

'I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD BE A FATHER'

ELTON JOHN

THE MUSIC LEGEND EMBARKS ON HIS FINAL WORLD TOUR BEFORE CALLING IT QUITS TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH HIS FAMILY



Wearing sparkly shades and a custom Gucci Flora jacquard tailcoat – with 'Gucci loves Elton' emblazoned across the back – the devoted dad (below, with sons Elijah and Zachary and husband David Furnish) announces his final tour.

No, don't go breaking our hearts! Music's favourite Rocket Man, Sir Elton John, has declared that he is hanging up his hat for good so he can spend quality time with his two young sons. But before he retires, the 70-year-old will set off on a three-year, 300-date *Farewell Yellow Brick Road* tour as a thank you to his fans.

Elton, who has sold more than 300 million records worldwide in his incredible 50-year career, made the surprise announcement from Manhattan on a special livestream on YouTube, highlighted by a virtual-reality presentation featuring his rise to fame, including his legendary gig at the Troubadour club in Los Angeles – the site of his sold-out, six-night U.S. debut in 1970 that catapulted him to fame – and his memorable 1975 Dodger Stadium concert. He opened the news conference with live performances of "Tiny Dancer" and "I'm Still Standing," and after the video, Elton chatted with journalist Anderson Cooper about why he's calling it quits.

"There is no word in the English dictionary to describe the love you have for a child," he said of Zachary, 7, and Elijah, 5, his children with Canadian husband David Furnish, 55. "I never thought I could be a father. I always said, no, I'm too selfish, too set in my ways." His view changed while visiting an orphanage in Ukraine with his Elton John AIDS Foundation when a little boy came up to him and captured his heart. They weren't successful in adopting the boy in 2009, but the experience was life-altering: "It was like a message from God or somewhere

saying, 'You can be a dad ... Change is good. Stop being so selfish.'"

Since the defining Troubadour appearance, the "Candle in the Wind" singer has given more than 4,000 performances in more than 80 countries.

"I've had an amazing life, amazing career," said Elton, who will conclude his six-year Las Vegas residency in May. "My priorities now are my children, my husband and my family. I've been touring since I was 17 with various bands, then as Elton John in 1969, and I thought the time was right to say thank you to all my friends around the world and then to say goodbye and just to have a breather."

His fans won't be able to breathe easy until they get their tickets, though. The tour promises to be "a musical and highly visual journey" with costumes designed by Gucci. It kicks off on Sept. 8 in Allentown, Pa., with stops in Toronto (Sept. 25 and 26), Ottawa (Sept. 28), Quebec City (Sept. 29) and Montreal (Oct. 4). After the tour concludes in 2021, Elton still plans to make music!

"I definitely want to make a couple more albums, but that will be easy because I can do that at home," he said. "I'll be writing more musicals."

A lot of his time will be devoted to shuttling his kids around. "My sons are beginning to play soccer, and they're quite serious about it. I want to take them to the proper places where they can learn to play well," he says. "I'm not worried about stopping [being on tour]. Believe me, I'm really looking forward to doing this tour, and I'm really looking forward to the 300th date." **H**

REPORT: SUZANNE WINTROB



'My priorities now are my children, my husband and my family'



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID LACHAPPELLE; DAVID WARNER ELLIS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; INSTAR

Sir Elton (opposite, in 1975) is the third most successful artist in the history of the American charts, behind Elvis Presley and the Beatles. His global *Farewell Yellow Brick Road* tour (here, the promo portrait) begins on Sept. 8 in Allentown, Pa.