a record shop and at the time I bought a copy of the "Empty Sky" album which I really liked. Then about six months later somebody asked me if I could get a song to a publisher and the only person I knew who had anything to do with publishing was Gus Dudgeon, so I called him up and said "Hey, I've got a song I'd like somebody to hear," and he said he'd take it across to somebody in the professional department. So I was left looking around his office and Gus is one of these very methodical people who stick huge wall charts up everywhere outlining his next few months' plans and I suddenly noticed the name Elton John, all along this board. Gus confirmed that he was about to record Elton and asked if I knew him. I said no, not personally, but I really liked the first album and he said he was really excited about the project, played me some of the demos, and asked me along to the sessions. So I went along, and I met Elton and I've always had a relationship, on a friendly basis, ever since. I didn't hear from him for a while after that but then I started working at EMI and a voice on the phone said "Can I have a Delfonics single please" and it was Elton John, and that was it. I went to all his very early gigs in this country, the very first ones he did before he went to the Troubadour, every one I think.

RW: What sort of venues were they?

Croker: The first one he played was the Pop Proms at the Round House, at which T. Rex topped the bill. Brinsley Schwarz and Curved Air were also on. There were some godawful places in Wales we went to for the day. At 10:30 they came out of the pub and had fish and chips at the front of the stage. There were colleges, small venues, very small halls, in Leeds, St. Mary's College in Twickenham, The Marquee, The Round House, The Country Club in Hampstead (where there were no pedals on the piano) and Mothers, which was an important venue at that time.

RW: Do you recall the beginning of the "dressing up" idea as a conscious effort to project himself more dynamically? Did he feel it wasn't sufficient just to write and play pretty songs?

Croker: I think he's just a showman. It's in his personality so he would obviously want to put that across on stage. But he certainly believed at that time that we were just coming out of the jeans and t-shirt, 'let's all get up on stage and have a jam session' and he really went out to market himself in that manner. He didn't want to give just music, he wanted to give his all to the public.

RW: Is there anything else up his sleeve, to take that even further?

Croker: He's always thinking, you just can't stop him doing it. You can't say, "Right Elton, we're going to have complete cut off," because he can't. It's impossible. He's certainly always thinking. How far can he go? Well, he wears the most elaborate costumes I've ever seen and every time he comes up with something new. Short of walking on stark naked I don't think he could really shock me with anything he wore, but I still expect him to come out with more brilliant costumes.

RW: Has this ever backfired on him in any way?

Croker: In the very early days they thought in was a bit peculiar, I must confess. A large segment of the public took some time getting used to it. The press as well. They don't like gimmicks, it's very strange, I don't know why.

RW: John Reid was working at EMI at about the same as you. Did your relationship subsequently have any direct bearing on your ending up at Rocket?

Croker: Oh very much so, because I became friends with John



Reid as well. We've been good friends over the past four or five years as he went to EMI about six weeks after I started. There were a couple of earlier occasions when I was asked to go to America to open the office there and for a variety of reasons things didn't come together. Then out of the blue one day—well the phone call wasn't so much out of the blue because of the friendship—but out of the blue he suddenly said, "You've got to come over here right now." It was on a Friday afternoon. I went across to see him and he told me about the changes that had been going on over the past month and would I consider coming in to look after the UK operation for Rocket. I'd been at EMI for four years then and I'd had a number of offers, some of which were interesting, and I'd really thought about them but I had no hesitation in doing this. I went away and thought if I've got no hesitation that means I really want to do it. I wasn't thinking about it at all. I was just going to put my heart and soul into it. It made me think about the other things I'd nearly taken and I thought, well if I had to think about it I should never have taken them so I probably made the right decision.

RW: At that time when you started here did you anticipate working on Elton as an artist as well as with him as a record executive?

Croker: By the time I arrived at Rocket, yes. The decision had already been made for Elton to move over to Rocket on this side of the world. I came just at the time where he'd re-negotiated the deal with MCA just for North America. I'd known at the time so that was no surprise to me, but certainly at the start of Rocket it wasn't envisaged that Elton would go on the label. I think we had to prove that we were a capable working unit before we could even consider taking Elton for the label.

RW: With the introduction of an artist with such an incredible history of success do you think there's any danger that other acts might be somewhat overshadowed?

Croker: I'd like to think that Rocket does its best to put all its acts in the market place. Obviously there will be huge campaigns for Elton but it's just the same as with every other record company—we're here as a business. We're not here just to pander to Elton, we're here to maximize his sales the same way we would go out to market to maximize the other artists' sales.

RW: "Rock of the Westies" received a few dubious reviews in the UK. Has this put any pressure on Rocket and Elton regarding the next album—his first for the label?

Croker: I have no fears whatsoever. All artists go through these periods, when they're not the "bee's knees" at the time. Anybody who picks up a copy of "Rock of the Westies" and sticks it on in

(Continued on page 91)

From the desk of your friend:
RUSS REGAN

Dear Elton,

Thank you for giving so much happiness
to the world. Thank you for giving
so much happiness to us. Thank you
for being the beautiful person you
are and may our friendship last
forever.

Russ & Judy Regan



WHERE YOUR FRIENDS ARE



For Jules Stein Eye Institute Pride and Purpose Yield Rewards

By HOWARD NEWMAN

■ NEW YORK—Dr. Jules C. Stein, the founder of MCA, Inc. was born April 26, 1896 in South Bend, Indiana. Dr. Stein formed MCA in 1924 after he had graduated from Rush Medical College in Chicago, which was at the time a division of the University of Chicago. He had a brief, but very successful career as an ophthalmologist, becoming the chief resident in ophthalmology at Cook County Hospital in Chicago and writing a treatise on "Telescopic Spectacles as Aides To Poor Vision" which is still a highly respected instruction manual in this field. While practicing medicine, Dr. Stein would find the time to also work on booking musicians into hotels, cafes and summer resorts. His foresight into the growing area of talent management proved to be the basis for the founding of MCA. In fact, Dr. Stein's booking agency was so successful that he gave up practice of medicine by 1926 to devote full time to the entertainment business.

All through the years of growth which saw MCA branch out from a talent agency to a total media giant Jules Stein has maintained a deep commitment to ophthalmology. In 1960, urged on by Mrs. Stein and New York attorney Robert E. McCormick, he joined the latter in founding Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc. (RPB), a voluntary organization dedicated to prevent blindness and eye disease. Dr. Stein still serves as chairman of RPB and is active in its efforts to accelerate the pace of eye research.

Stein told **Record World**, "Research To Prevent Blindness works with 50 ophthalmological institutes around the country and acts as a catalyst in promoting the growth of these institutes." It is the nation's leading non-profit organization in eye research. This preeminent position developed as Stein used his years of business acumen to foster a national survey of eye research facilities which investi-



Elton and Jules Stein

gated current inadequacies in research, laboratory space, equipment, manpower and financing. He then directed the development of programs to combat these shortcomings.

An RPB laboratory construction program was instituted to stimulate the building of eye research centers across America. Four centers have been built with RPB support. They are located at the University of Louisville, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Columbia University in New York and the Jules Stein Eye Institute at UCLA, in which Elton John is most involved. There are also two RPB institutes under construction; one at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and the other at the Neurosurgery Center in Houston.

The Jules Stein Eye Institute is the largest structure ever built at one time for eye research, education and patient care. Dr. Stein proudly states, "We're a comprehensive, self-sustaining institute. We have care for in and out patients and our fees are nominal. Patients pay what they can afford. We see about 40,000 patients a

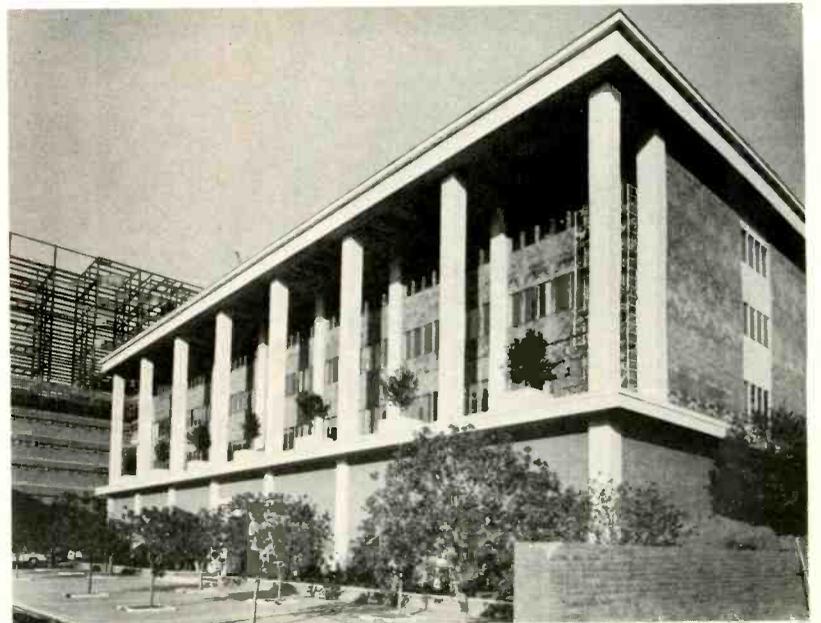
year and we're the only eye institute in Los Angeles that offers this complete service."

The Institute has been offering its services to the Los Angeles community since 1966, but it was in the planning stages for four years. Dr. and Mrs. Stein person-

ally directed the design, planning and equipping of the Eye Institute, as well as contributing \$2,500,000 of their own money to the building. The Steins were also instrumental in directing the fund raising campaign which raised \$6 million for this worthy cause. Dr. Stein noted that many Hollywood celebrities were extremely generous with their gifts.

Elton John's return to the Troubadour, the site of his initial American acceptance, was a special benefit engagement for the Jules Stein Eye Institute on August 25, 1975. The opening night audience who paid \$250 a ticket per person included Cher, Hugh Hefner, Barbi Benton, Mae West, Tony Curtis, Ringo Starr, Helen Reddy and the David Janssens. Despite the \$250 price another charity show had to be scheduled due to the tremendous demand. Coupled with the next two nights' showings at \$25 a seat Elton John raised \$150 thousand for the Eye Institute.

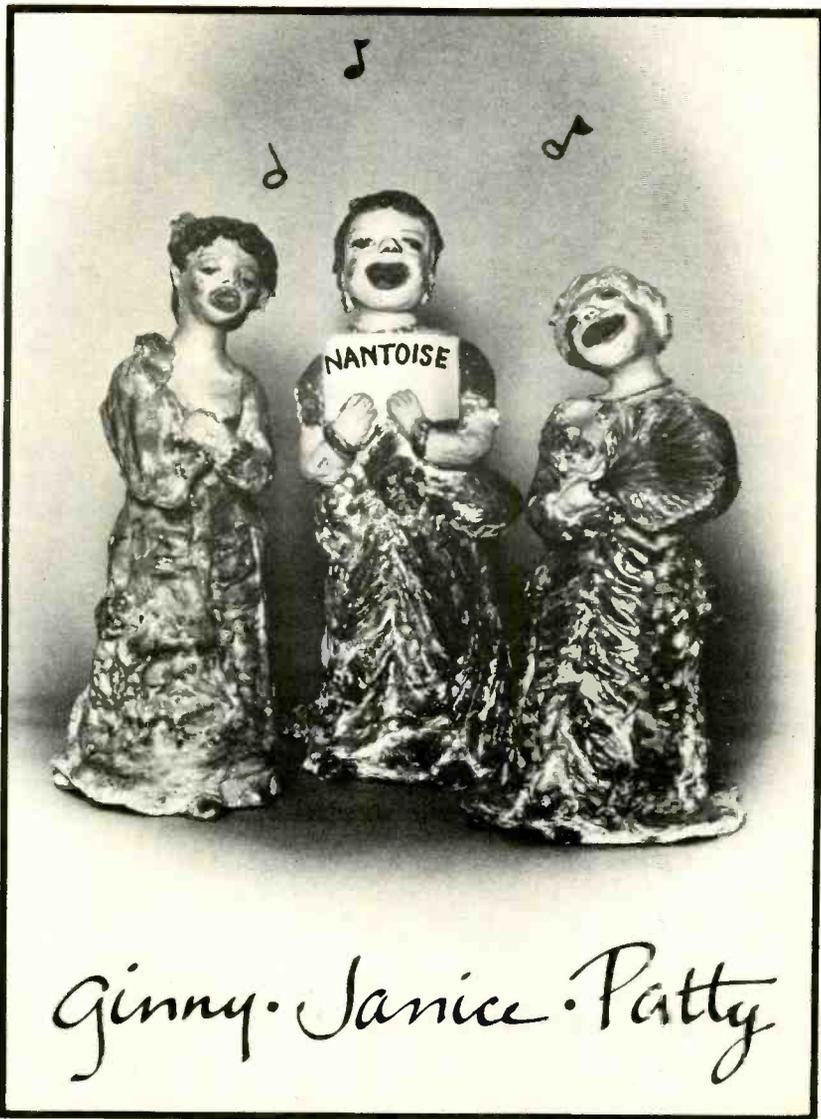
These funds are needed for both the maintenance and expansion of the Institute. The complicated technology and extensive research that is necessary to keep
(Continued on page 120)



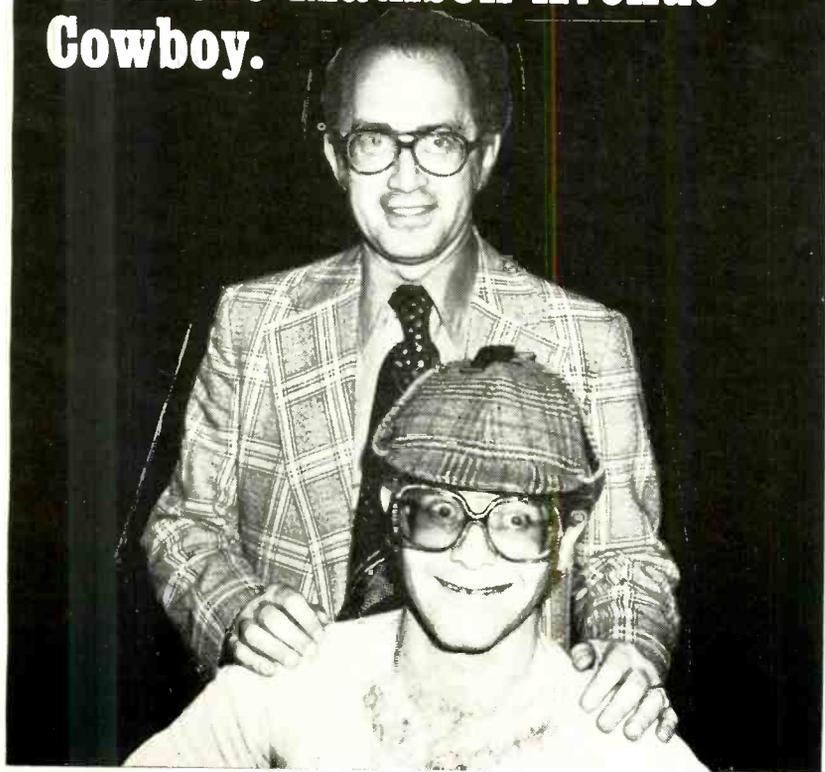
The Jules Stein Eye Institute

Le Restaurant

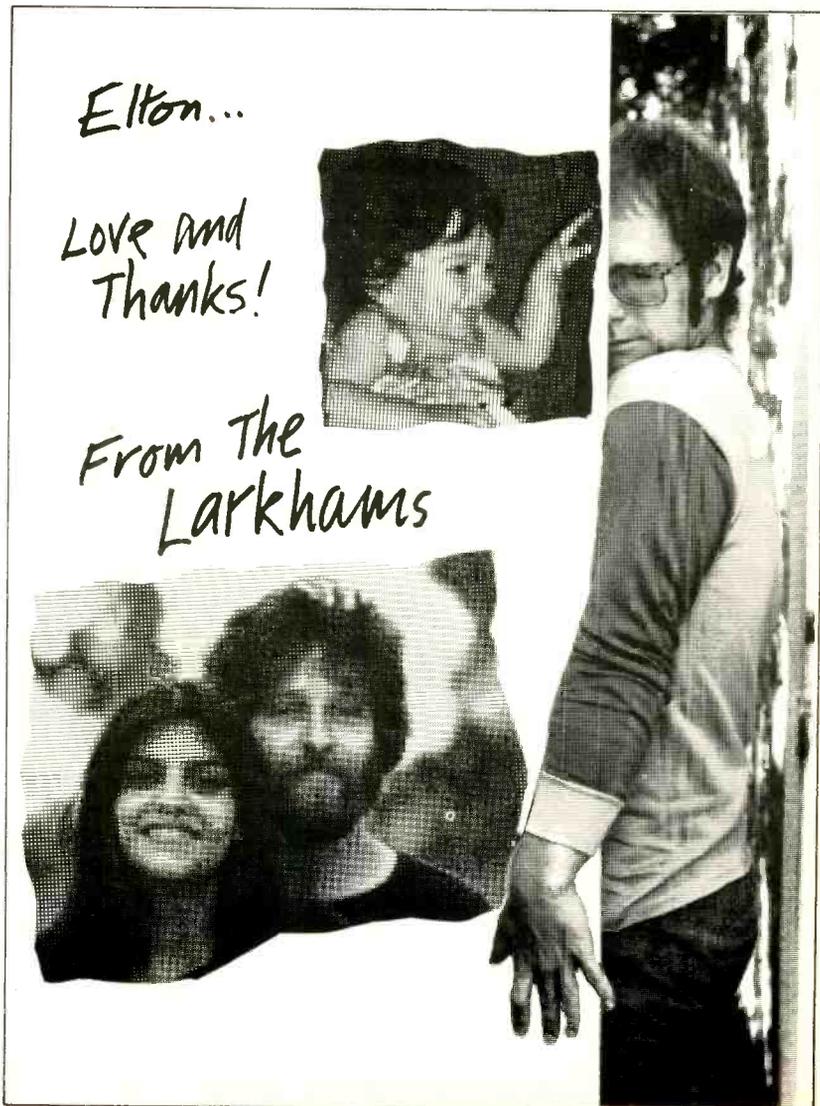
To A Special Friend From Michel



To Captain Fantastic
from the Madison Avenue
Cowboy.



All best wishes from all your friends at the
PHILIP STOGEL ADVERTISING AGENCY
NEW YORK CITY.





Russ Regan:

The Man Who Brought Elton to America

By ELIOT SEKULER

■ LOS ANGELES — Although Elton John's first single release in the United States, "Lady Samantha," was on the Bell Records label, Russ Regan, former Uni Records vice president, is generally credited with being Elton's "discoverer" on this side of the Atlantic. Regan not only released the first successful Elton records in this country, but tirelessly plugged the then-fledgling artist with his characteristic enthusiasm. Almost everybody who came into contact with Regan in the spring of 1970 has some recollection of the executive's prophetic optimism: "Russ came over to me one day," recalled RKO programming VP, Paul Drew, "and he said that he'd seen a guy who's going to be bigger than Elvis." At the time, some just shrugged their shoulders. In the years since, as Elton has become the biggest star in the record business and Regan has left Uni to become founder and president of 20th Century Records, people listen a little more closely to Regan's prophesies.

As Regan tells it, the first time he'd heard the name Elton John was over breakfast at the Continental Hyatt House here, during an informal meeting with the then-representative of DJM Records in the U.S., Len Hodes. "He was telling me about this artist who he really liked and believed in and that particular morning I wasn't really in the mood to sit and listen to anybody. But out of courtesy I asked to hear him." Hodes gave Regan a copy of the "Empty Sky" lp and the "Lady Samantha" single, which were taken to the Uni office. "I just put them off on a shelf somewhere until about 5 o'clock that afternoon. Then I played the album and found that I really liked Elton as an artist and especially liked the song "Skyline Pidgeon" from the "Empty Sky" album. It was 6 o'clock by then and I realized, "My God, they're out shopping this artist. What if he's called some other record company?"

The suspense was short lived. Hodes had called other record



Russ Regan

companies but was unable to get through that day; a lot of people in Los Angeles would probably kick themselves later on.

"What isn't really widely known is that I had plans to leave Uni Records at about that time to form my own company with Elton John as my first artist. But MCA convinced me that my future was at Uni Records so I stayed there and formed another label called Congress Records. Our first record was "Smile A Little Smile For Me"—a million-seller—and I also put out our first Elton single on the Congress label, although it didn't hit. Then I got the "Elton

John" album in one day from England.

Regan's reaction to the "Elton John" lp was to stop work at Uni Records. Phones were entrusted to the answering services, and all personnel were summoned to the vice president's office. "That album *totally* knocked my lights out," says Regan, reaching for superlatives. "It was such a powerful new thing to me, to find an artist and an album like that. Everybody just listened, and when they'd heard it, the room was buzzing; they couldn't believe it."

"Elton John" was released in late June of 1970. On August 25 of that year, Elton opened his now-famous debut engagement at the Troubadour, and according to Regan, "45 minutes later, it was all over. You could just feel the electricity in the air; it was probably one of the most incredible evenings of my entire life." Uni released what was considered a two-sided hit record soon thereafter: "Your Song b/w "Take Me To The Pilot." "Your Song" was immediately picked up as the "A" side; it took off, the album took

off, Elton came back to America for an incredible tour and became the superstar he is today," recounted Regan.

"I've always had enormous respect for Elton as an artist and I still treasure his friendship. Elton's never forgotten; he's never stopped saying 'thanks.' He realizes, I think, that the record business is a team effort and I loved being part of the Elton John team for two and a half years. I'm still one of his biggest fans.

"Elton is always listening to other artists' music, and I think that that's one sign of greatness—when an artist can be a fan of other artists instead of being totally wrapped up in themselves. He always seems to come in when something is on the verge of popping at 20th Century Records; his timing is perfect. He came up when Barry White's first record came out, when Ambrosia first came out and when 'Love's Theme' was released and he sat down and listened to the entire Dan Hill album. He's a total record person on top of being a great human being."



Elton and John Reid

An Elton John Discography

1968

I've Been Loving You*/ Here's To The Next Time*

1969

Rock and Roll Madonna*/ Grey Seal*

Lady Samantha*/ It's Me That You Need*

EMPTY SKY (UK)

1970

ELTON JOHN

Border Song/ Bad Side Of The Moon

TUMBLEWEED CONNECTION

1971

FRIENDS

11.17.70

MADMAN ACROSS THE WATER

Tiny Dancer/ Razor Face

Levon/ Goodbye

1972

HONKY CHATEAU

Rocket Man/ Suzie (Dramas)

Honky Cat/ Slave

Crocodile Rock/ Elderberry Wine

*Denotes not available in lp form.

1973

DON'T SHOOT ME, I'M ONLY THE PIANO PLAYER

Daniel/ Skyline Pigeon*

Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting/ Jack Rabbit*/
Whenever You're Ready*

GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Step Into Christmas*/ Ho, Ho, Ho, Who'd Be A
Turkey at Christmas*

Candle In The Wind/ Bennie and the Jets (UK)

Bennie and the Jets/ Harmony

CARIBOU

Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me/ Sick City*

The Bitch Is Back/ Cold Highway*

ELTON JOHN'S GREATEST HITS

EMPTY SKY

Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*/ One Day At A
Time*

1975

Philadelphia Freedom*/ I Saw Her Standing There*

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC AND THE BROWN DIRT
COWBOY

Someone Saved My Life Tonight/ House Of Cards*

Island Girl/ Sugar On The Floor*

ROCK OF THE WESTIES

1976

Grow Some Funk Of Your Own/ I Feel Like A Bullet
(In The Gun Of Robert Ford)

Elton John can also be heard on: "It Ain't Easy" (WB) by Long John Baldry, "Smiling Face" (Rocket) by Davey Johnstone, "Nigel Olsson" (Rocket), "Smiler" (Mercury) by Rod Stewart, "Loving and Free" (Rocket) by Kiki Dee, "Goodnight Vienna" (Apple) by Ringo Starr, "Walls and Bridges" (Apple) by John Lennon, "The Hungry Years" (Rocket) by Neil Sedaka, "Sweet Deceiver" (Island-UK) by Kevin Ayers and "Tommy" (Polydor).

Elton produced "Loving and Free" for Kiki Dee, and one side of Long John Baldry's "It Ain't Easy" and "Everything Stops For Tea."

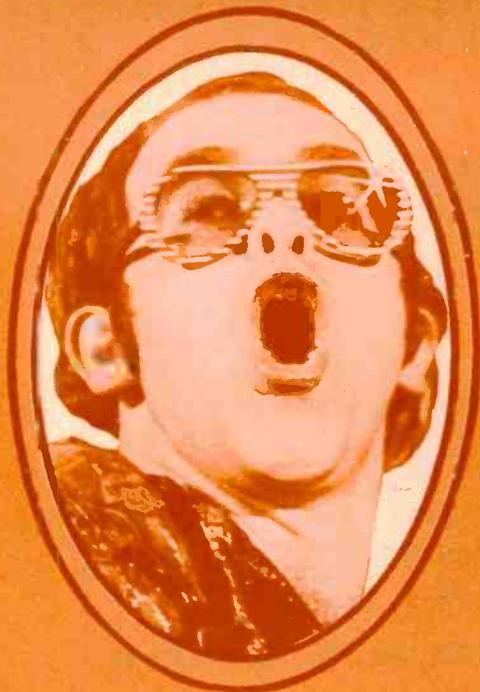
Some of the first albums to feature Elton John-Bernie Taupin material were: "Suitable For Framing" (ABC/

Dunhill) by Three Dog Night, "Orange Bicycle" (UK), "Currency" by Plastic Penny (UK), and "Gasoline Alley" by Rod Stewart (Mercury).

"Lady Samantha" was included on Sire's "History Of British Rock Vol. II" and "Rock and Roll Madonna" on "Vol. III"

Elton recorded an instrumental album titled, "The Bread and Beer Band" with members of the Hollies, Caleb Quaye and producer Chris Thomas but it was never released . . . he has also sung backup vocals with Lesley Duncan and Madeline Bell on Tom Jones' "Daughter Of Darkness" and "Delilah" . . . and played piano on the Hollies' "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother."

The Elton



ELTON JOHN

"My mother came home one afternoon with two discs. They were Elvis' 'Heartbreak Hotel' and Bill Haley's 'ABC Boogie.' They were the first two big influences in my life. I loved banging away at those two numbers on the piano.

"It was in a magazine in a barbershop that I read about Elvis and the way he performed. It seemed incredible. Then I saved my pocket money and bought Little Richard's 'She's Got It' and 'The Girl Can't Help It.'"

Elton worked for the Mills Music Publishing Co. during the day while at night he played in a group called Bluesology, "after a disc by a French guitarist, Django Rheinhardt.

"An agent saw the band and asked if we'd be interested in backing American stars on tour in Britain. We were taken on to back Major Lance which is when I quit my job at Mills. After Major Lance, we backed Patti LaBelle, Doris Troy, the Ink Spots and Billy Stewart.

"We were a snobbish soul band in our own right. We'd play Jimmy Witherspoon numbers and think we were God's gift. We'd play obscure records like Daryl Fletcher's 'The Pain Gets A Little Bit Deeper' and 'Knock On Wood.'"

BLUESOLOGY

REG DWIGHT
(piano)

STUART BROWN
(guitar)

Early in 1967, Bluesology was about to tour Sweden when they met Long John Baldry at the Cromwellian Pub, a popular musician's hang-out. Baldry who was already an experienced bluesman, asked them to join him after their tour.

"He was already writing songs at the time but they were hackneyed and nothing like those he was to do later," Baldry said of Elton. "It was not until after he left the group and was doing demos that I realized what was going to happen."

Steve Brown, a promotion man for DJM produced Elton's first few records and encouraged him to follow his instincts rather than make commercial concessions. Critics raved over these records, but they didn't sell. "I wasn't doing gigs. I hadn't got a band together," Elton said. "In fact, when 'Lady Samantha' came out, it was a turntable hit, not a real financial success. And then 'It's Me That You Need' came out, followed by 'Empty Sky' and they got good reviews but didn't sell. I also made another single called 'Rock and Roll Madonna,' which was a bit of a disaster."

Brown then asked to be replaced as a producer and brought in Paul Buckmaster, an arranger, classical composer and cellist who worked on Bowie's "Space Oddity" and had a hit of his own with a song called "Love At First Sight" by the group, Sounds Nice. Buckmaster, who was enthused about working with Elton, introduced him to Gus Dudgeon, a producer he was working closely with.

ELTON JOHN GROUP (1970)

ELTON JOHN
(piano)

DEE MURRAY
(bass)

NIGEL OLSSON
(drums)

DAVEY JOHNSTONE
(guitar)

RAY COOPER
(percussion)

Elton, looking to make a "different sort of lp" in February 1972, went to the Chateau d'Herouville in France to record, bringing with him 20 year old Scots guitarist Davey Johnstone who was previously with the group Magna Carta. The result was "Honky Chateau," an album in which the emphasis of Elton's music shifted away from string laden ballads and back to rock and roll.

"Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player," Elton's second Chateau album, was released late in 1972, with "Daniel," the first single off the lp, hitting the top of the charts within weeks after its release, marking the arrival of Elton — superstar. "I wouldn't have said 'Don't Shoot Me' was my 'Sergeant Pepper' — I suppose you could say so in terms of popularity but of all the albums I've made I like that one the least. I like a lot of songs on it, I just don't like the continuity or the flow of the album. There's a couple of things on it I was trying to test, and in a way, it worked."

Because of their working relationship with DJM, Bell Records had the first option on a U.S. lp, but turned it down. Russ Regan, who was working for MCA at the time, heard "Empty Sky" and signed Elton to Uni for a modest one year contract with an option for three more years. The first Gus Dudgeon produced lp was started early in 1970 and was completed in 55 hours of studio time.

The Elton John band, with Nigel Olsson on drums and Dee Murray of The Mirage on bass made their debut at London's Roundhouse in April, before their first visit to the States in September. "We treated him as if it was an Elvis Presley opening in Vegas even though nobody had ever heard of Elton John," said his U.S. publicist, Norm Winter. "People all over began to say, 'My God, what is an Elton John? A toilet?'"

By November, over one quarter million copies of the "Elton John" album had been sold in addition to thousands of copies of the "Empty Sky" lp which was available only as an import.

Elton made a successful tour of the U.S. from August to October 1973, breaking house records previously held by Elvis and the Stones including one date at Kansas City's Arrow Head Stadium, drawing 28,000 people.

He also introduced his Rocket Records label at this time with lps by Kiki Dee, Longdancer, Davey Johnstone and Mike Silver. Elton's own records continued to come out under the MCA banner. "If I'm on the label and an act doesn't make it, they're gonna say, 'Well, you spend more time on EJ' which would obviously happen if I'm on the label. So it's just easier for me to stay out—and it's more fun say, to produce Kiki Dee, who's bubbling under the Top 50. It's more fun that way . . . I might go on Rocket eventually, but not until we've broken at least two or three acts."

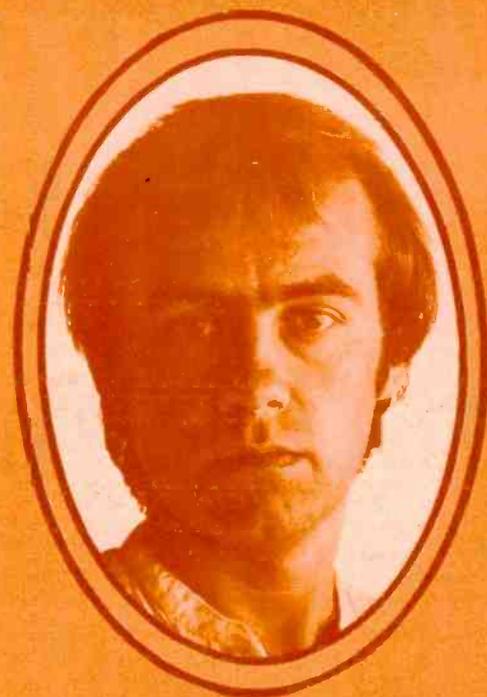
ELTON JOHN GROUP (1975)

ELTON JOHN
(piano)

DAVEY JOHNSTONE
(guitar)

RAY COOPER
(percussion)

John Years



Elton answered an ad that was placed in the New Musical Express on June 17, 1967 looking for "artistes/composers, singer — musicians" and was granted an audition. "Liberty asked me to sing five songs but all I knew was 'He'll Have To Go' and 'I Love You Because.' I hadn't sung in years and I was awful. They turned me down and I don't blame them."

Bernie Taupin who saw the same NME ad wrote a letter to Liberty enclosing some samples of his poetry, but decided against mailing it and threw it in the garbage. His mother, who had more faith in the writing abilities of her 17 year old son, retrieved the letter from the wastebasket and posted it.

Ray Williams at Liberty showed Elton a couple of Taupin's poems. "I was impressed by Bernie's work," Elton said later, "I was keen to team up with him although the way I was feeling, I'd have been keen to team up with anyone."

ELTON DEAN
(saxophone)

JOHN BALDRY
(vocals)

BERNIE TAUPIN

"I realized Reg Dwight was hopeless. It sounded like a library assistant. One of the guys in Bluesology was Elton Dean. I figured I could take part of his name but not all of it or he'd kick up. Later I thought of changing it again but nobody could come up with anything better."

The first John-Taupin songs were published by the Hollies' music company. Then late in 1967 through a business link with their company and Dick James, The Beatles' publisher, John and Taupin were permitted the use of James' four track studio to make demos. Caleb Quaye, a session guitarist, served as their sound engineer and brought the demo recordings to the personal attention of James. After listening to the recordings, James signed Elton and Bernie to a writing contract, and signed Elton to his label as a singer, keeping him on a \$25 a week retainer. This was enough to persuade Elton to quit Bluesology. The first record released under this new agreement was "I've Been Loving You" which was produced by Quaye for Dick James and released in the U.K. on the Philips label.

The song was entered in the 1968 Eurovision Song Contest, which prompted Elton and Bernie to complete an album of songs that was never released because "it wasn't commercial." A period followed in which Elton made demos of other people's songs and sang backup on their records. The first big break came when Roger Cook recorded the John-Taupin composition, "Skyline Pigeon" as his first solo single in August, 1968.

Elton's first movie spot was in Marc Bolan's "Born To Boogie." He was offered a starring role in Ken Russell's "Tommy" but declined in favor of the Pinball Wizard part. "I was offered a lead in 'Tommy,'" he said. "Not Tommy, but the part that Oliver Reed has. But there was no way that I wanted to get into that."

Elton's "Caribou" album marked a shift in recording scenery and included two more chart topping singles, "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" and "The Bitch Is Back."

Also at this time, Elton signed his colossal \$8 million contract with MCA, making him the highest paid recording artist in history.

"I can't really see myself settling down till I'm about 33. There's a lot of my life left. If I settle down, I'd have to slow down too. I'm at the top of the heap, I'm really enjoying what I'm doing. But I won't be doing 'Crocodile Rock' in six year's time. I don't want to become a pathetic rock and roller and take a slow climb down, like a lot of people do. When I'm 40, I don't want to be charging around the countryside doing concerts. My real ambition in life is to make enough money to retire and become chairman of my favorite soccer team, the Watford Football Club."

Bryan Forbes, a noted filmmaker, actor, writer, producer and director filmed a documentary titled, "Elton John and Bernie Taupin Say Goodbye Norma Jean and Other Things" which was first screened in England on December 12, 1973 before it was aired on American TV in spring, 1974.

Elton continued to dominate the charts with each subsequent album release from his "Greatest Hits" to "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy" to his latest, "Rock of the Westies." The latter being the first album recorded with his new expanded line-up which re-united him with Caleb Quaye. Elton also enlisted the aid of Kiki Dee's drummer Roger Pope and keyboard / synthesizer extraordinaire James Newton Howard who was most recently in Melissa Manchester's band.

Elton's third Chateau album, the double "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" was recorded in Paris in late 1973. The album and its title track which was pulled as a single, both subsequently went on to top the U.S. and U.K. charts.

ROGER POPE
(drums)

KENNY PASSARELLI
(bass)

JAMES NEWTON HOWARD
(keyboards)

CALEB QUAYE
(guitar)



The Collective Image of Elton on Album

By ROBERT ADELS

■ The chart and sales success patterns of each of the twelve albums in the Elton John catalogue—and the resultant geometrically-increasing notoriety of the creator—go a long way in quantifying the wallop of rock's most potent superstar punch for the seventies. An appreciation of the music behind his dozen lps also indicates that Elton John's album output represents a qualitative milestone for rock as well as a continuously-building series of realized high points, each developed to the fullest.

For in a decade relatively devoid of performers capable of generating two-pronged public interest—in their image as personalities and in their personalized music craft as well—Elton

John appears the exception extraordinaire. Strutting tall in his princely platforms, looking multi-colored through his stunning specs, Elton John approaches as the musical master of and the success standard for all he surveys.

One only has to feel comfortable dealing with huge numbers to cope with the quantitative side of Elton John's album history to date. For the qualitative view, however, one must start with the realization that this particular solo artist has long had a collective musical consciousness, that he is as much a catalyst as a composer-performer.

It is most misleading, and in the end pointless, to disassociate Elton John the songwriter, vocalist and keyboardman from the efforts

of lyricist Bernie Taupin, producer Gus Dudgeon and the rest of the entire cast of characters from EJ's recorded past, present and future. Some have been in the playbill from the beginning while others have had a shorter run. But just as each has brought or continues to bring something very special and essential to setting the stage for truly great music, it is Elton John who takes on the lion's share of the responsibility for making the continuing chemistry work. And with the task at hand, he plays his biggest role as the creative force behind the best his musical associates can give an Elton John.

Both his first American release and his current band's initial endeavor, "Rock of the Westies," employ group shots on the back

cover—an obvious pictorial indication of the degree to which a collection of talents has come to mean "Elton John" to his public throughout his recording career.

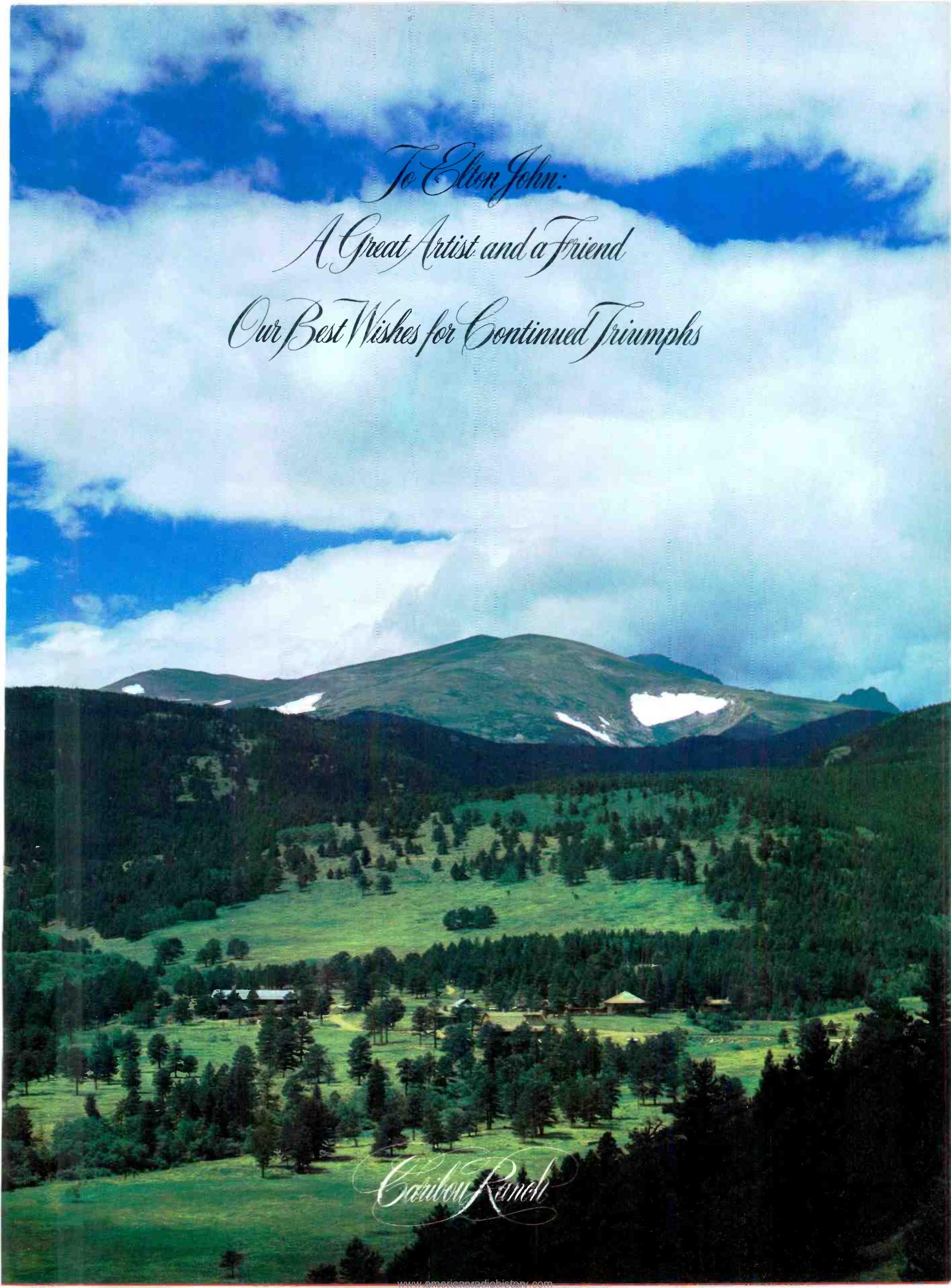
The "Elton John" album, released on July 22, 1970, caused only minor confusion in this regard. The "Is that a group or a person?" query was quickly answered by the package's more-than-50-week chart run spreading both the sound and the image of this new great rock hope far and wide.

