

Elton John fans feel the love on the North Shore for PNC Park show

Scott Mervis/Po



PUNYA BHASIN
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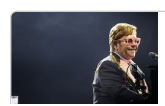
Elton John is still saying his goodbyes.



On Friday, the promise of those fond farewells brought friends and families to the North Shore ahead of the rocker's show at PNC Park, the third "farewell" show he's performed in Pittsburgh since 2018.



Here's what people were saying before the show.



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Representing three states, two coasts and one border, Katie Brown, from Pittsburgh was joined by her two friends, Chris Page of Dallas, TX, left, and Cate Kessler of Los Angeles, right, who came together for tonight's big show and a bit of dress up for the occasion.



Chris Page, of Dallas, TX, Katie Brown, of Pittsburgh and Cate Kessler, of Los Angeles, gathered outside of PNC stadium for the "Elton John Farewell Concert" on Friday, September 16, 2022.

Joseph Phillippi/ For The Post-Gazette

Mother-daughter duo Barbara Toothman, 75, and Ginger Masters, 52, said they were looking forward to feeling young again during Friday's show..

Ms. Toothman, of Mannington, W.Va., said she has been a fan of Elton a John for a long time.

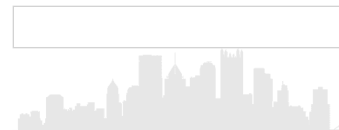
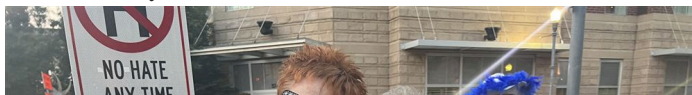
"I was raised with this kind of music, and he's been my favorite ever since he started," she said. "I raised my kids with this kind of music, too."

Ms. Toothman said she is looking forward to some nostalgia from Elton.

"I hope I see him and I feel young again," Ms. Toothman said.

Ms. Masters said she hopes this isn't the last farewell tour and wants to continue to listen to Elton's voice for as long as possible.

"We love you Elton, and we hope you just keep on playing even if we can't hear you," Ms. Masters said.



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Ginger Masters, 52, and her mother, Barbara Toothman, 75, were hoping to feel young again at the Elton John show.
(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

Jennica Schiffer was able to fulfill a dream of hers when she attended the Elton John concert.

Ms. Schiffer and her family, decked out in Elton-inspired costumes, made the concert a chance to bond as a family and help Ms. Schiffer check an item off.

“This was my bucket list item, that I’ve had forever and I finally get to cross it off,” Ms. Schiffer said. “I just love him, and I love everything he stands for, and I’m just excited to make memories.”



The Schiffer family brought their "A" game with their outfits for the Elton John concert.
(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

For Sara Pelegreen, 31, attending the Elton John concert with her

family is a tribute to the years spent singing along to his songs on the radio with her mom.

The family, who traveled from Cadiz, Ohio, was brimming with anticipation on what Elton John plans to do at his Pittsburgh concert.

Ms. Pelegreen said the whole family decided to get together for the show once it was announced.

“I think that that's really cool that I get to share that with my family and all of the cool looks that we get to see while we're here,” Ms. Pelegreen said. “It's such a different dynamic than if I was attending this concert with my friends because Elton is an older generation thing for me, and I think this will be really special for all of us.”



Sara Pelegreen is pictured with her friends and family, who were all excited to attend the Elton John concert.

(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

Romance was in the air as couples joined the scene to see Elton John perform.

Robert Chaibi and Karen Gauriloff, a couple from Cleveland, said Elton John helped spark the chemistry between them.

Mr. Chaibi, a 24-year-old musician, has attended six Elton John concerts in the last 10 years and was just as excited for Friday's show.

“His music has just resonated with me my whole life,” Mr. Chaibi said. “I'm hoping for this concert to be as good as all the others.”

Ms. Gauriloff, a set designer, said she worked on “Elton-type things” with Mr. Chaibi, which brought them even closer together as a couple.

“I didn’t get into music until I was older and I found that I really resonated with Elton,” Ms. Gauriloff said. “Then I met [Mr. Chaibi], and Elton John is such a big inspiration for him. So we had this amazing thing in common.”



