

Bill Rea ? Some retirement project

I admit this effort is almost desperate.

I have to write about something in this space this week, and I refuse to give any more ink than necessary to the political turmoil that seems to be all over us. So there's going to be no more mention in this piece about Patrick Brown or Premier Kathleen Wynne's recent cabinet shuffle, which I essentially took to mean we're going to have to wait even longer to find out what's going on with the GTA West Corridor (not surprised). I could mention Donald Trump. I just did, and that's one mention too many.

But one news item that caught my attention in the last couple of days was the announcement that Elton John will be launching his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour. It's going to be his last tour, and will take three years and include some 300 concerts. Not a bad pre-retirement project. Good for him!

I don't think there's any doubt it will be a success. The man has been doing these things for some 50 years, and he has a lot to show for it. He's also 70 (I was a bit surprised when I read how old he was ? I had assumed he was younger), meaning he's entitled to retire if he wants to and focus on other things. He can presumably afford it. He has obviously made a lot of money over the years, and unlike a lot of people in his situation, it looks like he's been able to hold on to a lot of it. And one would expect that 300 concerts over the next three years will mean a lot more money coming his way. It's almost like a retirement bonus. Good for him!

The man has an enormous fan base, which he has built up over five decades. Although I have always liked several of his songs, I have never been a major fan of his. But the same can be said for any other musician.

I do love music, and have since my youth. But it's the individual piece that attracts me, not so much the person who's responsible for it, or who performs it. Thus, when it comes to my favourite musicians, composers, performers, etc., my list is pretty eclectic. The Beatles are well represented, naturally, as is Cat Stevens, Gordon Lightfoot and a few others. Starland Vocal Band is also on the list (I've always enjoyed listening to Afternoon Delight), and Don McLean's American Pie will never leave it. And yes, Elton John has a few offerings on my favourite play list.

I just read over that last paragraph, and realized I've really been showing my age. Well, if Elton John's entitled to, then so am I. And like all people in the public eye, he's been open to criticism over the last many years, but as the saying goes, ?that is the price of fame.?

There have been times when I have thought ill of him, although the nice thing about the passage of time is it gives all a chance to rethink.

He performed at Princess Diana's funeral in 1997, rewriting his hit Candle in the Wind, which had originally been a tribute to Marilyn Monroe, and focusing it on the late Princess.

We must all remember that feelings were running very high in those days, with some people facing threats of violence if they dared speak a negative word about Diana, and the Royal Family taking a major trashing, which I have always believed was not deserved, and I still believe it. I was in that cynical group at the time that thought Elton John was cashing in on a tragedy, while trying to make some kind of statement. I regret those thoughts today, as I have come to realize he was only trying to use his God-given talents to pay tribute to someone who was special to him.

After more than 20 years, I can admire the love and devotion that was represented by the act that was performed before the world the day of Diana's funeral. Good for him!

So at 70, the man has found a way to keep himself busy and occupied for the next three years, doing work he obviously loves (he wouldn't have been nearly as successful as he's been had he not loved what he was doing). He's going to make a lot of people happy, make some money for himself, and possibly make some history. The guy is going to go out from his career on his own terms.

Good for him!

