

SOUNDCHECK



Elton John

ROCKETMAN MOVIE
Elton John's life in song and dance

Elton John's life is coming to the big screen. Tentatively titled *Rocketman*, the movie will take a surreal approach to the telling of the singer's storied career. "It will be more of a fantasy—*Moulin Rouge*-type stuff—not just a factual look at my life," says John. "Obviously, it's not going to be your normal, run-of-the-mill film. My life's been so surreal, from buying a football club to God knows what."

Plans call for extravagantly choreographed sequences to accompany John's biggest hits—perfect for director Michael Gracey, who's known for his commercial work featuring strong musical and dance numbers. "Everyone knows and loves Elton John's music," says Gracey, "but the true story of his life is incredible. His journey from impossible dreamer to stardom and uncontrollable excess is something only a musical film can capture."

The script was penned by *Billy Elliot* writer Lee Hall, and casting has begun. John has indicated he would like to see Justin Timberlake in the lead role. "He played me before in a David LaChapelle video and was superb," says John.

It's presumed the film will emphasize the tumultuous nature of the first half of John's career. Today, the singer insists he's achieved a hard-won equanimity. "When I come offstage now I have a balance in my life," he says. "I fly home after a show and get back in my own bed."

TOP TEN

Love of pets provided inspiration for these tunes.



Michael Jackson

- 1 HENRY GROSS**
"Shannon" (1976)
Mourning the death of Beach Boy Carl Wilson's beloved Samoyed.
- 2 MICHAEL JACKSON**
"Ben" (1973)
Jackson's first No. 1 solo hit about a rat earned an Oscar nod for Best Original Song.
- 3 HARRY NILSSON**
"Me and My Arrow" (1971)
The song about a dog was a high point of the animated film *The Point*.
- 4 PINK FLOYD**
"Lucifer Sam" (1967)
Troubled original frontman Syd Barrett paid tribute to his Siamese cat.
- 5 ELVIS PRESLEY**
"Old Shep" (1956)
In his first public show, at age 10, the King sang this tune about a dog.
- 6 THE BEATLES**
"Martha My Dear" (1968)
Honored McCartney's sheep dog while addressing longtime girlfriend Jane Asher.
- 7 CAT STEVENS**
"I Love My Dog" (1966)
Cat sang about a dog he found tied to a post when he was a kid.
- 8 LOBO**
"Me and You and a Dog Named Boo" (1971)
Two hippies and their dog travel the nation in a rickety car.
- 9 MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHEY**
"Wildfire" (1975)
Murphey dreamed the song years before he got his palomino mare.
- 10 LED ZEPPELIN**
"Bron-Y-Aur Stomp" (1970)
Robert Plant stomps in the woods with his dog, Strider.

LIVE NOTES

'IF YOU CANNOT TEACH ME TO FLY, TEACH ME TO SING.'
-J.M. BARRIE
1904



Mumford & Sons

and wraps up at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival in Colorado. In August, the folk rockers hit the road again for several Gentlemen of the Road Stopover dates. "We play in towns not normally frequented by touring bands in buses," the group explains. "We deliberately look for towns that have something unique, or some vibe of which they are proud."

BIG COUNTRY

A reconfigured Big Country is set to release their first studio album in 14 years. The beloved Scottish band—which was roiled by the suicide of frontman Stuart Adamson in 2001—remains best known for their 1983 anthem, "In a Big Country." The new record, *Journey*, features Simple Minds bassist Derek Forbes and two original members Mark Brzezicki and Bruce Watson, along with Watson's son Jamie. The Alarms' Mike Peters is stepping into Adamson's role. "After all that's happened to Big Country, it would have been easy to say no to making a new Big Country record," says Peters. "But as a cancer survivor and someone inspired by the words 'stay alive' from their signature song, I chose to say yes." Ironically, not long before his death, Adamson recommended



Bruce Watson, Jamie Watson, Mike Peters, Derek Forbes, Mark Brzezicki

Peters as his replacement. "He wanted to live in America," says Peters, "and the band wanted to do a different style of music. So he told the band they should carry on with me fronting them. It's weird, here I am doing just that—something Stuart suggested more than 10 years ago."

COMING SOON



Black Sabbath

> **BLACK SABBATH** (June 11) Black Sabbath turned to producer-guru Rick Rubin for *13*, the band's first studio record featuring Ozzy Osbourne in 30 years. Rubin insisted the heavy metal icons not "overthink" the attempt to recapture their vintage form. "The idea that we're making an album that hopefully can sit alongside the best Black Sabbath albums is exciting," says Rubin. "We've worn out the old ones."



Ashanti

> **ASHANTI** (June 4) Contemporary R&B singer Ashanti promises her fifth album, *Braveheart*, will explore new stylistic territory. "I'm super-excited," she says. "I'm doing things I haven't done before." The chanteuse admits to commercial aspirations, saying she wants a "multiplatform record." "As long as everyone loves it, it'll be a hit, regardless of genre."



Keith Urban

IN THE STUDIO

Keith Urban is nearing completion of his first album since 2010's *Get Closer*. "It's taken a long time," says Urban, "mostly because

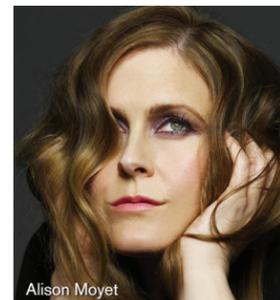
I'm working with different people. When you work with one producer, you can block out time and your album's finished. Working with various people, I've been at the mercy of everybody else's schedules and

'WHEN I HEAR MUSIC I FEAR NO DANGER, I AM INVULNERABLE, I SEE NO FOE'
-HENRY D. THOREAU
1857



George Benson

> **GEORGE BENSON** (June 4) Jazz great George Benson employed a 42-piece orchestra to make *My Inspiration: A Tribute to Nat King Cole*. Benson and Concord Records teamed with PledgeMusic to solicit funding for the project, with special merchandise and public recognition promised in exchange for financial support. "This is a very unique project," says Benson. "I wanted to give my fans a chance to take part."



Alison Moyet

> **ALISON MOYET** (June 11) British songstress Alison Moyet enlisted Guy Sigsworth to produce *the minutes*, her first studio album in six years. Sigsworth's work with Madonna, Robyn and Alanis Morissette figured in her choice. "I avoided listening to anything during the process of writing and recording," says Moyet.

mine." Urban has recorded 16 songs so far, though he's unsure which tracks will make the final cut. "It's not like I set out with a theme for this album," he says. "But songs start to have a similar thread and a feel that constitute an album, and that's what I've been trying to make."