Karen Gauriloff and Robert Chaibi, a couple from Ohio, traveled to PNC Park.
(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

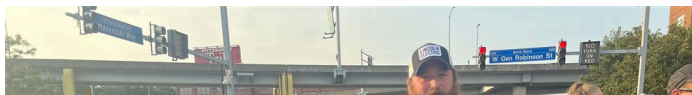
For the Hilling family, the Elton John concert will be a family affair as parents Julie and Josh brought along their two young children Lyla, 8, and Jacob Hilling, 6.

The family came to Pittsburgh from Morgantown, W. Va. Lyla, who dressed up in a pile of multicolored boas, said she is excited for “everything.”

“We have dance parties to his songs and my favorite song is ‘I’m Still Standing,’ and I like the way he dresses,” she said.

Julie Hilling said she is a big fan of Elton John and raised her children to be the same way.

“I grew up listening to Elton John as a kid, and I just love all of his stuff,” she said. “I wanted to make sure they also grew up loving him because it’s really a thing we enjoy as a family.”





The Hilling family — Jacob, Lyla, Josh and Julie — came from Morgantown, W.Va., for the Elton John concert.
(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

Ellen and Maria Giarrusso, a mother-daughter duo from Mt. Lebanon, have been prepping for an Elton John concert their whole lives.

Ellen Giarrusso, 53, dressed up as Elton John as a kid in 1975 and honored that moment in a vintage T-shirt for her first Elton John concert.

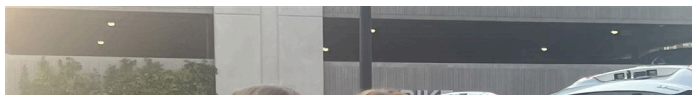
“I fell in love with him at a very young age and I never got to see him, so I raised my daughter to like him as much I do,” Ellen Giarrusso said.

Maria Giarrusso, 20, said she became a fan of Elton John at age 13 and hopes to see his talents on the piano at the concert.

“I like all of his extravagant costumes and also piano is my favorite instrument,” she said, “and I’m looking forward to hopefully a big piano interlude during ‘Rocket Man’ because he has done that before.”

Ellen Giarrusso said Elton John is a legend, and she is glad to see him on his farewell tour.

“I just think he captured my imagination as a kid because he was so colorful and flamboyant and his music was so catchy and easy to sing along to that it was hard not to fall in love with him,” she said. “I think it’s sad that this might be the last chance to see him, but I understand that he’s getting up there and might want to just relax for a while.”





Maria, left, and Ellen Giarrusso, a mother-daughter duo from Mt. Lebanon, both share their love and excitement for Elton John on the North Shore Friday.
(Punya Bhasin/Post-Gazette)

Peg Zebrack is amped up for her first time seeing Elton John in concert. Ms. Zebrack was joined by her friends decked in boas as she blasted Elton John’s music for all of the passersby to hear.

The native Pittsburgher said she can’t wait to see the legend in person.

“He is a legend. I mean he is Sir Elton John. I can’t wait,” Ms. Zebrack said. “I think he’s going to end with ‘Yellow Brick Road,’ and we are all going to sing along with him, and it’s going to be just wonderful.”

Elton John fans

Elton John fans outside PNC Park join in for a singalong ...



Lou Towchik, from West View, has concocted an themed menu in preparation for the concert.

His signature cocktail, the “Captain Fantastic Cocktail,” consists of Captain Morgan, Jack Daniels and Coke — and it was a hit at the tailgate, tasting similar to root beer.

Mr. Towchik cooked an assortment of food also inspired by Elton

John's legendary tracks, including a grilled corn salad endearingly named the "Yellow Brick Road salad." This concert will be the first Elton John show for Mr. Towchik and the third for his wife, Beth Dubyak.

Ms. Dubyak said it's a fun way to get out of the house and is hoping to enjoy all of Elton's classic tunes again.

"When you're 62, what else are you going to do," Ms. Dubyak said.

For Deanna Frabotta and her friends, all adorned in rhinestone sunglasses and hats, this concert has been a long time coming. Ms. Frabotta and her friends decided to tailgate from New Castle and hoped to hear Elton John sing his famous "Candle in the Wind."

For Ms. Frabotta, this will be her first time attending an Elton John concert — and she expects to cry.

"I mean the queen died ... he's gonna do a tribute to Princess Diana, for sure," Ms. Frabotta said. "I just know I'm gonna cry."

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