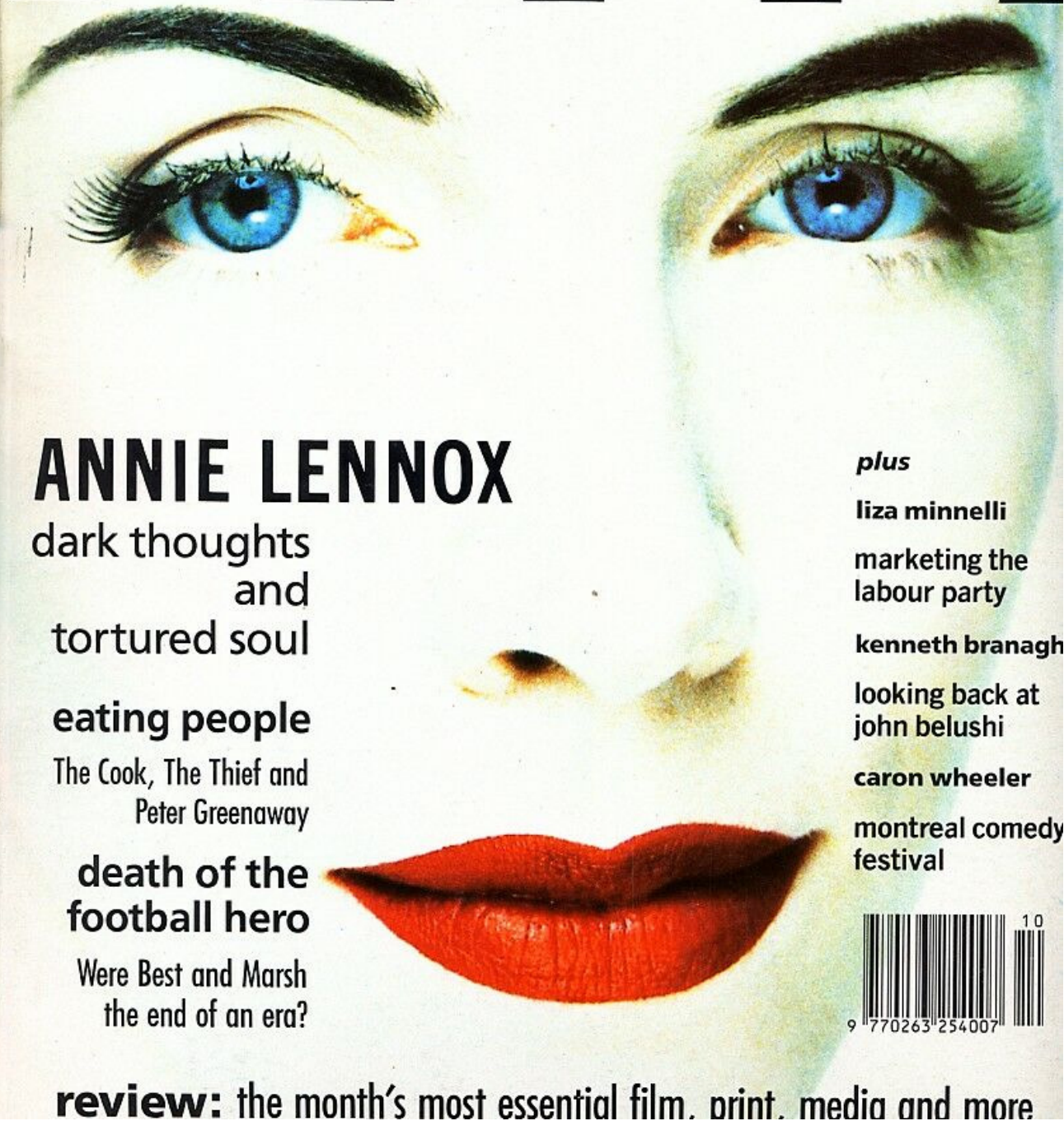


DENMARK DKR37 GERMANY DM9 GREECE DRA470 HOLLAND DFLB 25 ITALY L4700 SPAIN PTAS420 SINGAPORE MSB 90 USA \$4 50

OCTOBER 1989 No. 82

# BLITZ



## ANNIE LENNOX

dark thoughts  
and  
tortured soul

### eating people

The Cook, The Thief and  
Peter Greenaway

### death of the football hero

Were Best and Marsh  
the end of an era?

