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## Elton John, enjoying new freedom in his music, performs Saturday at Memorial Coliseum

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel  
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What can you say that hasn't been said before about the career of Elton John, who'll be coming Saturday to the Memorial Coliseum to perform a solo concert?

Sure, you can mention that he's had 59 Billboard magazine Top 40 chart hits; sales of more than 250 million records worldwide, including more than 30 gold- and platinum-selling albums; six Grammy awards; a Golden Globe award; a Tony Award; an Oscar; and sold out concerts all over the world.

You may also throw out some of his legendary song titles, such as "Your Song," "Bennie and the Jets," "Philadelphia Freedom," "Candle in the Wind," "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" and "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me."

Longtime fans will recognize the names of some of his classic albums from the 1970s that built his reputation as one of the most important singer-songwriters of the past 40 years.

Fans who attend his concert on Saturday night will get to experience Elton John's performance skills in an intimate setting. John will take the stage without his backup band and perform some of his classic hits and album tracks alone at the piano.

Elton John isn't a stranger to the Summit City. He played the Memorial Coliseum once before, on June 8, 1999. But he rarely performs solo concerts, and those who have seen him perform this way feel it's the best way to experience John as a performer.

Born Reginald Kenneth Dwight on March 25, 1947, Elton John created his famous stage name and persona in the late 1960s when he embarked on his musical career with the help of his longtime writing partner Bernie Taupin.

Trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London, Elton John created a unique style of flamboyant costumes mixed with over-the-top showmanship and superbly written songs that yielded one of the most successful streaks of hit recordings outside of The Beatles and Elvis Presley.

It's hard not to emphasize the popularity of Elton John in the 1970s.

There was no escaping him. If you turned on a radio any time of the day or night, more than likely you would hear one of his songs blasting from the speakers.

Hit after hit and album after album, Elton John simply dominated the music scene from about 1970 to 1977.

In the late 70s, personal issues and the rock star lifestyle began to take a toll on John and the hits began to slow down. After temporarily separating from writing with Bernie Taupin in 1977 (lasting until 1980), John's music didn't hit the artistic or chart heights of his previous work.

Also affecting his popularity was a 1976 article in Rolling Stone magazine in which John declared he was bisexual, which at the time caused quite an uproar with music buyers.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Elton John slowly regained his hit-making prowess.

John won the Academy Award and Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song for "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" (written with Tim Rice) from Disney's "The Lion King" in 1994, and in 2000 he won the Tony Award (again with Tim Rice) for Best Original Score for the play "Aida."

One of his biggest-selling hits also came in the '90s when he rewrote and recorded his song "Candle in the Wind" as a tribute to the late Princess Diana. The song sold over well over 30 million copies worldwide.

Nowadays, John still performs and records, but he realizes that, while he may not be the hit machine he once was, he now has the freedom to record whatever he wants without the pressure of competing with current chart toppers.

"As Elton John, my days on pop radio are over, and I know that and I accept it and I'm not unhappy about it," John told Irene Lacher in a Los Angeles Times interview from January of this year. "It's a different time of my life now, and it gives me the freedom to do whatever kind of music I want to do. And it may end up being pop, but I don't know. There's no pressure for me to go out there and say I've got to have a Top 40 hit, because it's not going to happen."



### More Information

#### Music legend

**What:** Pop music star Elton John will perform solo in concert.

**When:** 8 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Memorial Coliseum, 4000 Parnell Ave.

**Cost:** \$39, \$79, \$139. There are a limited number of seats left. For tickets, go to the coliseum box office, Ticketmaster outlets, [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) or charge by phone at 1-800-745-3000.

John has also found personal happiness by overcoming years of drug abuse and finding a stable personal life with his partner of almost 20 years, David Furnish, with whom he had a son by a surrogate mother in December 2010.

“It’s a different kind of love for your child than you have for your partner,” John said to the Los Angeles Times in January. “Everyone kept saying that, and now I realize that, having had Zachary. He’s the light of our lives. I’ve had an amazing professional life, personal life, but, at 64, to have a son who gives us that much love and enjoyment is, wow!”