The "Elton John" lp began many of the artist's long-standing relationships which continue to figure prominently in his career, those with the full sound of producer-ace Gus Dudgeon, the re-

(Continued on page 90)

To:
The Captain & the Kid
"It's been fantastic!"
Ron

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*To Elton John:
A Great Artist and a Friend
Our Best Wishes for Continued Triumphs*

Caribou Ranch



CONGRATULATIONS

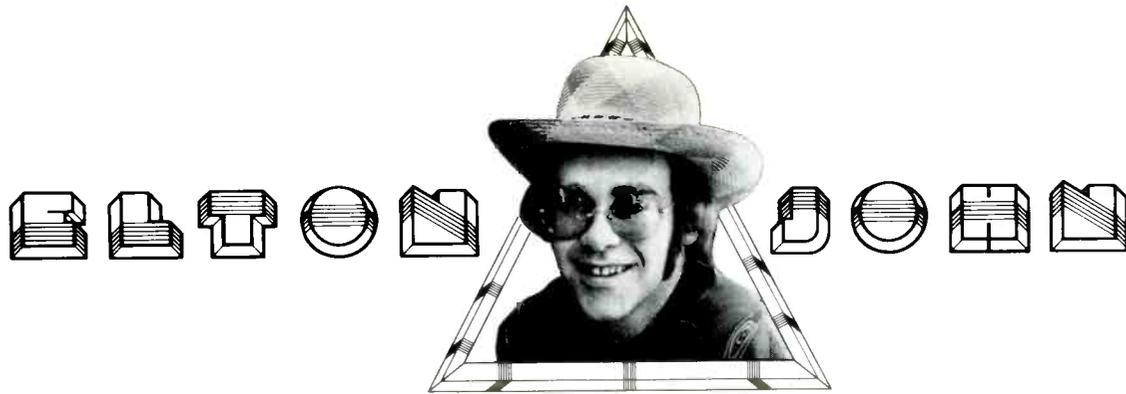
FROM ROCKET, LOS ANGELES

Yoko 78
OMO

CONGRATULATIONS



FROM ROCKET, LONDON



The Songs (Continued from page 28)

modern warriors the kamikaze pilots of World War Two, is that death is very much a part of life. And the *manner* of one's death becomes the touchstone by which one's life is remembered by history.

This code, "The Way of the Warrior," has been incorporated into a number of western films by Italian director Sergio Leone which were lifted wholesale from Japanese samurai movies. Leone saw in this singular code of honor—so much like chivalry in some respects—part of his vision of the American West. The Leone westerns are among Bernie's favorite films.

The warrior of "Indian Sunset" is told by his chief that he must lay down his weapons. The warrior's code of honor will not allow him to disobey that order yet he cannot face the death of his people, so he commits ritualistic suicide. This, precisely, is an aspect of *bushido*.

4. "For season come and seasons go . . ."
—First Episode at Hienton.

The first three Elton John albums concern themselves in the main with the search for freedom. Both the title song of the "Empty Sky" lp (the only tune that EJ has ever written that sounds even remotely like anyone else) and "Skyline Pigeon" exhibit the yearning of the trapped soul for the freedom of flight of the birds high above. It is interesting to see how both sets of lyrics—dealing essentially with the same theme—are treated by Elton. The former is an all-out rocker, with a grittiness akin to certain Stones' numbers; the latter is a dreamy ballad. Each catches a subtle flavor in the lyrics that is not readily apparent but which nevertheless makes the fusion of words and music perfect.

Taupin's bent towards the historical, which begins on "Empty Sky" ("Sails," "Val-hala") and the "EJ" lp ("The King Must Die") as exotic but ill-defined forays, suddenly comes into sharp focus in "Tumbleweed Connection." Early on, Elton confessed that "TC" was not a particularly difficult album to do since "we had such a backlog of songs that it was just a question of going through them and picking out the ones we wanted."

Still, given the total package presented to us, it is hard to dismiss it as anything but a concept album. From David Larkham's monochromatic period cover design to the threads of themes that run through virtually every track (including Leslie Duncan's lovely "Love Song") the unity of concept seems cemented by the unity of structure.

It is an album that perhaps was ahead of its time; it needs now to be pulled out at intervals, to be heard in retrospect, to be appreciated. Its singleminded adherence to depicting the futility of war ("Where To Now St. Peter?", "My Father's Gun," "Talking Old Soldiers"), the failure of the young rebel ("Ballad of a Well-Known Gun," "Son of Your Father"), and the desperation of the common folk ("Burn Down The Mission"), only make the inclusion of such gentle interludes as "Come Down In Time" and "Amoreena" that much more exquisite.

5. "And now that it's all over,
The birds can nest again . . ."
—Goodbye.

By Elton's own admission, "Madman Across the Water" is the ending of an era. But we hardly needed him to tell us that. Made at times unwieldy by the padded uniform of Paul Buckmaster's lush strings and the stage at which Elton found himself, the album had its problems. For a start it perhaps came out at the wrong time and therefore many people, looking for the negative aspects, picked it apart. Which was altogether unfair but certainly understandable.

Elton was at low ebb, but Bernie wasn't. In the title song and in "Levon" Taupin attained a new level of imagery, despite the fact that "Madman" was a relatively old song, used in the early days before "Burn Down The Mission" had been written as the live act's finale. It remains as one of the most powerful statements on alienation to ever don the guise of a pop song. As for "Levon," it carried forward the Taupin theme of the dual legacy handed down from father to son begun in "My Father's Gun."



Bernie and Elton with Billie Jean King

Surely there is no continuity to the album and in that sense it fails. But the moments of beauty when again Elton and Bernie connected and soared together are impossible to deny. But the "formula," as Elton called it, had run its course. All change!

6. "I know you and you know me,
It's always half and half . . ."
—Writing.

The foretaste of things to come commenced with the launching of "Rocket Man," a song that, lyrically, is far and away the most interesting of any of the tracks on "Honky Chateau." The depiction of a future astronaut as tomorrow's suburban commuter, bored with his mundane lot in life, locked within a metal shell with nothing to look at but the infinity of space is a devastating social comment on how today's people view wonders with a jaded and jaundiced eye.

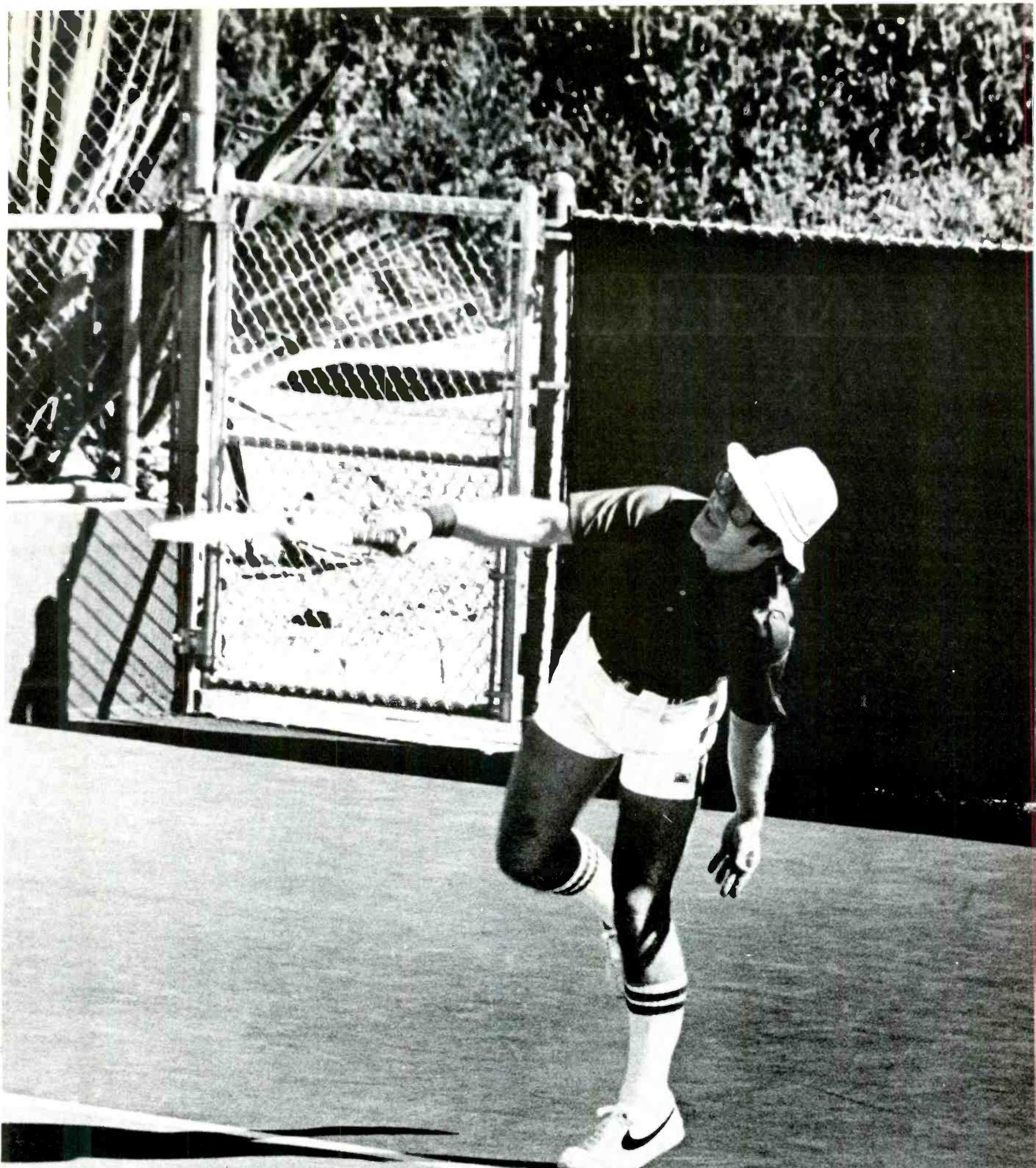
Of the album that followed in "Rocket Man's" vapor trail the overriding aspect of its content is the contraction and retrenching of the music.

Everything was different, even down to a new site for recording, Strawberry Studios, in an old chateau outside Paris. Already having a permanent band on stage, Elton now sought to continue this rapport in recording. Instead of using a multitude of studio musicians (he used two different drummers on "Madman" for instance), he decided to use his stage musicians, drummer Nigel Olsson and bassist Dee Murray, adding a formerly folk-oriented guitarist named Davey Johnstone.

Not yet content, Elton set about penning a set of lean, muscular melodies to Taupin's new lyrics. As if sensing the change in his writing partner, Bernie seems to have deliberately de-emphasized his lyrics so that, even today, listening to the album, one is struck by the vast change in music and musicianship, as if Elton had held fast to the reins, pulled them tight toward him and, almost solely, created the tenor of the album. The raves still reverberate.

7. "There's a greyhound outside in the lane,
it's waiting for us . . ."
—Blues For My Baby And Me.

(Continued on page 98)



*"Elton John you are the greatest on the
Tennis Court or on the Stage"*

John Gardiner's Tennis Ranch



Five Years of Fun

(Continued from page 30)
 room. By the end of six-day engagement, some of the most respected figures in contemporary music (including Leon Russell, who was just emerging as a star in rock) stopped by to see him. The national news magazines and Ed Sullivan's office sent somebody by for a look. A local FM station (KPPC) even took out a page ad in the Free Press to say how much the station personnel liked Elton John and urging him to hurry back to town.

Impact

Because of the enormous impact that opening week at the Troubadour had on his career, it's not surprising that John speaks of it often in interviews. "I was quite nervous about the opening, of course," he said, sitting in the

Troubadour's sister club in San Francisco a week after the Los Angeles debut. "But mostly I was nervous for Nigel (Olsson) and Dee (Murray). They were so nervous about it. I thought it would go well. All our songwriting money has been from the United States" (John-Taupin songs were included on two \$1 million selling albums by Three Dog Night).

"I was really excited when people like Leon Russell started coming by, but the thing I started to hate was when so many people began coming up to me saying 'you're the greatest.' I appreciated it, but I know I'm not," he continued. "I've only been singing with the group for two months. It'll take us a while to get things really together. I just let all that talk go in one ear and out the

other. About 60 percent of the people in Los Angeles were from the music business anyway. The kids who buy the records weren't really there. We'll have to wait until the next tour to see what they think."

Barometer

While Elton John's Los Angeles success was repeated in varying degrees in San Francisco, New York and Philadelphia, Los Angeles—because he made his debut here—always remained an important barometer in his career. You can note a lot about his growth by following his success here. By the time he returned to Los Angeles—he headlined at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium on Nov. 15, 1970, both the "Elton John" album (it eventually reached No. 4 in the nation) and

the "Your Song" single (it reached No. 8) were beginning to move up the sales charts.

Santa Monica

In theory, John's Santa Monica concert couldn't miss. After all, it was his first local appearance since the Troubadour and his album, ahead of the rest of the nation, was already a local best seller. But several problems arose—ranging from microphone difficulties to an endless horde of photographers plodding distractingly around the stage—that could have turned the evening into a disaster for a lesser performer. The fact that he ended up with a long, uproarious standing ovation reinforced the potential he demonstrated earlier at the Troubadour.

(Continued on page 72)



Photo by Brenda.

Thanks for everything

T.K.

TO THE ARTFUL DODGER



WITH LOVE AND THANKS
FROM JOHN REID ENTERPRISES, INC.
LOS ANGELES



John Reid (Continued from page 16)

Reid: The only thing we could do—Elton, Bernie and I—was to try and keep our heads above water and look beyond that. We had to work towards doing something that was fresh and better, something that would wipe away the feeling that it was a fleeting romance or that the record company, management and artists were together in a conspiracy to milk the public and the business.

RW: During what period did you feel that pressure most strongly?

Reid: Back in 1971 and 1972.

RW: When was it all resolved?

Reid: We really got it under control after "Madman Across the Water" and "Honky Chateau." "Madman" was done very quickly and although it was done under pressure, it was still a biggie. It had to happen that way because of our contractual commitment, and contracts, in fact, were among the first things that I had to get involved with because I had very little experience with contracts, practically none. When I did get involved, read all of Elton's contracts and re-read them, and sought legal advice, we started to change them and straighten things out. One thing that Dick James had done before I assumed Elton's management was to re-negotiate with Russ Regan and Mike Maitland for an extension of his contract which was financially good for Elton at the time, but bad in that it extended the pressure of having to submit two albums each year.

RW: Have you still been bound to deliver two albums per year?

Reid: Yes, but no longer after "Rock Of The Westies;" that's it. With "Honky Chateau," for example, there was a tour in between the time it was recorded and the time it was released and by that time, they had already written material for the next album. Those gaps between the recording and the release of the album became wider and wider; it was ludicrous for a while. "Captain Fantastic" was recorded in August of 1974 and released 10 months later, which was frustrating.

RW: Does the lapse between recording and release still exist with Elton's records?

Reid: No, "Rock Of The Westies" was done in July and released in October which was great. It was still fresh.

RW: What led to the formation of Rocket Records?

Reid: During the "Honky Chateau" sessions, we were all sitting around bemoaning the situation we were in contract-wise. Then Gus (Dudgeon) said, "Why don't we do something about it?" and he suggested that we form our own company. And we said, "Oh, God. Everybody does that."

RW: At that point, you didn't intend to do it?

Reid: No, definitely no. But then I went away and thought about it for a while, put some ideas together and Elton said that we might try to do it.

RW: Was Elton interested in recording for Rocket?

Reid: He said that if it were done and it worked, he would be on it. But he didn't want it to be a situation where everybody else on the label was being carried on his back.

RW: Now that Rocket has been successful on its own, will Elton be recording on the Rocket label?

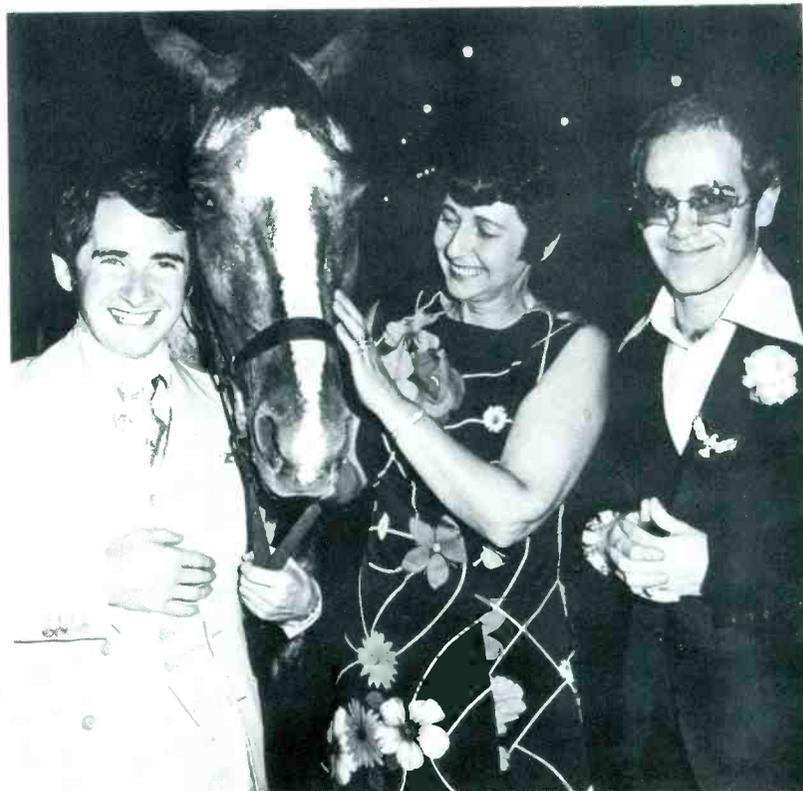
Reid: Eventually he will. In the rest of the world, Elton's recordings will be on Rocket beginning with his next album; that was part of the deal we recently negotiated with EMI.

RW: How much bigger do you expect Rocket to become?

Reid: I expect this to be a major label within the next four or five years. Within the next 12 months, we should have a roster of 12 or 14 artists.

RW: By "major label," do you mean a major custom label?

Reid: I mean a major independent label; that's what I'm building towards. There comes a point when you have to go whole hog, like an A&M Records for example, although there are few companies that can actually do it. I hope, at this point, that we'll eventually go whole hog.



Le Restaurant was the scene of a presentation to Elton's manager John Reid (left) of a horse for his birthday, two years ago.

RW: Do you play an active role in the day-to-day affairs of Rocket, the merchandising and promotion of the records?

Reid: No. I do as much as I can. The people we've got, though, all have similar tastes and Rocket has taken on its own identity, I think.

RW: Rocket seems to be very independent in terms of graphics.

Reid: That was very deliberate. With a small label distributed by a large company like MCA, it's important to retain your own identity—inside the large company as well as outside.

RW: Are you working towards building your own promotion staff?

Reid: In the next six to nine months you'll see a lot of change in that area. We need to cover the east coast and the midwest.

RW: Who thought of the name Rocket Records?

Reid: All of us were sitting around soon after coming from the studio in France when the "Honky Chateau" sessions were completed. Elton had recorded "Rocket Man" and it seemed ludicrous that nobody had ever used that name for a label. We checked, found out that nobody in fact had used it; we went on the market and bang, a lawsuit was filed by a guy in Chicago who claimed he had used it first but who never issued a record for all I know.

RW: Tell us about your management activities aside from Elton John. How many clients do you have?

Reid: Well, there's Bernie of course and Kiki Dee. Then I've just recently taken on Queen and Kevin Ayres.

RW: Are you looking for additional artists?

Reid: Not really. I've never really looked for artists and I've turned down a few. I don't think I have enough time to take on any more artists. Management is a very time-consuming thing and with the artists that I already represent, who are quite diverse and reasonably successful, most of my time is spoken for. I would rather spend whatever free time I have working on the label. I assumed the management of Queen after they came to me through various people and asked if I would manage them. We talked about what their problems were, what their reasons for changing management were and we decided that it might work very well.

(Continued on page 88)

Elton,

*May rock's brightest
star continue to shine*

*Ron Powell
St. Louis, Mo.*

**Congratulations Elton.
You're a great artist
and friend.**

Colony Records

**Congratulations
on the first 5 years.**

Best Wishes



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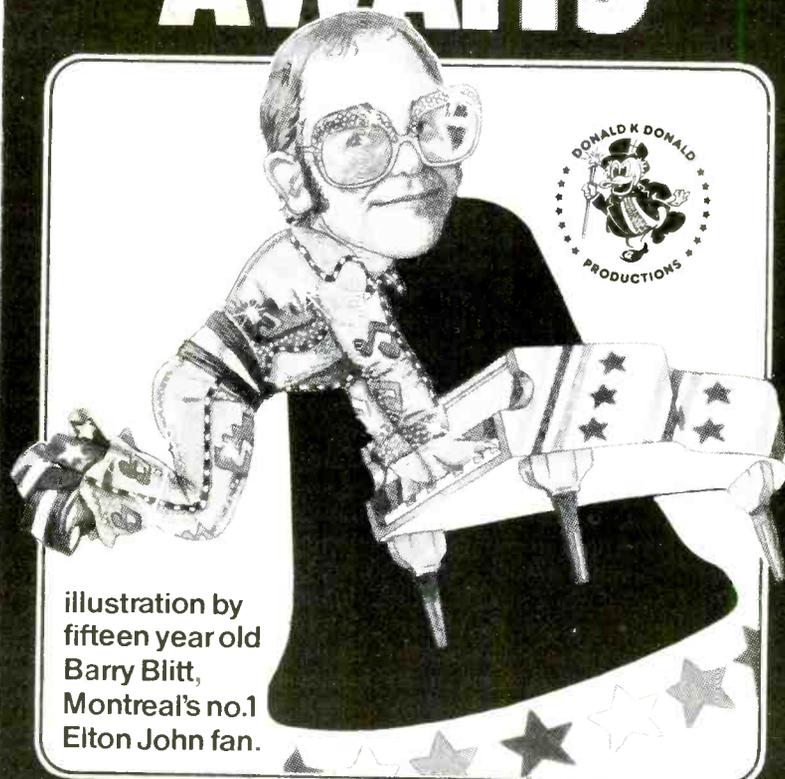


illustration by
fifteen year old
Barry Blitt,
Montreal's no.1
Elton John fan.



Stephen James:

Building an International Superstar



Stephen James

■ *Stephen James launched the DJM label in the U.K. in 1969 with Elton John and in this Record World interview recalls the decisions crucial in breaking, developing and sustaining the success of this immense talent, while at the same time commenting on his long-standing relationship with Elton and what the future may hold for him.*

"The first record we made with Elton was 'Lady Samantha' and that went out on a licensing deal that we had with Philips well before the DJM label ever started. It was basically because of their attitude towards some of our product, particularly Elton John, that we felt we wanted our own identification. I wanted the opportunity to put out the product that I felt was right and to promote it and publicize it the way I wanted. With the Philips deal it was very much the product that Johnny Franz, for whom I have great respect, chose from the DJM output, and then the promotion, publicity, and the artwork—everything in that area was then carried out by Philips.

"We had very little to say in the direction and type of publicity and promotion that took place. It was a very old-fashioned licensing deal on the basis where we made the product and then once we'd delivered the product, Philips did the rest through their normal channels. Being a major company with a lot of other product and a lot of other artists we had to fall in line with their policy, with their release schedules, with their form of advertising and promotional campaigns and it sometimes didn't quite fall in line with the kind of operation that I wanted.

"Elton wasn't the normal commercial artist who you put a record out by and went to the BBC and tried to get airplay and if you got airplay, fine, and if you didn't, you dropped it. I felt Elton was the type of artist who was a project. It was word of mouth, it was publicity, it was advertising, it was a long term type of development, and you couldn't expect to break the first record in the first month. 'Lady Samantha' in fact I thought did extremely well for a first record by a brand new artist.

"If I remember rightly it had quite a bit of airplay and sold about 7000 records, which for a single by a brand new artist wasn't a terrible achievement. Nevertheless it was the future commitment to break him that bothered me, and eventually I felt not only with Elton but with a lot of other product that we were producing (I was producing some, and Steve Brown, who made the first 'Empty Sky' album, was producing for us) that Philips wasn't the right company for us to be with. I came to the conclusion that in fact I didn't want that type of deal with any other company—whether Philips was the right company or not, I wanted to have my own identification, and the right to put my money where my mouth was, basically, and say I want to do that advertising, I want to do that promotion, I want to take three months to plug that one record.

"It was because of this independence and also the fact that we mentally committed ourselves to breaking Elton and a couple of other artists that I decided I wanted my own label; Philips wouldn't agree to it, but one thing Philips did agree to—I was very grateful that they

did—was to terminate the agreement, which gave me the right to go elsewhere, and I ended up doing a label deal on a distribution basis with Louis Benjamin at Pye who we're still with. It gave me the opportunity to open the DJM label which we did on 28th February, 1969, and about the fifth record released was 'It's Me That You Need' by Elton which was his follow-up single to 'Lady Samantha' which, although it never happened in the U.K. or America, has subsequently been a very big hit in Japan, in fact one of his biggest hits in Japan. Then the 'Empty Sky' lp came out and then from then onwards of course it's history. We broke the second lp, 'Elton John,' subsequently after Elton had visited the Troubadour in America.

From The U.K. To America and Back

"The situation in America at that time was that DJM had a licensing deal for U.S.A. and Canada (I hope they won't mind me quoting this story) with Larry Uttal's Bell Records. Basically, the reason for that deal was that Larry Page, who'd been operating for some years with The Page One Records operation within the DJM Organisation, had licensed several of the Vanity Fair tracks to Bell and we developed from that a complete overall licensing deal with Bell to have a sort of first option on all product that emanated from this organization either from Larry or anywhere else. So when I started up the DJM label and myself and Steve Brown started some productions we naturally offered the first product to Bell Records under that licensing deal and, in fact, Bell Records put out 'Lady Samantha' in America. It didn't happen, it flopped, I don't think it got anywhere at all and I don't think anyone ever heard of or noticed an artist called Elton John.

"After that we offered them the 'Empty Sky' lp which they failed to release and said that they didn't think Elton John was an album artist and would we please supply another single to them. We did supply them with 'Skyline Pigeon' which was on the 'Empty Sky' album and they didn't like that and they didn't like the album. We suggested that they didn't seem to want to go in the same direction with Elton John as we did and asked if they would terminate the agreement with Elton John which they agreed to do. During the time that they were terminating the agreement for Elton John and giving us back the rights to Elton and 'Lady Samantha,' Elton was in fact in the studios producing the new 'Elton John' lp, and I will say this on behalf of Bell, they never had the opportunity of hearing that product prior to terminating their agreement with Elton John. I think if they had heard it they might have changed their mind on the direction of Elton John and the talent of Elton John. Anyway, in their defense, I will say that they never heard that album prior to terminating the agreement of Elton.

"Then Steve Brown in his modesty said that he didn't think he was a good enough producer to produce Elton John further, and felt that there was another producer friend of his who was becoming successful with David Bowie ('Space Oddity'), a guy named Gus Dudgeon, and Gus would like to produce an album with Elton John, would we be agreeable. We then negotiated with Gus to produce the next album in January, 1969. Lennie Hodes was running the Dick James Organisation in New York at the time, mainly in publishing because we weren't only just into records and we sent Lennie a copy of the 'Empty Sky' album, on which we published all the tracks. Lennie's first thought was that the artist on it was very talented. When Bell Records decided to terminate the agreement Lennie wrote to us and said he'd like to run with the Elton John lp 'Empty Sky' and would like to show it around to several other labels because he believed that Elton John should have an album released in the U.S. and not just purely a single. He drew a blank on the east coast, in New York; not many companies

(Continued on page 110)

Nederlander: Elton's a Pro with Charisma

■ According to James Nederlander, president of the New York based Nederlander Theatrical Organization, Elton John has "a charisma on stage that seems to have a universal appeal that a lot of others lack." Charisma is a word usually associated with great political leaders and only rarely with show business personalities, but Nederlander definitely thinks that the word applies to Elton. He continues, "Sinatra, Jolson, Garland had a charisma. These kind of artists literally hypnotize you. They instinctively know how to get to the people. All great artists have a charisma. Elton John has it!"

Impressive Praise

This is particularly impressive praise coming from James Nederlander since he has worked with the stars that he mentioned as well as other entertainment giants too numerous to list. Although Nederlander is mostly known, at present, for his work on Broadway he has never booked Elton on the "Great White Way." He has promoted Elton at the Arizona Coliseum in Phoenix when his American career was getting under way and most recently at the 16,000 seat Olympia arena in Detroit, Michigan. Nederlander was happy to note that the Olympia engagement was sold out in three hours, "about as fast as you could sell 16,000 seats," he adds. This must have been incredibly satisfying for Nederlander since he can trace his theatrical roots to Detroit. It was there in 1912 that his father, David Nederlander, first became associated with the Shubert family. It is fitting that the top entertainer of the seventies should be connected with a member of one of the top promotional families in the U.S.

Elton on B'way?

When questioned about the possibility of Elton playing on Broadway, Nederlander immediately cited the financial difficulty that would be involved. Tickets would be prohibitively expensive considering the average Broadway theatre holds a few thousand viewers while Elton is used to playing halls of hockey arena capacity and bigger. However, Nederlander did find the extended engagement, à la Frank Sinatra, Bette Midler and Paul Anka, to be an intriguing format. He said, "Elton's the number one superstar and of course, I'd love to see him on Broadway. Although I've never spoken to Elton or his management about doing this you always have to keep your eyes open for new properties, and

anything with Elton John certainly would be interesting."

Universal Appeal

Aside from Elton's undefineable charisma, James Nederlander has other views on what makes him such a great star. "Elton John is real down to earth which is terrific for a man who has had such enormous success," states Nederlander. He is not alone in his opinion of Elton's level headedness contributing to his continuously rising career. Another viewpoint that Nederlander shares with other industry leaders is that the immense scope of Elton's audience leads to his pre-eminent position in the pop music world. He relates, "I took my 82 year old mother to Elton's show at the Olympia and she thought he was marvelous. She normally doesn't like rock. It was an extraordinary thing. She really had never seen anything quite like that show. So I can certainly say Elton appeals to people from 15-82 and I can personally vouch for the 82 year old."

A New Career?

An experience that James Nederlander shares with other associates of Elton John is defeat on the tennis court. When Nederlander referred to Elton as a "tremendous performer" he could have been alluding to him with either a racket or a microphone in his hand. Nederlander raves, "He has great potential. As a matter of fact, if Elton didn't go in for music, I'm sure he has the potential to be a tennis pro." It seems that no matter what Elton John does, he does it like a pro.

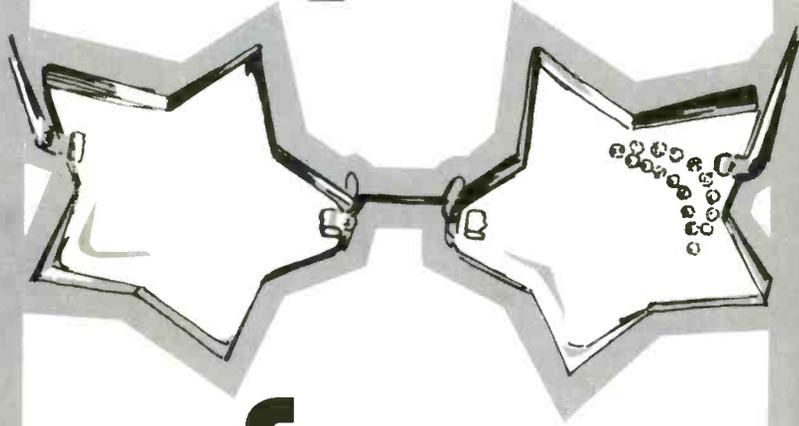
Howard Newman.

Oops!



Pictured above at a preview of his 'Captain Fantastic' album is Elton and then-assistant editor of Record World Roberta Skopp.

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Elton Brought Sedaka Back

By ELIOT SEKULER

■ LOS ANGELES—The past year and a half has seen Neil Sedaka rocketing back to a new peak of popularity, reaching an audience that is perhaps even wider than the millions who bought his records during his initial heyday in the late fifties and early sixties. His comeback has been marked more by maturity than by nostalgia, as even a casual listen to his current hit single, the newly arranged "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do," will confirm. But despite the quality and sophistication of Sedaka's music, the artist had been almost completely frustrated in his efforts to regain a toehold on the fickle American pop audience until Rocket Records released "Laughter In The Rain" and the "Sedaka's Back" album amidst an enthusiastic promotion campaign undertaken personally by Elton and John Reid.

Parallels

Said Sedaka: "Elton, John Reid, Rocket and MCA are definitely responsible for this tremendous second career. I've put out records that were equally as good as 'Laughter In The Rain' that just sat on a shelf somewhere, so I know that it wouldn't have happened without their support."

Clearly, there are parallels to be drawn between the two artists' careers. Both are classically trained pianists, composers whose forte is more musical than lyrical and both are distinctive vocalists and dynamic showmen. Elton has admitted to being an admirer of Sedaka at an early age, while Sedaka has regularly bought Elton's albums beginning with his first American release. The two did not meet, however, until 1974, when Sedaka was performing and recording in London, where his career had experienced a strong resurgence.

"A mutual friend gave me Elton's telephone number and I called to invite him to the house one afternoon. We sat for several hours and listened to an album that I had recorded in England and later, he sat at the piano and played for me; it was a very delightful day," Sedaka recalls. Sedaka's career continued on the



MCA president Mike Maitland (standing, left) joins Elton, Neil Sedaka and MCA N.Y. promotion rep Ray D'Ariano (seated, left) in a visit to WNEW-FM's Scott Muni (standing, center) and Dennis Elsas (right).

upswing through that period in the U.K.; three albums had been recorded and his name was consistently indexed at the uppermost part of the British singles charts. For some reason, his record company did not find the material suitable for release in the United States. "They had the records world-wide except for America but they didn't think that they had any potential over here," said Sedaka, an undisguised element of irony in his voice.

Alliance With Rocket

It was Sedaka's attorney, Fred Gershon, who first suggested that a Rocket Records-Sedaka alliance might be beneficial to all concerned. "There was a party several months after I met Elton and Fred suggested that I ask Elton if he would put my records out on Rocket in America. I had had several hit records in England, but I didn't know; I didn't want to put Elton on the spot and I was afraid that our friendship would be affected if the records didn't go well. But when I approached him at the party that night, Elton was delighted. He said it was like handing him gold bricks, because a couple of the records had already been proven and he'd seen that my following was kind of contemporary. Like his following, it consisted of a very wide-spread

age group. He became very excited, he and John Reid, as well."

For the initial Rocket album, Sedaka was less concerned with making money than in re-establishing his career in his own country. "I wanted his endorsement and for him to promote it, which he did," Sedaka said. The choice of "Laughter In The Rain" as the first single release was a natural one, since the record had done extremely well in the U.K. Before that release, though, the two artists retreated to Caribou Ranch

where they pored over Sedaka's three British album releases, extracting an album's worth of material that was to become "Sedaka's Back," a commercial and artistic tour de force that not only dramatically re-established the artist's career in the U.S., but served as source material for dozens of other artists who made the album perhaps the most covered of any record since Carole King's "Tapestry."

The careers of Elton John and Neil Sedaka became further entwined with the later release of "Bad Blood," a number one single written by Sedaka and Phil Cody and featuring Elton's unmistakable background vocal. "He was very sweet, and as I recall, a little bit late for the session," said Sedaka. "He arrived in a big limousine with his chauffeur and his bodyguards and of course, everybody in the studio was a little thrilled, as I was."

"Elton's probably the driving force in the music business today. He's been consistent, he's grown and each album keeps the public guessing. The quality of his records is always very high and his songs are marvelous; they have an appeal that reaches all ages. He's been an inspiration not only to me, but I think to everybody in the industry." There are few higher compliments that one artist can pay to another.



John Lennon with Elton



From Elton's favorite city continued success. From Elton's #1 fan KFRC.

Michael Spears, KFRC, San Francisco

In years to come, Elton John will occupy a place in our format alongside Presley and the Beatles. *Paul Ward, WROR, Boston*

When we at K-EARTH talk of Elton John, it's always in the past-present sense... to be exact, it's from "Your Song" to his most recent six-month old smash.

Dick Bozzi, K-EARTH, Los Angeles

Congratulations from Boston's #1 rocker to the world's #1 rocker.

J.J. Jordan, WRKO, Boston

Elton John's the most imaginative and consistent performer of the decade.

Brian Beirne, K-106, San Francisco

The gift of "Your Song" has kept us turned on. *Dave Williams, WHBQ, Memphis*

Elton John still produces the music we can't wait to play. 1976 will be phenomenal. Congratulations from your official New York station.

Lee Douglas, 99X, New York

The most exciting performer since Elvis.

Bill Heizer, WAXY, Miami/Ft. Lauderdale

Elton's ability to develop and progress constantly reinforces the lasting effect his artistry is leaving on the music industry. *Don Kelly, WFYR, Chicago*

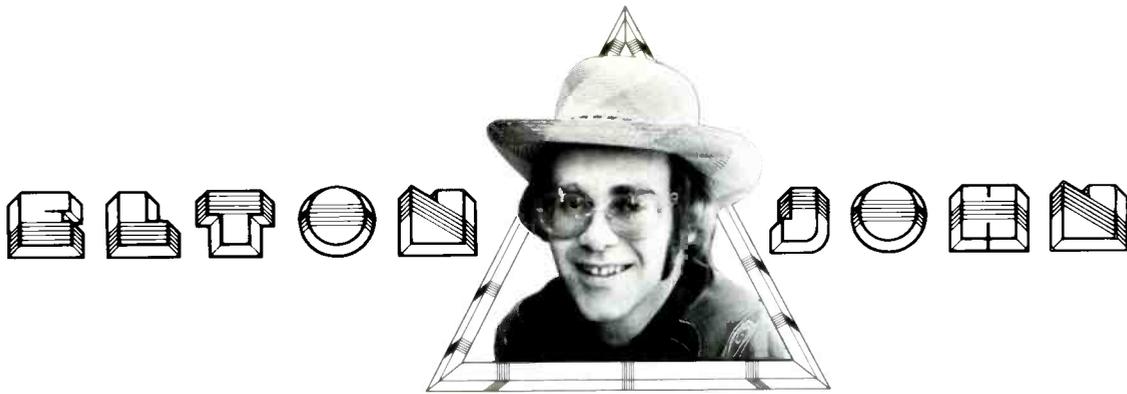
Yesterday is experience, tomorrow is hope, today is for the man who fills our lives with joy. Thanks Elton for being you —

Love, Mardi Nehrbass, Music Coordinator, RKO Radio

Congratulations to the superstar of the decade! *Charlie Van Dyke, KHJ, Los Angeles*



RIKORADIO
EST. 1954



Bernie Taupin *(Continued from page 18)*

Taupin: No, I can't think of any off hand. But that one sticks out in my mind particularly. I knew that when I wrote that lyric it would explode in a way you could tell. I mean I almost knew how he would write the song, it was just so obvious.