*plus*

**liza minnelli**

marketing the  
labour party

**kenneth branagh**

looking back at  
john belushi

**caron wheeler**

montreal comedy  
festival



**review:** the month's most essential film. print. media and more

## Is Annie Lennox in the wrong job?



### 1. MEGALIG.

Juan Les Pins on the Cannes coast, where the launch of the new Eurythmics album *We Too Are One* mixes the classic clichés of lavish industry hype, intense, intrusive personal scrutiny and a colourful surrealism. In attendance, the jackal hacks and reptiles of Fleet Street, the twits and toerags of the music press, European TV crews, record company executives, distributors and retailers, mad marketing men and press officers, even, shock-horror, a few stray members of the public. Some of us have A Great Time.

Previewing their sixty-four-date world tour, there's a Eurythmics show (the first since Annie Lennox lost her baby), an extensively filmed press conference, an 'impromptu' acoustic set, a video presentation, interviews, entrances and exits, and a beach party to cope with and confront. It's what

# tortured soul

someone – some music business – type (rolled-up jacket sleeves, white shoes and Zanzibar stories: not even the decency or dignity to undermine a cliché) – calls "a megalig".

At first, Lennox, the artist/product – the almost famously distracted, defiantly sensitive side of the Eurythmics – seems like the wrong person for all this – so much liberal principle, hippy-naïve idealism, gallons of compassion, the morbid sensitivity that sees her casually reveal such gems as "I'm not on terra firma" and "Singing is necessary for my stability and happiness." But she takes it all in her stride. Probably the only time she takes away the shelter of her shades is onstage. When, after a tiring, trying two days she finds forty minutes more to talk, she still stays behind the superficial security of the dark glasses.

### 2. TAKE-OFF

It's 10am and 200 of us – the mediocrity and inanity of the media and the industry in one, freeloaders, freebasers and freemasons – get a special check-in at the International Hilton Ballroom, Gatwick, the start of what becomes an almost endless forty-eight-hour buffet. "Here's to a good

## LENNOX

weekend," comes a toast. It's a two-day trip alright but, sadly, a Wednesday. A press officer wonders out loud how he's going to break the news to the *Vegetarian Times* that Lennox is no longer a vegetarian. Nothing happens and nothing happens slowly. Hours of airport air empty the mind. When the private plane takes off, we hacks – the Great Communicators – sit in our shades and Walkmans as the PA plays a tape of the new Eurythmics product, heartlessly mauling it to a groaning, slow-speed death, strangling the life out of it without anyone even noticing. A French steward in a Peter Sellers accent requests, "No smirking", the stewardesses fit our little trays for us and I wonder if they're going to spoon-feed us.

When I open my eyes it's 4.30 in Cannes, the air like sauna sweat. Like a school outing, we cheer the final arrival of the French coach driver, who responds, as coach drivers will, by exiting immediately. Within ten seconds we have hit the Cannes sand, burnt tourists and locals just so much human litter. I get stung by a jellyfish, scrape the tentacles from the sting and find someone rubbing tomato on me. Hotel television plays CNN's *Lifestyles Of The Rich & Famous*, last year's snooker final, vintage episodes of *Neighbours* (with Max) in French and *Les Rues du San Fran-sees-co*. I think perhaps this is the life. On the bed they've left a gift-box promotional presentation – a CD, cassette and video wrapped in a lavish photo by ▶

INTERVIEW JIM SHELLEY



Frame from Mondino's video for 'Don't Ask Me Why'

# LENNOX

Mondino, whose fee must account for a fair share of the estimated £100,000 splashed on this bash (with a few hundred thousand more to come on advertising, marketing and promotion). The video cuts slick new Eurythmics videos in with earnestly bland comment, interviewer Johnny Walker saying things like, "After the break, Dave Stewart talks about the loneliness and isolation in today's modern society." I bet he does.

Lennox then comments that 'Baby's Gonna Cry' is "another little song about betrayal, a duet between me and Dave... says it all... ha! I discovered it isn't Us and Them, it's just... us. In the human condition, we are all frail. The people that have problems are us; we're all potential candidates for problems." She admits to darker moments, raging arguments, her commitment to the group and interest in a solo record, revealing the pop star's knack of answering old questions with the same answers and the same tone of sheer sincerity.

