



What do Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Stevie Nicks, and Lionel Richie have in common?

They all had successful careers as part of a group and then moved on to successful solo careers. Singers become solo artists for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they get bored with what they're doing and need a change. Other times, one person wants to try something different and the rest of the band doesn't want to. Some artists, such as Billy Joel and Elton John, have never been known as anything other than a solo artist. Regardless of the reason, solo artists have played an important role in the music industry and continue to produce popular music.

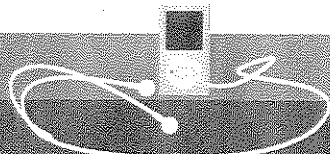
Billy Joel and Elton John are known as the top piano men of pop music. Although they are separate recording artists, they have gone on "Face to Face" tours together, each playing their own set and then playing a third set together. Billy Joel, who at one stage was a successful boxer, began his music career in high school after seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964. Over his career, he has produced six top-30 singles, his first coming in 1974 with the tuneful, *Piano Man*. Elton John began his musical career 1961 with a band called Bluesology, but was not highly successful until 1970, when he went out on his own. Apart from his five hit singles, including *Candle in the Wind*, which is noted as the top selling single of all time, he is also a composer of musicals and film scores. His music for the movie *The Lion King* even won him an Academy award. Both Billy Joel and Elton John are still active performers, commanding sell-out audiences and extremely high ticket prices!

Eric Clapton, well known for his guitar playing, has played in many rock bands throughout his musical career, although he still maintained his interest in American Blues. He launched his solo career in 1973 and has recorded many blues and rock songs, continuing to be one of the most versatile of pop artists. He has **collaborated** with artists as diverse as BB King, Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Mary J. Blige, Luciano Pavarotti, and Elton John.

In the 60s and 70s Rod Stewart was the lead singer for the Jeff Beck Group and Faces, becoming a solo artist in the 70's and 80's with chart toppers such as *Maggie May*, *The Motown Song*, and *Downtown Train*. In 2002, Rod Stewart traded in his rocker clothes for a suit and tie, which have become his trademark. His album *The Great American Songbook*, a recording of **Jazz** standards written by composers such as Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, and Irving Berlin, has become a classic.

Other solo artists of note include Beyonce (who previously sang with Destiny's Child), Rob Thomas, Sting, and Diana Ross. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr also became solo artists of note after the break-up of the Beatles.

Fast Facts



Time Span: 1970s-1990s

Influences: Various

Primary Instruments: Various

Major Artists: Billy Joel, Elton John, Rod Stewart, Beyonce, Diana Ross, Stevie Nicks

Fun Fact

Elton John holds many, many records for top selling albums and hit singles as well as numerous awards. In fact, he is ranked by Billboard as THE top male solo artist. Known as being a close personal friend of Princess Diana, he sang his most successful hit *Candle in the Wind* at her funeral. In honor of her and to give the tribute special significance, he has not performed it in public since.

