



## out in print

by terri schlichenmeyer :: *quotes* contributing writer

### *The Bitch is Back*

You are a maestro of air.

Ever since you were a teen, you played with the best. Air guitar with Steven Tyler. Air piano with Billy Joel. Air

drums with Keith Moon. Air sax with Clarence Clemons. You were good at it then. You're better at it now.

Life is good and fame is fleeting when you strum / drum / key with the band in the privacy of your living room, or in public at the bar. But for some, fame comes easily and stays. In the new book "Elton John: The Bitch is Back" by Mark Bego, you'll read about how a chubby English boy became a mega-star.

From the time he was three-years-old, it was obvious that Reginald Dwight was a piano player. Little Reg, raised almost solely by a mother who had "secretly" wanted a girl, was encouraged by his mother and, later, his stepfather.

Though he was sent to a tony British music academy, Reg loved rock & roll, which was a newly emerging musical genre. After being hired as a "tea boy" at a recording studio and with just a few weeks left before graduation, Reg dropped out of school to work and pursue his dream. He was introduced to Patti Labelle, Rod Stewart, and a man who would eventually tell him, point-blank, that Reg was gay — something Reg claims he "was clueless about."

In 1967, Reggie Dwight (by then known as



Elton John) was introduced to Bernie Taupin because Elton could "write music but not lyrics" and Bernie "could write lyrics but not music." Arguably, they became one of music's most seminal duos, both benefiting from a lifelong relationship that flirted with "more-than-friends" but that never went beyond professional.

It's the rare person who can't name an Elton John song or sing a few lyrics, but while

his music has topped the charts, his personal life was open to fierce speculation. Though it's no secret now, Elton John "shrugged off" queries about his love life for years, admitting to admiring women while he quietly slept with men.

There's no doubt that author Mark Bego — who has written other books about Elton John — knows his subject completely. But though it's researched to the farthest corners of stardom and thorough as can be, "Elton John: The Bitch is Back" is dry as toast and reminded me many times of a very long college thesis. It's just the facts, Ma'am, which occasionally caused my attention to wander.

On the "B" side, this book reads like a Who's Who of Music, and I found that part fascinating. Bego draws several lines that connect Elton John to many musicians, songwriters, performers, and behind-the-scenes people, making the 1965-1980 music scene seem like a small world, indeed.

If you're looking for a lively biography, I don't think this book is what you want. But if you're a music fan — especially of '70s and '80s music and particularly of Elton John — you'll enjoy it immensely. "Elton John: The Bitch is Back" is music to your eyes. ::

#### info:

"Elton John: The Bitch is Back" by Mark Bego: c.2009, Phoenix Books \$22.95, 375 pages, includes notes.

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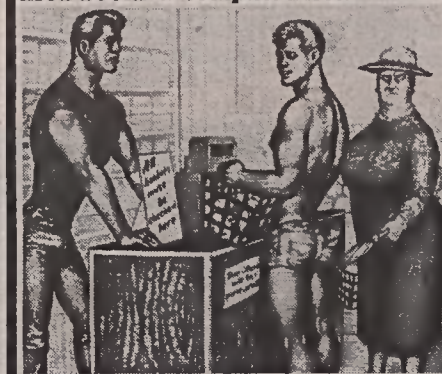
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