RW: After EJ has put the melody to them, were there any songs you had strongest feelings about as far as hit potential is concerned?

Taupin: Oh yeah, because you hear them in a totally different way; it's a different kettle of fish then. Things like "Saturday Night" and "Crocodile Rock"—you can tell those are very commercial. Then there are songs at first you think are not so commercial, like "Rocket Man" or "Daniel," "Don't Let the Sun Go Down"—especially when he's just playing them on the piano, but when everything's put to it.

RW: Do you have a favorite of all the stuff you've written?

Taupin: I have particular favorites but they've changed. I don't like to pick out favorites because it's so hard because I could say something and then maybe tomorrow I'd say "Oh well, I didn't really mean that, I prefer something else."

RW: Are there any habits or working conditions when you do your best work or is it just the fact that when you're down to the wire, no matter where you are you're forced to deliver.

Taupin: I can write anywhere. I've been under pressure. We'll be in situations where we are recording or have to write songs; we've done that with "Caribou," "Honky Chateau" . . .

RW: You could almost say then that the ideal condition is to have a certain amount of pressure, as you said before that you are basically a lazy writer.

Taupin: I don't think I'm lazy, it's just that I just have to say to myself "Sit down and write." I enjoy writing. Saying I'm lazy doesn't mean I don't like it.

RW: Do you have any fear with all of this enormous success—I'm not talking about financial, I'm talking about critics—of not being able to sustain it?

Taupin: You mean drying up? I don't think so, it never bothers me. I've never been in the position where I've become artistically barren at any time. I've always been able to come up with delivering the goods and I think I can carry on doing that.

RW: Obviously you've traveled with the band while they're on tour because we are sitting here in Seattle.

Taupin: I don't always travel; the reason I'm on this tour is because it's a nice tour to be on. There are a lot of reasons. One is because it's the first one with the new band and I wanted to see the reaction, enjoy their enjoyment of success. Secondly, it's only about 17 dates and we're only in three places so it's very easy. If it's a really grueling, long tour, it's not that I mind being on it, but sometimes I've got to be somewhere else, but I travel with Elton as much as possible.

RW: On several occasions you've joined the band on stage. Any feelings about that?

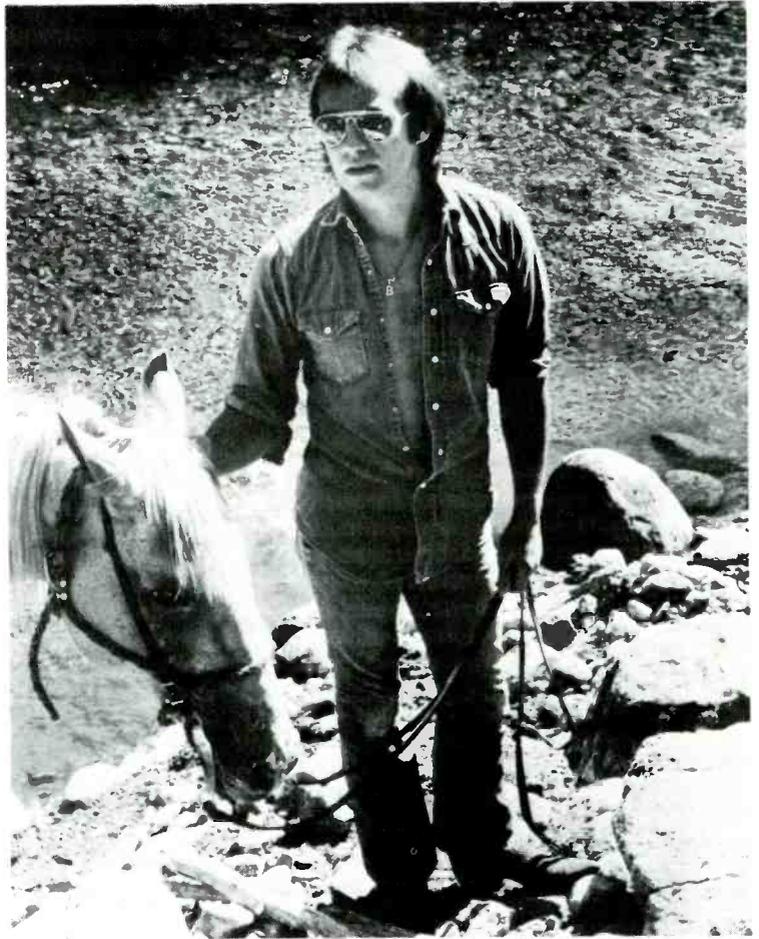
Taupin: I don't mind doing it now and again. I hate for it to become a regular thing where it wasn't an event anymore. Also I feel a bit stupid going up there. I don't mind going up and taking a bow and waving like we did; that was okay because I didn't have to grab a tambourine and make myself look awful, which is pretty boring. It was nice like at Madison Square Garden going up with Lennon and shaking around—that was fun. But it doesn't particularly enthrall me.

RW: What projects do you have planned at this point that we can discuss?

Taupin: Okay. First of all I'm doing my own album—my first solo album—which I'm doing in Canada the first two weeks in November. I'll be using Kenny on bass, Davey on guitar, James on piano and keyboards and Jim on drums and Robert Appere is producing it.

RW: For Rocket or MCA?

Taupin: Rocket. It's not going to be a country and western album, which everybody thinks it is going to be. There might be a couple of c&w tunes on there, and it won't also be all Elton and Bernie songs. It's going to be a few songs by the people I like—a couple of songs Kenny and I have written. That's about it really. I don't know when



that will be coming out; it may coincide with the book as well.

The book is coming out sometime in May. It is a collection of everything that I've ever written from the time that we first began. It finishes at the end of "Yellow Brick Road." We'll probably do another book later on that carries on. The book's called *The One Who Writes the Words*. Most of the songs are illustrated by various people—artists, photographers, etc. The book's being put together by Alan Aldrich, who did the album cover of "Captain Fantastic," did the Beatles *Illustrated Lyrics* so on and so forth.

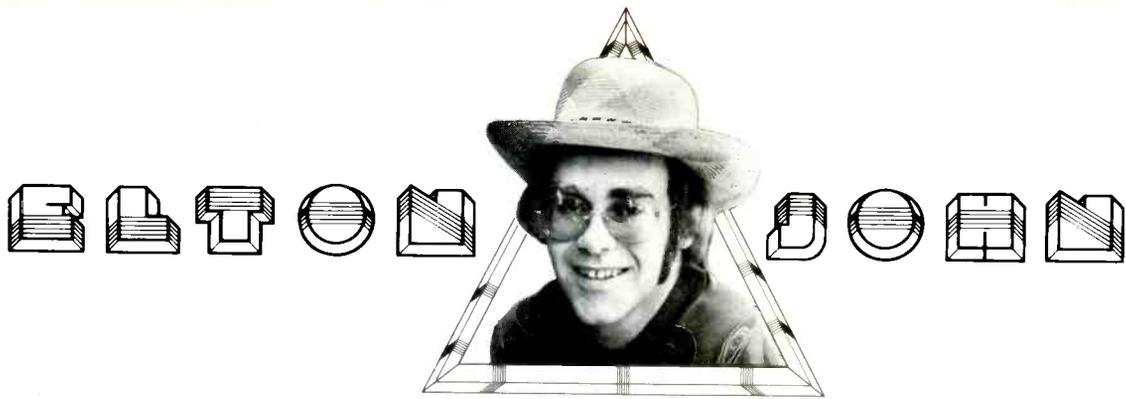
There will be drawings in there by some people like John Lennon, Joni Mitchell, Alice Cooper, Ronnie Wood, Charlie Watts, a few other people. It's all going to be black and white except for the cover because we thought it might make a nice change. It's going to be a very high quality book—a table book, but very, very good. It'll be great to have my own book because I love books so much. So there's my album and the book.

RW: When you spoke about your book you said it's about everything you've written from the time you got together to "Yellow Brick Road." Does that include stuff that you've written that at this point may not have made it onto an album?

Taupin: Oh yeah. There's a lot of songs on there we wrote that are covered by somebody else and we never recorded. Very, very obscure songs. We did write them and they were recorded by somebody, if not by us. There's a lot of stuff in the book that's just awful, really corny, but I wouldn't let it not go in there; it had to go in there, it wouldn't be complete.

RW: Are there any lyrics in there that you wrote, once you were writing with Elton, that Elton never set to music?

Taupin: No. As I've said, the book is everything we've written that's been released. The only thing on there is stuff from my first album which is a spoken word album, which is in the book, otherwise no. ☺



Past to Present

(Continued from page 10)

Surely it is not hyperbole to say that history was made that night. Granite-faced elitists, used to sitting on their hands and yawning through live performances first applauded, then screamed, then stood and begged for more. And it was more than the music. It was exceptional, dramatic and exhilarating, but beyond the music, they were caught by Elton himself. He played to them, joked with them and finally made them his own. The air vibrated with the energy and from that moment his success was assured.

He came to the New York public then, several months later, on

the heady wings of this triumph over the jaded and the blasé. He played second on the bill to Leon Russell at the Fillmore East, but the kids were calling it the Elton John Concert and the Fillmore staff acknowledged that the shows sold out both nights on Elton's strength. Bob Dylan came the second night, went backstage with Michael J. Pollard and Albert Grossman. Elton and Bernie Taupin were goggle-eyed.

Culture Shock

And the audiences were suffering from culture-shock. Or something. Undeniably they loved him, but he wasn't at all what they had expected. Perhaps the fault can be

traced back to the cover photo of the "Elton John" album, moody and introspective and perhaps, in part, to the lushness of Paul Buckmaster's string arrangements. Whatever the cause it was clear that most people had expected Elton to be a shy, introverted artist on stage, hunched over his piano, quietly singing his dramatic songs. Think then of how they felt by being confronted by this manic fugitive from Disney World. Mickey Mouse ears askew, glitter pants and platform boots a blur of motion, he pounded the piano with fingers and feet, did splits and limbo backbends during solos, and stood atop his Steinway exhorting the standing crowd to help him "Burn Down the Mission."

First Albums

His album exploded up the charts and in a way it was like the Beatles. There was such a backlog of material that "Tumbleweed Connection" was released soon after "EJ." The live album was already in the can, mixed and ready to go and Elton's previous commitment to Paramount for songs for their "Friends" film was being rushed released as a soundtrack album to catch the crest of the Elton John boom. All of this made a great deal of EJ product available in a relatively short period of time. And suddenly there was grumbling from the same press superstructure that had raved about him. They felt the surfeit and were vocal about it.

Undaunted, Elton went back into the studio with Gus Dudgeon and Paul Buckmaster and released "Madman Across the Water." With few exceptions the critics panned the album unmercifully. And it began to look as if the kids agreed because the album wasn't selling well.

"I agree," Elton nods. "That was a dangerous time for me. I think every successful artist goes through a time when everyone is out to get him." Around him, the roadies are busily preparing for the show and most of the backstage friends and business people have been shunted into the larger room across the corridor where a cold buffet has been laid on. "After 'Madman,'" Elton continues, "it was an important sort of stepping stone that

we changed—I mean I felt we had to, there was no choice, really—and so I brought Davey (Johnstone) in, even though I had always fought against having a guitar in the group. But he's influenced everybody so much with his guitar playing, and then we got Ray (Cooper) and now Caleb (Quaye) and the others, I think of us more as a band. That's important because more and more I want a band-y sound on the records." Elton turns as the door opens briefly and a roadie comes in with tonight's stage outfit.

It was pure hard work on MCA's part. Perhaps more guardian angels. They worked "Tiny Dancer" as a single and eventually brought "Madman" home as a gold album. But, as Elton said, he knew it was a time of changes. Obviously, the next release was crucial and it could mean a beginning or an end.

"Honky Chateau" marks a new phase in Elton's career, catapulting to widened, critical and popular heights. Clearly he had understood the nature of his career and had neatly turned the corner that had stood implacably before him. The music, the arrangements were different but further, he had sensed a certain lack of recording image most noticeable on the "Madman" album and, accordingly, had begun to solidify a permanent band around him in the recording studio as he had done earlier on stage. It was at least partially this new cohesion that made "Honky Chateau" so different from any Elton John album that had gone before. Two very different singles, "Rocket Man" and "Honky Cat," conveyed the album into a spectacular run up the charts. And predictions of the imminent demise of the mighty mite blew away like yesterday's confetti.

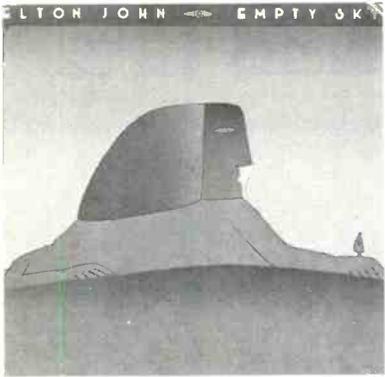
But beyond all of this the forceful resurgence that "Honky" provided was an indication of Elton's growing maturity. No longer overawed by his rapid ascent into the stratosphere of rock, Elton had obviously developed the ability to step back and personally evaluate the course of his career. He was twenty-three and still fairly green to the high-powered manipulations of American business, yet he had been a rock fan for many

(Continued on page 112)

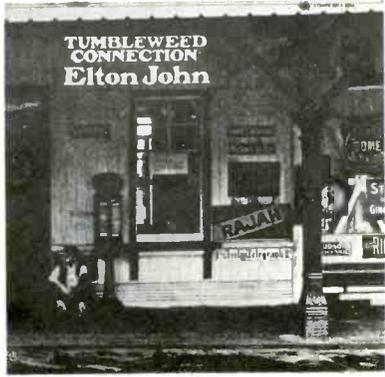




Elton's Albums: An Appraisal

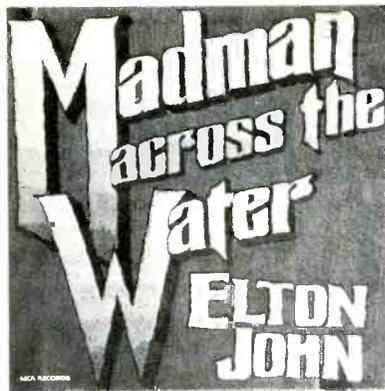


Empty Sky. Release of this first-recorded Elton John album was delayed several years in the United States but was finally greeted as both a historical item and a wealth of new (for here) material. "Skyline Pigeon" was the most called-to-the-fore cut, with "Empty Sky" and "Valhalla" providing additional points of interest. Also, "Empty Sky" was produced by Steve Brown.



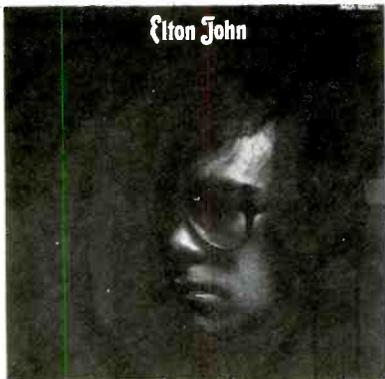
Tumbleweed Connection: Considered by many as the classic Elton John album. Again, a strong first cut—"Ballad of a Well Known Gun"—establishes the mood of the album, which is as upbeat as the first one was depressing. The moody, introspective Elton of the first album is more the rocker here; he's always been a rocker at heart, but his first album gave little indication of how deep a commitment he had to the genre. The aforementioned first cut and "Country Comfort," both on side one, are classic Elton rockers and the final cut on side one, "My Father's Gun," recounting a young Southern boy's grim determination to avenge his father's death and to fight for the glory of the South during the Civil War, has the bite of good fiction, particularly in its opening line: "From this day on, I own my father's gun." Side two could be a superb side three of Elton's first album. "Where To Now, St. Peter?" in fact represents the apex of the John - Taupin - Dudgeon - Buckmaster art song style. "Talking Old Soldier" is Elton and piano and a perfect lead-in to the classic "Burn Down the Mission."

11-17-70. The date tells the story. Just beginning the climb to American and worldwide fame, Elton did a live radio concert for then-WABC-FM in New York, a concert that let the music capital of the world know . . . Released the following year as an album, "11-17-70" conveyed the excitement of that broadcast with such unforgettable highlights as "Take Me To the Pilot," "Sixty Years On" and "Burn Down the Mission." With just Nigel Olsson and Dee Murray backing him up, it was not long until the world discovered what the fuss in New York and L.A. was all about.

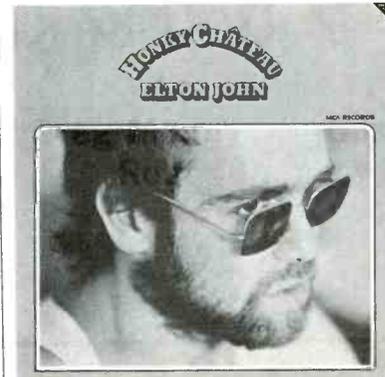


Madman Across the Water. In retrospect it is amazing how many of the individual songs on each of the Elton John albums are familiar. "Madman Across the Water," may not be the first album to come to mind when thinking about the totality of Elton's work up until this point, and yet such classic songs as "Levon," "Tiny Dancer," "Indian Sunset" and "Madman Across the Water," certainly rank among his most popular, with "Tiny Dancer" and "Indian Sunset" among that group of EJ songs to have been covered.

Honky Chateau: Widely hailed as a remarkable rock and roll album, "Honky Chateau" also starts strong with the smash "Honky Cat" and ends with "Hercules," a relatively "unknown" song cherished by ardent Elton fans. The songs in-between those two are equally good, particularly "Rocket Man" and "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters." "Think I'm Going To Kill Myself," undoubtedly a depressing sentiment, is given a light, up-tempo treatment and is hardly cause for wearing black—it also features a tap dance by ex-Bonzo Dog Band member "Legs" Larry Smith, and an album needs no higher recommendation. "Slave" ranks as one of John-Taupin's most intriguing compositions with its thick-textured arrangement and seething emotions. Elton's vocal here is one of his finest. As usual, Dudgeon's production is superb.

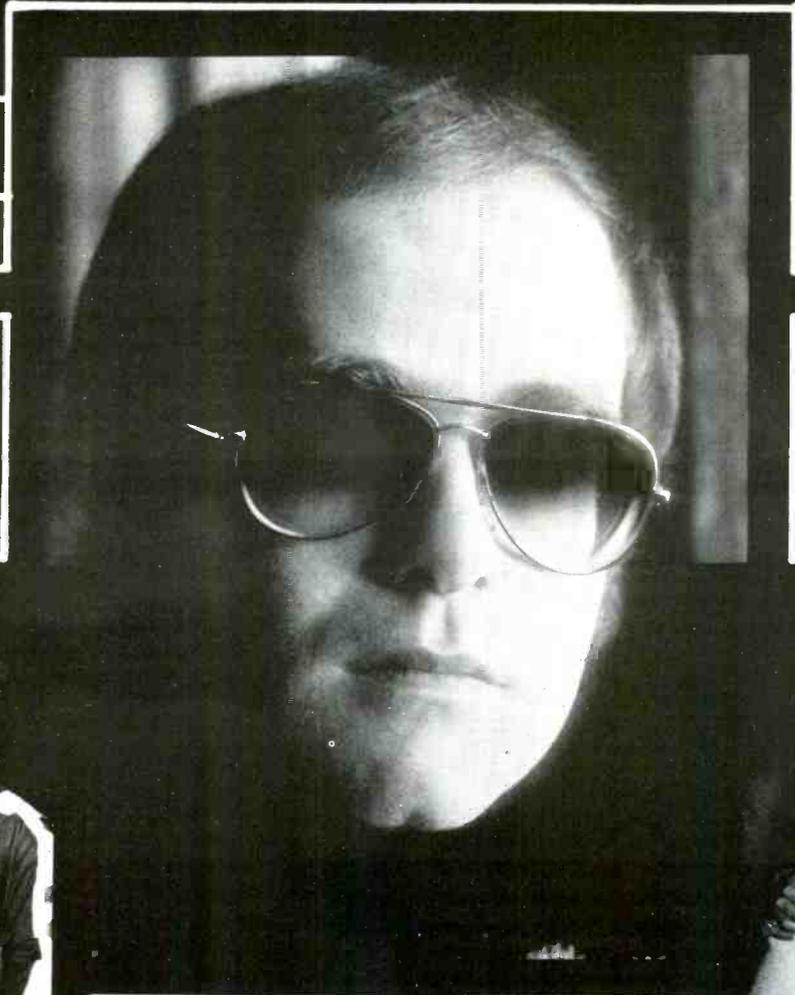


Elton John: Still one of Elton's finest, most disturbing albums and an auspicious U.S. debut for the artist dubbed by Rolling Stone as "The first rock star of the '70s." Predominantly an album of art songs, chilling in their elegance and unrelenting despair. The first eight songs — "Your Song," "I Need You To Run To," "Take Me To The Pilot," "No Shoestrings on Louise," "First Episode at Hienton," "Sixty Years On," "Border Song," "The Greatest Discovery" —are sheer knockouts and Elton's vocal delivery is impassioned and controlled throughout. Gus Dudgeon's production is flawless and Paul Buckmaster's arrangements are representative of the best in rock at that time.



Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player. It has certainly been said of Elton often enough that he plays the role of rock and roller much in the grande style of the Hollywood kings and queens. Here at least in terms of package concept, he accepts the image in earnest but with just the right touch of wit to keep you from believing that he takes it all too seriously. "Daniel," "Blues for Baby and Me" and "Crocodile Rock" get both the balladeer and Little Richard sides of Elton across, leaving nary a doubt as to what it means to be a star.

(Continued on page 102)



Congratulations

Cheers,

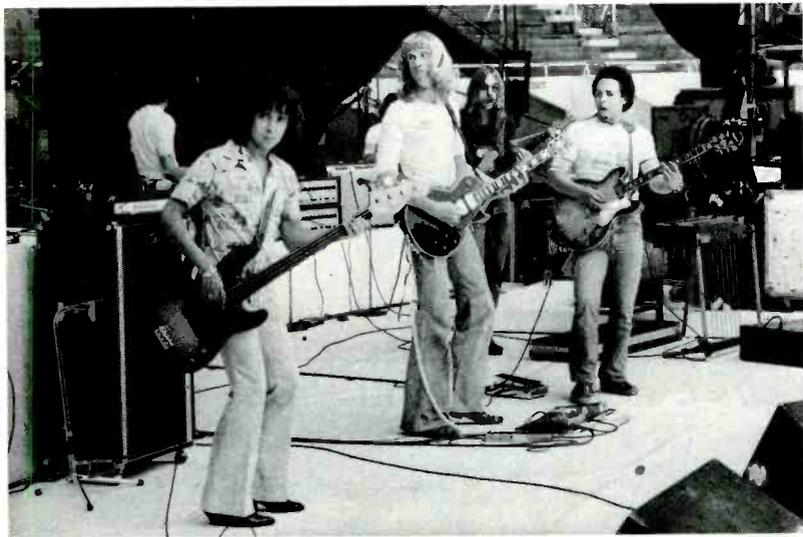
FUN PRODUCTIONS

David Forest Greg Mundy Casey King
Sue Finn Roger Shepherd

Photography: EMERSON-LOEW



Caleb Quaye—Musicianship and the Right Attitude



Caleb Quaye (right) with Kenny Passarelli and Davey Johnstone

■ Caleb Quaye has been part of the Elton John Story from the start, but became an official band member only last year. He met Elton when the two were office boys for London music firms, then they played together in *Bluesology*, Long John Baldry's back-up band. Quaye co-founded his own band, *Hookfoot*, but continued to appear on Elton's albums. His first solo effort is set for release early this year. In this *Record World* interview, he brings his unique perspective to Elton's career.

Record World: As the only member of the Elton John Band who played with Elton in *Bluesology*, how would you describe the progression of Elton's music and your own since the early days in London?

Caleb Quaye: I would say he's really covered it all. As an onlooker—inside and outside onlooker—I would say I've seen nothing but growth. Over the years I'd say he's covered all grounds and I've seen nothing but strong musical growth. I'd say he's one of the very few artists, very few superstars—whatever you want to call it—who's managed to keep growing and not get trapped by any kind of formula. Especially with the new band, I think whatever formula was there before is going to be done away with.

RW: Why do you think that is going to be?

Quaye: Basically underneath it all he's the man who writes the songs, him and Bernie, but the music has always been fresh; it's always good music, which I think has lent a lot of substance and strength to the whole thing. Put it this way: if the music hadn't been as good as it was, I don't think he would have been able to last as long, especially when he was going through the heavy ritual number.

RW: You mean in the performance end with the costumes, the production . . .

Quaye: All that. It wouldn't have come across as well if the music hadn't been that strong. But the tunes up there—there's something for all kinds of people to hear—it's not just rock. There's music for every age to relate to plus there are costumes for the kids, what have you.

RW: What do you think is so special about Elton that enables him to progress that way? Does the fact that he is so interested in music in general—total knowledge of music—enable him to just grow?

Quaye: I wouldn't say that he has a total knowledge of music in general, but I think he must have total knowledge of where he knows he can put his own talent—what situations he can apply his own talent to. I don't think anybody can have a total knowledge of music in general.

RW: You did write most of *Hookfoot's* material, did you not? Do you find it constricting now that you're working with someone else—

doing the writing and your performing someone else's material?

Quaye: No. It can be hard, I think it all depends on the sense of attitude. At the moment I feel really comfortable with what is happening. Obviously, I do want to do my own album sometime, but I don't want to rush into it. This right now is really good. A lot of people asked me that question. A lot of people thought I would never join Elton's band again, but all along I knew that at some point I would be playing with him again.

RW: Why is that?

Quaye: I don't know why. I think it's just down to the music. To take it back to the old days, he was always one of the musicians that we could just sit down and play all day and all night. We've always had an interest in musical chemistry between us. I think we both recognized the vaudeville elements in our heritage.

RW: You said that at one point you are looking forward to doing an album of your own. Do you have any plans to produce other artists?

Quaye: At this particular time, there is no time right now, but I would like to in the future.

RW: Bernie just usually waits until he's under the gun to write. Are you one of those writers who has something pop into his head and sits down and does it?

Quaye: That's right.

RW: You were speaking about rejoining Elton, but you didn't really say why.

Quaye: Well, the music that he's playing—again, this goes back right to the beginning because in a sense I started the ball rolling for Elton because I got him his contract with Dick James and this is in days before—long before—Gus or Steve Brown or any of those people, and I was Elton's first producer. So in a sense, I felt a strong tie with what's been going on over the years even though I haven't actually been a participant in it. Before Nigel came along, after we recorded the first album we had to get a band together to go on the road. I already had a band and Elton asked me many a time to join the band. I said no because there were other things I wanted to get together. I'm a music man first. So this was fine—it didn't destroy the friendship at all. I suppose what he's really been doing over the years has been part of me as well in a way. In the early days, Elton, Bernie and myself used to get together and write songs and it all sort of started for them. I sort of splintered off and the two carried it on.

RW: But obviously the three of you have kept in touch?

Quaye: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

RW: When did this rejoining come about?

Quaye: I just got a phone call in Chicago in May of this year. I was working with another band in Chicago, and he just phoned up and said "I want you to join my band." He told me what had gone down and he just said "You're the only guitar player in the world; it's up to you." I thought it over for a few days—as soon as he phoned up, I knew I was going to take it—I just thought it over for a few days anyway just to be on the safe side. I went to Phoenix to see my aunt, spent a few days there, because then I hadn't spoken to him for about two or three years and we just talked over the good times and I said yeah, I'm going for it.

RW: How do you find working with another guitarist on some material that was originally played by you alone?

Quaye: Just great, because the stuff me and David are doing now is the sort of thing I've always wanted to do with another guitar player. I've never really been able to find the right guitar player to do it with consistently. It's really good—it's chemistry.

RW: What's incredible is that from that first gig in San Diego, people couldn't believe how tight and how hot that band was after a week of rehearsal.

Quaye: It's just down to good musicianship and the right attitude—football team. The right attitude and a good football player.

RW: You're having a good time?

Quaye: You bet, I love it.

HOW MANY TIMES
HAVE I TOLD YOU
"YOU'RE GOING TO
BE A STAR."



*Ron
Ron DeBene*



Elton's Singles

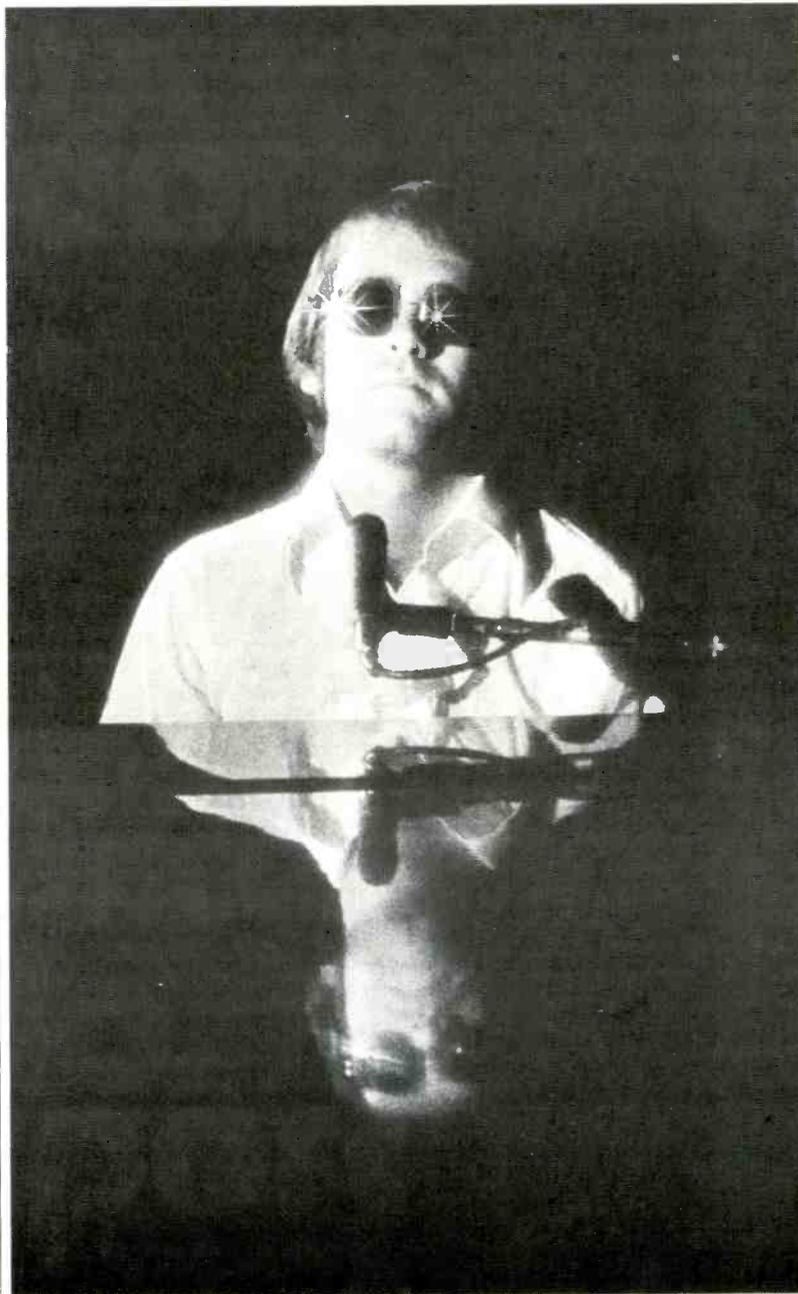
(Continued from page 14)

A few days after the launching of Apollo 16—and about six weeks before the release of the much-anticipated "Honky Chateau" lp—Elton John lifted off to his loftiest destination since "Your Song" with "Rocket Man" (Uni 55328/MCA 60165). Soaring all the way to number 6 by the summer of 1972, it firmly planted an EJ flag in top 10 orbit for all following product to use as a homing device. Producer Gus Dudgeon had previously worked on a similarly-themed "Space Oddity" for David Bowie, but Elton's space journey was the one which America's AM radio audience first traveled. "Honky . . ." cut "Suzie (Dramas)" served as the B-side with a wallop no less galactic.

The followup flight from "Honky Chateau" took a variant on the "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm?" story to the seven spot in the fall of 1972. "Honky Cat" (Uni 55343/MCA 60166) sees Elton's keyboards wrapping around Davey Johnstone's oriental-flavored banjo for a truly international barnyard of sounds. Another song cut from "Honky . . ." the country-rockin' "Slave" gives us an interesting look as EJ the vocalist sans his own instrumental accompaniment. Perhaps he was restin' up a bit for the proud poundin' to follow.

"Crocodile Rock" was unleashed on a now Elton-crazy public about two months in advance of the "Don't Shoot Me . . ." album as the first single on the MCA logo (4000). This tale of when rock was young went top 20 just five weeks after release in late November of 1972, and quickly grew up to spend two weeks at the top slot in February of '73. Elton employs a Farfisa organ here to capture a carnival atmosphere and then proceeds to dazzle us all with a hypothetical dance that becomes as real as any we've ever shaken to. Another elixir of happy days gone by, "Elderberry Wine," poured itself from B-side position to a cut on the new album.

A different shot from "Don't Shoot Me . . ." followed in March of 1973—"Daniel" (MCA 40046), to be regarded as one of the most



sensitive statements Elton John has ever made. This tale of leaving and brotherly love reached the two position on The Singles Chart with the gentle aid of EJ's "flute mellotron" work.

For a B-side, Elton chose a 1968 composition, "Skyline Pigeon," which he had written as a single for Roger Cook but had not released yet in the States in his "Empty Sky" version. Elton John re-recorded it into a "collectible," replacing the harpsichord with a piano. This reflection of dreams left behind became the first of a run of "collectible" B-sides which

has since continued with only occasional breaks up through the present.

In fact, the next single was to provide two treasures not to be found on any album, with both on the B-side. To accomplish the trick, Elton came up with a modification of the EP disc, with one standard side for a song later to be included on the "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" album and one extended play side for the two collectibles. (In late 1975, Columbia Records would revive this semi-EP disc for Simon & Garfunkel's reunion "My Little

Town.")

"Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting" (MCA 40105) was already a top 10 single by the time its companion album was released, busting on the charts at a fast 59 in July of 1973 and quickly debauching its way to the eight slot. This unabashed rocker sports EJ's piano pyrotechnics as pure rhythmic and interjectory joy, with his vocals as precisely sharp-toothed as a wolf's jaws on a cold and hungry night.

A Throwback

The first section of the B-side is a brief (1:50) but crunchy rocker with bluegrass harmonies—"Jack Rabbit." Even more intriguing is its companion "Whenever You're Ready (We'll Go Steady Again)." More than a tenement rocker filled with '60s heartbreak, it is an updated throwback to EJ's days with Bluesology, his first group experience. Here's a piercing sax riff that could have belonged to Elton Dean, whose nifty monicker reportedly moved one Reg Dwight to cop his Christian name and link it with that of Bluesology's lead vocalist, Long John Baldry.

"Saturday" was followed by the title cut from the "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" (MCA 40248) album, in time to coincide with its October '73 release. The single which only took eight weeks to reach the top chart slot represents a high point in Elton's falsetto style. It also contains the supreme cockney pronunciation guide to the word "road."

Following the collectible tradition, EJ cut "Young Man's Blues" for the flip. After some strange intro guitar which suggests a sci-fi-inspired time warp action, Elton unveils a further extension of "Saturday . . ." raucousness, proclaiming "Screw you!" to an entire globe. Several times. Thumbing his nose at the worst puritanical hang-ups of the best of us, he ingeniously laid the groundwork for "The Bitch Is Back."

But there were more pranks to be played out as Elton followed with a more immediate and timely two-sided entry, a Yuletide pairing of "Step Into Christmas" and "Ho Ho Ho (Who'd Be A Turkey At Christmas)" (MCA
(Continued on page 108)

Here's To Many More!



John Reid Enterprises Ltd

London



Five Years of Fun

(Continued from page 54)

But there was some grumbling of discontent in the audience over John's colorful wardrobe and exaggerated behavior. He came on stage dressed outrageously in a brown leather top hat, blue velvet cape, high big yellow overalls and silver boots with stars on them. While most in the capacity audience roared its approval, some felt John was trying to use gimmicks to further his career. They felt he should stick to the music, that the fancy clothes and exaggerated Jerry Lee Lewis antics (at the end of the show) were signs of a desperate desire for success. The clothes and manner, it turned out, were simply a national extension of John's personality and belief in the entertainment purpose of rock shows.

"It wasn't any desperation to be successful," he said later, looking back at the scattered criticism. "I just wanted to get away from the thing that everyone else was doing. I could have come out on stage in a pair of Levis, a cowboy shirt and boots and everyone

would have said 'wow.' But I would have been bored to death. I just couldn't do it.

"Eighty percent of the music business is such a drag. I know it's the music that counts, but I also like it when someone puts on a good show. Ninety percent of my act is the music, but the 10 percent theatrics is fun. For me and for the audience.

"People like Randy Newman are great. He just sits down at the piano and plays. But he's got something better than all the rest. He's great. A great sense of humor. I could sit and listen to him for hours. But he's the exception. Most of them come out and play very adequate music, but they are so bloody boring. There are so many like that.

'Fun'

"Quite honestly, I regard all pop music as irrelevant in the sense that people 200 years from now won't be listening to what is being written and played today. But, I think they will be listening to Beethoven. Pop music is just fun. That's one of the reasons I don't take myself seriously. I love

pop music. It's my whole life. But I love it because it's fun.

'Dressing up'

"I really have a ball dressing up, wearing the crazy clothes and stuff. We do all sorts of funny things in the show. I get up during a song and stride across the stage in my huge, high heel boots and chubby little figure doing a very camp Mick Jagger bit. The audience really has fun and so do I. I think people look forward to it. If we didn't do things like that, they'd be disappointed. But the music has to be there."

Elton's next Los Angeles area appearance was on Dec. 4, 1970 when he appeared with Leon Russell (one of the few times in his career that John didn't headline) at the 9,000-seat Anaheim Convention Center. By then, his career was skyrocketing. In some ways, it was moving too fast. Between the Anaheim show in December and the week at the Greek Theater the following September, three new Elton John albums ("Tumbleweed Connection," the "Friends" soundtrack and the live "11-17-70") were released, and another ("Madman Across the Water") was on the way. A certain critical backlash began.

Greek Theater

As with John's other local appearances, the Greek Theater engagement—he was the only performer that summer at the Greek without an opening act—was a spectacular success. Despite the success of the live shows (the grumbling about the desperate costume gimmicks had begun to soften), there was increasing disenchantment among some rock journalists and other "industry insiders" who felt John was too greedy in putting out so much product. They began to wonder aloud if all his success wasn't due in large part to the hype of a major publicity and promotion campaign. Some felt John's career was on the decline.