The record and the show – and even, I suppose, the interview – pose the central Eurythmics contradiction: why a group capable of ice-perfect avant-garde pop – ('Heaven', 'Chill In My Heart', 'Sweet Dreams', 'There Must Be An Angel', 'Savage', etc) are so adequately expert at stodgy stadium rock for American students and white ersatz gospel/soul (the recent 'Revival' being an appallingly clumsy piece of Q-Tips tack). It's easy to blame Stewart's muso talent, but then he does also write the gorgeous, cynical pop gems. Lennox's appetite for performance, her theatrical energy, fierce determination and sheer ambition, are probably more to blame. The Eurythmics have always posed a contradiction: not as immaculate as The Associates, not as mediocre or worthy as the Gabriel/Sting/Chapman set, always insisting on a strange sexuality, a stubborn re-invention to make Eurythmics "not easily marketed, not easily

A huge beach party proves better – fireworks over the bay, 400 bottles of champagne, a bulging buffet and a DJ flown over from London's Cafe de Paris. Lennox leaves early but Stewart surveys the scene like the Great Gatsby, the King of Cannes, white suit and weariness. It ends with midnight dips, Siobhan and Annie cutting a rug, screaming debauchery. The Sun, Mirror, Star and Express win a bonus story when Anne Nightingale, slightly the worse for wear, wakes up on the beach near the end of the party to find her bag has been nicked, sparking a Filofax alert. I end up stealing bottles of champagne from the local mayor's bodyguards, falling into a champagne sleep, missing the coach home and waking up with two Parisian sisters. Oh dear. Disgraced.

### 3. CIRCUS

The following day, alongside a deliberately revolting cold meat buffet, the Eurythmics sit at a table, under the cold glare of several European video crews, cameras and tape recorders – two stars in dazed shades, with Stewart's musician's mumble and Lennox's cutting, prim Brodie brogue putting the idiot lizards of the press in their place. Lennox wears the crisp, cream style that she's made her own – white poise, white spiky hair, red lips on a white face which erupt into a dazzling silver smile. Stewart clowns around in his role of rock's Liberace: white suit, red face, black greased hair – a kind of rock 'n' roll version of Reg Varney, more Benidorm spiv than Scarface. The questions rapidly gather an increasingly surreal edge, questions like: "Do you lead an ozone-friendly lifestyle?" and "What will the new decade bring?" Lennox derides the evident stupidity by saying she has absolutely no idea. Stewart does it by saying *he* knows exactly. The suggestion that, after one hit, Siobhan's Shakespear's Sister are

**"My parents didn't know what they got when they got me. I was rebelling so hard. It wasn't easy. I always thought I could meet like souls and I never really did. The first like soul I ever met was Dave."**

sold, not easily consumed, or disposable..."

The contradiction holds on *We Too Are One*. Death's head rears up on the sweeping 'Angel' (a piece of moving and stylish pop anguish "about bereavement, a life after death") and 'Sylvia', a rather obvious Eleanor Rigby as Amsterdam casualty/hooker, written round the hauntingly nasty image: "The fingerprints of strangers on the ugly bedroom floor reveal/The only traces of what Sylvia was for." ('You Hurt Me And) I Hate You' and 'Don't Ask Me Why' are superbly intricate, crisp and bitter pop: "Look what the night dragged in/A pocketful of misery... I don't love you anymore/I don't think I ever did." The climax presents a long litany of dedications: "All the people of this lonely world have a piece of pain inside"; "This is for the broken dreamers... the vacant souls... the hopeless losers/This is for the helpless fools and the burnt-out and the useless/And the lonely and the weak, and the lost and the degraded..."

It's a momentous avalanche of Eurythmics sentiment and melancholy that Lennox somehow manages to make seem hugely uplifting, if not ever matching the spectral gloom of pieces like 'Shame' from *Savage's* unrepentant self-examination. Others – 'King & Queen Of America', 'We Too Are One', 'Revival' – are lumbering stadium stuff, although the videos show the skill of the irony, and their far superior acoustic versions. They plunder and parody Sonny & Cher, Springsteen, The Beatles; parodying America in a way that's bound to sell well there. The contradiction intrigues and infuriates – most of it lies with Lennox.

