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To sir with love

By Mary Wozniak

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Elton John's sold-out performance Sunday night may be a harbinger of bigger and better things for Germain Arena.

The Estero venue will be packed with about 8,000 fans when John takes the stage at 8 p.m. Sunday, and event director Matt Blasy didn't even have to break a sweat to make it happen.

John's concert promoter contacted Germain to suggest the superstar's return visit, Blasy said.

John performed when the building first opened as TECO Arena and it's fitting that the rock star will do an encore as the facility celebrates its 10th anniversary, Blasy said.

"I'd like to take credit for it, but it was just one of those things."

Blasy thinks the show will put Germain Arena on the entertainment map.

"We do our fair share of major shows and hopefully this will let the promoters know that we're able to put on the biggest of the big shows and get more sent our way," he said.

With a crowd of 8,000, Germain is beefing up security, mostly to help traffic flow, Blasy said. The doors for a concert usually open an hour beforehand to let the crowd find their seats, but Sunday the doors will open at 6:30, which is an hour and a half before showtime, he said.

Keith T. Pells of Fort Myers will be there, just as he has been for eight other previous Elton John concerts.

"He was the first artist when I was a teenager that I could relate to," said Pells, now 46. "All my friends were into the heavy metal bands back in the '70s."

But John defied the other musical artists out there, Pells said. "He was the artist not trim and svelte and wore funny glasses. He just got out on stage and was himself. I fell in love with him at the time."

Pells has remained a dedicated fan ever since. He



Gannett News Service

Elton John, singer/songwriter, piano man: Sunday at Germain Arena.

TICKETS, PERHAPS?

Not to get anyone's hopes up ...

But sometimes tickets to a sold-out concert can be released at the last minute by corporations that buy blocks of tickets and end up not using all of them. Tickets may also become available because the particular staging of a concert may open up extra space at the last minute, said Matt Blasy, Germain Arena events director.

Tickets to the Elton John's performance sold out in just less than an hour at \$67 and \$97. Blasy's advice is to contact Ticketmaster at its Web site (ticketmaster.com) to see if any tickets are released. The Germain Arena box office is 948-7825. Web site: germainarena.com.

Or, you can visit the Rivals Sports Kitchen restaurant before 6:30 p.m. today at Miromar Outlets in Estero, where a pair of tickets to the Elton John concert are being raffled as a fundraiser for the Boys and Girls Club of Lee County. Raffle tickets are \$1 each. The drawing is at 6:30.

Or, if you don't have concert tickets, you can always

has all of John's CDs. "I actually had a streak going. For the last 32 years, I bought every one of his albums on the first day of release," he said.

Pells said he's partial to John because the musician makes playing the piano look effortless, he shows appreciation for and true connection with his audiences, and he's willing to embark on atypical musical avenues.

Pells' favorite John concert was in 2005 in Sunrise, where he saw the singer backed by the entire Atlanta Tabernacle choir in full robe.

His favorite album is "Blue Moves," a double album released in 1976 that includes the hit, "Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word." The song is so melancholy, written in minor chords, and part of a heavily orchestrated album that was a departure in style for John, Pells said.

His favorite song by John is "Nobody Wins" from a more obscure album, "The Fox."

"It's basically a piece of electronic Europop released in 1981, and again it was something so atypical and so drastically different," Pells said.

He also hopes that Sunday's concert is a sign that more high-caliber acts will be coming to town. John is one of those performers who likes to play mid-size venues because they know the show will sell out and be an instant moneymaker, Pells said. "It's nice to see Fort Myers get these kind of acts, and Germain is the place to do it."

Baby boomers aren't the only demographic John draws his fan base from.

Constantine Grim was 9 years old the last time John came to town. "I do remember my parents hired a sitter to go see him that night," he said.

Grim, now 19 and working at FYE music store in Fort Myers, said John is one of those artists who is timeless and everyone likes to go see.

"I'm a pretty good fan," Grim said. "I'm definitely going to go see him."

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