

ELTON JOHN

b. 3/25/1947



Elton John was born Reginald Kenneth Dwight. The son of a former Royal Air Force trumpeter, he was a musical prodigy, playing the piano at age 4. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music for six years before leaving school for the music business.

His career reached a turning point when he connected with lyricist Bernie Taupin through a music magazine advertisement both men had answered. Their first collaboration, "Scarecrow," was recorded in 1967, beginning a songwriting partnership that continues today. About that same time, Reginald Dwight legally changed his name to Elton John as a tribute to musicians Elton Dean and Long John Baldry.

In the 1970s, John grew famous for his energetic performances and flamboyant stage wardrobe, including a large collection of outrageous spectacles. Many considered the Elton John Band to be the greatest act in the rock world. John had a string of seven consecutive No. 1 records, 23 Top-40 singles, 16 Top-10 singles, and six No. 1 hits. He holds the distinction of having had a Top-40 single every year from 1970 to 1996.

In the 1990s, John turned his talents to film and musical theater. In 1994, his collaboration with lyricist Tim Rice on the Disney animated film "The Lion King" resulted in a soundtrack that won both an Academy Award and a Grammy Award and remained at the top of the Billboard chart for nine weeks. He later worked with Rice on the film "El Dorado" and the musical "Aida," which won both a Tony and a Grammy Award.

John was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994. He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1995.

John's friendship with young AIDS patient Ryan White and Freddy Mercury, of the rock band Queen, who later died of AIDS, inspired him to establish the Elton John AIDS Foundation in 1992. He announced his intention to donate all future royalties from sales of his singles in the U.S. and the U.K. to AIDS research.

Elton John has sold more than 250 million records in a career that spans more than three decades. He was honored with knighthood for his work on behalf of AIDS research and education.



© ASSOCIATED PRESS