The show, arranged near Dave and Siobhan Stewart's Cannes home, brings out all her performance energy, hyperbole and a sad series of lame crowd pleasers, with special guest Charlie Wilson from the Gap Band joining Lennox in a chorus of, "Great to be back in Juan Les Pins! Yeah! Woo, alright! We're gonna play a little number for you now, want you all to clap your hands in the air now! Yeah!" All that rabble-rousing bullshit.

"overtaking" the Eurythmics has Stewart drolly reply that he gets half of everything and reveal, to frantic scribbling, that Siobhan has hacked into the Eurythmics' lyrics computer.

When Lennox diplomatically avoids condemning or condoning her friend Chrissie Hynde's "Firebomb McDonalds" comment, Stewart eagerly suggests, "We should flame-throw Spud-U-Like – for the name alone." He tells a Euro-hack that the first Eurythmics cover version will be either 'Right Said Fred' by Bernard Cribbins or the seminal Charlie Drake classic, 'Please Mr Custer'. When a concerned hack asks about ▶



TIM JARVIS

# LENNOX

► Annie's stillborn son, Daniel, and her courageous return to touring and recording, the concern is coated in callousness and the ANNIE'S AGONY OVERDEADBABY headline might as well be tattooed on his lips. The event incites echoes of all the stories she's endured: the death; husband Uri Fruchtnab's photograph of Annie with the child; an established, still eerie therapy; her previous marriage to Hare Krishna devotee Radha Raman; the break-up with Stewart. Further questions about Bringing A Baby Into Today's Wicked World elicit an erratic, rambling speech comparing the Spanish Inquisition with today's modern torture, before she says yes, she will try to start a family after this tour. Strange. Almost too personal.

Staying sat at the table, an impromptu 'jam' is greeted by a sick swarm – the various camera crews and hacks circling round too close for comfort: crews filming crews filming other crews, like a freakshow. From 'Sweet Dreams' to 'Language Of Love' and 'I Need You', Lennox, instantly and eerily, gives everything in an awkward but emotive performance, cold and oblivious to the percussive whirr of camera and tape recorders shoved inches from her face. I wait for a version of 'Michael, Row The Boat Ashore' and Lennox laughingly says a hat will be passed round. Stewart had remarked earlier, "It's almost *too* hard to play an acoustic set with Annie, 'cos it's so emotional." Aretha it ain't, but decent acoustic jams are as rare as a nice journalist, and the warm force of her performance, along with the oppressive intimacy of the event, make even the most miserable hack misty. It's acoustic folk made strange and the sheer ice intensity, the cold heart of the words simply heighten the sick scrutiny, the salacious appetite

**"I see the faces behind the cameras and the journalists that are writing, it is frighteningly ugly. If it was that surreal all the time, if I didn't have such a close relationship with my husband, it would flip me right out."**

of the surrounding media malice. There's not much room for dignity.

Later, while admitting that the Eurythmics were "very badly burnt early on. We discovered what the press meant, what the television meant, what being in the charts meant, what not being in the charts meant, what other groups meant", Lennox confirms the suspicion that she and Stewart are too careful (always choosing control over spontaneity) not to know what the effect of the session will be. One smart cynic sums it up succinctly as "sad". Once again, Lennox strikes me as the wrong person for all this; the wrong person doing the wrong thing in the wrong place.

#### 4. TALK

Lennox is nearing 35, an only child, a Capricorn with Sagittarius rising who lives mostly in Paris. Fresh from an interview about women in rock, she arrives, nervous and over-assertive, a bit hyper, bossy and brassy, slightly fractious, traces of scoffing Scottish bitterness in her voice, bristling against any criticism. Her answers make comparisons to things "in life" or "in existence". All the famous Lennox traits – the cold sensuality, intense introspection and fragility, the fierce vivacity, her warm and beautiful heart, bitter spite and firm determination – are obvious.