Aware of the complaints about flooding the market with product, John began to maintain a much lower profile. Where the Greek Theater engagement had been his fourth Los Angeles appearance in little more than a year, it was well over a year before he re-

turned here for back-to-back shows at the Anaheim Convention Center and Inglewood Forum.

'Honky Chateau'

He also released only one album — "Honky Chateau" — in 1972. But the album contained "Rocket Man" and "Honky Cat," his first Top 10 singles since "Your Song." Their success gave him some much needed, renewed confidence. The career, which had seemed to some in trouble only a few months before, was flourishing again when he toured America in the fall of 1972.

"I really have fun touring, particularly in America," he said, during the 1972 tour. "I love having parties and making records. If I weren't making records, I'd like to work in a record shop. If it (the career) fell through tomorrow, I'd say, 'What the hell. Two and a half years and I had a ball.' When we came over for that first Troubadour gig, I never imagined things would happen so fast. I was just thrilled at the idea of coming to America. I was looking forward to rummaging through record shops, looking for old records that we can't get in England.

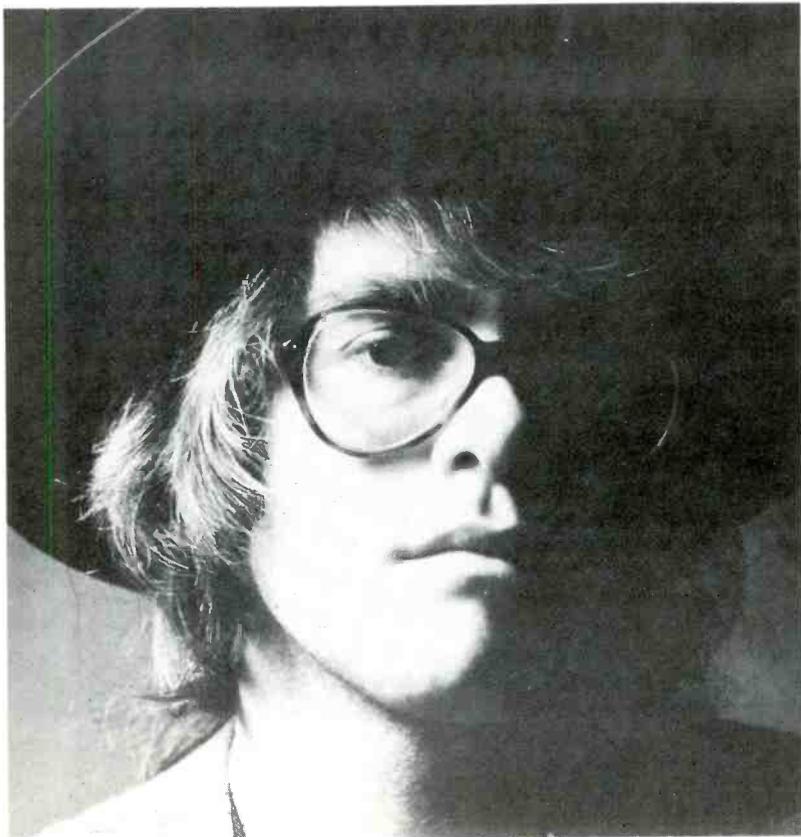
"Sure, I used to get hurt by all the knocks," he continued. "But 'Rocket Man' and 'Honky Chateau' were the best replies to the people who wrote I was finished. I was really on the chopping block for a while. There I was 'instant super hero' and then the knocks began. I can understand part of it, particularly the complaints about four albums in eight months, but most of it was stupid. I could have done all sorts of bitchy interviews after the success of those records, but what's the point? It's only the music that is important."

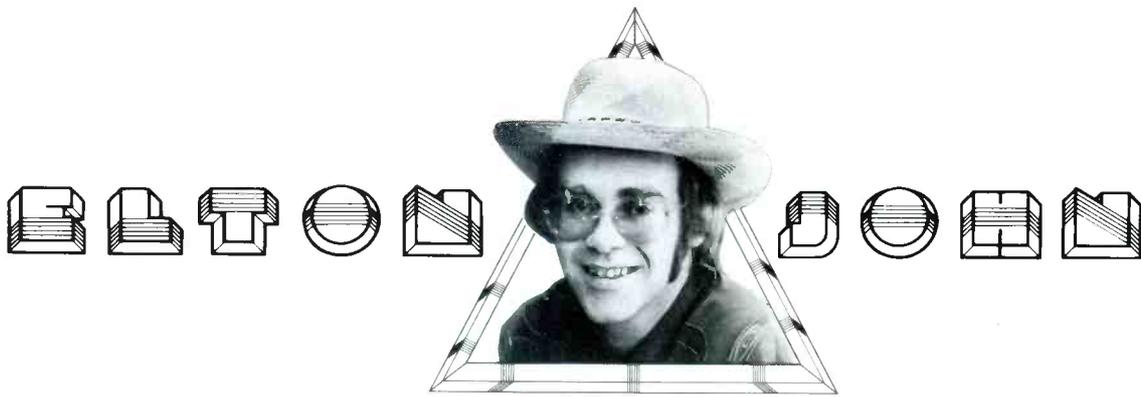
Playing the piano

Elton John, whose given name was Reg Dwight ("I changed it because I thought it sounded like a cement mixer or something") began teaching himself to play the piano when he was four. His mother enrolled him in London's Royal Academy of Music when he was 11. "I was a big bluffer," he once said. "I never did any practicing but I always got good grades."

But his real interest was pop music, not classical. He used to

(Continued on page 81)





A New Departure for Ray Cooper

■ Percussionist Ray Cooper, an Elton John Band member since 1973, has appeared on every Elton John album except "Empty Sky." Classically trained on piano and wind instruments, he made his name as a studio musician working with artists ranging from Maynard Ferguson to the Rolling Stones. His association with a band named Blue Mink ended with his addition to Elton's group. Cooper spoke with *Record World* about a longstanding association with Elton.



Ray Cooper

Record World: What led you from the piano and string instruments to percussion?

Ray Cooper: When you're first starting out, the piano is a very good instrument to start with; that led me on to further musical education, got me very interested in composing contemporary—classical contemporary—music, and rather than reading about those instruments, I preferred to physically know the instruments so I went and

got a working knowledge of string instruments. Then the crunch came, because having this knowledge, if you're thinking about going into the profession as a musician, you have to pick a working instrument. Percussion being probably the most dramatic of all the instruments you can play and also the least inhabited, if you like—there weren't so many percussion players about—I decided to get involved with percussion. It always interested me.

RW: Since you have a wide musical range as far as instruments are concerned, obviously you still play and have the knowledge of strings. Do you ever have the desire to contribute more than just the percussion, say in recordings?

Cooper: I do in so much as I have the knowledge that I have, even if it's not physically contributed. In so much as playing myself, I can suggest things that I know are possible and that would sound well.

RW: How do you determine what you're playing and where?

Cooper: It's not very difficult to determine what you do with Elton's music; it's very lyrical. Certain lyrical aspects suggest musical sounds, certain musical aspects suggest musical sounds, and they are brought about in rehearsal, they're rehearsed and accepted or thrown out and then once they're set, it's quite an easy thing to remember where you are going to put things in, as long as it has some continuity.

(Continued on page 80)

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC



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Roger Pope: The Right Man at the Right Time

■ Drummer Roger Pope was featured on Elton's first single, "Lady Samantha," and appears on three of Elton's earlier albums. A co-founder of Hookfoot with band member Caleb Quaye, Pope was also a member of the Kiki Dee Band for its 1974 summer tour with Elton John. He became the permanent Elton John Band drummer in 1975. In a Record World interview he commented on his relationship with Elton John.

Record World: How did you first link up with Elton and Caleb Quaye years ago?

Roger Pope: I met Caleb once before because Caleb used to work with Dick James; he was a juicer up there and I was in a band and that was the first time I met him. Soul Agents was the band I was in before. Our bass player went up to Dick James to talk about something or other, and bumped into Caleb, and Elton had asked Caleb to find some people to do some sessions and Caleb bumped into Gloves and asked him and Gloves told me and that's how we first got together. We went up and did "Lady Samantha," which was Elton's first or second single. Then we did the "Empty Sky" album from that. It was just being in the right place at the right time.

RW: After Hookfoot disbanded, how did you come to join up with Kiki Dee and then ultimately to rejoin EJ?

Pope: Well, Kiki decided to replace her drummer, Pete Clark, and Gus was producing her album and Gus always uses me for anything he

wants and I started doing this for about a week; it went well, and they asked if I would join the band. They had this big tour coming up with Elton last year and wanted me to do it and I had nothing else to do. It was a chance to get to America and meet up with a few other people.

RW: You're living in the States now, right?

Pope: I'm not living anywhere at the moment.

RW: Do you have plans to settle in the States?

Pope: I don't know. I like to spend a lot of time here; I expect we'll be here a lot anyway. In the long run, I'll go back to England and live there.

RW: How did it come about—you joining the new EJ band?

Pope: I had worked with him on many sessions in the past and I believe he had been thinking about making a change in the band on the last tour. He rang me up while he was in England and asked me to join the band in rehearsals in Amsterdam.

RW: You didn't have any hesitation about it at all?

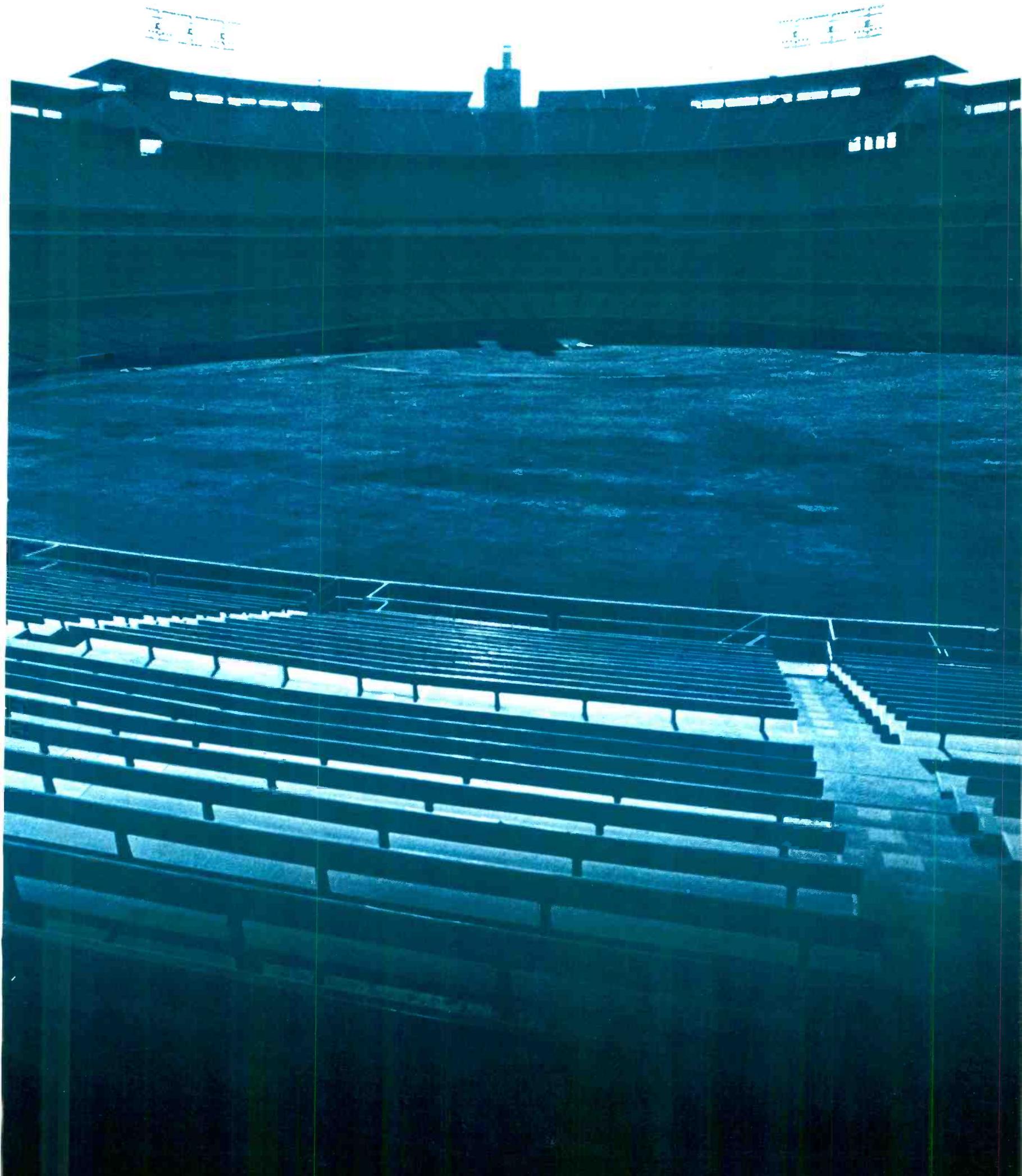
Pope: No, not at all. It was in the back of my mind to try and get the gig with Elton after we split up. I always wanted to do it. We were there in the beginning but for the fact that Hookfoot's manager and Dick James, who was managing Elton at the time, couldn't work out a deal.

(Continued on page 103)

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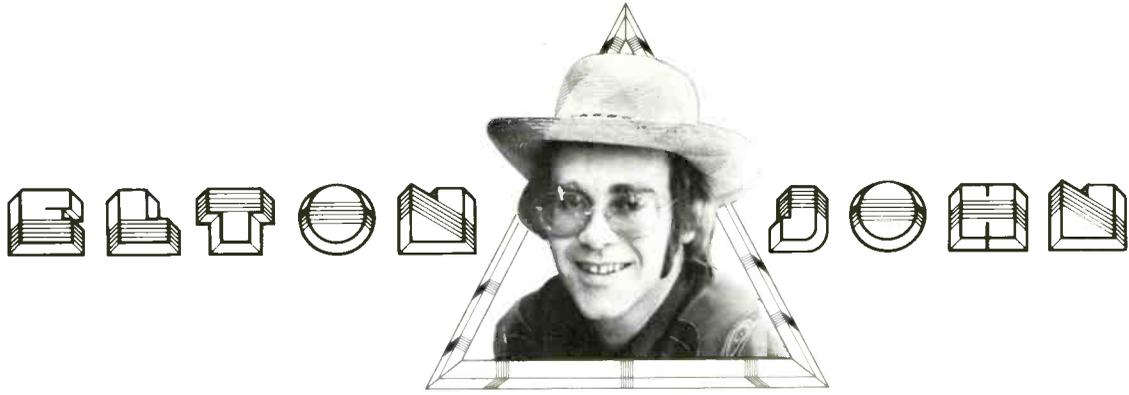
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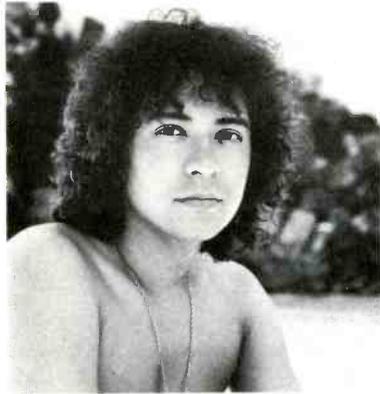
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Consistency Counts for Kenny Passarelli

■ A veteran of Joe Walsh's Barnstorm and Stephen Stills' Manassas, bassist Kenny Passarelli is a relatively new member of the Elton John Band. Passarelli had also performed with Dan Fogelberg, Veronique Sanson, and Joe Vitale before being recommended to Elton by Joe Walsh. The Denver native features 18 years of classical trumpet study among his musical credentials, and does songwriting on his own, including "Rocky Mountain Way," which he co-wrote. He spoke to Record World about his new role in the Elton John Band.



Kenny Passarelli

Record World: After having come to the Elton John Band after having toured extensively with two other excellent groups, how would you describe the differences in working with Elton from your work with Joe Walsh and Stephen Stills?

Kenny Passarelli: One word: consistency. Elton's music and the way he goes about making the music is the most consistent I've ever worked

with. First of all, when we go to record, we rehearse instead of writing the music or trying to compose it while recording.

RW: What led you to the bass?

Passarelli: I couldn't play jazz and it was a frustration, plus The Beatles came along and I wanted to play the guitar and I couldn't.

RW: Why couldn't you play the guitar?

Passarelli: You can make a parallel between the trumpet and the bass because they play single notes and the guitar is based on chords, so my training was on melodies and the bass is similar.

RW: What advantages does a fretless bass afford you as opposed to the fretted electric bass?

Passarelli: Electric bass has always tried to achieve the same sound as an acoustic bass; that was what it was originally designed to do, with more volume. The fretless bass comes to the acoustic bass.

RW: So you always use a fretless on stage?

Passarelli: On stage. In recording I use fretted bass—it depends on the circumstances.

RW: How did you join the Elton John Band?

Passarelli: Phone call first of all, and I was recommended to Elton when he was looking for a new bass player. Joe Walsh happened to be at Elton's house one night and Elton asked Joe about a bass player and Joe recommended me. Elton listened to the records I'd played with Joe Walsh and I got a phone call.

Elton

Some guys got it made!

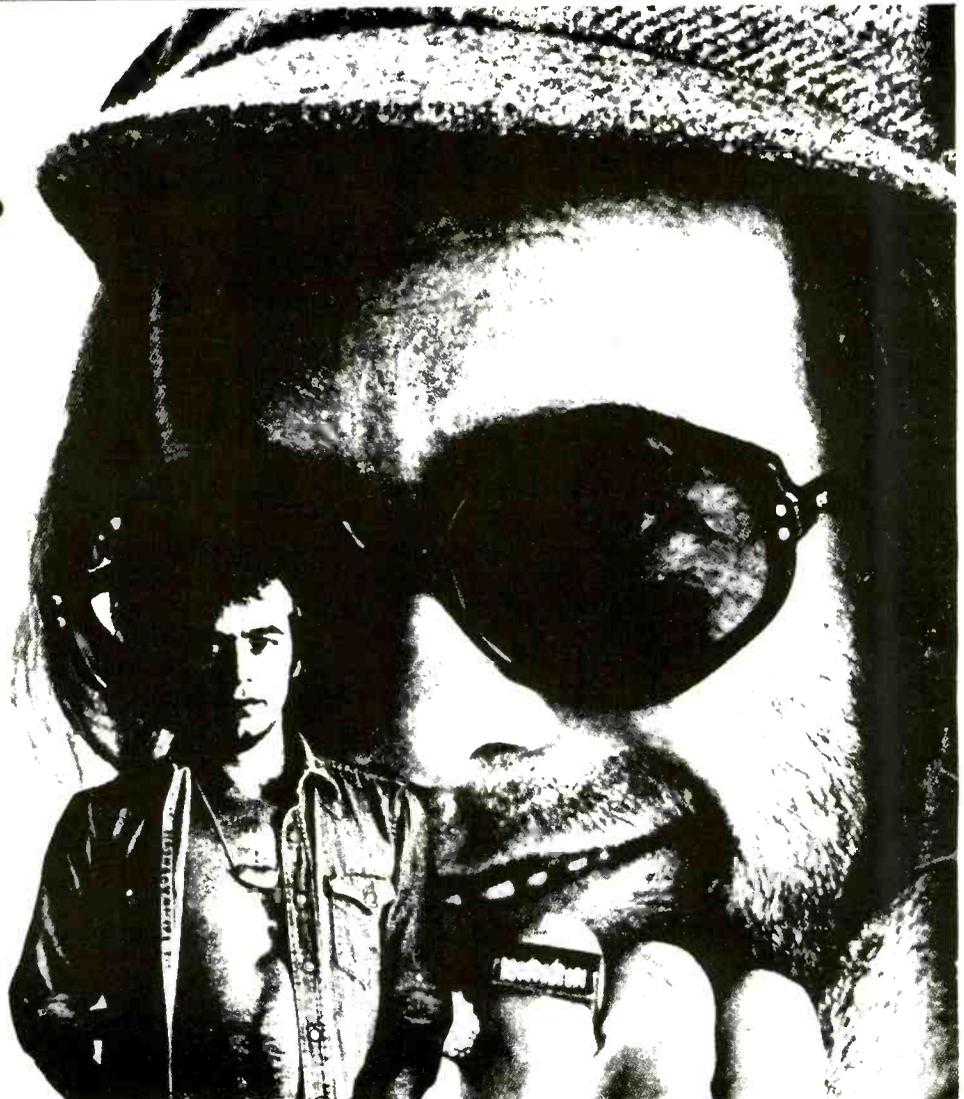
- Denver - Oct. 75
- Vancouver B. C. - Oct. 75, Oct. 74, Sept. 73
- Portland - Oct. 75, Oct. 74
- Seattle - Oct. 75, Oct. 74, Aug. 73, Oct. 72, Apr. 71
- Honolulu - Oct. 74, Aug. 73, Oct. 72, May 71
- Dallas - Sept. 74, Aug. 73, Nov. 72
- Houston - Sept. 74
- San Antonio - Aug. 73
- Oklahoma City - May 71
- Baton Rouge - Sept. 74
- Mobile - Sept. 74
- Tuscaloosa - Sept. 74
- Miami - Oct. 73, Nov. 72, May 71
- Hampton - Nov. 72
- Atlanta - Nov. 74, Sept. 73
- Des Moines - Aug. 73
- Kansas City - May 71

Thanks



TOM HULETT
TERRY BASSETT

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ELTON JOHN
AND
JOHN REID**



**FROM,
HELEN REDDY AND JEFF WALD**



Art Direction from David Larkham

■ LOS ANGELES — David Larkham first came into contact with Elton John via his friend of ten years, Steve Brown, who was at that time a song plugger for DJM Records. Brown needed a photo session done with a young song-writing partnership that DJM had signed, so off went Larkham and shot the first publicity pictures of Elton John and Bernie Taupin. Through this meeting Larkham was commissioned to do the cover of the first Elton John album, "Empty Sky," a portrait that "was something we all loved for about a week and then absolutely hated." This introduction notwithstanding, David Larkham's relationship with Elton John has continued through all the EJ albums, and his graphics company, David Larkham & Friends, has become the art direction wing of Rocket Records.

Credits

His credits are not restricted to Elton John alone. Following a stint as art director at DJM (during which time he accompanied Elton on two U.S. tours), he formed a company called Teepee Graphics (in partnership with Norman Winter) that resulted in album covers for, among others, Three Dog Night, Van Morrison, Neil Diamond and Steely Dan. He initially formed David Larkham & Friends as an independent concern, turning out packages for Judy Collins, Kiki Dee, Martha Reeves and the Hudson Bros. There can be no denying, however, that his professional continuity is best seen in his work with Elton John.

"The conceptual process varies with each album," he explains. "Bernie Taupin and I worked very closely on the 'Captain Fantastic' package. Because the album was recorded well in advance of its release, Bernie and Elton and I had a lot of time to put it together exactly the way we wanted to do it."

'Yellow Brick Road'

"Some of them, on the other hand, have had to come together in an alarmingly short period of time. 'Yellow Brick Road' was one of those. Although we had a few of the illustrations that accompanied the song lyrics on the inside, we had only three days

to put the cover together. I had to fly to London on a Friday, doing drawings on the plane all the way over. No sleep. Planned out the cover on the weekend. Met the illustrator on Monday morning, and he and I drew up the pencil sketch that became the front cover by Monday afternoon. Still no sleep. Finished off the drawings and began sticking all the type down over Monday night, and caught a plane back to Los Angeles on Tuesday morning."

Advance Listening

Larkham usually hears the music that his artwork will cover before he actually sets about working on it, often watching the musical direction take form in the studio. "On the last two or three albums, especially, I've been at Caribou or wherever they were recording, so that we could all sit down and work out titles and graphic ideas right then and there."

Audio/Visual Relationship

Given that the nature of Elton John's music necessitates constant change, so Larkham must also be prepared to change his artistic vision with it. "I think," he stated, "that every cover has pretty much related visually to what he's been doing musically. The first album in this country, 'Elton John,' was kind of a moody record, and the cover photo was correspondingly moody. 'Honky Chateau' was a funkier album, so we chose a photo that pictured a funkier Elton, which corresponded even though the picture was three years old. So we're always looking to make that connection."

Extra Care

One of the things that separates Elton from the superstar pack is the extra care that's accorded the packaging of his albums. "It's been great in that Elton and John Reid have both encouraged us in this direction. Elton has always wanted to do things above the average, to give the fans a little more than other people did. I think 'Tumbleweed Connection' was one of the first rock albums to include a booklet, and of course 'Captain Fantastic' with its two booklets and poster. And something that Elton is really into now are the special labels that

have been on his records since the 'Greatest Hits' package.

'That Little Extra'

"It's nice that he has the sales and the weight behind him to be able to say that he wants a little extra. So it's therefore nice for me, instead of just having it be a

front and a back, to have that little extra to play around with. I love working with Elton, Bernie and John Reid; they've all been super encouraging. Which is why I never fail to get keyed up for each Elton John package. I can't wait for the next one."

'The Only Automatic Artist'

■ LOS ANGELES — As vice president of programming for RKO General Radio, Paul Drew is responsible for the sound of several stations including WRKO, KHJ, KFRC, WHBQ, and 99X. Keeping in touch with a total audience that reaches well into the tens of millions, Drew's appraisal of Elton as being the most popular recording artist in the business can be considered nothing less than accurate. "Elton's the only 'automatic' artist that I can think of today," he said. "He does equally well in all markets and reaches teens, sub-teens and people well into their twenties. His track record can't be questioned and he hasn't disappointed us or the audience."

Beginning with "Your Song" in 1970, RKO's top forty stations have played every Elton single that has been released, but it was with "Crocodile Rock" in 1973 that Drew realized the magnitude of Elton's career. "When that record was a hit, I made the statement that with one more hit record, he would be a major super-

star artist. I told John Reid that when Elton went on tour, he would be a major superstar artist. I told John Reid that when Elton went on tour, he would become The Beatles of the seventies.

"Elton has a great talent for writing and working with his producer to come up with good commercial records," Drew continued. "He's a great student of the business and listens to more records than maybe even I do. His taste has no boundaries."

Drew enjoys a personal friendship with Elton and calls occasionally to learn what records Elton is listening to. "He's got great commercial ears. He helped pick the Average White Band's 'Pick Up The Pieces,' Gloria Gaynor's 'Never Can Say Goodbye' and the Bee Gees' 'Fanny,'" Drew said. "I think of him as a warm, sensitive, hard-working individual and anything that I'd add to that would be superlatives. He deserves the success he has—he works hard and has paid his dues well."

Eliot Sekuler



Paul Drew, Elton

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MCA Viewpoint (Continued from page 20)

only Elton John album of that year. The lp, "Honky Chateau," was Elton's first to hit the number one spot on best selling charts and it was certified gold in 1972. It was also a turning point for Elton. Davey Johnstone joined Elton's band permanently. As Elton noted, "I think it was a real turning point because I started using the band instead of session musicians on records." The album included some of Elton's greatest rockers, "Honky Cat" and "Rocket Man." These two singles were the first to hit the top 10 since "Your Song." Bernie Taupin said of "Honky Chateau," "We wanted to do some fun songs . . . We had a good time making that album. We went to France and took our time. It was a new atmosphere and everything was very relaxed." Elton's 1972 tour was also different from the preceding ones. It

was far more elaborate, with Elton wearing windshield wiper-equipped eyeglasses and dressing in wild costumes. On this tour, Elton introduced "Crocodile Rock." This was the first single ever released on the new MCA Records label and it was Elton's first number one single.

"Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player" was Elton John's next album and it included "Crocodile Rock" and "Daniel." The album was already number one when Elton returned to the U. S. It was also certified gold. Elton's 1973 appearance at the Hollywood Bowl was an enormous celebration. Everyone who attended received a free souvenir t-shirt. Linda Lovelace hosted the evening's entertainment and the performance took place in front of a huge backdrop with a picture of Elton. Look alikes of Groucho

Marx, Elvis Presley, Frankenstein and many others paraded down an enormous staircase. When asked about the fun-filled, party-like atmosphere at his concerts, Elton commented, "Pop music is fun. That's one of the reasons I don't take myself seriously. I love pop music. It's my whole life. But

I love it because it's fun. I really have a ball dressing up, wearing the crazy clothes . . . but the music has to be there."

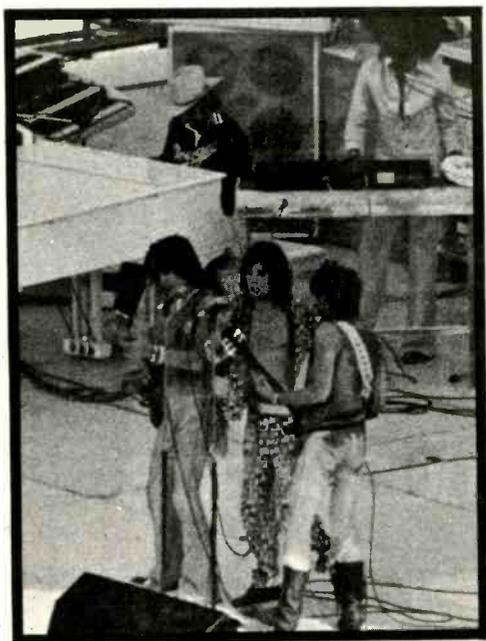
Not only is the music "there" but more and more people were learning to love Elton John's sound.

(Continued on page 126)



One MCA promotion for Elton John included a look-alike contest. Pictured above are the finalists awaiting the judges' decision.

Hot Fun In The Summer Time

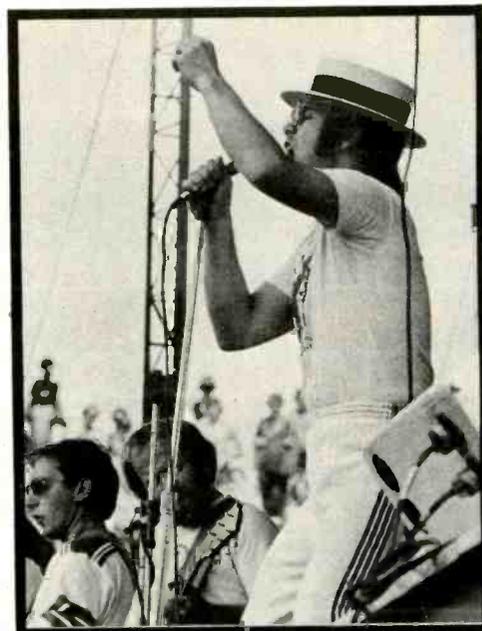


Elton & Stones

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friends**

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Barry Fey**



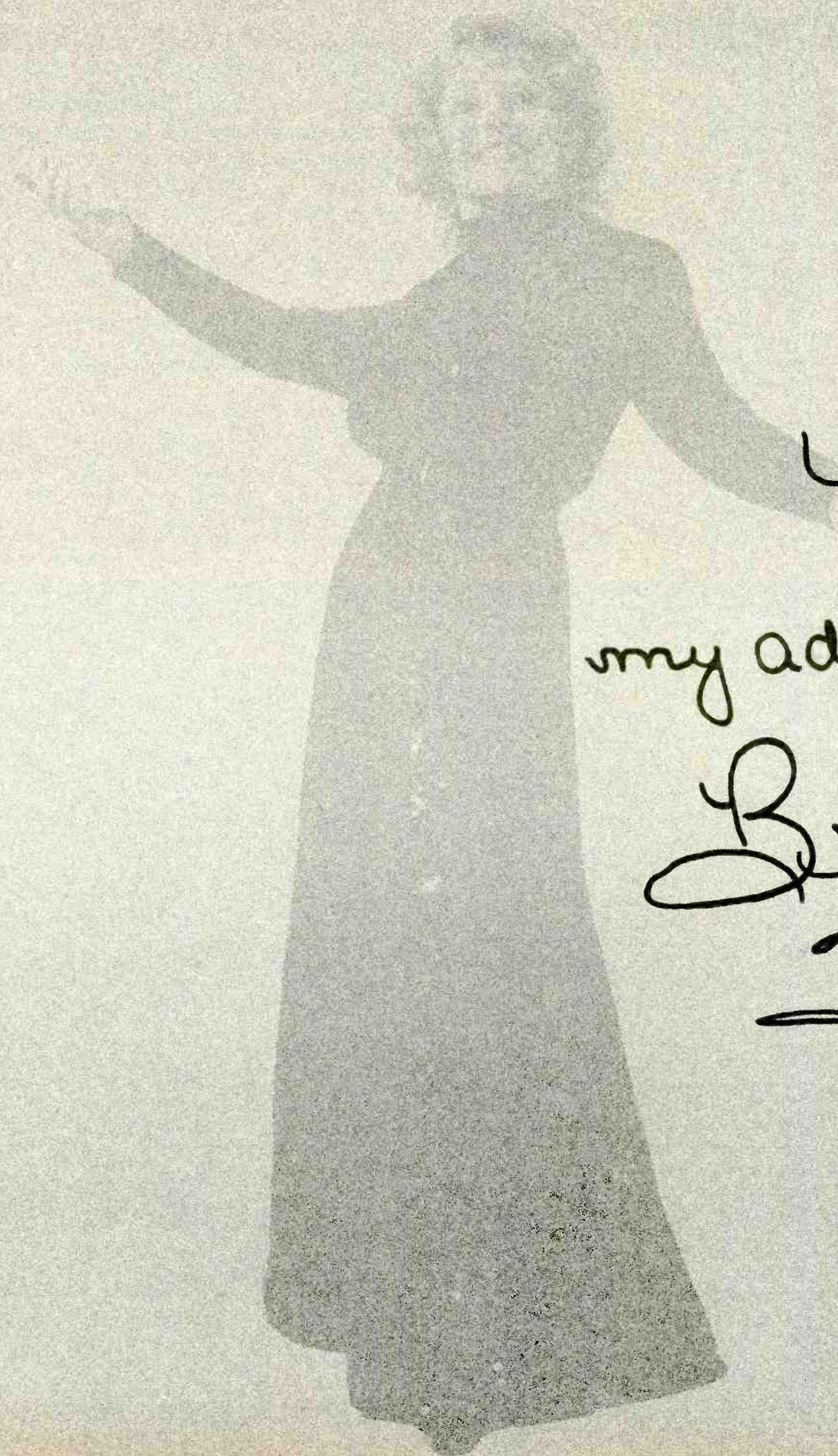
Elton & Beach Boys

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a Charlie Blue Design

RECORD WORLD JANUARY 31, 1976

Heaven lent him Genius,
and was repaid.



With
my admiration,
Brenda
Lee
H



John Reid *(Continued from page 56)*

RW: How active a role does Elton take in the operation of Rocket Records?

Reid: He's active in the area of choosing artists and in deciding what kind of artists we should sign—creative decisions.

RW: Last fall's Rock of The Westies tour was a new type of project for Elton. In the future, will he be touring one section of the country at a time?

Reid: We thought it was the right thing to do at this time. He has a bigger band now and he spends a little more time recording than he used to; he records in four weeks now instead of in two. Also, it's a matter of not being able to keep up that pace of doing 42 cities every year—something has to give if you do. I think Elton realizes that; he's holding himself back a little bit. But then who knows? You can't really predict exactly what will happen because by summer, we may have taken a different view. Rock 'n roll changes from minute to minute.

RW: Did you have an active hand in changing the band?

Reid: I played a very small part in that. Basically, it emanated from Elton. He'll discuss things with me, with Gus and Bernie and then he'll draw his own conclusions. I nearly had a heart attack at the beginning of the year when he said he was going to change the band. It was actually inconceivable to me that it would happen so suddenly and that it would work.

I feel more comfortable in America, for a variety of reasons. Everybody seems to know that they have a job to do here and they do it.

RW: Whose decision was it that Elton would play at Dodger Stadium?

Reid: We could have played Anaheim or the Rose Bowl but Dodger Stadium is a great facility. It was the right size, more intimate than the others.

RW: I wouldn't have thought of Dodger Stadium as intimate.

Reid: It was more so than any of the other places and aside from that, everybody had said that we wouldn't be able to get it. It became a challenge.

RW: Do you prefer touring in the States to playing elsewhere?

Reid: I feel more comfortable in America, for a variety of reasons. Everybody seems to know that they have a job to do here and they do it. England, being a much smaller place, is easier to control in many ways, but there you have to take control of everything and not leave things for other people to handle. Europe is nice to tour through but the language barrier adds an additional hassle. And Italy can be

(Continued on page 104)

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Ray Cooper

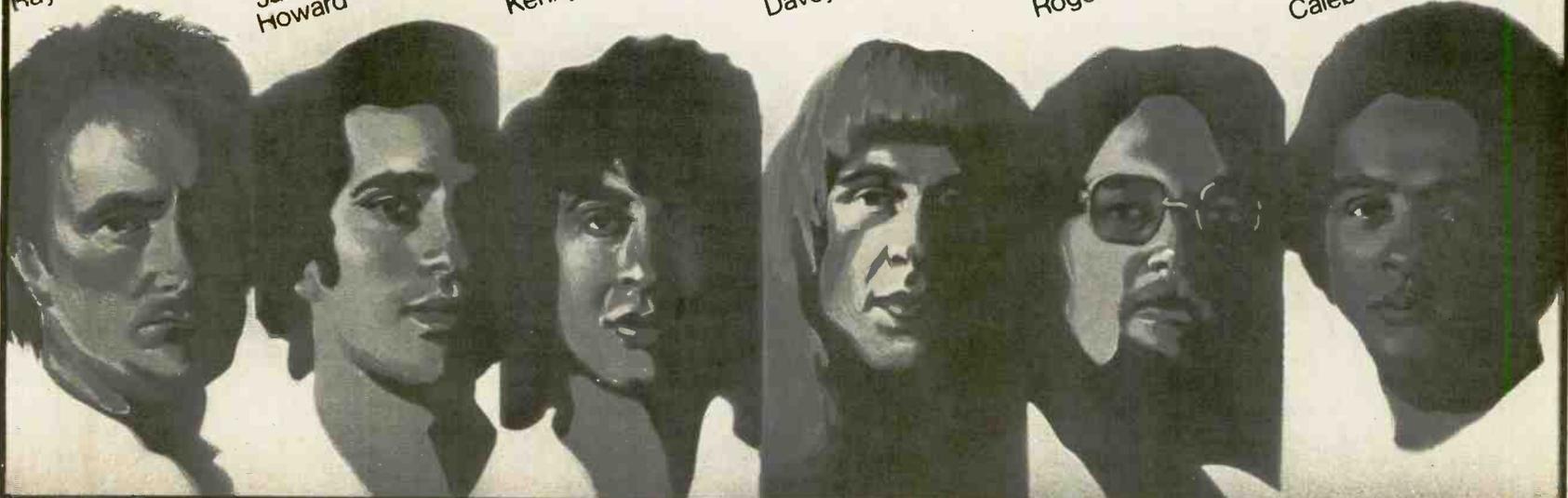
James Newton
Howard

Kenny Passarelli

Davey Johnstone

Roger Pope

Caleb Quayle



FROM THE BOYS IN THE BAND



Elton on Albums (Continued from page 46)

recording/mixing ambience of London's Trident Studios and of course with the lyrical brilliance of Bernie Taupin. From Elton's first, any arbitrary lines separating "the star's" talents from those with which he surrounded himself were successfully blurred. A lot of gears were shifted in the process of recording this variegated album, but each set of movements took place as one joint effort. And so it all came together in a variety of styles—on the smash ballad "Your Song," the country-rockin' "No Shoestrings On Louise," the classically-cloaked "Sixty Years On" and the positively hell-raisin' "Take Me To The Pilot"—to give Elton a wholly mesmerizing multi-faceted profile.

1971

The next two projects followed in quick succession in early 1971. Both were album efforts from which no singles were pulled, allowing Elton to solidify his sound and image in the broadest possible contexts. "Tumbleweed Connection," a broadly-themed lp, sported several lowdown 'n nasty "gun" tunes but seemed equally at home with the fireside warmth of the now standard pastoral "Country Comforts." The live "11-17-70" session brought Nigel Olsson and Dee Murray to the fore as straight-ahead boogie purveyors. (Olsson and Murray had played briefly on "Tumbleweed . . ." but really rose to recording prominence here.)