"I never really was a punk, or a hippy, and I'm not really a rock'n'roller. What I do best is just being me," is how she describes herself, hopelessly. Hers is an idealism so fierce it becomes naivety – sitting by a pool in the South of France saying things like: "I'm curious about what it really means to be successful in this society... when we're spending so much money on things, which are appalling, such tremendous wastage..." Or: "I confess I've wondered about really big groups like U2, if they really, really mean it, why don't they give all their royalties away?!" I always attributed the Eurythmics' success to her fierce determination and ask her if she always wanted all this and she says firmly, "Well, yes. I didn't see any point in doing anything by halves. I just don't see any point in that at all. I've been through the whole machine, all the machinations. This is still what I want to do. The person that I am now is very much the person that I was back

then. My values are the same essentially."

The constant mockery of fame and its trap(ping)s don't disguise the inevitable greed and lust a group like Eurythmics must have, the compromise necessary. Their American music seems blatant, despite its ironies.

"Well, I don't know. I just think we make our music just how it is. I don't know how to court audiences, to be quite honest with you. I don't know what America likes. I wish they would get the irony. It's not my fault that they're not that bright. There's no such thing as pure, *only* good or *only* bad... In life, there are always things where you can say, 'I wish I hadn't done that'. I always keep very detached from the fame/success, it can become such a force in your life. It takes over. I try to be anonymous, it's more interesting. England still has this really perverse fascination with people that are famous or successful. They love you to bits until anything remotely associated with failure or tragedy. Then they wallow in it."

Do you enjoy fame, enjoy all of this?

"By and large. I'm happy to be doing it. The media monster raises its head; it's a strange one which sometimes I really loathe. Other times I find it quite enjoyable actually, and thank God I do! If I didn't, it would be painfully difficult. Some aspects of it, like everything in life, are better than others."

Inevitably the enigma of how someone as admirably anxious as Lennox copes is not even dented. "Yeah, I know, I don't know how I cope, to be quite honest with you. I am a performer. I know that I just can't escape

that. I could run away from this. I've thought about it – playing hundreds of concerts, I was tired, worn out. I could stop it all. I haven't yet. Everybody in life either avoids confrontation or they take on the challenge, like I do."

You always struck me as a very strong person. Does that come from a belief in anything?

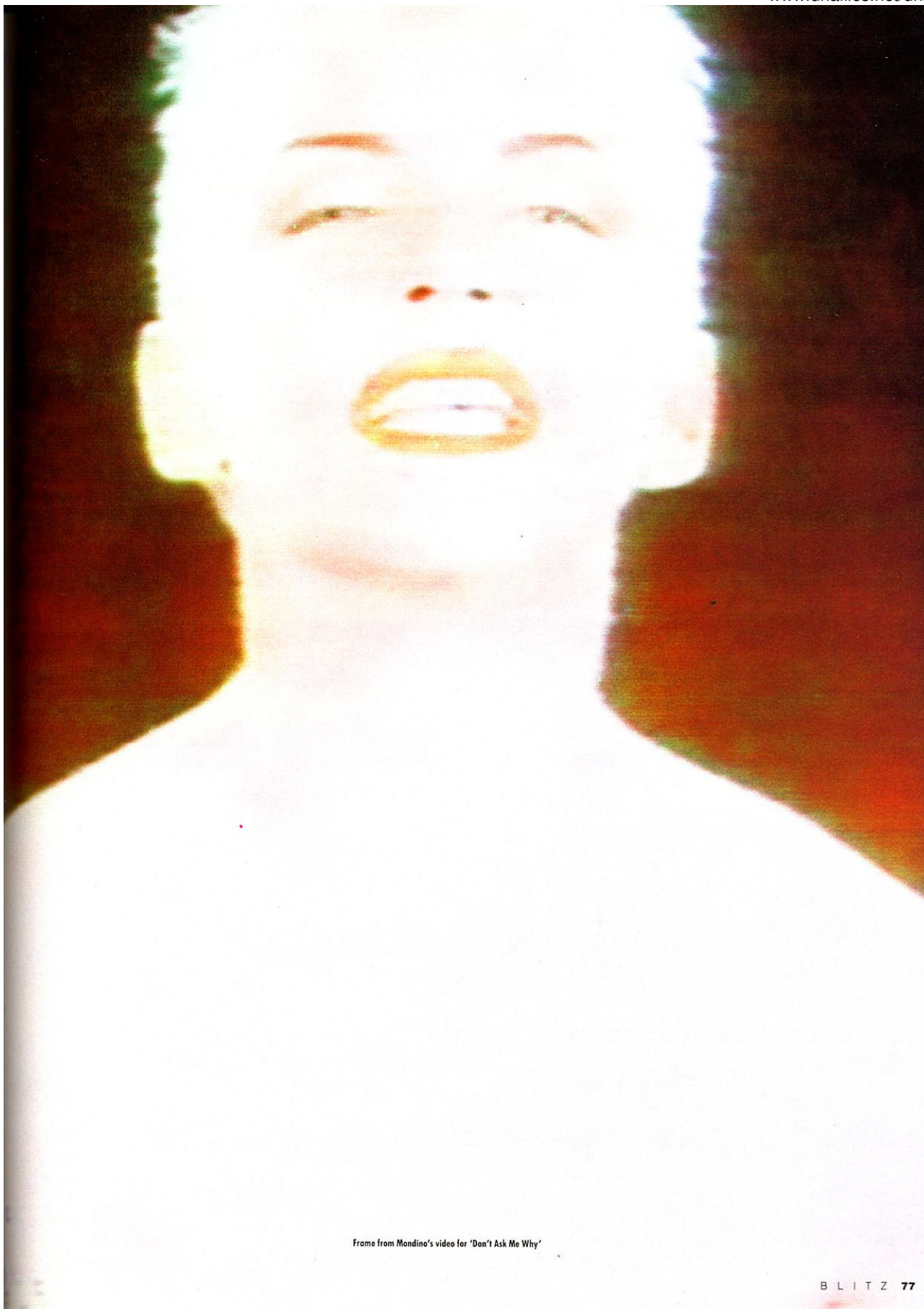
"Probably more intense than strong. I'm just chemically that way, er, it's not down to belief in anything, no. I can be very headstrong and I can be very passionate, I don't know why I'm like that. All my family, my cousins are very quiet people – never cause any problems, not provocative, not extreme, very conformist. My parents didn't know what they got when they got me. I was rebelling so hard. It wasn't easy. I always thought I could meet like souls and I never really did. The first like soul I ever met was Dave."