The simultaneous charting of all three albums well into 1971 gave Elton more than triple-threat visibility. Just as importantly, their combined success showed a breadth of scope in the span of ten months that few acts ever achieve in as many years. And that common thread of grandeur with the high-energy gloss running through Elton's first three albums was woven to last through the triumphs that would follow.

"Madman Across The Water" released in mid-November 1971 didn't have to feature a "jacket" likeness of Elton to achieve maximum top 20 impact—a simple name identification on denim pants was all that was needed for the music within. The singles "Tiny Dancer" and "Levon" set a

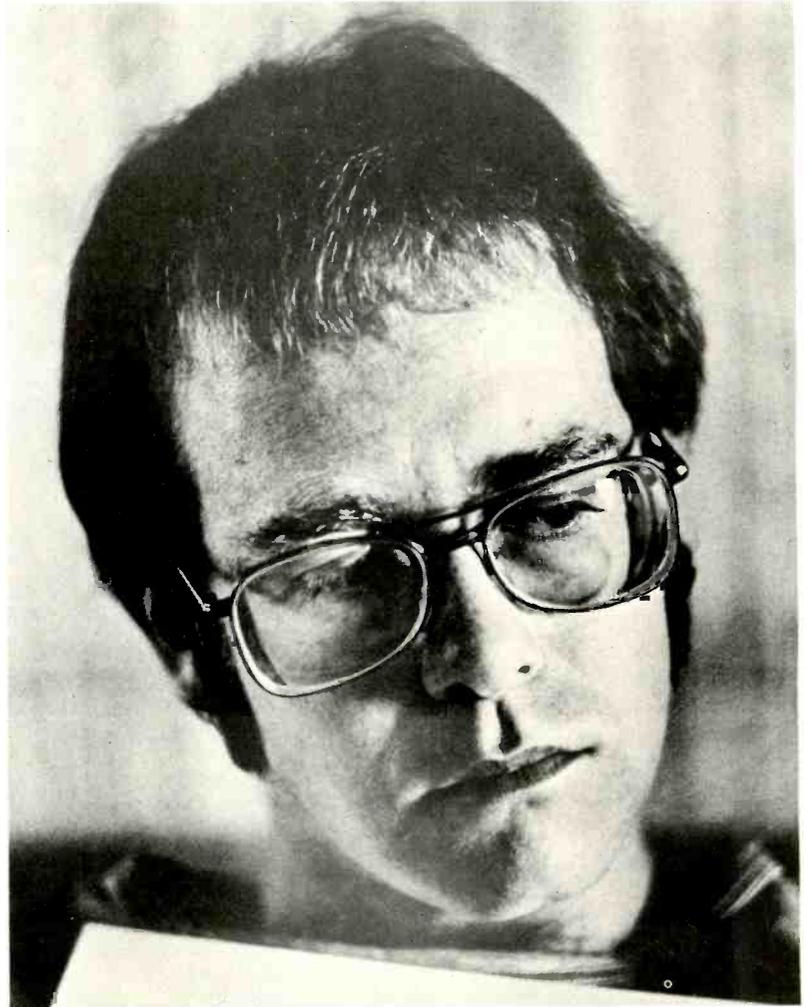
third-person tone for character sketches which flowed easily into other performances where the word "I" was mightily felt. The addition of Davey Johnstone on mandolin and sitar injected strangely effective progressions into Elton's overall sound, clearly defined but ever open to variation by this point in musical time. The "more-than-a-guitarist" stance of Johnstone's has been moving Elton's albums forward ever since.

Paul Buckmaster's arrangements had provided a stunning sheath of symphonic strings for all of Elton's studio albums before "Honky Chateau" and his talents would also reappear for later sessions. But the lp released on May 31, 1972 opted instead for the solo virtuosity of Jean-Luc Ponty and arp perfectionism from David Hentschel. A more crisp, fiery variant on Elton's sound pattern resulted from the combination, and so too did his fastest-rising album to date: "Honky Chateau" cracked into the top three in just five weeks.

'Honky Chateau'

"Honky Chateau" saw Nigel Olsson, Dee Murray and Davey Johnstone take a fuller responsibility for all basic track duties; thus Elton's "live" band was allowed to blossom as a complete studio unit. The site of the studio itself switched to the French ambience of Strawberry (with Trident being used for mixing only), accenting a more international approach to recording. Bernie Taupin's lyrics seemed to take on a stronger emotional tone, even when comically seen in "Think I'm Gonna Kill Myself." The "Honky Cat" and "Rocket Man" hits showed Elton could celebrate the bustle of the city at one moment and deal with the ennui of mass society the next, in a case of contrast rather than contradiction.

The scruffy, unglamorized cover pose Elton selected for "Honky Chateau" likewise contrasted with the pink and yellow outrageousness he donned for the inner-package illustrations for "Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player." Taking only four weeks to hit the number one bullseye, this second of three Strawberry Studios sets saluted the past as it forged ahead at the start of 1973.



"Teacher I Need You," "Teenage Idol" and the smash "Crocodile Rock" reached back for adolescent memories and turned them into timeless flights of fancy with an almost futuristic edge.

Boogie Power

The boogie power thus tapped became the backbone of other tunes ("Elderberry Wine," "Midnight Creeper") which lyrically sought their futures outside of any nostalgia theme. But "Daniel," regarded as a towering ballad achievement, also came out of this package. For despite his fondness for wearing ceramic clowns that light up on the crotch, Elton had no trouble whatsoever maintaining a pose of dignity when and where appropriate.

While other acts were looking to the two-record set as much-needed demonstrable proof of their continuing viability, Elton had only to regard the idea as giving his audience a double

shot truly worth their time and money. His "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road"—still top five some 36 weeks after its October '73 release—pushed the value of his "twice-as-much-music" concept far beyond four-sides and an \$11.98 list worth.

Launching Pad

"Goodbye . . ." became the launching pad for no less than three hit singles ("Saturday Night's Alright For Fightin'," the title song and "Bennie & The Jets") and the introduction of percussionist Ray Cooper to the ranks. Several tunes (like "Candle In The Wind" and "Roy Rogers") seemed to question the price or final meaning of fame for others; but never was there heard a discouraging word about life at this particular top. There was no personal disillusionment anywhere; from the ambitious instrumental

(Continued on page 128)



Dave Croker (Continued from page 38)

their turntable will find that it's compulsive listening after the first couple of plays and they'll start hearing more and more and find that it's a great album, so it doesn't worry me. I remember that Elton was having a really hard time with the press about three years ago, just before "Honky Chateau" came out and he'd started off the dressing up brigade on stage. He really did bring it to new extremes and there was a comment in one of the papers saying "Should Elton John record 'Death Of A Clown'" and just before "Honky Chateau" came out they were interviewing him for what was then the "Scene & Heard" program on BBC Radio One and he said, "Everybody's ready to write me off, I'm coming back to make them all eat humble pie." He made that quote, he said they're all going to eat humble pie, and by God they have. There's no doubt that he's the biggest record seller in the world at the moment. I think everybody goes through periods when they can't please the press. Certainly the public is still ruling out and buying "Rock of the Westies" and "Captain Fantastic."

RW: Do you think that the British public can be a little too image conscious?

Croker: England isn't the same as America. To explain to anyone in England how big Elton is in America is absolutely impossible. My mother and father went across and it wasn't until that point that they realized the size of Elton John over there. There's no doubt. Everywhere he walks is like hallowed ground to everyone, they just follow in his footsteps. Whereas over here the whole atmosphere is totally different. I think that he will get right back on top. He will tour and everybody will jump up and down and say he's got the greatest rock and roll band there is. Anyone who saw his Dodger Stadium concerts knows that. People with the most discerning musical tastes came forward and said "My God, I never thought it possible but I've just been knocked off my feet." He hasn't toured over here for about 2½ years. He's done occasional dates, like the Christmas shows, but he'll really go out and see the public next year.

RW: What was the story behind the re-formation of the band?

Croker: The decision to split was really taken by Elton personally, although at times everybody must have felt it. The whole unit had been together for five years by that time and that's a really long time to be together. Nigel was very interested in making solo records, I think Elton just felt that he wanted to play with some different musicians.

RW: How far has the next album progressed? Is he recording yet, or still writing?

Croker: He has some songs written and the studio time is booked for next March. He's going to do it at Caribou. That's all I can say really. It is anticipated that it will appear late next spring.

RW: What was the most crucial factor in switching your distribution from Island to EMI?

Croker: The switch I think was one of the hardest decisions we've ever had to make. We've had such a good relationship with Island and they've given us 100 percent support when we've needed it. At times, they gave us more encouragement than anything else which was great, what we needed at the time. We were a small label so we've had ups and downs and when we were down they really gave us the encouragement to get up again which was fantastic. And I think the personnel at Island are really first class. Anyway it was our duty to check out every possibility and it narrowed down to a choice of three—Island, EMI and DJM. DJM came through with a very very strong offer and they're a growing company. They certainly go out of their way to market. But the big appeal of EMI is that they're a truly international record company. They're the one major company who manages to remain at the top all the time. All the majors generally

have periods of either being hot or a bit cold but EMI always manages to hang up at the top there, which must prove something. Both John and I had worked there for periods of time so we knew the majority of the problems we would be facing if we did go with EMI so we really were able to weigh it up properly. But one of our greatest concerns was definitely the international market.

RW: Was this decision influenced in any way by Elton's intention to go on the label?

Croker: That was something we did take into consideration when we looked right across the market, the fact that Elton is such a huge seller, and we wanted a company that could handle large stars such as Elton. DJM, Island and EMI could fill that capacity.

RW: How involved is Elton with the running of Rocket?

Croker: Extremely. He's on the phone twice a week, he wants to know sales figures, he wants to know what's happening, he wants to know who did this, when it's out, he's really really interested. Time for him to go in the studio and record other people has been rather limited because of his other busy schedules. I would think that within the next year Elton will go into the studios to produce somebody for Rocket, but certainly Rocket, along with Watford, is number one in his mind all the time.

RW: Does he actually participate in making decisions?

Croker: He's certainly consulted on things and takes a very active interest in every decision that's made within the company, from office premises to artist signings. He has a phenomenal collection of records so he knows about everybody else's records anyway, so you only have to phone him up and say so and so's contract's up and he'll say their album was good, wasn't bad, or had some patchy moments. Wherever he goes he carries a record player and a tape machine. That's part of his entourage.

RW: Do you think he is at all conscious of serious competition or that there might be the "new Elton John" round the corner that might take over?

Croker: He's conscious that you've got to work at staying on the top. He's also sensible inasmuch as he knows it will never go on at this level forever. There'll be a slight decrease as time goes by, he's got to let up on his work rate, so there'll be periods when he'll be quiet and then he'll be back. Queen's album is kept off number one by Perry Como. There's a huge hitmaker who had some periods in the middle of his career out of the public eye. Elton's very conscious of other acts all the time. Not in a nasty sort of way, but he's very aware and he knows what the public's thinking.

Ken East (Continued from page 48)

old mini. One day he sent him into town on a fruitless mission and when the guy came back he found that the mini had gone and Elton had bought him a brand new car. He somehow communicates that he needs, that he depends on people. I think he is lucky to have a down-to-earth mother who helps keep his feet on the ground. Like Elton, she is totally unchanged by the success

of her son.

It will be interesting to see how he develops. He has the ability to change to any musical taste. He enjoyed his part in "Tommy" and I guess films must be one avenue for development. Obviously he will have an even greater influence on the present success of Rocket Records when he has finished his Dick James commitment.



Nigel and Dee: Instrumental in Elton's Success

■ Those who have followed the six year course of Elton John's career development will have no trouble in identifying the contributions made by drummer Nigel Olsson and bassist Dee Murray. In the days when the Elton John Band was a three piece unit, it was their creative flexibility that made the live shows as satisfying a musical experience as the highly produced counterparts on record. And when the band began to expand its membership, it was their rock solid rhythm sense that provided the foundation from which the new members could integrate their own contributions.

Since leaving the Elton John Band, both have pursued a wide range of musical activities. Dee has done extensive session work, and has laid the groundwork for some solo recording of his own which should be well underway by the time this reaches you. Nigel has released an album, done sessions both as a player and producer, and is currently taking the plunge into cinema, working on a film which he will not only act in but score as well. Both of them now base their activities in Los Angeles, and they managed to squeeze a few moments of reflection on their years with Elton John into their busy schedules for **RW**.

Nigel and Dee worked together in one of the last incarnations of the Spencer Davis Group. Nigel had graduated to a group called Plastic Penney that was involved with Dick James. Another Dick James interest, Elton John, had just finished an album and needed musicians to help him bring off a promotional gig. So Nigel and Dee went down and rehearsed with the young singer/songwriter and things worked out so unexpectedly well that when Elton hit the road it was as a trio.

"We were," Dee asserts, "one of the first to go out as a three piece that featured piano; apart, of course, from the kind of piano trios that play the Hyatt House lounge circuit. This arrangement pushed us into filling the sound out more. I'd do a lot of chords and slides and, for example, take on the cello parts from the record. It challenged us to use fully what we had in our hands, and it developed from there."

"The 'Elton John' album," Nigel pointed out, "was full of strings and very orchestrated, so our job onstage was to put that kind of a feel across. For that purpose, I had all of my various drums miked separately. We had to get a big, big sound, and I think we brought it off."

Did they see that what they were doing in those early stages was building something that would eventually develop into a fully realized phenomenon? "I felt that it was so different that it *had* to happen," remembered Nigel, "but who could've imagined that it would happen as monstrously big as it has. It happened so fast, as well, that we didn't actually have a chance to sit down and analyze what was happening around us." "Aware-

ness of our own success," added Dee, "didn't catch up with us until two years later."



Davey, Nigel, Elton, Dee, Bernie, Ray

ness of our own success," added Dee, "didn't catch up with us until two years later."

In terms of working out arrangements in the studio and on the road, the three worked as a collaborative trio. "We were never told what or where to play," Nigel stated emphatically. "That was the beauty of recording, actually. It was never a case of Elton saying to me 'You play it this way,' or 'Dee, you play that.' We had a certain amount of freedom. And onstage, being that we all had the basic arrangements down from recording them, we could pretty much play it as we felt it."

Dee: "Elton never gave orders; it was completely free in terms of making our contributions and having our say in developing the songs. We both loved the music,

it just fit so well together. We had to adapt our styles as he changed, and somehow inject *our* personalities into all of it. But my style of playing is capable of that kind of flexibility.

"As time went by, we were more and more accepted as a band. People would be coming to see all of us—to see what the *band* could do onstage—and not so much just because Elton John was a name. We began to see the audience turning on to the little things that we'd do, and that was very gratifying."

Out of their years with Elton John, both Dee and Nigel have developed considerable reputations for their instrumental skills; the latter, particularly, is now recognized as the master of a very specific drum style. "I'd describe

myself," says Nigel, "as basically a timekeeper. So I'd keep time, putting in fills whenever I felt them, keeping everything very simple. Because of the melodies and lyric importance, I didn't want to risk covering anything up. My whole style was developed through Elton's songs. I realize now that, before Elton John, I was never really into *music*.

"The ballads were my favorite thing to play. I didn't really care for the rock & roll stuff all that much, like 'Crocodile Rock' and 'The Bitch Is Back.' I feel that I can put more into ballads descriptively; rock is the same thing over and over again and you can't do much that's different. But with the ballads I could really express myself. I'd just keep the time, and when I felt a change in the lyrics, I'd play to the lyric." His style was

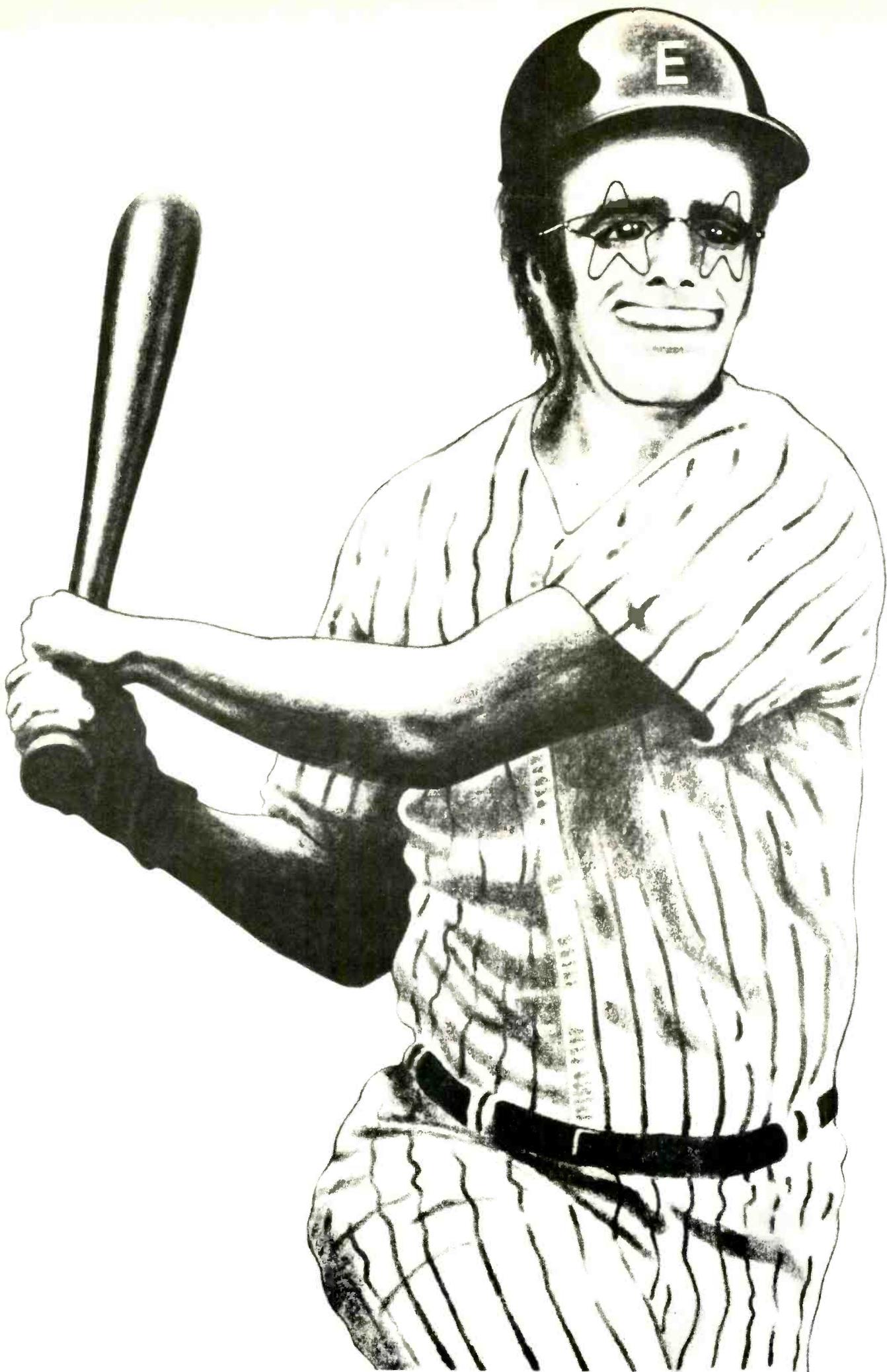
so highly developed that other artists (ranging from Rod Stewart to Jimmy Webb) see very specific parts for him in their sessions, and he's become probably the most widely imitated drummer working today.

As the band expanded, it allowed Nigel and Dee to more rigidly define their personality as a rhythm section. "When Davey joined," said Nigel, "it took a lot of weight off Dee and I. We'd had to be thinking all the time about filling it out as far as we could and making it as big as the records, but when Davey joined we could become more of a tight rhythm section and leave the fancy stuff to him. Having Davey there really helped."

"In some ways," Dee mused, "I preferred it when it was smaller. I didn't object to Davey joining, but I was a bit concerned that we might lose the image that we were in the process of building up as a three piece. As it happened, it worked out fine. And Ray Cooper worked out incredibly well also. So obviously the natural progression was toward a bigger band, the way it is now."

"Obviously," said Nigel in response to a question about how the experience of those years has changed or benefitted them, "the pressures of being a superstar are numerous. Everybody on the street wants to talk to you and wants something from you. You learn to be very wary of people, which is a very sad thing in a way, but Elton's remained remarkably unchanged by it all. I'm lucky inasmuch as I've had five years to sit on the sidelines and watch how those things go down and others come together. It's helped me have a much clearer idea of what I want to do, and how to go about doing it."

"Elton went through a few changes of course," Dee offered, "but all in all I've gotta hand it to him. He handled it pretty well. There was the odd blowup, but that's almost to be expected. What we learned was the determination of what directions to go in; how to handle different situations. It was all learned through the experience of watching everything that went down. That kind of experience is invaluable."



KEEP ON BELTIN' ELTON!



electric factory concerts



Connie Pappas *(Continued from page 36)*

Howard Rose spent five months negotiating with them before we finally signed a contract in July.

We had to educate them about Elton John, about his image, the kinds of crowds he attracts, and the way his concerts are organized. When we made the deal finally, they said they would prefer dealing with us as opposed to an outside promoter, and we agreed. When we do a show, our riders are so extensive and our plans so carefully laid out that we were pretty much aware of what had to be done. But there are a million little things that you're not aware of that go into the promoting of a show. We learned a lot about promoting dates and I'm really proud that it was so successful. It seems that every time we diversify, we learn an enormous amount very quickly.

RW: On the subject of diversification, what's happening with the television production project?

Pappas: That's John Reid Productions, which David Bell, a successful English director, has been running along with John. He's working on some pilots and developing things for television. I'm involved on an administrative level, acting as sort of a liaison between the production company and the artists we manage. I haven't been involved in actual production.

RW: Would you want to be?

Pappas: I really would. I think it's very interesting and it's something that I haven't done before. The way things have been is that I've sort of phased into something else all of the time, which keeps it exciting.

RW: You seem to maintain a steady level of enthusiasm . . .

Pappas: It's because I work with great people. There aren't any better people to work for than John and Elton and that's why the organization is so good. Elton's inspiration is really what does it. When you see how involved he is with his career and that he's not just turning it on and turning it off. He's very good in business and very aware of it, as well as being aware of the creative aspect, both of his work and other artists. He's involved with the totality of his show, the staging, the lighting, how the band is coming across, everything. And his hard work and involvement reflects over here and reflects on me. I can't turn myself off either or say "Okay, the tour's done and that's it; see you guys in four weeks." I'm very involved in it and my opinion on management is that you have to be there when

(Continued on page 109)



Elton, Connie Pappas, Mike Maitland

Dick James *(Continued from page 32)*

old original rock 'n' roll things that were based on it. One of my favorites perhaps is 'The Greatest Discovery' mainly because of the lyric more than the melody, which is Bernie's work, although the melody is very attractive.

"But then if we go to what one might term songs, pure and simple, then I would single out 'Your Song' as a favorite. Perhaps it's significantly the first really big hit that we had, and very justifiable. We also had a lot of cover records on it, so as a publisher I go for the song that has the value beyond the original artist.

"'Crocodile Rock,' 'Daniel,' that was a beautiful song, and funnily enough 'Daniel' was the subject of a fight between myself and Elton, and Stephen and Elton at the time, because although we granted Elton it was a fantastic song and we loved it, we felt it was wrong to take it off the album at the time and make it a single. He insisted on it and we thought well we're not going to fight you, we love each other too much, we respect each other, who's going to fight over releasing a song? If it's wrong then he's wrong, and if it's right then he's right, so what the hell, and we agreed, and we put it out and he happened to be right and it was a big record. I think it made number two but we sold an awful lot of records, it was always a beautiful song.

"Perhaps in that argument I was harping back to some of my experience with The Beatles. There was the time when for an album called 'With The Beatles' they recorded a title called 'All My Loving,' and I was in the studios dancing round like a cat on hot bricks, I was hitting the ceiling, one of the greatest commercial songs I'd ever heard and I said that must be a single and Paul said I don't want it out as a single, I want it on the album, but I was saying you must put it out as a single, it's just too great. Paul said well if you pull it as a single you're leaving nothing new on the album. That was his argument, so I said have it your own way. He didn't want it off the album and I wanted it as a single. The proof of it was it went on to be an incredible individual hit song but it was never released outside of an album. These are some of the background things that go on, but look, so long as it turns out right at the end of the day I don't have to be the one that's right. In fact I'm only too delighted if I'm wrong and it rings the cash register, that's the best way I can be wrong.

"I suppose my most rewarding moment with Elton was when his Troubadour show was an incredible success. I was on the phone to the States all the time when he went back for a short tour, I think it was only about seven or eight dates as we couldn't get a permit for any more dates. The moment he got over there people started hailing him as a phenomenon and when I was on the phone saying 'How's it going?' it was, 'fantastic, tremendous, Dick you've got to come over and see it,' and I said 'I don't know when, I've got this, this, and this and I can't get away from the office.' 'Dick you've really got to see it, you won't believe it unless you see it.'

"So I said 'When's the Fillmore East?' and they said he's there on the Friday night doing two shows, and he's doing the David Frost Show the day before. So I looked at my book and said, 'Look, I'll get out of here on Thursday morning at 11:00 o'clock, I'll be in New York at 1:30 New York time, I'll come to the Frost show in the evening, stay over, see the Troubadour on the Friday night, but I must come back on the Saturday.' A cousin of mine was getting married and I was under penalty of death if I wasn't there.

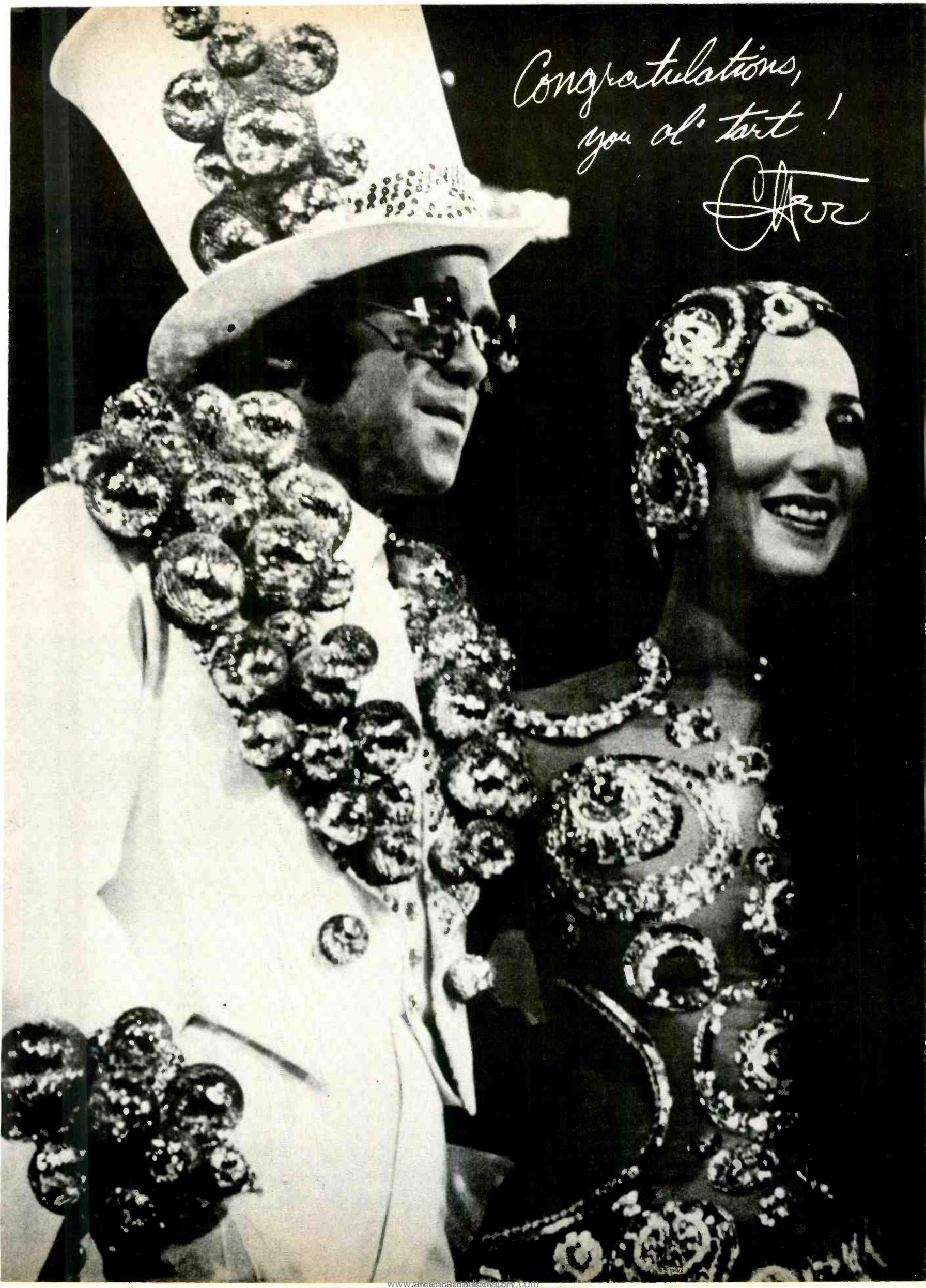
"So I flew out on the Thursday lunchtime and went to the Frost show. Elton didn't know I was coming, well the tears in his eyes, we were hugging each other all around the room. When I walked in he just didn't believe it, it really crowned all this tremendous success he was having. We had some lunch together because by this time it was mid-afternoon and we went off to the TV show in the evening and then we had something to eat and spent half the night together with all the guys in the band, just chatting. I don't think I had any sleep.

"We went somewhere to see some show or other and we went to a radio station and did some interviews with him as well. I was down at the Fillmore East the next morning to see that everything was al-

(Continued on page 109)

*Congratulations,
you ol' tart!*

Star





The Songs *(Continued from page 52)*

"Don't Shoot Me" and "Caribou" are the odd albums out. They perhaps seem like gentle rest periods, being successors to, respectively, two lps, "Honky Chateau" and "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," whose creative outlay was exhausting. But "Don't Shoot Me," recorded quickly between mammoth tours of the States, is in fact, a "work" album where much is accomplished.

Song by song, it appears to hang together better than Elton remembers. Taken as a sort of musical scrapbook of the past seven months in the lives of Elton and Bernie, the set acquires a validity perhaps not initially noticeable. For instance, there is "Teacher I Need You," an utterly charming, tongue-in-cheek sexual fantasy. Elton takes Bernie's lyrics and plays with them vocally, giving them an innocent sixties Bobby Vee-ish edge, thus enhancing their flavor. Too, there is "Blues For My Baby And Me." Elton's light-hearted melody accentuates rather than disguises Taupin's ironic tale of the illusory nature of freedom.

Overall, the songs exhibit a broader scope in both melody and lyrics that is to see its full maturation in the next album, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road." Elton's voice, always possessed of that quality which makes you believe in what he is singing, has become a more malleable entity so that the perversity inherent in "Teacher I Need You" is given a "gee-whiz" veneer making it socially acceptable and even something to chuckle over; so that the deliberate blandness of his delivery of "Texan Love Song" heightens the incipient menace of Taupin's lyrics; so that "High Flying Bird" becomes the wail of a lost child.

And here one begins to see the formation of the second key to the uniqueness of the John/Taupin writing team, and why, with few exceptions, their songs are monuments. As Elton becomes more confident of his voice, learning how to use it, he commences writing melodies expressly for his voice. Complex, swooping progressions, unconventional and formidable, that range from high to low registers, which any other singer would have great difficulty in performing.

Of "Caribou" Elton says: "It was recorded under the most excruciating of circumstances. We had eight days to do fourteen numbers; we did the backing tracks in two-and-a-half days. It drove us crazy because there was a huge Japanese tour, then Australia and New Zealand, that could not be put off, obviously. And it was the first time we had recorded in America and it seemed like ages before—we just couldn't get adjusted to the monitoring system, which was very flat—that's true of all American studios. In England they eq (equalize: add brightness) the speakers at the beginning so they have some presence. Anyway I never thought we'd get an album out of it."

From a creative standpoint, "Caribou" cannot help but suffer from the agony of compressed time leading to its birth. There is, perhaps, some attempt by Elton to return to the funk of the "Honky" lp, but his exhaustion is apparent, for what funk the up-tempo numbers have comes from external sources such as the Tower of Power horns, which no matter how cleverly integrated still seem intrusive.

(Continued on page 114)

Dear Elton,

Our account shows you as #1

Marshall

Airt

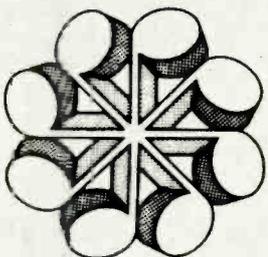
Wayne

Neal

The Eyes Have It Elton & John



**"Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds"
and
"One Day (At A Time)"
John and The ATV Music Group Loves It.**

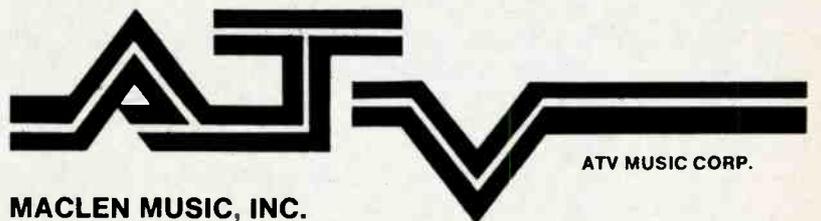


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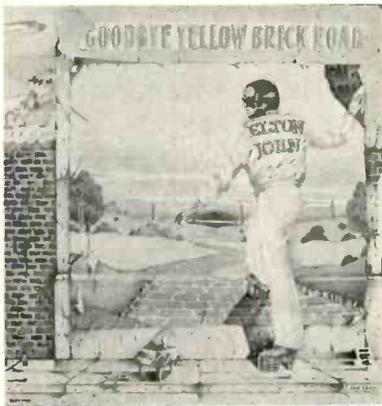
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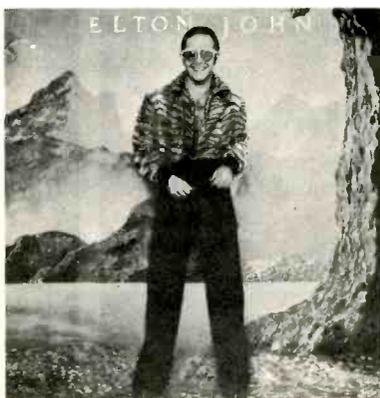


Album Appraisal (Continued from page 64)



Goodbye Yellow Brick Road:

A magnificent achievement. Two records of indisputedly brilliant songs and musicianship. Few albums surpass it in spirit and fewer still in intelligence. Side one has three songs on it and two of them—"Candle In The Wind" (for Marilyn Monroe) and "Bennie and the Jets"—are Elton classics. Side two begins with the title cut which segues into "This Song Has No Title" and the two songs are works of superior intellects. "Grey Seals," with its disarming chorus, is one of Elton's most provocative songs. Highlights of sides three and four include "Sweet Painted Lady," "All The Girls Love Alice," "Your Sister Can't Twist," the immortal "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting" and the paean to Roy Rogers entitled "Roy Rogers." Elton's band, always tops, went beyond the call of duty on this album, particularly drummer Nigel Olsson and guitarist Davey Johnstone, making this an album that will stand the test of time with ease.



Caribou. Relatively speaking, a far simpler effort than had become the norm—the calm before the storm (of "Captain Fantastic"?). Well, not exactly, of course. "The Bitch Is Back" (what Bette Midler did with that one) and the hauntingly tender "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" represented the hard-rocker and the sensitive artist, respectively. And the dynamic contrast that makes each EJ album a totality are as carefully programmed as ever. It is a fitting tribute dedicated to the Colorado ranch which had by then become Elton's recording paradise.



Captain Fantastic and The Brown Dirt Cowboy. This was the history-making album—No. 1 on release, shipped platinum. An incredible elaborate package with poster, scrapbook and wonderfully jovial cover. Pressed on "brown dirt" vinyl. And the music, without exception, held as much interest as anything Elton, Bernie and Gus had ever put together. The theme song, "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" and "(Gotta Get A) Meal Ticket" were the single sparks that gave this lp life that epitomized the rags to riches rock story. Yes, Virginia, there is an Elton John.



Tom Hulett: Crocodile Rock-o-phile

By MIKE HARRIS

■ LOS ANGELES—Tom Hulett is the president of Concerts West, a concert promotion outfit that has been involved with major artists since its inception in 1967. Starting on a grand scale by promoting Jimi Hendrix on his national tours, Concerts West has gone on to work with Led Zeppelin, John Denver and the Eagles—as well as a certain bespectacled and musically prolific Briton named Elton John.

From his main office in Seattle, Washington ("Nobody," says Tom, "can figure out how we do all the stuff from here, but we do"), Hulett recounts his association with the man of the hour: "The first time we did any business with Elton was a couple of months following the Troubadour dates, down in Los Angeles, when we played some northwest dates up here in Seattle and Portland. Then we also played some concerts with my partner, Terry Bassett, in Dallas. And I think that anybody who's been in the music business could see right then and

there that what was happening in Los Angeles was also happening wherever he played.

"It was not just another act. But here was something different, unique. And the people who saw him went nuts—even though the crowds weren't there in those days.

"The first part of promoting Elton was trying to get across to the public what they were going to see live. He wasn't being played across the board, radio-wise, as he's been in the last two or three years. So back in the '70-'71-'72 era, we just said 'If you've never seen him, find out who has—things like that. This was done through radio primarily.

"I always felt that Elton was more than just a record artist. He was visual—which is one of the things that makes his concerts so much more than the ordinary. Every year he's done something innovative. The kids expect something different, and they get it.

"Elton has not become complacent. He's changed his music—but more importantly—he's given the kids back something.

"I remember little things like when he played Seattle in 1972. Well, Seattle was the start of that tour, and he was rehearsing at the Arena, which is only a six thousand seat building. And the day before the first show he said, 'Listen to this one, Tom,' and it was 'Crocodile Rock,' which he had never played on stage before.

"There we were, a bunch of us—the road crew and three or four of my guys—and we all yelled 'Number One!' as we were boogieing like the 1950s on the goddamn main floor of an empty hall.

"My impression of Elton is, if there's a stage, and something's going on, Elton wants to be up there. When we were in Maui—where we both became friends—we were talking about the Don Ho Show, and we were all laughing about it—how Don's so commercial, with his girls taking pictures of all the grandmothers kissing him, and all that. And we all went to the show and Elton got off. Because here was a guy, Don Ho, doing his own thing, commercially—successfully—and it was fun. Elton, I'm sure, could relate to it."

Rock of the Westies: A disciplined, unusual album. It rocks, but without the abandon of Elton's best efforts, and the tension evident is itself an answer to the question of why Elton formed the new band. You can sense the musicians' struggle to find common musical ground and therein lies the intrigue. It's working and working well—the success of the "Island Girl" single proves that—but more important is the anticipation one has for future albums by this band. Few stars would dare break up a top-flight band such as the one Elton had assembled previous to this one, but then Elton can afford to take chances and is willing to do so in order that he might retain the freshness and vitality of his work. The songs—especially "Island Girl," "Street Kids," "I Feel Like A Bullet (In The Gun of Robert Ford)," and "Hard Luck Story"—are moving in a more cerebral way, much like Elton's earliest albums. This entire album, in fact, seems more for the mind than the body. In a sense, "Rock of the Westies" is a first album from a band with a great deal of talent and promise.



Davey Johnstone

(Continued from page 67)

have? Do you feel that that's a part of what Elton's music stands for?

Johnstone: Definitely. You see, in the past, there was only myself and Ray accompanying Elton. It meant that I had to do a lot of filling out, and what we've played in a studio or what we've rehearsed is the same, only we can work on it and jam on it. It is essential for his sound.

RW: Was it a strange feeling for you the first time you got on stage with another guitar as a part of the band?

Johnstone: It's never been strange; there's never been any problem. We're all fairly together musicians in our heads so there's been nothing like that. I'd say it's been more of a pleasure than anything else.

RW: Are you currently working on another solo album?

Johnstone: When I get a minute, I will.

RW: How would you categorize what you are doing in your own music now in terms of what the last lp sounded like?

Johnstone: I don't know what to say to that except for the fact that we all seem to be growing week by week, be it in the studio or live.

Roger Pope

(Continued from page 74)

RW: Considering that a lot of music on this tour is old Elton John material as compared to the stuff in the new album of which you only do a couple of cuts in the run down, do you find yourself having to adapt to Nigel's style since those parts are already recorded? Have any been restructured?

Pope: It's not been restructured. Obviously things have changed because there's a lot more musicians in the band, but I haven't really had to change anything. Things that Nigel used to do, I've kept in; there's a few drum parts he had worked out with Ray. It's fairly logical—what you have to play. The solos are now getting longer, more jam, so it's been a bit of everything.

RW: How did you find recording with the new band?

Pope: It was great. It was one of the most enjoyable recordings I've ever done.

RW: That was really the first time all of you had played together on new material. Creatively, were there any problems?

Pope: None at all. One of the numbers on the album Elton didn't play on. He went to bed early one night and we sat in the studio and we knew it roughly and just put it down and he came in the next morning and really dug it and overdubbed piano on it. There was one number we did without him so you can tell it was going well.

"above them all...stands ELTON JOHN."*

**THANK YOU for starting
your incredibly successful
West Coast Tour
at the SAN DIEGO SPORTS ARENA**

**"It'll be a long time before the sun
goes down on him."***

*Quotes from article by **ROBERT P. LAURENCE**, Staff Writer, **THE SAN DIEGO UNION**



Gus Dudgeon

(Continued from page 84)

In the end the decision was "Bennie & The Jets" for the States, "Candle In The Wind" for England, which was a sort of compromise. "Bennie & The Jets" was enormous, it was the first record he ever had that crossed over to the black market. It was no. 1 on the black market which was amazing. I've never grown stale on him. It still knocks me out what he does, and I don't think he's gone stale on me, so until such time as this happens or as I say I completely screwed something up I can't imagine not producing him. Although of course it's even more tied in now with Rocket because we're all directors. It's like a family thing.

RW: Are you conscious of outside influences or current trends?

Dudgeon: Well a few million people are going to read this and are probably going to hate me but I never actually pay any attention to what they want or what I think they might want. I don't look at the charts and say I think there's a trend in this direction or that direction or there's this happening or there's that happening or there's that bandwagon. I think the reason that he is where he is is because he has almost the same attitude to what's going on around him as say The Stones have or The Beatles had which is that if a change comes it comes because you yourself were a little tired of what you were doing, not because you think that somebody else thinks you ought to make a change. So when you make the change it's usually the moment when people least expect it rather than the moment they do expect it. It has to come from within you.

John Reid (Continued from page 88)

the worst place in the world; we toured there and got stoned by radical students.

RW: It seems that Elton has been very sparing about his television appearances . . .

Reid: I don't think that Elton translates well to the television medium as that medium is usually presented. Also, Elton prefers to play for a lot of people and is very impatient with the procedures involved in producing television. For that reason, one of the things we've done that was successful was the Festival Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

RW: Was that televised?

Reid: It was taped, but it was never shown in the States.

RW: Everything about Elton's career—and yours for that matter—seems to have progressed very smoothly. There must have been a few kinks somewhere; can you tell us about any?

Reid: Well, re-signing with MCA was pretty crucial. It was scary because there were pressures coming from a few areas and I wound up having to take responsibility for the decision, just keeping what was right for Elton in mind. The best thing to do was to stay with MCA if the right deal could be made, and it was.

There were also internal problems that were created when Elton decided to change the band. There was some bitterness, and there were people who had to be helped through that period. And then there were so many albums that nearly didn't get made. I remember going to Jamaica to make "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" and it was a disaster; we finally hi-tailed it back to Paris.

RW: In the way of crises, you've been involved in an accident or two yourself, haven't you?

Reid: I know what you're talking about and it's true that I have a short temper. Elton was talking about my bad points and good points on a TV interview recently, and he said that I was too aggressive. I suppose that's true, but I don't know any successful people who aren't aggressive. I have breaking points, just like anybody else and I won't make apologies for it. Now, when I feel that I'm likely to lose control, I've learned to just walk away from the situation. ☺

A lot of the things that happen have been completely accidental—as I say, "Bennie & The Jets" was an accident. That really cemented his career in the States because it was a sudden crossover thing. You could never have said at the time of "Your Song" that Elton John was going to have a no. 1 black record, that's a very difficult thing to achieve. Half the people in the top 50 black charts in America are unknown in the U.K. and they've been making hit records for like eight years. It's like country & western, it's as completely alien to most English people as country & western is. He didn't write it thinking now what I want to do now is I've done this and I've done that, now I really ought to have a no. 1 black record. It just happened.

RW: In the U.K. there was a certain amount of criticism over the content of "Rock Of The Westies." If you felt any such weakness in an album are you in the position to change certain titles in selection?

Dudgeon: The truth of the matter is that the whole thing really in the long run is in Elton's hands, the whole thing. His whole career, the whole thing is controlled by him. No one else should really take the credit for it actually, that's the real truth of it because the guy is so aware of himself, of his own limitations, of his own possibilities. He wasn't, now, when we started. When we did the first album I won't say I told him how long to sing but I used to memorize the way he'd used a vocal arrangement or a vocal phrase and I would sing it back to him and say "You remember when you got to that line you sang whatever, well try that again." He was sort of experimenting. That never comes into it now. Now he comes out with endless ideas, he almost gives you too much to work with and it's only a question of trimming it down. Now his career is really in his hands. He's like the vortex of a whirlpool—he's right in the center whizzing round and we're on the outside and the whole time we're aware of what he's doing, we're aware of what's going on because he lets you know—he let me know before we did "Rock Of The Westies" that it was going to be an up-tempo album. He said "I fancy the next album being a rock & roll album, they may not be the greatest songs I've ever written but I'm just going to have a really good time because that's what my new band need." He felt they needed something they could just get their teeth into, not have to think about clever technique or brilliant this or brilliant that or amazing guitar solos, just something simple like "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting," just

(Continued on page 132)





Dear Elton.

No tribute could be big enough.

You're the best.

Love Spencer & Carol



Five Years of Fun

(Continued from page 81)

what we had so we tried to do what they wanted. But we didn't feel it.

"Then we started writing what we wanted to write. That's the big difference. I pushed myself to find just the right word to describe what I meant, not just the word that rhymes best."

Like John, Taupin felt "Honky Chateau" was a particularly important turning point in their career. He feels all groups go through a sort of "cross over the bridge" period in their career in which the successful ones start across the bridge, get increasing public and press attention until they reach the midpoint or pinnacle of the bridge. At that point, they either cross over the bridge and become a major, established group (in the sense of the Stones or the Who) or fall off the bridge and either have to start over again or settle for a low rung in rock.

"When a group is at that pinnacle, it has to prove its worth," he said, during the 1972 tour, "it has to come up with something new. It can't just do the same thing over again. It's on trial. I think 'Honky Chateau' brought us across the bridge. I think we are accepted now."

The album, Taupin said, was a deliberate attempt to get away from the strings and types of songs on the first album. "We wanted to do some fun songs, very simple things that people could sing along with. We had a good time making that album. We went to France and took our time. It was a new atmosphere and everything was very relaxed. For the first time, I found the songs coming out naturally. I didn't have to consciously look for things to write about."

Just as the "Honky Chateau" was designed with "good-times" in mind, the 1972 tour was far more elaborate—and fun-oriented—than the earlier tours. Elton came on stage in a sort of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" red, white and blue tuxedo with such high heels on his boots that he almost resembled a man on tiny stilts. Legs Larry Smith from the old Bonzo Dog Band and some dancers joined him in an elaborate, showstopping "Singing in

the Rain" skit. "Crocodile Rock," which was to become John's first No. 1 single, was introduced on the tour. The career, clearly, was moving faster than ever.

"Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player," the follow-up album to "Honky Chateau," was already No. 1 by the time Elton came back to Los Angeles in 1973

Behind the backdrop was a large, colorful set consisting of five pianos (each featuring a letter in Elton's name), some palm trees and a huge stairway down which lookalikes of Queen Elizabeth, Groucho Marx, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Frankenstein and others paraded.

Elton followed them in a white

still knew better than to take rock 'n' roll seriously. The point, always, is to have a good time.

In the years that I've been able to watch Elton John both on stage and off stage, the thing that continually impresses me—and is, I think, a key to his ability to continue to be productive despite the mounting pressures—is his simple love of music. He has been, since the first Troubadour engagement onward, the consummate rock fan.

Unlike so many of his rock contemporaries, Elton has not succumbed to the twin dangers that so often accompany success: the arrogance that can come from so much acclaim and the emotional and artistic destruction that can result from the pressures placed upon a performer. Elton has been able to enjoy his success without losing the humbleness and unabashed enthusiasm for the music that he brought from Britain in 1970.

Thus, he doesn't—as do so many in his field—look upon concerts as a necessary evil, complain about having his picture taken, cringe when spotted in public, walk away when asked for an autograph and confess privately that music is such a bore he'd rather retire to a farm somewhere. Elton, in short, isn't one of those musicians who has ended up resenting the very success he so long sought.

"I can't understand those people who say they don't like doing concerts," he said during the 1974 tour. "It's the greatest thing in the world to stand on a stage and see people in the front rows smiling and know they came to see you. The stage, in reality, is the closest you can ever get to most of the fans. I mean they can't come any closer than that. They may say hello backstage or in a hotel or something, but that's not even as close as seeing a show and being affected by the music."

"That's why I get so upset if I play badly. Not only for me, but because I know I've disappointed the audience. There's nothing worse than knowing everybody went home thinking, 'Oh boy, that was sure a drag.' That's what you struggle against every night."

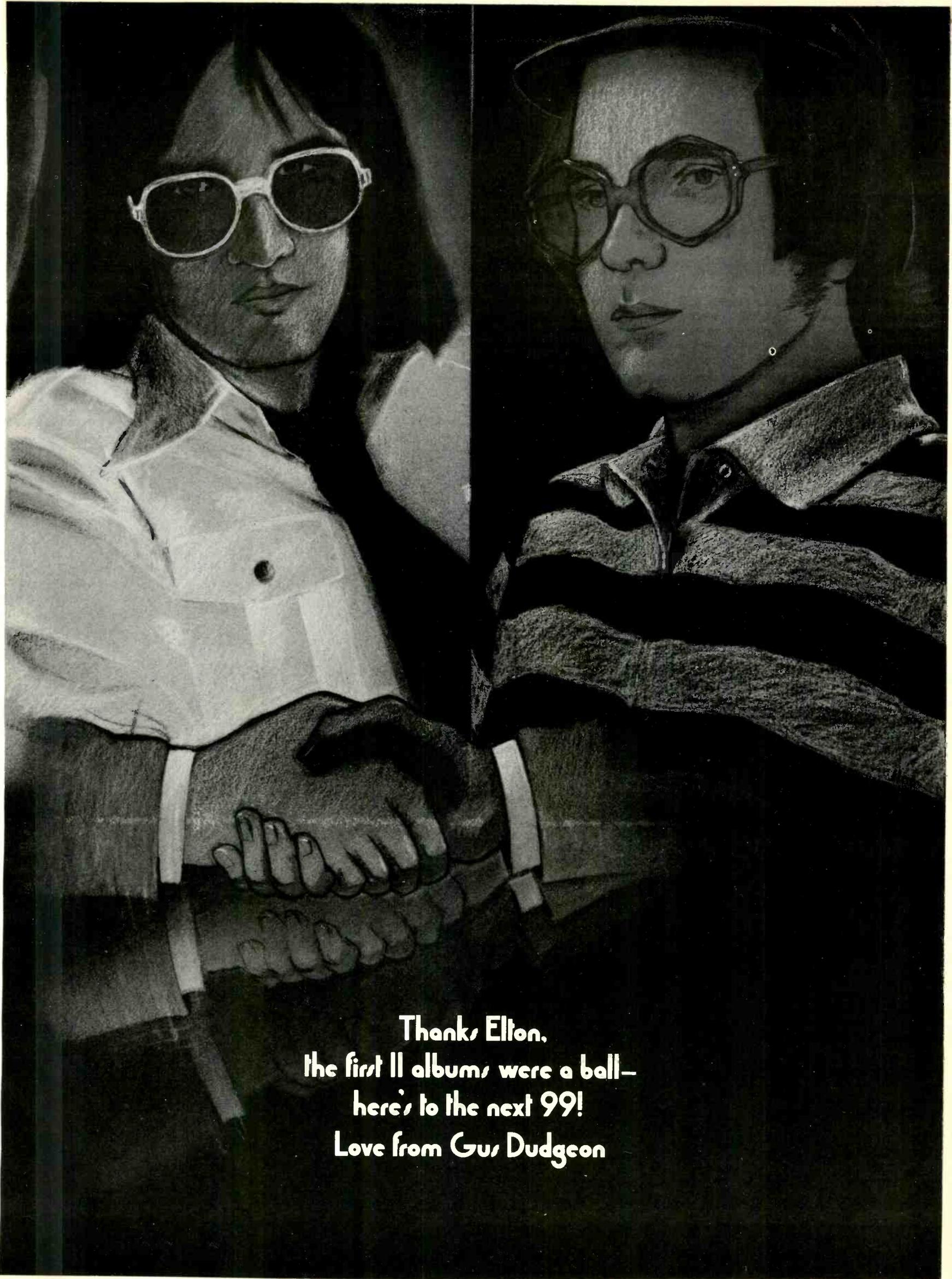
(Continued on page 130)



for a September appearance at the Hollywood Bowl that included several features that weren't repeated at other stops on John's U.S. tour. They added up to a \$50,000 rock 'n' roll party. Among the highlights: free souvenir T-shirts for everyone in the audience, a huge 65x28 foot backdrop with a scene of a smiling, tuxedoed Elton with 10 chorus girls and Linda Lovelace as the evening's hostess.

cowboy suit and large, decorative boas around the shoulders and down the pants.

"This was all Elton's idea," his manager John Reid said afterwards. "He's been looking forward to this show for weeks. He wanted it to be a big party for everyone." The key to the evening's success was Elton's own unpretentious manner. Even with the enormous success in the years since the Troubadour opening, he



**Thanks, Elton,
the first 11 albums were a ball—
here's to the next 99!
Love from Gus Dudgeon**



Elton's Singles (Continued from page 70)

65018). Both were charted before New Year's Day, 1974, thus becoming one of the few successful seasonal entries of the seventies. "Step" features a sound not unlike what King Of Rock Caroldom Phil Spector might have achieved had Elton been a Ronettes contemporary. "Ho Ho . . ." smiles out as rock's answer to "T'was The Night Before Christmas," with Santa identified only as "the bearded wierded."

But if you thought Elton looked fantastic in his St. Nick costume, you just had to catch him in a soulsuit. And that's just what he added to his already eclectic wardrobe for "Bennie & The Jets" (MCA 40198). Not only did it top the pop charts, but it worked its way in reverse crossover manner into the top 15 of The R&B Singles Chart. This celebration of the concert experience from the "Goodbye . . ." album which broke into the pop listings at 64 in February '74 was still a hit some 18 weeks later. "Harmony" from the same lp proved to be a rare break in the now familiar collectible B-side pattern.

Two weeks before release of his "Caribou" lp, Elton returned to a ballad for a preview of the album with the single "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me," his fourth number one song. (Like its predecessor, it accomplished the chart feat in just seven weeks.) It's a veritable field day for old friends (members of The Beach Boys) and new (Captain & Tennille) in the backup vocal department. But as usual, no one puts more of his own effort into the glow of it all than Elton himself.

"Don't Let The Sun . . ." couples itself with the collectible "Sick City." It's to Elton's credit that he can still come off the friendly, happy sort after venting his wrath against "backstage monkeys" on his back. EJ's lack of sympathy with these hangers-on is right on target, with rage and rationale perfectly combined in the emotional outburst.

The passion which found its way to the flip side of Elton's summer '74 single pulled up front and center again for his second culling from "Caribou," "The Bitch Is Back" (MCA 40297) which followed in the fall. Could Elton reach the top 10 sporting a

five letter word of this calibre? He did just that, peaking at six.

The controversy of the lyric seemed to play itself out as the disc itself sped up the chart. The end result was a far cry from what ensued after the Beatles' "we're bigger than Jesus" revelation which some had compared it to. In fact, there was so little fallout of any lasting sort that good old EJ walked away from the whole thing without any ill effects at all—and more importantly—with yet another hit.

The potentially ominous stuff was really on the B-side in the collectible "Cold Highway" flip. If any Elton John song was ever conceived without humor of any variety, this was it. But the subject matter of death and utter loneliness also passed through Elton's career without making itself into a federal case. And there was more than enough frivolity in the next release to show Elton was just making a different kind of statement and wasn't falling out of touch with the cosmic giggle.

Being the first "outside song" he'd ever recorded, "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" (MCA 40344) also amounted to the first two-sided collectible that was not Elton John Christmas product. The Beatles' enchanting head song went number one for EJ in just six weeks as the biggest Lennon-McCartney performance by a non-moptop. The "reggae guitars" credited on the label copy to "Winston O'Boogie" provided much of the whimsy which pervades the entire tune.

Another "outside song," this one by solo John Lennon—"One Day At A Time"—provided the haunting flip. The arrangement is neither lush nor raunchy but peculiar to the very unique nature of the song itself.

It was followed in the spring by one of EJ's most elaborate creations — "Philadelphia Freedom" (MCA 40364) with performer credits listed as "The Elton John Band" and the impressive arranger as Gene Page. Billy Jean King (B.J.K. on the copy) is as much inspiration here as the Gamble-Huff-Bell school of music; the performance employs its own soul credentials and successfully reached the r&b top 30. Like "Lucy," it catapulted to the top



pop spot in six weeks and has never been made available on an album despite its A-side success.

Its flip, "I Saw Her Standing There," is probably the best known of all Elton John B-side collectibles, being the only live Elton-John Lennon duet in recorded history (and the only live Elton to see release as a single). This return favor for EJ's help on "Whatever Gets You Through The Night" is the most vibrant remake ever of the initial Beatles Capitol Records flip.

June of '75 brought "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" (MCA 40421) out of the "Capt. Fantastic . . ." album. It broke onto the chart at 35 as the album was in its fifth week at the top. This documentation of a bittersweet reincarnation gave EJ his third number one single in a row—a consecutive total now going on five.

The pressing of the "Someone . . ." single was made special not only by its album-keyed label artwork, but also with the selection of another collectible, "House Of Cards." For this home in which playing deck metaphors are king, Elton cleans up with a straightforward performance as crisp as a fresh new pack. Total finesse and immeasurable class on EJ's part!

The fall of '75 saw Elton's fastest rising single yet: "Island Girl" which reached the top chart position in just five weeks, jumping almost unbelievably from nine to one in a seven-day period. Pulled from the "Rock Of The Westies" package about three weeks in front of its own release date, "Island Girl" brings together slide guitar, mellotron, marimbas, congas and banjo. This dizzying concoction is sweetened with the backup vocals of Kiki Dee who also wrote its B-side collectible, "Sugar On The Floor."

Elton's Grandest

The Kiki Dee-penned flip about love with the proper stranger is in contrast given a very uncomplicated Elton execution which relies almost totally on solo voice and piano. Here is EJ's "smallest" record, and yet surely one of his grandest.

Elton has become the personification of the best rock has to offer by daring to be grand—and different—hit single after hit single. His prolificness is matched only by his inventiveness, his consistent vitality only by his omnipresent sense of the majestic.

Elton John has singled himself out in an unceasingly regal style indeed.



Dick James *(Continued from page 94)*

right and then I did an interview for **Record World**—then went to the Fillmore in the evening. He did two shows. Bob Dylan came in there, I forget who else was there. Leon Russell was top of the bill, but Elton's success flattened everything, incredible. We had something to eat, went back to his hotel, had some champagne, then I left for my hotel, the Plaza, packed my bag, took a shower, and left for the airport and that was it. I didn't sleep for 48 hours. Got to the airport, got on the plane, and somebody had the engine in bits so we were delayed for about two and a half hours. It wasn't a very good weekend but nothing mattered.

"From all the composers I've worked with, Elton John must stand as one of the greatest. But I think it would be very unfair of me to say that the whole success is Elton's. He writes great melodies, they're great vehicles, for himself as an artist, and they are great melodies carrying the incredible lyrics of Bernie Taupin. It's like in the old days of saying that Lennon sparked off the success, the imagination of McCartney. McCartney sparked off imagination in Lennon, they wrote songs individually but they inspired each other. There was that creative competition. Finally, of course, some of this creative competition did rub off on George Harrison as well.

Connie Pappas *(Continued from page 94)*

the act needs you for anything.

RW: Have you ever felt any resentment directed towards your being a woman in your position?

Pappas: I'm not a woman's libber but I believe that if somebody takes me exactly for what I am, it should be no different dealing with me than it would be in dealing with John or Tony. I'm just somebody who's been put in a position because I have the ability to do it. There are occasional people who resent it, but I don't have time for that sort of thing. My only real bout with that kind of prejudice was at IFA when Howard Rose wanted to make me an agent and they said I couldn't take the pressure. So I left IFA and here I am; I think I can handle it.

RW: Why do you think the chemistry has worked so well within the Elton John-John Reid organization and particularly between John and Elton? In other words, what makes management work well?

Pappas: Artists need a perspective from somebody that's close to them, somebody who's both a friend and close to their career. They need somebody who can give an objective point of view without being destructive, without hurting and destroying a part of their sensitivity, because it's really a fine line. You have to know your artist. If you don't and you just treat it like a business or another piece of product, it's not going to work well or for very long. It's like relating to any other close friend; there are times when you can sit down and talk business with them and times when you just don't and that's true of every artist we deal with. You have to have that insight. That's why you can't just take somebody off the street, put them together with an artist and have it work. There is chemistry between John and Elton which extends to me too, and it creates an awareness between us that enables us all to act on our own without having to confirm every single detail; we couldn't operate that way. If we didn't have a great degree of mutual trust, I don't think we would be able to operate on the scale to which this company has already grown.

I really love the whole organization and I get excited when I hear from other people that we have a great image. When we deal with promoters on the road, they almost invariably tell us that it's great working with an organization that's so together and that knows what's going on. That kind of "together" feeling goes all the way down the line, from John all the way down to the roadies. We've got the best road crew of any band around and in fact, I'd like to give the road crew a plug. We love them.

Bill Graham: Elton-A Total Professional

■ LOS ANGELES — There are too many testimonials, too many out of place eulogies, says concert promoter/entrepreneur Bill Graham. But his praise for Elton John is unbounded. "Elton is one of the few acts I haven't a bad word about," Graham told **Record World** recently. "You can use him as a prototype when promoters talk about the things this industry needs. It's not just his talent. He enjoys what he does, considers himself an entertainer. And that's what's missing most of the time today." Professional is the word to which Graham keeps returning in speaking of Elton, a man who "gives his everything" in the tradition of such show biz legends as Milton Berle and the late Sophie Tucker.

Graham first booked Elton into the Fillmores East and West after hearing the "Elton John" album, explaining: "I've always been a person who'd buy what I wanted even if I didn't have the money for it. For example, I remember a

pair of dance shoes I saw in a window on Fifth Avenue in New York in 1949. I went in and paid \$35 for them even though I couldn't really afford it. I made the same 'mistake' the first time I played Elton." Graham called Elton's agent of the time and was told the price was \$5000—for an opening act! "Some of his immediate booking success around the country can in part be attributed to some maniac in New York paying \$5000 sight-unseen for an opening act." It was, Graham adds, "an emotional decision," and obviously one he does not regret.

"I take my hat off to Elton not just for his on-stage ways but for the way he handles himself off-stage. The ability to handle success with grace, style and respect for his fellow man the way Elton does is very rare." Graham stops and thinks for a minute. "Elton's Geritol," he says finally. And you can quote him on that.

Ira Mayer





Stephen James (Continued from page 58)

liked it at all, and nor did they feel that there was a future for Elton John, so he got on a plane and went across to California and went round the west coast offices and saw a guy named Russ Regan who was working for MCA, or Uni as it was called in those days.

Timing

"Well Russ' timing was impeccable because more or less while he was thinking about the 'Empty Sky' lp Gus in London had completed the 'Elton John' lp. My father and I had returned from MIDEM and it was completed. We came back into London and sat down for a first meeting with Gus Dudgeon, Steve Brown and Elton John and listened to the new lp and flipped because it was so superior to 'Empty Sky' and anything else that we'd ever been involved in. We believed that definitely there was a major talent there at that time although we'd always felt there was, we now had proof that we were right. Also waiting for us was a letter from Lennie Hodes saying that out of all his travels with the 'Empty Sky' lp would we note that only Russ Regan at Uni seemed interested so we telexed Lennie immediately and said 'Inform Russ that there was a new album out and available and we think that he'll flip when he hears it.' So obviously Russ was very interested in hearing this album and said that he still fancied Elton John and could he have first option on hearing the new album before we took it elsewhere. We shipped a copy over to him and apparently he

hit the ceiling, he went berserk, thought it was incredible and wanted to do a deal. We did a short-term licensing deal for Elton John only, just the one artist, with Uni, or MCA as it's now called. Then Russ wrote to us and said that he felt that the only way to break Elton, the right way, was not just to put the record out, not a single, not to do anything, but he had to go over for interviews and just be in California at the time the album was being released. So we said well it's a bit too expensive just to bring an artist over to California and plop him in the middle of Sunset Strip. Is there a possibility that we can get him a live performance or whatever so that the reviewers and general business can see him and see the kind of act he does. He hadn't done a lot of work but he had developed a sort of makeshift group with Nigel Olsson, who had been a drummer with Plastic Penny, and with Dee Murray, who was the bass player with the group I was producing called Mirage.

"Russ came back to us and said that a friend of his at the Troubadour offered a support situation to Elton with his group but that the money would be very low indeed and wouldn't cover his expenses but nevertheless it was the best they could do and he'd offered him a week at
(Continued on page 127)

Bringing Elton to the Midwest

■ Midwesterners should be thankful to Frank Fried of Triangle Theatrical Productions, Chicago, because he is the man responsible for booking Elton John for many of his playing dates in the central United States. Some of the halls that Fried has promoted for Elton have been the St. Paul Civic Auditorium, in St. Paul, Minn.; Keough Arena in St. Louis, Mo.; and the Ampitheatre and McCormick Arena, both in Chicago. Fried proudly notes that Elton is "always sold out."

Like most people who have business dealings with Elton John, Frank Fried has found the rock superstar of the seventies to be quite a pleasant and down-to-earth fellow to work with. Fried has his own opinions of what made such a seemingly average man the musical megastar of our times. He remarks, "Elton is a gigantic artist, one of the greats. His appeal transcends age, culture and class. The key is his broad appeal. Most artists have a parochial limit, but Elton seems to appeal to everybody." He adds, "Elton's an entertainer, not just a performer, in an era that hasn't produced any entertainers. You go away from his shows feeling good, and that's what it's all about."

The inherent talent of any showman is the primary force behind his success, but a fine support system is needed to keep even the best on top. Frank Fried works most closely with Howard Rose

and John Reid when he promotes an Elton John concert and has the highest praise for these dynamic men. Fried says, "They have a fine organization that's intent on giving the public the best possible show. This includes paying an incredible amount of attention to details." Fried knows that a younger crowd in general comes to his Elton John productions than to a Frank Sinatra or Bette Midler concert (other super attractions that he has promoted), so that might present security problems, but he mentions, "if you're experienced, it's no problem."

The biggest show that Fried has done with Elton was the St. Paul Civic engagement. However, the concert he remembers most fondly was the McCormick Arena performance over four years ago when Elton's star was first on the rise. Fried is very proud of being involved with EJ's career before everyone knew him as the next superstar of rock. The excitement of watching that happen must have been extraordinary!

On a more one-to-one level, Fried has had the opportunity to play tennis against Elton and sadly reports, "I lost. He is a great tennis player with a very powerful and unorthodox serve. Besides, he ran me all over the court." At least Frank Fried has better luck playing Elton John than playing against him, and that's no small consolation at all.

Howard Newman

Thank You Elton,

For Just Being Yourself

Doug Weston
and
The Troubadour



1970

KRLA PRESENTS "ROCK'S NEWEST SUPER STAR" ROBERT HILBORN, L. JONES

ELTON JOHN
SPECIAL GUEST STAR
ODETTA

SUN. NOV. 15 8 PM
Santa Monica Civic

All seats reserved: \$6.50, 5.50, 4.50
Available at all Ticketron outlets, Wallich's Music City Stores, Mutual Agencies and S.M. Civic Box Office (883-9981)

Produced by CONCERT ASSOCIATES, A Filmways Company

1970

LEON RUSSELL
SPECIAL GUEST STAR
ELTON JOHN
and **FREDDIE KING**

FRI. DEC. 4 8 PM
ANHEIM CONVENTION CENTER

All seats reserved at \$5.50, 4.50, 3.50. Available at Anaheim Conv. Box Office, Mutual Agencies, Wallich's Music Stores. Mail Orders Accepted. For information call (714) 635-5000

Produced by CONCERT ASSOCIATES, A Filmways Company

1971

ELTON JOHN
WITH **DEE MURRAY** AND **NIGEL OLSSON**
MARK ALMOND
EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION
REDEYE

ANHEIM CONVENTION CENTER
FRIDAY, MAY 14 8 PM

All Seats Reserved: \$6.50, \$5.50, \$4.50
Available at Anaheim Conv. Center Box Office, So. Cal. Mutual Co., 837 S. Hill and all Mutual Agencies, Wallich Music Stores. Mail Orders Accepted. For information call (714) 635-5000

Produced by CONCERT ASSOCIATES, A Filmways Company

1972



ELTON JOHN
WITH **NIGEL OLSSON**, **DEE MURRAY**, **DAVEY JOHNSTONE**
SPECIAL GUEST STAR
FAMILY

ANHEIM CONVENTION CENTER
SUN. OCT. 22 7:30 PM
FORUM
MON. OCT. 23 7:30 PM

All seats reserved at \$6.50, \$5.50, \$4.50
Available at all Ticketron outlets, Anaheim Convention Center Box Office, Mutual Agencies, Wallich's Music Stores. Mail Orders Accepted. For information call (714) 635-5000

Produced by CONCERT ASSOCIATES, A Filmways Company

Congratulations on your great success and for continued success in the future.

KDAY/Concert Associates Present **In Concert**



Elton John
with **Nigel Olsson**, **Dee Murray**, **Davey Johnstone**
with **The Sutherland Brothers & Quiver**

HOLLYWOOD BOWL SOLD OUT

TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE:
LONG BEACH ARENA
SAT. SEPT. 8 8 PM

EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION **SAN DIEGO ONLY**
STEELY DAN
An Afternoon on the grass
SAT. SEPT. 1 2pm

SAN DIEGO BALBOA STADIUM
15th & Russ Blvd. Entrance
TICKETS \$5.50 in advance / \$4.50 on day of show
IN SAN DIEGO: Tickets available at all Mutual Ticketing agencies, all Ticketron Stores, S.M. Civic Box Office, Theater Box Office (714) 635-5000
IN LOS ANGELES: Tickets available at all Ticketron Outlets, including S.M. Civic Box Office, Wallich's Music Stores and Broadway

Produced by Concert Associates

1974

ELTON JOHN TOUR



CONCERT ASSOCIATES PRESENT
Elton John In Concert
At The Fabulous Forum

Davey Johnstone, Dee Murray, Nigel Olsson and Ray Cooper
and
Special Guest Stars **THE KIKI DEE BAND**
Tuesday October 1st, Friday October 4th and Saturday October 5th at 7:30pm
All Seats Reserved: \$6.50, \$5.50, \$4.50
Tickets go on sale Monday August 5th at 10:00am. First Come First Served

Tickets available at all Ticketron Outlets and at the Forum Box Office
Available at Music City Stores, Liberty Music Agencies, Mutual Agency, 401 So. Hill St. and at Mutual Agencies
Produced by Concert Associates, A Filmways Company

1973

1974

WOLF AND RISSMILLER CONCERTS



Past to Present (Continued from page 63)

years and still was. He read the trades and the consumer music papers assiduously, constantly bought the torrents of singles and albums released each week, continued to keep mental track of which songs and which artists made it, which did not. Always he had been aware of what was selling in the States even before he had arrived here. And now, after two tours and months spent over here, he had first-hand knowledge of what was selling and what was not.

Elton calls it his "incredible luck," others perhaps label it a sixth sense, but in fact it is a stochastic ability—the happy faculty of ingesting pertinent data and, from it, projecting probable trends. And from "Honky" on, he began to be the master of his own musical fate. Certainly Taupin provided the underpinnings—the dressmaker's form—but it was Elton who tailored the creation with tempo and melody, and like a haute-couturier, he turned out song after song, each of which sold more than the one before.

Breaks In England

Also "Honky" broke him at home. Up until this time, England had remained rather cold to Elton. Whether they resented the fact that he broke first in America or they felt that he had abandoned them by spending so much time touring the States is hard to say. Perhaps all along Elton was unconsciously writing for American audiences since he had spent so many years assimilating the changing pop music of the U.S.

Still, "Honky" was the first Elton John album to make it in a big way in Britain, thus further expanding his audience, and very importantly, launching him as an international star. What Dick James had attempted to do for Elton at MIDEM in 1971, had been accomplished by Elton himself two years later.

Meanwhile back in the States, he went from strength to strength. Four nights at Carnegie Hall, the first half of each concert a solo piano recital, the lights up at show's end to illumine the four tiers of fans surging forward.

This first Carnegie gig exemplified an important aspect of



Elton with Bette Midler and Cher

Elton's attitude towards live performing. Ever on the march against boredom, he has never been afraid to try different approaches in concerts. Given the direction in which his career had blossomed, this recital approach took quite a bit of daring. But calculated risks have rarely bothered him and in fact over the years he has seen his wild performing concepts accepted ecstatically by his growing following.

The time was right, Elton felt, to concentrate on touring extensively and so the first of his massive three month tours was launched, a grueling but ultimately rewarding circuit. He took time off—perhaps ten days—to record "Don't Shoot Me (I'm Only The Piano Player)" an album of which he says, "There were some nice cuts on it; I love 'High Flying Bird' and I like 'Daniel' but as an album it's not very good. There's no continuity to it." Still, it was

a singles album and "Daniel" and "Crocodile Rock" were gigantic, and that, for the moment, was enough.

The Fillmore had long shut its doors forever and quite suddenly Carnegie seemed too small to hold all the people who clamored to see him. So the inevitable had come. Madison Square Garden, the giant barn with no acoustics or atmosphere. But he fooled us all and brought his own. Compared to the concerts by the groups who had previously filled the giant hall, EJ's show was a totally different ball game. The collective harmony of the audience was like a pure note sounding on the air—no fights, no aggressiveness, simply anticipation and good feelings. Astonishingly, the sound was superb and, at last, we saw the outrageous showman in his true element. "If I can't have fun on stage," he has always maintained, "I'd just as well not per-

form." And the sheer number of people watching him acted like a jolt of adrenalin, turning him on.

He laughs. "I love playing halls like the Garden! Absolutely!" He talks easily as he begins preparing for tonight's show. But as always the excitement glows just beneath his skin. "You see, there's for and against. Some people say that the sound is bad, but for me, twenty thousand people is such a buzz to go and play to!"

Something Different

Without doubt his most outrageous shows have been reserved for L.A., a city with which Elton and Bernie have fallen in love. And since his concerts there, the Hollywood Bowl and the Forum have not been the same. Neither have the kids.

But the best was yet to come, and with the mammoth U.S. tours for that year behind him, Elton and Bernie commenced work on the next album. "We knew we had to come up with something different," says Elton. And we promptly stunned one and all by releasing "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," a double album of tremendous breadth; a culmination, in effect, of his career up to that point. And again it was a calculated risk, given his rapid (one album every six months) release rate.

He dons the flared white sequined pants, pink plumes running down the outside of each leg. "Worried?" he says. "I wasn't worried that the songs weren't good. What I was worried about was would people be ready to have a double album from me. I mean, usually double albums are by groups—with eight-minute cuts on them. The only one I can think of that wasn't like that was the Stones' 'Exile On Main St.' But usually it's like 'Eat A Peach,' which had long jam cuts on it. Ninety percent of them are padded." He goes to the mirror on the wall to briefly peer at his face. "'Yellow Brick Road' is like the ultimate Elton John album. It's got all my influences from the word go—it encompasses everything I ever wrote, everything I've ever sounded like. And it was the

(Continued on page 116)

KODAK TRI X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM

KOD



→ 31A SAFETY FILM → 32 → 32A → 33 → 33A KODAK TRI X PAN FILM → 34 → 34A → 35 → 35A KODAK SAFETY FILM → 36 → 36A



→ 25A → 26 → 26A → 27 → 27A → 28 → 28A → 29 KODAK TRI X PAN FILM → 29A → 30 → 30A



→ 21A → 22A → 23 → 23A → 24 → 25A KODAK TRI X PAN FILM



→ 13A → 14 → 14A → 15 KODAK TRI X PAN FILM → 15A → 16 → 16A → 17 KODAK SAFETY FILM → 17A → 18 → 18A



→ 7A → 8 → 8A → 9 → 9A → 10 → 10A KODAK TRI X PAN FILM → 11 → 11A → 12 → 12A KODAK SAFETY FILM



THANKS FOR THE MANY IMPRESSIONS A.G.I.



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Photography Terry O'Neill



The Songs (Continued from page 114)

It seemed so full of excitement at that time—just a hive of industry, people creating things all the time. Nowadays, it's plodding along . . ."

Bernie Taupin, very thirties in a cream suit with wide lapels is, along with his wife, Maxine, the last to arrive. Everyone falls silent except for an almost suppressed giggle or two of anticipation and excitement. They breeze into the restaurant, past Zsa Zsa Gabor and her escort, who are waiting for a table in a certain part of the establishment that has been reserved, and are ushered by the captain to that reserved section where everyone leaps up, screams "Surprise!" and watches Taupin's face go white.

Later, after the superb French dinner, comes the present-giving, it being Taupin's birthday. He opens them one by one and there are "ooohs" and "aahhs," but at least part of everyone's awareness is focused on a large oblong shape, gift-wrapped and tied with ribbons that is, indubitably, Elton's present to Bernie.

At last, the other presents have been opened and laid aside. At last Taupin turns to the final gift and, as he does so, small spotlights flicker on, illuminating the shape. Quickly now, two waiters are summoned to lift off the gift-wrapping. There is a collective gasp from the assembled friends.

What stands revealed is a glass and chromium case within which stands a dress-maker's form, old and obviously much-used. On it is written in blue ink: "Marilyn Monroe."

"It's the nature of things," says Elton, "but it really infuriates me.



Taupin is always the one to get picked on. I mean the critics either say his lyrics are a piece of bleep or they attribute meanings to them that he never intended." Take "Candle In The Wind," for instance, the most notorious example. Although Bernie has been fascinated by Monroe for many years and, in fact, wrote the song at least eight months before the Monroe revival was to begin, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" was released—inauspiciously, in this sense—just after the Norman Mailer "Marilyn" biography hit the stores with such enormous impact. Because of that, Taupin was widely criticized as opportunistic whereas nothing could be further from the truth.

For him, the fascination is for the unique impact Monroe created. "Quite simply," he says, "she was able to reach out from the screen and make each person in the audience believe she was talking directly to him." And for Taupin, she epitomizes all that made Hollywood the most *fabulous* and the most *horrific* place on earth; the dream-center, dedicated to the fulfillment of fantasies at the expense of all else.

And at last Elton John and Bernie Taupin came to the land of their dreams, to settle and live, which culminated in the creation of "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," as awesome a work as anyone has a right to expect from a rock artist. It is indeed a heavy harvest of eighteen songs that, in their own way, reveal more about the pair, than their later, autobiographical "Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy."

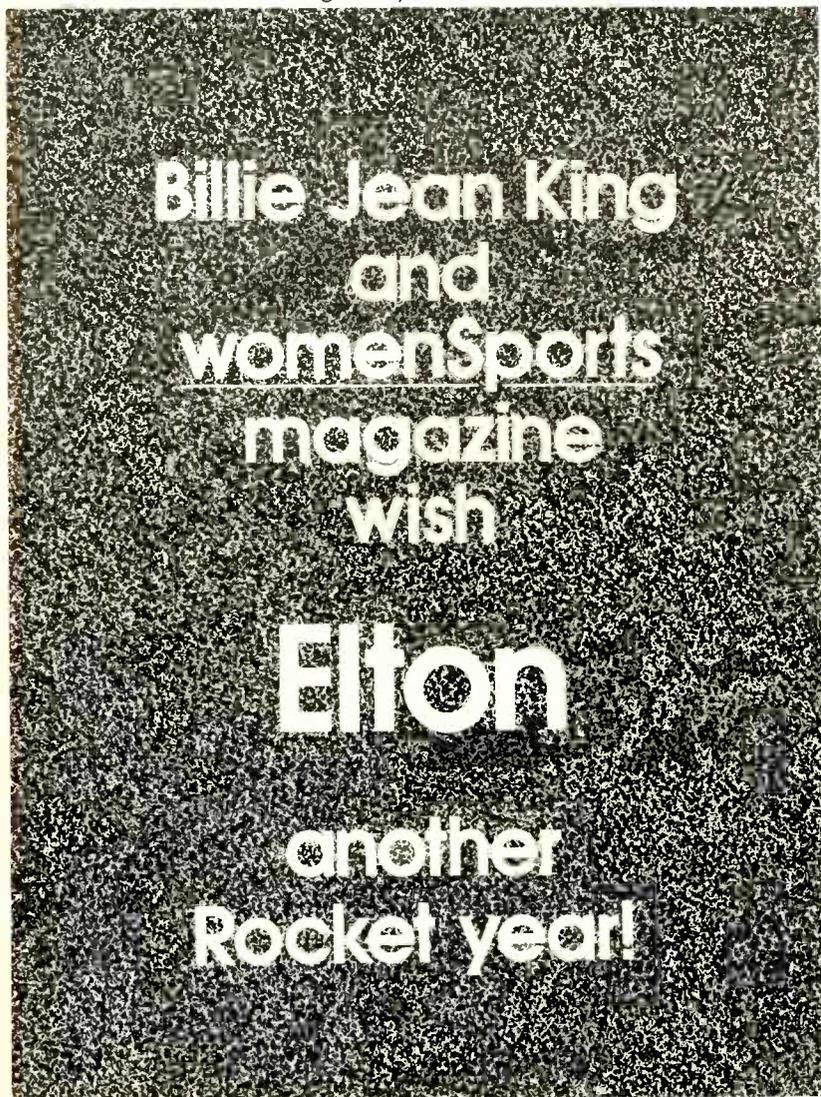
Yet it all started on the wrong foot. Tired of the Chateau, where he had recorded the last two albums, Elton betook himself and crew to Jamaica, following the Stones into a studio there. It was a total disaster. The sound was awful, the piano wrong, and Kingston was a squalid eyesore. They sat around for six days, getting more and more bummed out as things went from bad to worse. No one did anything during that time except for Taupin who began to write and write and write, until he had written himself and Elton into a double album. Fortuitous fate!

The sole memento of that fiasco (the album was recorded at the Chateau) is, of course, "Jamaica Jerk-Off," a bitter little pseudo-reggae thing that serves the same purpose here as "All The Nasties" did on "Madman."

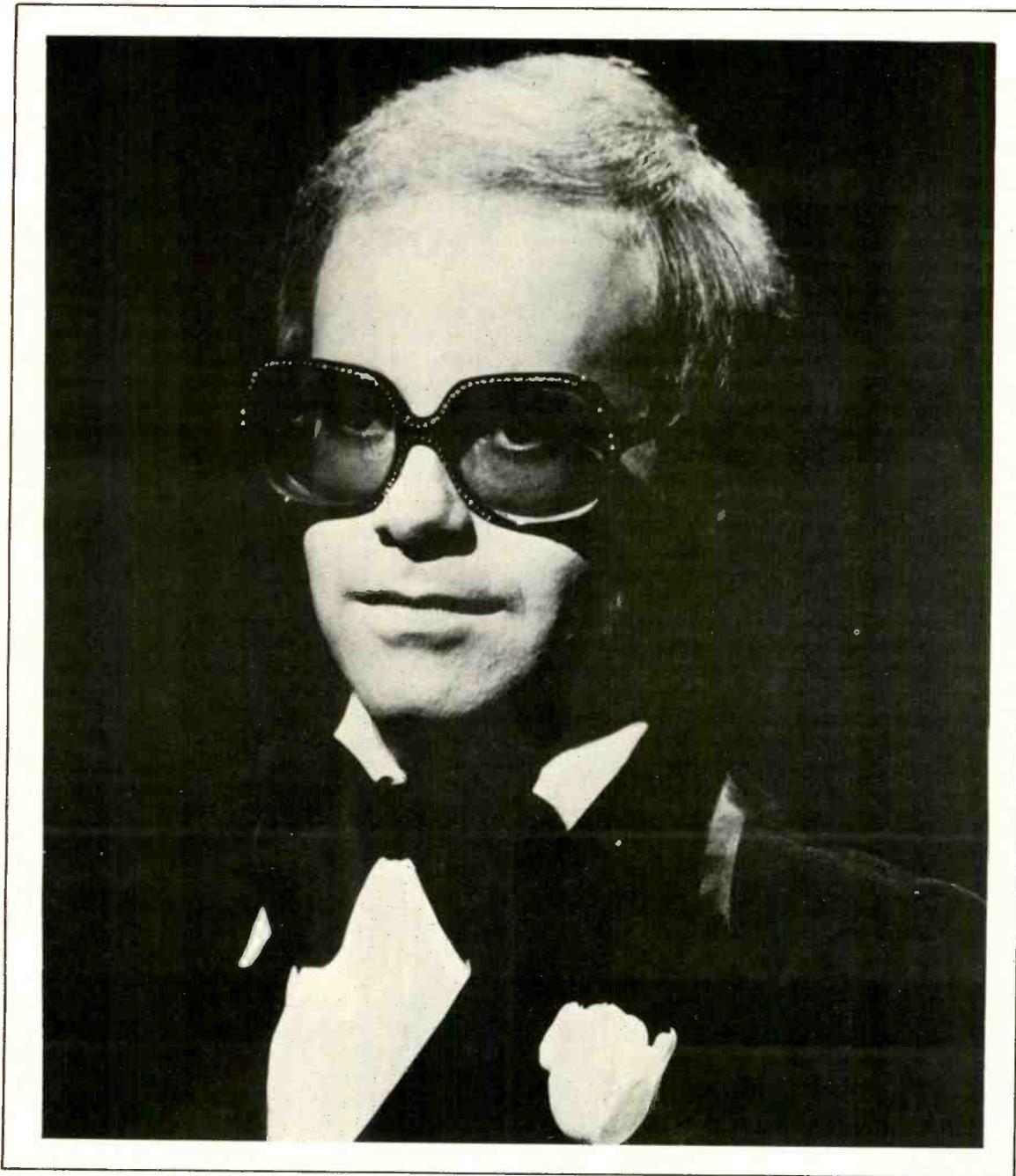
Interestingly, what pervades many of the songs on the album are the relationships between the rock star and his public. For instance "Love Lies Bleeding" (the title refers to the name of a flower indigenous to England): "I was playing rock-n-roll and you were just a fan/But my guitar couldn't hold you so I split the band . . ." is a tale of lost love: "You said I'm sorry honey/If you don't change the pace/I can't face another day." And all that's left alive, in the end, is the flower in the musician's hand.

Contrast this then with "Dirty Little Girl," where we find that the roles have been reversed: "When I watch the police come by and move you on/Well I sometimes wonder what's beneath the mess you've become." Here, the more traditional need for solitude is displayed: "And like the rags that belong to you/I belong to myself." Implicit in both songs is Taupin's ambivalent feelings about England and L.A. "Love Lies Bleeding" is obviously set in Britain, whereas "Dirty Little Girl" has the taste of Hollywood about it, the love/hate

(Continued on page 122)

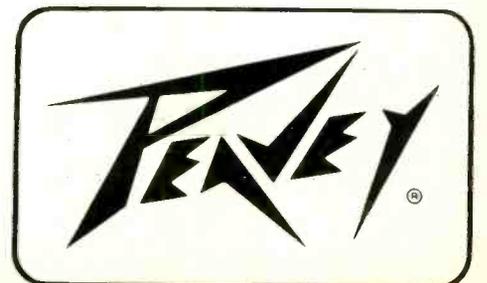


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Peavey Electronics Corp.
Meridian, Mississippi



The Elton John Band Performing And Recording Exclusively With Peavey.



The Songs (Continued from page 118)

manifesting itself thusly: "Here's my own belief about all the dirty girls/That you have to clean the oyster to find the pearl . . ."

In a lighter vein, "Bennie and the Jets" pokes fun at the trend-a-minute aspect of the music business that is prevalent all across the country but which seems most concentrated in L.A.: "Hey Cindy and Ronnie, have you seen them yet/But they're so spaced out, Bennie and the Jets . . ."

Perhaps the most forceful statement Taupin has made about the life of the rock star resides within the burnt crystal of "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" itself. The title, a film symbol from childhood, of all the glamor and glitter of supersuccess, can be misleading at first glance since its suggestion of Hollywood is obvious, but false. The dreamed-of stardom from Hollywood is now the reality of rockstardom, and the pungent former-dog-bites-master lyrics refer to old mentors: "You know you can't hold me forever/I didn't sign up with you/I'm not a present for your friends to open . . . You can't plant me in your pent-house/I'm going back to my plough . . . Maybe you'll get a replacement/There's plenty like me to be found/Mongrels, who ain't got a penny/Sniffing for tid-bits like you on the ground."

Acerbic Sentiments

These acerbic sentiments are echoed later on in "Bitter Fingers" (from "Captain Fantastic . . .") but here the non-specificity of the situation makes the statement more forceful. Too, this song is obviously about Bernie which is unusual enough (Taupin seldom writes *directly* about himself. For instance, on the autobiographical "Captain Fantastic . . ." there is only one song, "Tell Me When The Whistle Blows" that is about him. All the others concern either Elton or the two of them.): "I should have stayed on the farm . . . [I'm going] Back to the howling old owl in the woods . . . Oh I've finally decided, my future lies/Beyond the yellow brick road."

The depiction of nasty people mushrooms on this album, from the bitch of "I've Seen That Movie Too," to the "sixteen-year-old yo-yo" of "All The Girls Love Alice" whose only "friends" were "One or two middle-aged dykes in A Go-Go," to the dim-witted British aggro-mix-master of "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting," to the useless soul of "Social Disease." It seems odd that Taupin should spend so much time on the misfits of life until one understands the rest of his writing. Still, it's somewhat mysterious and that is precisely as it should be. (Taupin smiles at this.)

10. "My gift is my song
And this one's for you . . ."

—Your Song.

Almost every Elton John album has contained at least one superb love song. And at this point one can more easily understand why "Your Song," which began it all here, made such an instant and, more important, *lasting*—because it can be argued that the majority of the people who heard that song were made fans because of it—impression on the public. Like Norma Jean, who was "more than just our Marilyn Monroe," "Your Song" was more than just a top five hit; it is a song able to reach out and touch each listener personally.

Usually Taupin is at the top of his form on his love songs and, knowing this, Elton always comes through with remarkable and startling melody lines for these. "Madman" has its "Tiny Dancer," another rare personal song for Taupin, and "Don't Shoot Me" has its "High Flying Bird" (the symbol most representative of freedom and women in Bernie's lyrics), certainly the highlight of that set, a sombre, aching ballad, pain-filled and without hope. "Daniel" is also a love song, though of an unconventional nature. This was no impediment to it rapidly achieving hit status.

"Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" for all its cynicism boasts, on its last cut, a rather overlooked song, "Harmony," that is, at some time, destined to become a standard. It has, within the context of the song, the best opening lines Taupin has ever written ("Hello, baby hello/Haven't seen your face for a while/Have you quit doing time for me?



Bernie Taupin

. . ."), so casual yet so full of indirect pathos. It is Taupin at his best, slightly ill-defined and ambiguous, as all love affairs tend to be, at least for their participants.

Taupin can be a genius with songs titles, too. At least half the charm of the intriguing "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" is derived from that line which forever seems to hold tantalizingly elusive hidden meanings.

Bernie's ability with the perverse makes "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" the first negative love song of its kind. That it is a love song, despite its depiction of a particularly venomous female ("Sitting like a princess perched in her electric chair . . ."), is undeniable: "Sweet freedom whispered in my ear/You're a butterfly/And butterflies are free to fly/Fly away, high away, bye bye." This imagery is intrinsic to all Taupin love songs and here is no exception. That the love is directed towards the chrysalis of Elton's career and against the female who would have crushed it makes no difference.

But the most delicate, the most ambiguous, and therefore the most powerful love song that Taupin has written is "Come Down In Time." Cast within the temporal period of the rest of "Tumbleweed," it yet, through its poetic imagery, spans every century that man has walked the earth, and in its universality is its genius.

*In the quiet silent seconds I turned off the light switch
And I came down to meet you in the half light the moon
left*

*While a cluster of night jars sang some songs out of tune
A mantle of bright light shone down from a room
Come down in time I still hear her say
So clear in ear like it was today
Come down in time was the message she gave
Come down in time and I'll meet you half-way
Well I don't know if I should have heard her as yet
But a true love like hers is a hard love to get
And I've walked most all the way and I ain't heard her
call*

*And I'm getting to thinking if she's coming at all
Come down in time
There are women and women, and some hold you tight
While some leave you counting the stars in the night.*

(Continued on page 133)



ELTON



**We Salute Your
Achievements
May They Go On
Forever**



TRIANGLE PRODUCTIONS INC.
Franklin E. Fried, President



MCA Viewpoint (Continued from page 86)

"Yellow Brick Road" was the next release in the U.S. and, according to Elton, "It is like the ultimate Elton John album . . . it encompasses everything I ever wrote or sounded like and now I've got to start all over again." "Yellow Brick Road," the only two-record album he's ever recorded, was released late in 1973 and it was gold before the end of the year. The album contains rockers such as "Bennie And The Jets," "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting" and "Social Disease." It also includes beautiful ballads such as "Harmony," "Candle In The Wind" and "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road." The album stayed in the top ten for more than nine months.

'Caribou'

It was just before the release of Elton's "Caribou" album that Elton John signed the landmark contract with MCA Records.

Well established as the rock superstar of the 1970s, Elton's popularity continues to soar. "Caribou" was released in June of 1974 and it was certified platinum before the start of Elton's American tour in the fall of 1974. All of Elton's concerts were complete sellouts. Three concerts at the Los Angeles Forum sold out so quickly that a fourth concert had to be added to the schedule. And tickets to that performance were gone within hours. Elton's elaborate costumes, his rhinestone-covered piano, his dramatic performances and the vast amount of excellent, well-known and popular Elton John hits all added to the excitement of the 1974 tour. MCA Records capped off the year by releasing a "Greatest Hits" album in time for Christmas. The lp was certified platinum within one month of its release.

Elton's next album, released in the spring of 1975, was "Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy." It was the first album in the history of the recording industry to ship platinum and MCA had advance bona fide orders for approximately 1.4 million copies. The lp is an introspective, autobiographical testimony to Elton John and Bernie Taupin, beginning with their childhood, reviewing early professional and personal struggles, and ending with the recording of the "Empty Sky"

album. It is a symbolic end to chapter one of Elton's career and an auspicious beginning to chapter two.

As Elton changed the sound of his music, he felt he had to reorganize his band. Elton can only be admired for his selection of performers and for his ability to put together a tight unit of musicians. Elton has been increasingly interested in rock and r&b. Two of his singles, "Bennie And The Jets" and "Philadelphia Freedom," had been very successful in the r&b field and Elton appeared on the television show "Soul Train." His new band is a six-piece group made up of Davey Johnstone (guitar), Ray Cooper (percussion), Kenny Passarelli (bass), James Newton Howard (keyboard/synthesizer), Caleb Quaye (guitar) and Roger Pope (drums).

There was another exciting evening at the Troubadour in late August, 1975. Elton John returned to celebrate the fifth anniversary of his first American performance. And Elton John put on display his new band, one of the finest rock

groups ever assembled. Elton gave six benefit performances, with tickets going for \$250 each the first night and \$25 each for the second and third nights. All proceeds from the event, approximately \$150,000, went to the Jules Stein Eye Institute.

Elton's newest album, "Rock of the Westies," is a showcase for Elton's new band and it features what one reviewer called "good time rock and roll." The lp contains only one ballad, "I Feel Like A Bullet In The Gun Of Robert Ford," and includes the semi-reggae single "Island Girl." Elton is moving on musically and his following continues to grow. The album was released just before his recent tour 'west of the Rockies.' Elton's itinerary included two sold out concerts at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. He played to 110,000 people and was the first pop music act to perform at the stadium, since The Beatles played there nearly a decade ago.

In addition to his music, Elton has developed a great enthusiasm for tennis and one of his good friends is Billie Jean King. Elton is

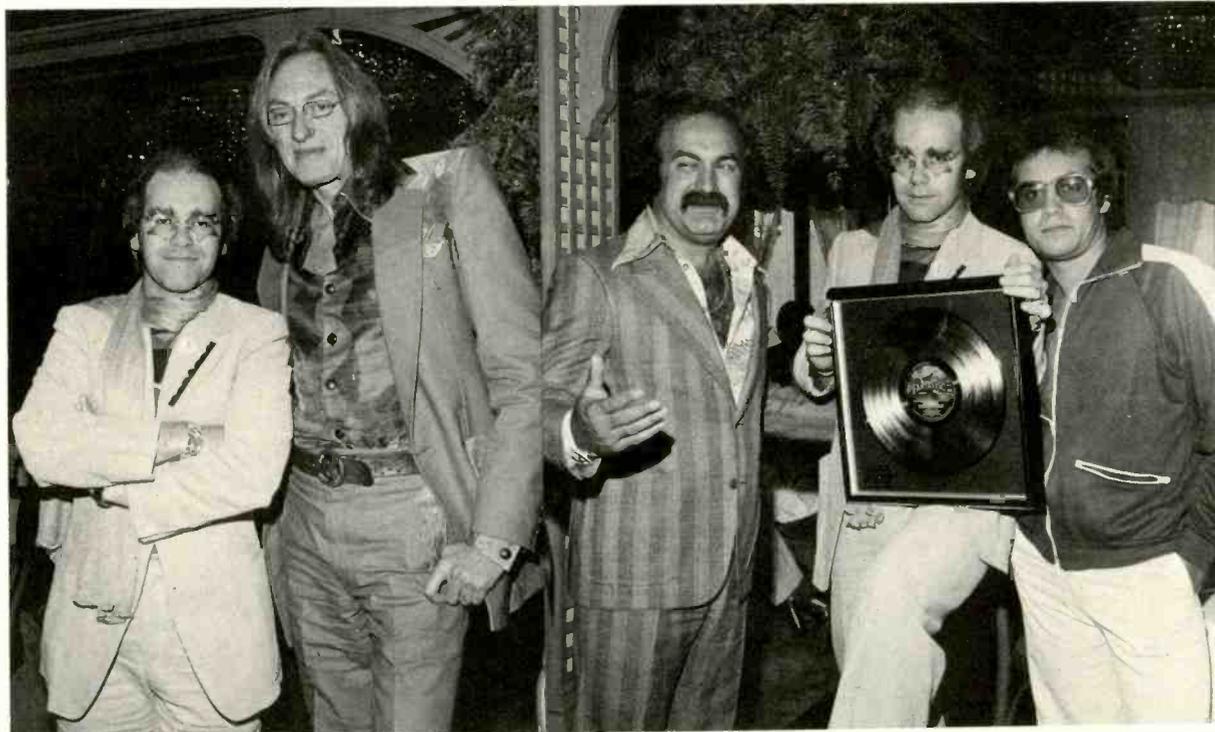
a director of the Watford Football Club in England and recently became an owner of the L. A. Aztecs.

In 1975, Elton made his film debut as the Pinball Wizard in the Ken Russell film, "Tommy."

And Elton now has his own record label, Rocket Records, which is distributed by MCA Records, Inc. Kiki Dee, Nigel Olsson and Neil Sedaka are among the artists who record for the label.

It is impossible to predict what more Elton John has in store. His track record is truly unbelievable. Ten albums, "Elton John," "Tumbleweed Connection," "Madman Across The Water," "Honky Château," "Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player," "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," "Caribou," "Greatest Hits," "Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy" and "Rock Of The Westies," have been certified platinum. Elton John is the superstar who has dominated the music industry for the first half of this decade. And indications are that Elton will continue to be a leader of the industry for years to come.

Double Barrel Event



In a double-barrel event at L.A.'s Bistro, Elton John announced a return engagement to the Troubadour, marking five years since his American debut at the club. The Troubadour is owned by Doug Weston (right, first photo). Also at that party, however, Elton and Bernie Taupin (right) received a gold record for "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy" from MCA VP, marketing Rick Frio.



Stephen James *(Continued from page 110)*

Los Angeles and a week at San Francisco. Russ thought that it would be a perfect situation to show off Elton to the press, and get the publicity that he required to try to release the record. Of course no one at that time expected anything particularly sensational. We weighed up in our minds the amount of money involved and my father took the decision that although we were bound to lose quite a hefty amount it was still worth the gamble to put Elton and the others on a plane to California and do it. He opened at the Troubadour, the record came out a week before, it was sampled round to all the reviewers and everybody in the business, and apparently received enough interest to get them to go and see him. That was all that we could ask. Apparently most of the business turned up at the Troubadour to see Elton John and within three days of his opening he had hit the headlines of the musical page of the Los Angeles Times and everyone was going berserk. I still can't quite believe the telex that came over to say that L.A. had been hit by a storm and Elton John was a superstar. That was within three days that Russ Regan sent us the telex, around the end of August—he opened on August 25, 1970.

"Meanwhile the Elton John lp had been out there for about six months and really had done very little sales-wise although it had created quite a bit of interest and there was one person in this country who seriously believed that Elton John could break here and I must admit he proved to be right, and together with the publicity that was being created in L.A., Tony Blackburn (BBC Radio 1 deejay) approached DJM and said that if we would pull the track 'Your Song' off the Elton John lp as a single he would guarantee to make it his Record of the Week, and we did. That was towards the end of 1970. Together with the publicity that was going on in California, Tony Blackburn's interest, with the publicity starting to gain impetus in the Melody Maker and NME here, we pulled it off. I think we got it into about no. 5 on the charts and at the same time, just before Christmas, we put out the 'Tumbleweed Connection' lp. We did the first, as far as I know, television advertising of an individual artist to try and break Elton John in this country, and by January 1 we couldn't press them fast enough. 'TC' had broken and I think eventually we got it to no. 2 on the lp charts and Elton John was a big success.

"Since he broke the U.S. and U.K., Australia has emerged as an important territory in terms of record sales. Total figures there possibly aren't the highest among the other territories but he's a superstar in Australia. He's had a string of no. 1 lps and singles there; he's also apparently sold the largest amount by anybody ever in Australia on an lp, and that was 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.'

"In Scandinavia also he's extremely popular. He hasn't been out of the top 3 with any of his records, lps or singles, since we've broken him in Scandinavia. He's also had quite a huge success in Brazil where we had enormous sales on 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road,' both single and lp. He's never toured there but we've sent films down to Brazil of some of his performances which we've supplied free to our licensee in Brazil and he's used it to the best of his ability to help promote Elton. He's never been there yet he's one of the biggest artists on two legs down there. In fact, if I remember rightly, his sales on 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' single did more than 400,000 in Brazil alone, which I think is enormous, for that market. Since then in both Brazil and Argentina he's had a string of no. 1 lps. The only territory where we've had very little success is France. There are very many reasons for that including a bad situation that occurred at MIDEM a few years ago with Elton and since then he's never performed live in France.

"I've got several favorites in the Elton John catalogue for different reasons. I love 'Your Song' of course; it broke Elton John in the U.K. and helped to make DJM Records a successful record company. On the other hand I still love the song regardless of the success it brought to the company and also Elton John. I like 'Candle In The Wind' because I think it's a fabulous song and I love 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' because it just happens to be one of my personal favorites but I think for me the 'Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player' lp is the one. It took Elton John out of the hit star status and put him into

■ It would be impossible to thank all the people who helped put together this tribute. But special thanks must go to John Reid, Tony King, Connie Pappas, Dick Grant, David Larkham, Ronnie Lippin, Patti Bogdanski and Porche Lottermoser. All the articles emanating from England were compiled by Ron McCreight, who wishes to thank Dave Croker, Diane Evans, Lynne Wheeler and Gerry Fallon for their assistance. The Elton John Discography and the "Elton John Years" spread were compiled by Barry Taylor.

It is also impossible to thank all the photographers and illustrators whose work went into this section, but thanks must go to David Larkham, Terry O'Neill, Mike Hewitson, Ed Caraeff, Sam Emerson and Jacques Benoit, among others.

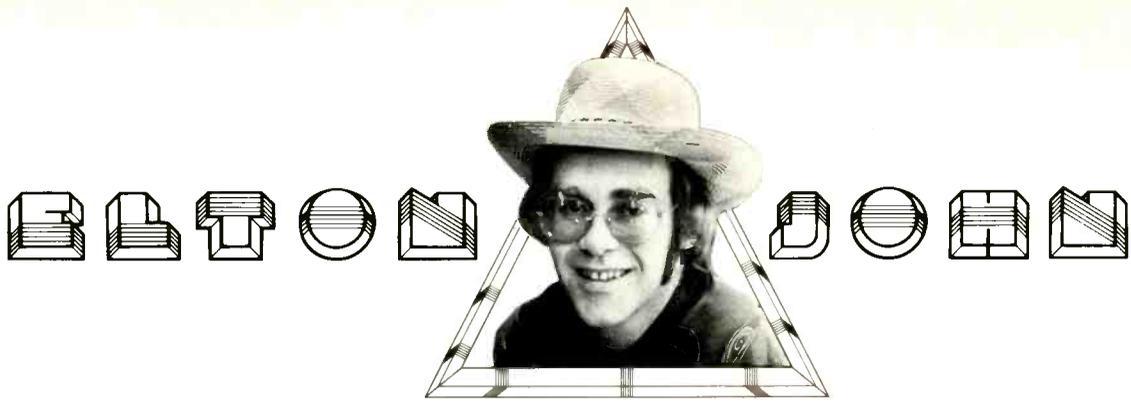
the superstar status, definitely changed his whole image.

"Elton's status was then very similar to the old Beatles in the sixties, and a lot of his record sales and acceptance was very reminiscent of the '60s, mid-'60s Beatles sales and success, and I think his 'Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player' followed by 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' and the records he made round about that era—'Rocket Man,' 'Daniel'—were some of his biggest sales—'Crocodile Rock,' his biggest sales period.

"Although after losing out a bid to re-sign Elton I don't really feel that we're losing him because we own all the catalogue so far, we retain it so therefore we'll be re-releasing, re-packaging and changing Elton John for many years to come. In fact, I think we'll be re-releasing and re-packaging and possibly releasing some tracks you've never heard of long after the EMI deal has been and gone and either made or lost money. There are some un-released tracks in the can. I therefore don't really feel I'm losing Elton John. I certainly haven't lost him as a friend. In fact Elton and I are still as good friends as we were before the negotiations started and failed.

"There's an Elton John single out which is Elton's choice and the A side is 'Grow Some Funk Of Your Own' and the B side is 'Robert Ford.' At the moment we're still in discussion with exactly what the spring lp will be but there will be an lp from DJM in the spring, round about April, more than likely of Elton John live recordings from Madison Square Garden, Festival Hall and Wembley, something like that. We don't know if it will be a one, two or three record set. We then definitely plan for the autumn another Elton John 'Greatest Hits' because we have enough new product that's been released since the last Elton John 'Greatest Hits' to make up a brand new album of hit tracks. There's also one track that we've never released in single form at all and we own the rights to it so we intend doing it at the right and most appropriate time, and that is 'Pinball Wizard,' which hasn't come out yet. We're also discussing other ideas for a major Elton John release in the middle of 1977 which really should be a superb package.

"I'm really quite happy that we or I'm quite resigned to the fact that we've got enough Elton John product to release as extra product to the DJM catalogue for the next few years to come. Naturally I'd like to cooperate very much with EMI in England, and Rocket, and MCA in America. Festival in Australia and Gallo in South Africa have both the Elton John back catalogue, licensed from us, any new packages and developments that we desire to do, as well as his future material. So these companies need to coordinate the release dates and the format of Elton John's new product along with us to release his back catalogue. I have no intention whatsoever of trying to overload the market with Elton John product either from DJM or Rocket EMI and I would like very much to be able to sit down and say to EMI you can have the June release date for this album and we'll have October/November for this album and you can have March/April for that album and space it out. Certainly from the personal friendship side I do not want to do anything that might harm Elton John's career as an artist, and obviously it's in my interest both as a friend and from a business point of view to sustain the Elton John career for as long as possible."



Elton on Albums *(Continued from page 90)*

"Funeral For A Friend" to the deceptively simple closer, "Harmony," all was self-fulfilling on the Elton John front.

Onward to the Western front and the Caribou Studios, for the site of sessions for the album which borrowed its title from the name of Jim Guercio's Rocky Mountain spread and sound shop. The results from "Caribou" have led Elton to return for all subsequent projects.

Debuting at 15 and jumping to the top spot one week later in early July '74, the album showcase for "The Bitch Is Back" and "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" employed back-up vocal talents as different as Toni Tennille and Clydie King. A clearly unreal mountain backdrop for the lp's cover shot wrapped itself most appropriately around a "you're here but you're not" feeling that permeated songs like "I've Seen The Saucers" and "Grimsby."

And when it came time to descend the mountain for a retro-

spective, Elton chose snowy white as his color for the occasion. A loud 'n large ceramic pin and harvest-hued bow tie accented it all as Elton smiled from the cover of his November '74 "Greatest Hits" release. Timed to coincide with the first of two singles still awaiting a volume two for their initial lp appearances ("Lucy In The Sky . . ." and "Philadelphia Freedom"), this one became all the more a 45 rpm festival at 33-1/3. A special approach to label artwork in a perfect reflection of the cover graphics crowned the birthday boy's present for the party-goers.

After MCA Records so saluted the artist behind the single hits (which collectively topped the Album Chart for six straight weeks), they decided to do the same for the artwork on "Captain Fantastic and The Brown Dirt Cowboy." It became the first package in history to debut at number one.

This first obviously autobiographical exercise from Elton

John provided the clearest musical indication of the extent to which he's always acknowledged his own work's ties to Bernie Taupin. But the hit "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" typified the lp's overall choice to slant the tales in the direction of mutual emotions rather than specific career details. It was the last Elton album for Nigel Olsson and Dee Murray, to whom the "Rock Of The Westies" package would be dually dedicated.

"Captain Fantastic . . ." graphically tied up the essence of the outer shell of the Elton experience in a rare cover featuring a representational rather than photographic likeness of the superstar. Four months before the album's initial salesquake would make the chart week of June 7, 1975 so historical, a more subtle piece of artwork appeared to grace "Empty Sky." It suited the no-fanfare approach to the belated U.S. release of the very first Elton lp, recorded in a small studio on even a more



minute budget: a Folon-designed Sphinx, the perfect visual translation of both the mythology-laden material inside and Elton's private attitude to his least favorite album.

Whatever mystery might have surrounded the pre-release announcements that "Rock Of The Westies" would feature a new band line-up, it was all quickly supplanted with day-of-issue enthusiasm and the ongoing excitement generated by an lp that went number one in just three weeks. The father of the fun single "Island Girl" offered several tunes seeking succor ("Yell Help," "Feed Me"); true salvation was found in each cut through the help of drummer Roger Pope (himself an "Empty Sky" veteran), bassist Kenny Passarelli, guitarist Caleb Quaye and synthesizer keyboardman James Newton Howard. Together with old band holdovers Davey Johnstone and Ray Cooper and of course Bernie Taupin, they joined as one sound source and with true mountain greenery in the background, posed for back photo recognition.

Twelve releases into a seemingly non-stop career, Elton John The Album Maker, specially-spectacled wonderboy of rock in the seventies, has simultaneously fashioned a unique musical niche and a highly visible public image, both relying on a blend of constancies and surprises. Their combined ability to keep his career on an upswing never ceases to amaze. The collected works of the "collective" Elton are both cause and effect.



Stevie Wonder, Olivia Newton-John, Elton, Bernie

Elton's No Handicap For Billie Jean King

By BARRY TAYLOR

■ When Billie Jean King was introduced to Elton John at a party two years ago, it was a meeting of superstar talents in the truest sense.

That introduction has led up to a relationship that has bridged their two professional careers and has seen Ms. King on the concert stage and Elton on the tennis court.

"I remember the first time I heard Elton John very well," Billie Jean told **RW** recently. "I was driving across the Bay Bridge in San Francisco with the radio on when 'Your Song' came on. It was about five years ago. I didn't know who it was at first, but I thought, whoever it is, he's got it. He's going to be number one. I was moved most by the lyrics and the strings. I knew he had it then."

An EJ Fan

Billie Jean readily admits to being a fan of Elton's music, "especially the softer tunes. You know, I have a great time dancing to the faster, rock songs, but I really enjoy listening to the ballads like 'Funeral for a Friend.'"

Billie Jean, who claims that she "hates going to parties," was persuaded to go to Elton's by the promoter of the King-Riggs match. "Elton came over to introduce himself and we were both pretty embarrassed at first, but we got along from the start," she said.

"We talked about tennis a lot and I would see him pretty regularly after that. We went out a couple of times—a whole group of us. Since then, we've kept in touch and we talk regularly."

She describes Elton as a shy person who does a "complete turnaround" once he fits the stage. "He's real sensitive. He was

crying at the Dodger Stadium concert because he was completely overwhelmed by the whole thing. He's also generous and competitive. Those are two qualities that I respect. He's got it as a human being."

Elton has always been interested in tennis and has always been a fan of Billie Jean King. "He has played with us several times and comes to all the matches whenever possible. In fact, we had a special track suit made for him when he played a special benefit match with us and Bill Cosby.

"He was so moved by the invitation that he said he would write a song for us. I said, 'OK, yeah sure' and I assumed that he would forget about it. Then one day we were having a playoff game in Denver and Elton was recording at Caribou. He came into this dirty old lockerroom with a tape recorder and played this song he had just finished called, 'Philadelphia Freedom.' We were all standing around while he played it and it was very exciting. Elton was nervous because he thought that we wouldn't like it, but we loved it. It was fantastic!"

Billie Jean's love for sports is obviously shared by Elton, who is very involved with his local soccer club, the Watford team. "He talks a lot about helping English sports and he talks a lot about getting more involved when the time comes that he feels that he should retire from the music business. He's got the facilities and the right attitude. I can understand what he says and what he feels," said Billie Jean. "I like his attitude as well as his music, and I'm sure that people will be listening to Elton John for a long time to come."



Elton with Billie Jean King

Congratulations To

ELTON JOHN

JOHN REID ENTERPRISES

ROCKET RECORDS

HOWARD ROSE AGENCY

PACIFIC PRESENTATIONS



Five Years of Fun

(Continued from page 106)

But he acknowledges there are times when the strains of the business got to him. "I go through periods when I think 'this isn't worth it' and I don't want to see anybody and I don't want to do anything. Everybody does, I guess. But I'm a very easy person to get out of that mood. I have a lot of friends who know me very well. They can just ring me up and say the right words and it snaps me right out of it.

"But I can understand performers going into those depressions and not wanting to do anything for a couple of years. It's all down to the people you're involved with, I think. If you don't have a friend to help you out, it just gets worse and worse. I'm lucky. A lot of people get involved with the wrong kind of people. Fortunately, I'm good at shutting people off. I'm very wary of people I meet because so many are out to push themselves on you or push their drugs on you or something.

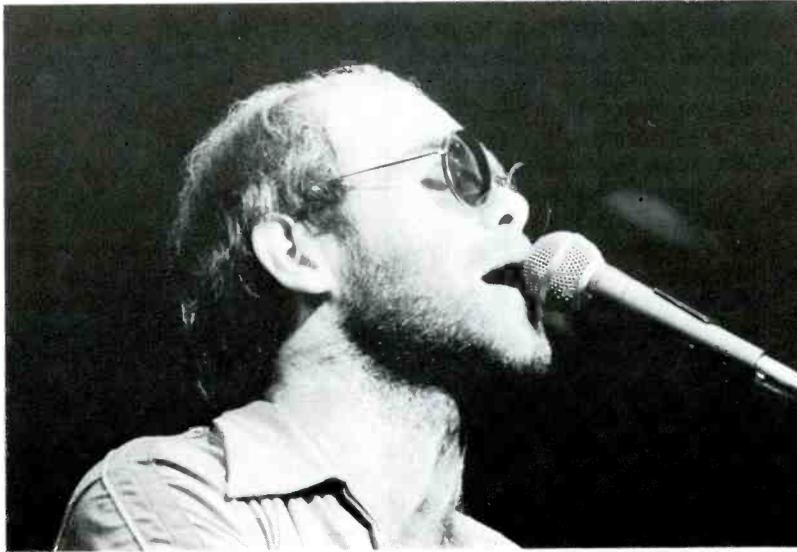
"That first week at the Troubadour (in 1970) was a great education for me," he continued. "There were so many people who suddenly wanted to know me. Instantly I went from being a nobody to MR. ELTON JOHN. I must have shaken a million hands and people slapping me on the back and calling me the great white wonder and all that.

"I was pretty naive before I came to America but that week made me grow up. In that week, I must have seen all the con men and hypsters and I found I could see through it all for the first time in my life and I pledged myself not to end up like them."

The New Contract

The customary thing for a record company to do when it re-signs an artist is to send out a simple news release or—if it is a particularly important signing—take out a modest ad in the music trade papers. The fact that MCA Records placed full-page ads in both the Los Angeles Times and New York Times last year to announce the re-signing of Elton John was an indication of how very special that pact was.

It was, in fact, the biggest con-



tract ever given to a single artist in the history of the record business: a five-year deal that was believed to guarantee John upwards of \$8 million in royalties. In an industry renowned for its complex, dragged out negotiations, the MCA-Elton John deal was put together in a four day series of meetings between J. K. (Mike) Maitland, president of MCA Records, and John Reid, Elton's 25-year-old manager and partner in Rocket Records.

While any contract that guarantees royalties is a gamble, the MCA bet was safe as long as John kept selling at anywhere near his remarkably consistent rate of the previous four years. Except for a live album that was originally recorded as part of a radio broadcast and released only after bootleg copies started appearing, all seven of Elton's albums have not only passed the coveted gold record status (i.e. \$1 million in retail sales), but achieved the more elusive platinum award status (more than one million units sold). His two record set titled "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" has spent an extraordinary nine months in the national Top 10.

Film and Television

Since the contract was signed, two more albums—"Caribou" and "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy"—have, of course, also achieved the same platinum status. He has also branched out into a bit of television (a guest spot with Cher and co-host with Diana Ross of a na-

tional rock awards show) and films (the part of the Pinball Wizard in Ken Russell's "Tommy"). While there are plans for additional projects in both areas, records, he says, will continue to receive his greatest attention.

'Captain Fantastic'

In "Captain Fantastic," John and Taupin trace their lives from childhood to the time they wrote the songs for the first "Empty Sky" album. While the album is quite personal, the story of their success—from the earliest dreams ("Everybody has a once upon a time") to the moments of doubt and severe frustration—carries a certain universality. The arrangements, vocals and lyrics are as controlled and finely honed as on any album they've yet done. It is both John's and Taupin's personal favorite.

In the album, they speak about the sometimes sordid pop scene ("Tower of Babel"), the strain of trying to turn out Tin Pan Alley hits ("Bitter Fingers"), the occasional homesickness and insecurity ("Tell Me When the Whistle Blows"), the refusal to toss aside one's goals ("Someone Saved My Life Tonight"), some of the distressing sights around London at night ("Better Off Dead"), an affectionate tip of the hat to their craft ("Writing"), the financial difficulties of struggling songwriters ("Meal Ticket"), the discovery of romance ("We All Fall in Love Sometimes"). The album closes with "Curtains," a marvelously conceived selection that is at the

same time a farewell to what has gone before and a toast to what is in store.

Troubadour '75

With that closing number in mind, it is only fitting that the 1975 Troubadour engagement was the first time he had played material from "Captain Fantastic" in the United States and the first time he had played here with his new band—a six-piece group that includes holdovers Davey Johnstone, the guitarist who joined Elton in 1972, and Ray Cooper, the colorful percussionist who joined him in 1973. The new band is part of a desire on Elton's part to explore new musical directions. Even with the new material and new band, it was hard to imagine the 1975 Troubadour engagement could be as dramatic as his opening at the club five years ago. But Elton John has a way of overturning the odds.

Defining Elton's Success

I think it was during Elton John's first return visit here after the 1970 Troubadour engagement that someone, curious about how the other stops on his U.S. tour had gone, asked how he felt his career was moving at that point. Elton said something to the effect that it was like he was turning into the home stretch in a race that he was going to win. I sometimes wonder now what finish line he had in mind back then. That definition of stardom we all tossed around that night back in 1970 at the Troubadour, you see, still has no boundary for Elton John. Elton has rewritten it too many times for us to even bother with coming up with one now.

The simplest and safest thing to say now is that he has dominated pop music in the 1970s. He has not only helped re-introduce the element of fun to pop music through his stage shows, but he has, with the help of lyricist Bernie Taupin and record producer Gus Dudgeon, given us a body of work that has touched a wider and more celebrative pop audience than anyone since the day earlier in 1970 when Paul McCartney announced the end of another era was over. The consummate rock fan has, in short, become the consummate rock star. 🎸

Best Wishes

Eton

Jimmy & Joe Neederlander



Gus Dudgeon

(Continued from page 104)

get up and have a really great time, and then do the tour, culminating in the Dodger thing. He was thinking that far ahead.

Then he said "But the next album will be very musical." We've already talked about it. The band will each get a very good chance to start in their own right. He's already thought that far ahead and we're not doing it till March. He told me that two months ago, so I'm prepared. Really all the instruction and all the direction comes from him. You know I did a single with Nigel called "Only One Woman." When we laid that down, the first time we tried it Elton wasn't in the studio, we did it with Dee, Nigel, a pianist called Jimmy Hall and somebody else. I can't remember who else was on the session. Well, it was disastrous. Nigel came to me and said "You know what, I can't seem to get this thing together, what we really need is Reg." When he said that I didn't think much but afterwards I thought Christ almighty, that's amazing, you suddenly realize that you've relied on him, we've all leaned on him so heavily to give us the direction we want. It's like we're saying we can do it but you've got to get us going in the morning, wind us up, and after that we're all very good at our jobs—all the drummers he's had, all the bass players he's had, anybody that's worked with him, they've all been very good, but he's always first up in the mornings. It's the fact that he's in the studio running through the numbers at eight a.m. that makes us think Christ Almighty, I'd better get out of bed. You never have to goad him into doing some work, ever.

RW: How involved are you now with Rocket generally?

Dudgeon: I keep an eye on it all the time. I can't be there every day because I'm not an office-oriented person. Anyway, I work most of the time in the studios. I'm not head of a department or anything like that. I suppose you could say that I keep an eye on it, mainly on the creative side. I'm not into looking at how the fan clubs are running or whether we should be taking an ad this week in such and such a paper, I leave that to the people who work here and know about it.

RW: What about the important decisions such as the recent change in distribution?

Dudgeon: We've all been involved in that but it was mainly John Reid's department. You see it's a weird sort of team. It's very much like Bernie and Reg. Bernie cannot write a melody, he can't sit at a piano and demonstrate a song he's written, and Reg can't write a lyric to save his life. He's only ever changed one or two of Bernie's lyrics ever and whenever I hear them on a record they make me wince because they never sound right. Bless his soul, he tries, but he can't write a lyric. To extend that further still, I can't play any musical instrument. I don't know an A Flat from a Z Blunt, I've no idea, but I know what I'm doing in the studio. Davey is probably one of the best musicians I've ever met, and Caleb, and I can talk to them on a perfectly one to one basis, and they can't challenge me at what I do and I can't challenge them on what they do, so we're no threat to each other so we get on fine. John, he is the business man of the company. I couldn't do the deal—he just did a fantastic deal with EMI and I don't think anyone else could have done it. I know I couldn't have done it. I know Bernie couldn't have done it, I know Reg couldn't have done it. John informs us of what he's doing and obviously if we've got an opinion we voice it and he'll listen, but in the end it's his decision. We trust him to do it because he's got a track record, he's proven himself, he's a bloody good businessman, no doubt about it. So you've got four people, Bernie, Reg, myself and John, all of whom are involved in the one company, but all of whom are really good at their particular thing and we've never been able to challenge one of the other directors on his own ground. Trust binds people together much more than anything else.

RW: Has there ever come a time when you might have heard one of Elton's songs and considered it might be better for another Rocket artist, thereby utilizing Elton's talent to launch a lesser known act?



Elton portrayed an old man on the "Cher" TV show

Dudgeon: Well, it hasn't happened yet but it probably will happen because so far the kind of acts we've signed haven't required material. They've been signed because we wanted to sign them and in most cases they write their own material. It's happened just for the very first time with Colin Blunstone but it took us a year to sign him. At the time we were first interested we were making "Captain Fantastic," and at the back of my mind I was thinking maybe out of this series of sessions will come a song which could be great for Colin. As it happens there was one which I thought possibly could have been good for him, but in the end we still hadn't signed him. I couldn't have sat on the song because we ran out of time, and Elton mentioned it again when we were doing "Rock Of The Westies" and said "I'd really like to do it" but because again it was late in the series of sessions we had already got 40 minutes of good music and we figured it wouldn't fit in anyway because it was quite a gentle ballad, but we did it as a possible B side which meant really that we did a nice loose, but very good, version. We just said this is the song, roll the tape. Now I've done it with Colin. It would have been the B side of Elton's next single but I told him I'd done a version and all I said was "Look, it could be an A side so I'd appreciate it if you could put something else on the B side of the next single." So it's almost a scoop situation because it's never occurred before. If we do it and if it's an A side it'll be the first time ever than anyone has come out with one of Reg's songs before him.

RW: What else lies ahead in the future for you in terms of other acts?

Dudgeon: Well, we've got Colin for the whole of the world except England.

(Continued on page 136)

The Songs

(Continued from page 122)

The first verse, cascading like shimmering liquid silver, sets up the tale of overpowering, timeless love; the chorus is the beckoning call. But by the second verse the narrator *has* come down in time only to find that his love has not yet appeared. Rather than end the story, Taupin offers two possibilities, and like the puzzle of the lady and the tiger, each of us is left to decide, from our own experiences, the story's end.

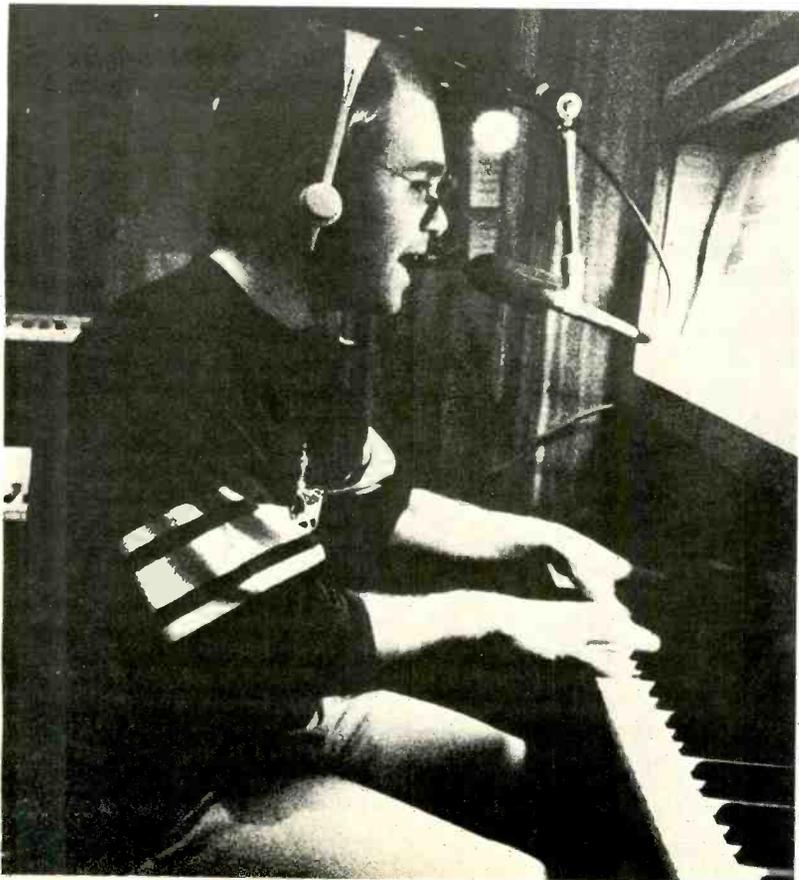
As in "Come Down In Time," the ending here is ambiguous, taking more than one path; human beings are too complex to be summed up in a simple statement. And, in the end, all our impressions are subjective.

Taupin comes to the door of his new house in the hills of bright-light L.A. He smiles quickly and leads the way across burnished parquet floors, past a fifty-inch TV screen, piles of albums, a wide staircase to the second story, out onto the orange-tiled patio drenched in warm sunlight and then to the pool. He takes up a rod and reel that has been lying beside the diving board and begins to flycast with expert precision. "We're going fishing in Mississippi next month," he says with childlike happiness.

Two figures walk east along grimy St. Mark's Place in New York's Greenwich Village on a bitterly cold November day in 1971. The sky is slate grey with layers of close clouds as opaque and solid-looking as Venetian marble. The figures hunch their shoulders against the cutting winds as they turn the corner onto Second Avenue and head towards the shabby, massive marquee of the Fillmore. Throngs of kids pass them by without a second glance. The dark-haired figure says, "You might as well savor your anonymity now because in a few years they'll all know who you are." Bernie Taupin, the fair-haired figure, turns to look at his companion and gives a quiet laugh. He shakes his head from side to side as if in disbelief. After a moment, the pair is lost to view in the milling crowd.

He does not talk much and when he does it is almost never about business. He answers questions grudgingly, offering up as little information as possible. He is deliberately obtuse on the subject of his work. Some days he is melancholy and appears solitary, forever locked within himself under a porcelain sky. Then his words speak for him, with no pretensions, completely uncalculated. They flow out of him like a clear brook, sparkling in sunlight, mysterious in moonlit nights. And that is all. The rest is fabrication. ☺

All songs written: John/Taupin—1. ©1969 Dick James Music, Inc.; 2. ©1975 Big Pig Music; 3. ©1974 Dick James Music, Inc.; 4. ©1970 Dick James Music, Inc.; 5. ©1975 Dick James Music, Inc.; 6. ©1975 Big Pig Music; 7. ©1973 Dick James Music, Inc.; 8. ©1974 Big Pig Music; 9. ©1974 Dick James Music, Inc.; 10. ©1970 Dick James Music, Inc.

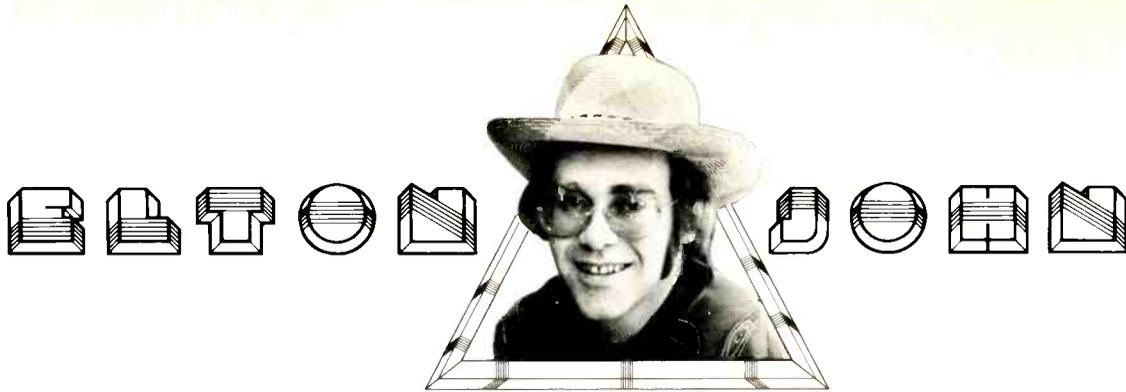


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David Rosner Recalls the Early Days

By ROBERTA SKOPP

■ NEW YORK — David Rosner, currently heading up the Bicycle Music Company—the firm that publishes the music of Neil Diamond, Robbie Robertson and, to a limited degree, George Harrison and Ringo Starr in addition to new writers who are now being developed — was professional manager at Dick James Music in New York when Elton's initial album was released Stateside. "Although I started with Dick in April of 1970," Rosner explained, "prior to that I was in London to hear product. 'Elton John' simply knocked me out." Rosner said he found it difficult to explain the excitement he experienced upon listening to that now historic disc. "It was head and shoulders above any other product around at the time," he explained.

Due to the set-up at Dick James at that time, Rosner, in effect, acted as Elton's first manager in the States. "Dick had a management contract with Elton," Rosner continued, "and rather than do a deal with an outside manager in this country, in a sense I had to assume that position. I worked with Uni, knew there would be a July release, and arranged with Uni to bring in thousands of English pressings for American use. I felt that exposure and word of mouth would work."

Airplay

Rosner recalled that the album received rather incredible airplay for an import album. He also saw to it that eight independent promotion people were hired to assist. "There seemed to be some snob appeal for radio people to have those pressings because, in a way, it let them discover the talent themselves," Rosner explained. Eventually the album was being played over the airwaves from coast to coast. "By the time the album was officially released here," Rosner added, "it had been exposed all over the country."

Additionally, Rosner felt it was quite important to build a reputation for Elton as a songwriter—a reputation that is now clearly and firmly implanted throughout the world. It was for this reason that Rosner attempted to get cover versions of "Border Song,"



David Rosner is pictured above with Elton, backstage during Elton's first Carnegie Hall appearance in 1971.

Elton's Chart Challenge

By PAT PIPOLO

■ Pat Pipolo, currently vice president of promotion for Island Records, was vice president and director of promotion for Uni and MCA Records from November 1967 through March 1974.

Looking at where Elton is now and thinking back to those early days in 1970, it would be appropriately modest to say that we never dreamed he'd get this big. That's not the case. We had a pretty good idea "he was capable of dominating the charts for a long time" and that "he would probably be the most imitated artist since The Beatles" (Russ Regan in May of 1970).

Prior to his historic opening at the Troubadour in August of 1970, we had released two singles from Elton, and both went nowhere fast. It finally happened with "Your Song" from the first Elton John lp. It was the sort of record that received acceptance at all formats: top 40, progressive, MOR, etc., eventually reaching the no. 8 position.

After "Your Song," everything we released by Elton made the national charts.

There was "Levon" (24), "Honky Cat" (8), "Rocket Man" (6), "Tiny Dancer" (24) and finally "Crocodile Rock" became his first no. 1 single. "Benny and the Jets," from the "Yellow Brick Road" lp, was no doubt the second milestone in Elton's record-

ing career. Detroit's then number one black station, WJLB, started playing the lp cut, eventually forcing CKLW on it and, of course, this forced MCA to release it as a single. The rest is history. It went to number one on the pop charts as well as r&b, which marked the first time that Elton received total acceptance at the black stations. With the exception of "11-17-70," every Elton John lp released went platinum — six of them, from the first lp up until "Yellow Brick Road" (and every other one released since).

Let me mention that through all of this Elton would call twice a week enquiring about chart positions, sales, or have I heard the new Roberta Flack lp. The man is the most avid collector and listener of records I've ever met. To say that his music says all there is to say about him is totally inaccurate. There is so much more. He created traffic in the retail stores and kept it flowing with each record release. He turned a very successful record company into a super-powered one. He created a multitude of jobs within the industry and he almost single-handedly straightened out the state of the economy in the U.K.

With Elton's heavy schedule, we don't see too much of each other these days, but I still consider him a good friend and I don't mind boasting about it.

"The original version went up the charts twice," Rosner expounded, "once before the covers and then after the covers people started reverting back to the original. The single was given a second life from George Wilson. All of this activity led up to the tour, which was co-oped by Dick James and Uni."

That tour included four cities—Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York (the last date consisting only of a press reception at the Playboy Club, during which Elton appeared on a three-act showcase). Another interesting point that Rosner brought up was that Elton's product never received any consumer advertising until the second album release.

"I remember Elton setting foot in the country," Rosner continued. "The first thing he wanted to do was to go to the Troubadour and the Whisky. I remember that at the Troubadour that night the headline act was the Dillards and the opening act Longbranch & Pennywhistle. Elton had to spend a few days in town before the opening and it was driving him crazy. I remember my wife Margo asking Elton if he was nervous. But Elton wasn't. He was confident and just knew he would give a terrific show. He had absolutely no qualms about performing. He just didn't know how the audience would react."

Today the reaction to that performance is common knowledge to us all, but back then there was some apprehension. "The album was highly orchestrated," Rosner said, "and when everyone learned that he would be coming here with only two people we were afraid that the people who liked the album wouldn't be impressed with Elton live, performing as a trio. But once he came out there was no question of how great he is."

On a personal level, well, as Rosner explained, "I can't say enough about how great they were—Nigel, Dee and Elton. If I could pick any three people to work with it would be them. They're the kind of people who you wanted to do anything you could for."



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Vic Lewis *(Continued from page 97)*

with them but the thing is I find that in America if a person like The Beatles that same person, who today would be years older, would still like The Beatles. They would most probably like somebody else as well but they wouldn't change. A person who loved Elton John three years ago would still be an Elton John fan. In England it's quite likely that if Elton John was their favorite three years ago by now they will have found another. It's a different mentality.

"In America they don't rely on television for an artist's exposure. I think television is murder. I hate 'Top of the Pops' and I hate 'Super-sonic.' I know it's good for the record companies because of the exposure which is what it is all about. But in America there is not the equivalent and the act goes on the success of the record by radio or by personal appearances and stays much longer. Here they are seen according to their latest record where the kids can watch it and if they don't like the group on TV that record won't make it and if they won't make it. My latest group, called Druid, is great, but they did a TV show that wasn't all that great. They aren't a television act, they're a new group. They have been out on tour with 'Old Grey Whistle Test' and have sold a lot of records, now I'm sorry they ever went out because I think if they had done it the way they do in America—let them be heard on the radio and put them second on the bill with a top group and work up that way—but in England the first thing is to get them on television and this to me is a terrible mistake.

"I don't remember exactly when Elton really developed his act with visual concentration, but I am sure he didn't do any of the stunts when he went to Paris. There was always the funny glasses but it gradually became more and more, I think through America, that he decided that it wasn't good enough just to play the piano and sing the songs that he had written with Bernie, and I think eventually he felt that he had to become a showman and he naturally developed from there. It is amazing how different he is from the man that jumps around and plays the piano with his foot and all that kind of thing, to when he comes off backstage where it is very quiet. Every show I have seen has been outstanding in one way or another, but the first time I knew that he had made it was in Gottenburg where he did an open air concert and Copenhagen; both of them were packed because the people paid to go in the grounds and they didn't pay to see the act, but they all swarmed around the stage 'cause they knew he was on for just half an hour and then I could see. People went mad and the theatrical gardens where there were other side shows, Tommy Steele was on, but they all came to see Elton and I realized then that people were saying, 'Elton John, Elton John' humming around everywhere and I knew that he had made it!"



Elton, Mike Maitland, John Reid

Gus Dudgeon *(Continued from page 132)*

I'm also producing Howard Werth & The Moonbeams. I'm not recording any acts outside Rocket because Howard Werth is signed to Rocket for America and we're putting out that album in January. I was at Rockfield last week doing some singles with him and I think we've got two. At the moment he's got the best band he's ever had. He's like Colin, inasmuch as everyone is saying he's a good artist, a good songwriter, and makes some good records, but they fall slightly short and I can't really say that they're wrong because I've known all along with Howard's records. I haven't put one out and thought that's a smash hit. With Bowie and "Space Oddity" I just knew, even though no one had ever heard of him before, he meant nothing to anybody, the record was so good it just couldn't fail. I've never felt like that about any of Howard's records really. I've always thought maybe with the wind blowing in the right way, and that's not the way to make records.

So I went out specifically to make some singles with Howard and I've done the same with Colin. He's made some fantastic records—"I Don't Believe In Miracles" should have long been a monster hit, beautiful record, but they never quite have that real spark, that little bit of extra, and that's what's been wrong with Howard's career which has been down to both of us really because we have been probably a little bit self indulgent. Colin's got the talent to be a star, definitely. He's a very good looking guy and very easy to get on with. I've known him for years because I used to engineer The Zombies years ago. I did all their records. I've known the guy for about 14 years or something ridiculous. I've also got this band called Solution. I'm really proud of their album, I think it's really good. So with Kiki Dee that's four artists which is all I have time for at the moment—Elton consumes a good four or five months a year.

RW: From all the classic Elton John tracks you've recorded is there one that you feel is particularly outstanding?

Dudgeon: It depends on the mood I'm in really. I've always loved "Yellow Brick Road." I drove to France last year to do that album and I drove back, and my wife and I just sang that riff all the way back to England. "Rocket Man" has always been a favorite, there's something special, there's an atmosphere about that record. "Danny Bailey" is another one of my favorite tracks, "Your Song," that's an incredible song. He still comes out and plays that on stage and still I can see it's giving people the shivers. Off the new album I really like "Street Kids," it's got a nice aggressive atmosphere to it. I never listen to his albums for months after I've finished them. It gets to a point where I know them so well, every edit, every fader movement, every echo effect I use becomes embarrassing to me. Then after a while I just forget about what I did and I put them on again or go to a shop—I tell you the favorite thing, have you noticed that hi-fi shops nearly always play Elton John albums—that knocks me out because I consider that they must think that's a really good album for showing off their equipment.

I went to the Audio Fair one year and I would say eight out of 10 stands were playing Elton John albums. I figured that's great because they must think they're really well-recorded albums. They're not playing The Who, Mott The Hoople, The Stones, they're playing Elton John and that's great. It's usually when I hear them like that that I hear them again for the first time in ages. "Step Into Christmas" has just been played quite a lot on Capital Radio which we made last Christmas and hearing it again I remember I never liked the mix when I did it, but listening to it now I can't remember what it is about the mix that I don't like because it's too late, it's a year ago. It's completely fresh. So that's why I don't really have any obvious favorites because it changes. "Harmony," that's the most requested Elton John track in the States above any other single or album.

ELTON JOHN

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Gateway · Hymn 2000 · Lady What's
Tomorrow · Sails · The Scaffold ·
Skyline Pigeon · Gulliver/Hay Chewed/
Reprise DJLPS 403

ELTON JOHN

Your Song · I Need You to turn to ·
Take me to the Pilot · No shoe strings
on Louise · First E]isode at Hienton ·
Sixty Years on · Border Song · The
Greatest Discovery · The Cage · The
King must die DJLPS 406

TUMBLEWEED CONNECTION

Ballad of a Well-known Gun · Come
Down in Time · Country Comfort ·
Son of Your Father · My Father's
Gun · Where to now St. Peter? ·
Love Song · Amoreena · Talking Old
Soldiers · Burn Down the Mission
DJLPS 410

MADMAN ACROSS THE WATER

Tiny Dancer · Levon · Razor Face ·
Madman Across the Water · Indian
Sunset · Holiday Inn · Rotten Peaches
· All the Nasties · Goodbye DJLPH 420

HONKY CHATEAU

Honky Cat · Mellow · I think I'm going
to Kill Myself · Susie (Dramas) · Rocket
Man · Salvation · Slave · Amy · Mona
Lisa and Mad Hatters · Hercules
DJLPH 423

DON'T SHOOT ME ...

Daniel · Teacher I need you · Elderberry
Wine · Blues for my baby and me ·
Midnight creeper · Have mercy on the
criminal · I'm going to be a teenage
idol · Texan love song · Crocodile rock ·
High flying bird. DJLPH 427

CARIBOU

The Bitch is Back · Pinky · Grimsby ·
Dixie Lily · Solar Prestige a Gammon
· You're so Static · I've seen the Saucers
· Stinker · Don't let the sun go down on
me · Ticking. DJLPH 439

ELTON JOHN'S GREATEST HITS

Your Song · Daniel · Honky Cat ·
Goodbye Yellow Brick Road · Saturday
Nights Alright For Fighting · Rocket
Man · Candle In The Wind · Don't Let
the Sun Go Down On Me · Border
Song · Crocodile Rock. DJLPH 442

GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Funeral for a friend · Love lies bleeding
· Candle in the wind · Bennie and the
Jets · Goodbye yellow brick road ·
This song has no title · Grey seal ·
Jamaica jerk-off · I've seen that movie
too · Sweet painted lady · The ballad
of Danny Bailey (1909-34) · Dirty
little girl · All the girls love Alice ·
Your sister can't twist (But she can
rock 'n' roll) · Saturday night's alright
for fighting · Roy Rogers · Social
disease · Harmony DJLPD 1001

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC DJLPX 1

Captain Fantastic and The Brown Dirt
Cowboy · Tower of Babel · Bitter
Fingers · Tell Me When The Whistle
Blows · Someone Saved My Life
Tonight · (Gotta Get A) Meal Ticket
· Better Off Dead · Writing · We All
Fall in Love Sometimes · Curtains

ROCK OF THE WESTIES

Medley (Yell Help, Wednesday Night,
Ugly) · Dan Dare (Pilot of the Future)
· Island Girl · Grow some funk of your
own · I feel like a bullet (in the gun
of Robert Ford) · Street Kids · Hard
Luck Story · Feed Me · Billy Bones and
the White Bird. DJLPH 464

SINGLES

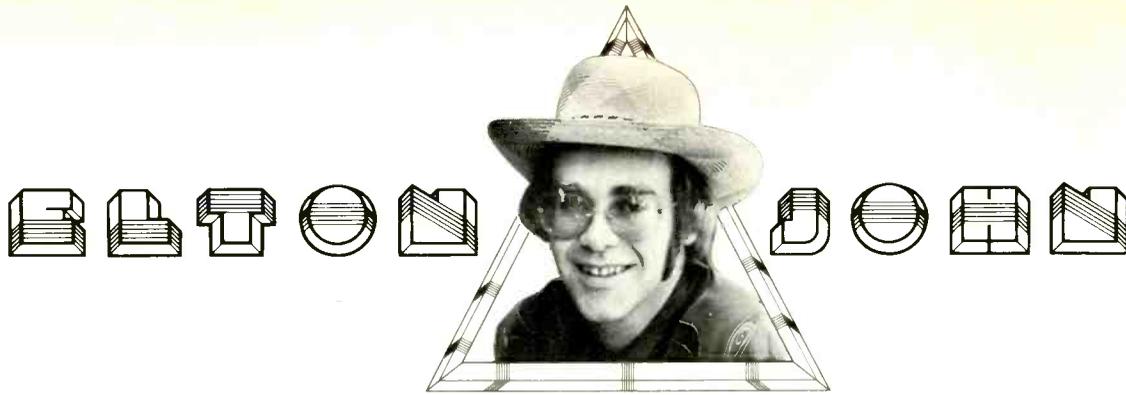
- DJX 501 ROCKET MAN (I THINK
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG
LONG TIME)/Holiday Inn/
Goodbye
- DJX 502 SATURDAY NIGHT'S
ALRIGHT FOR FIGHTING/
Jack Rabbit/Whenever You're
Ready (We'll Go Steady Again)
- DJS 233 YOUR SONG/The Old Man's
Shoes
- DJS 271 CROCODILE ROCK/Elder-
berry Wine
- DJS 275 DANIEL/Skyline Pigeon
- DJS 285 GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK
ROAD/Screw You
- DJS 290 STEP INTO CHRISTMAS/Ho,
Ho, Ho, (Who'd be a Turkey at
Christmas
- DJS 297 CANDLE IN THE WIND/Bennie
and the Jets
- DJS 322 THE BITCH IS BACK/Cold
Highway
- DJS 340 LUCY IN THE SKY WITH
DIAMONDS/One day at a
Time
- DJS 354 PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM/
I Saw her Standing There
- DJS 385 SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE
TONIGHT/House of Cards
- DJS 610 ISLAND GIRL/Sugar on the
Floor
- DJS 629 GROW SOME FUNK OF
YOUR OWN/ I Feel Like
a Bullet (In The Gun of
Robert Ford)



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...AND ALWAYS WILL BE



Seymour Stein on the Elton John Phenomenon

■ *Record World* recently elicited the following comments from Seymour Stein, managing director of Sire Records and chairman of Passport Records and a long-time personal friend of Elton John's.

Record World: How do you view the Elton John phenomenon?

Seymour Stein: We are all aware of Elton's unprecedented success and great talent as a performer, songwriter and recording artist, but it is his other talents, I believe, that totally set him apart from everyone else. In particular is his awareness of all areas of our business. He understands at least the rudiments of every phase and in certain aspects such as promotion and marketing has become amazingly proficient. His recognition that expertise in these fields is a talent as well as has enabled him to build strong relationships with the people who work his product around the world.

Other important factors that have made him a phenomenon are his uncanny sense of timing and his boundless energies. For example, Elton has always had a deep rooted love for r&b. When "Bennie and the Jets" began to pick up black airplay, Elton worked unceasingly to establish himself in this field by visiting many top soul radio stations as well as appearing on TV shows like "Soul Train." As a result, Elton has become the first white English artist to gain permanent recognition in that field. This was evidenced in 1975 when "Philadelphia Freedom," after reaching the #1 position and following a long and successful run on the pop charts, was forced back into the top 10 nationally because of strong rhythm and blues airplay and sales.

This is just one incident, but from where I sit, it is the basic factors of timing, energy and awareness that keep Elton ever open to new ideas in music and personal appearances. Combined with his amazing, almost awesome, talent, this is the backbone of the Elton John phenomenon.

RW: In what direction do you see Elton John's career headed now?

Stein: Elton, by his very nature, can never be satisfied pursuing merely one goal. I believe that during the next few years he will spend an enormous amount of time developing his record company. I believe Rocket has the potential of developing into a major force because of the ability and talent of the people both in America and England that he and John Reid have brought together and the intense loyalty and devotion of these people toward building the company. From the artist's side, who can better advise an artist on how to dress, give performance pointers or a&r decisions than someone like Elton who has been through it all.

As time goes on, Elton and Bernie Taupin will gain more recognition as songwriters for other artists. The quality of material from "I Need You To Turn To" from his first U.S. release to the more recent "We All Fall In Love Sometimes" from "Captain Fantastic" never falters. So many of his songs could be hits for other performers.

RW: Sire Records is a company very much devoted to the historical aspects of the music business. Where then do you see Elton John's place in history?

Stein: His place in history is assured. He will rank among the top performers of our time. Because of his uniqueness he will mean different things to different people, and it is difficult to totally examine this since we are, so to speak, in on the ground floor of his career. Those of us who followed his career from inception will always think of him first as a rock star. Audiences of the 1980s will know him as an all around and well seasoned performer. Still later, much later, he will be regarded as one of the grand old men and pillars of the entertainment industry. As his career continues to branch out to include other facets such as motion pictures, his audience will continue to grow.

By way of comparison, bobby soxers of the '40s remember Frank Sinatra as the singer with the Dorsey band, teenagers in the pre-rock era of the early 1950s will associate with hits like "Young At Heart" and "Love and Marriage" as well as his Academy Award winning

performance in "From Here To Eternity," in 1953. However, a whole new generation of record buyers were first turned on to the Sinatra of the '60s through the success of "Strangers In The Night" and "My Way." In much the same way, Elton will be pleasing audiences for many, many years.

This is only the beginning of his career and already he is a modern legend, ranking with Elvis Presley, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger, all of whom gained prominence one or two decades before him. Our business coined the phrase "superstar," then through overuse and abuse made the term meaningless. But in it's truest meaning Elton is a real "superstar."

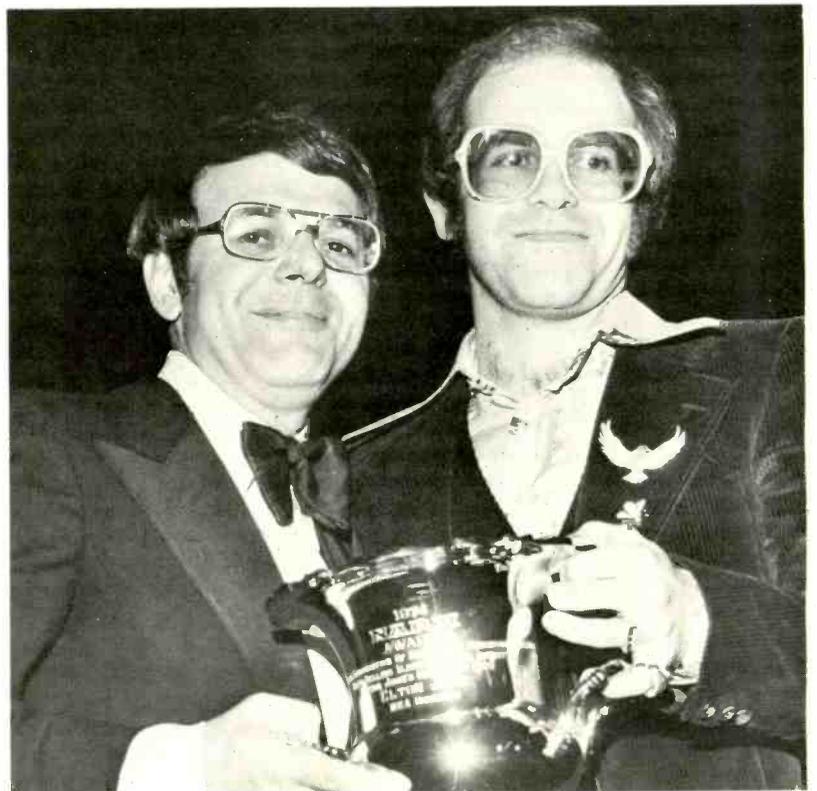
RW: What is it like being a close friend of Elton John?

Stein: In a lifetime, a person is lucky to have a few real friends and luckier still if he can relate to them on many levels. It's difficult to express how it feels to have a friend as special as Elton. I can only say I treasure the relationship.

Many times over, Elton has proven the quality of his friendship. He has always made every effort to be accessible despite the rigorous schedule dictated by his career. I particularly value his friendship on a personal level. Aside from music, we have many common interests including the collecting of Art Deco. In addition I value his advice on a business level. I have consulted with him on a&r and various other business decisions in the past. He was always available and anxious to be helpful. I would like to believe that I have been of some help to him in the past as well, and that this mutual feeling and respect has enhanced the overall quality of our friendship.

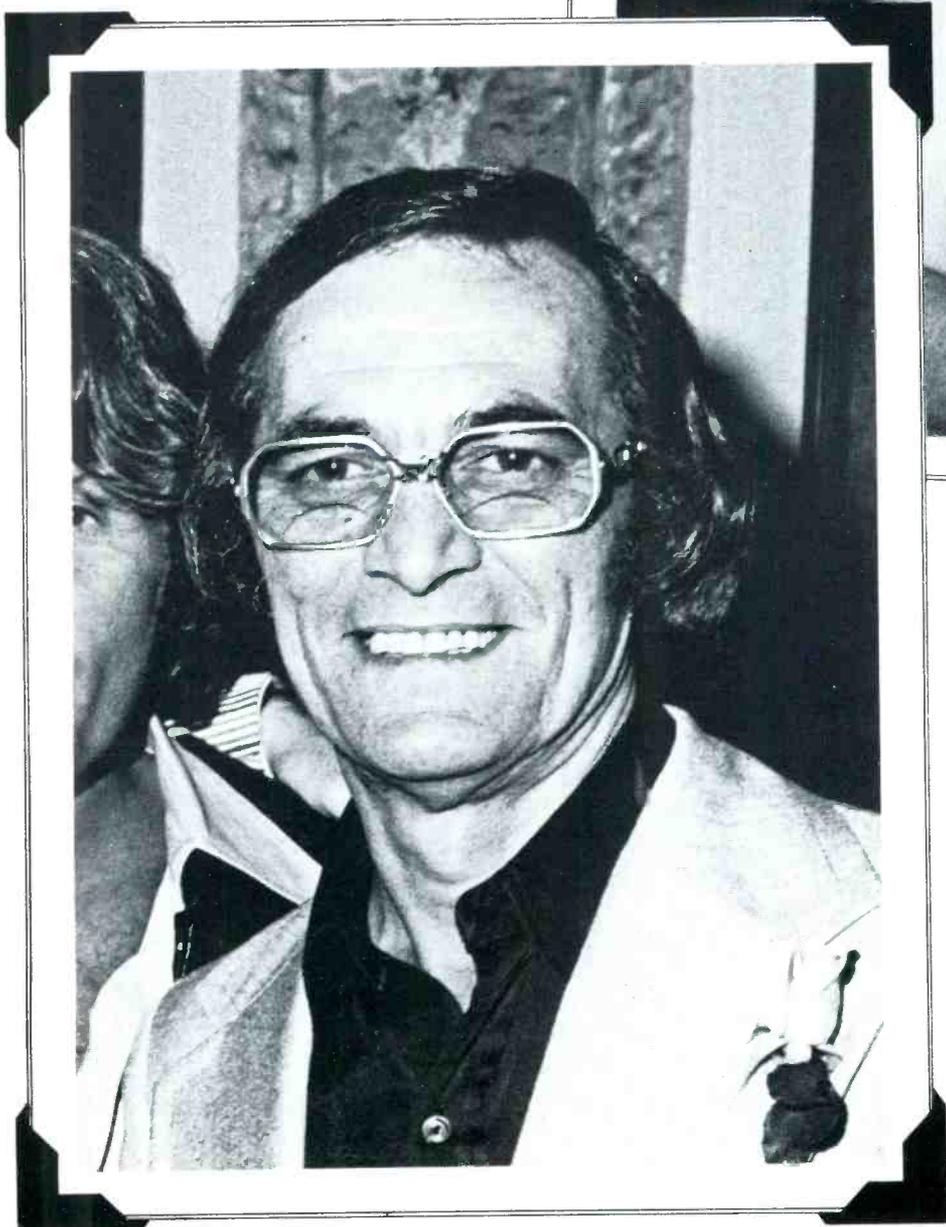
In general, he has the ability to move people toward greatness and toward reaching their full potential in life. His undying energy inspires a level of quality and professionalism in the members of his band, the artists on his label and everyone truly close to him. He honestly cares and this interest he has in others is also an inspiration to them. One is lucky indeed to be counted among his friends.

It is difficult to see where Elton John's career is heading, but he'll always be at the top.



Elton accepts a NARM Award from Elektra/Asylum head Joe Smith.

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Thanks



J.R.