The press conference was unsavoury. Really unpleasant. Or is it something that just has to be done?

"Yes it is [*firmly*]. I physically couldn't take having to do lots of interviews across the tour. It's not very pleasant. I'm not very comfortable with it, these pointedly private questions or absurd generalised ones. You could see I didn't like it very much. I'm squirming. I'm much more at ease – if I'm ever at ease – with one-to-one questions, like this."

There wasn't much room for dignity – what goes through your mind? "I wasn't really looking at people, I was just singing. It's incredibly freakish sometimes and very ugly. I see the faces behind the cameras and the journalists that are writing, it is frighteningly ugly. If it was that surreal all the time, if I didn't have such a close relationship with my husband, it would flip me right out. Some bands really court all that and they really do live that all the time. I really find that really hard to deal with. I go away very quietly, go to my hotel room. I have my life. I don't ask for attention. I don't get really dressed up and make entrances – here's the limo! The bodyguard! Here's the paparazzi! If I really wanted to, I think I could be on the front pages of papers quite a lot, a hundred times more than I am."

When I tease her for wearing her shades for the press conference and



Frame from Mondino's video for 'Don't Ask Me Why'

# LENNOX

► the interview, she's not relaxed enough (at all) to smile.

"You feel so exposed. It is such a cliché, but when people have cameras in your face like that, you feel you've got to keep the last vestiges of protection. About two years ago, after touring for two years, I had become this rather externally lacquered person, with this surface which meant I could just deal with every situation presented in front of me. Everything was faces and people tapping your shoulder and saying, 'Great, great, great' [she taps her hand on my bare shoulder]. All that falsity. Such bullshit. I'm not stupid. I think I have a few brain cells in my head. I see the whole thing, with all of the surrealism."

When you don't cope how does it affect you?

"It makes me a little bit hyper, a bit nervous, because the people that are smiling are actually the ones that are stabbing you in the back."

Is that because being in control, in control of the Eurythmics' image in particular, is so important for you?

"Well I'm not in control... Nobody's in control of their destiny. You're in control of your choices, but that's all. I take a great deal of care to control the way I'm seen, yes, to try and keep some sort of integrity, but I don't really feel in control of my life. At all. It's a sort of survival instinct from being completely chewed up by the media. There's this horrific consumption by the media of you as a person – in your private life, as a performer, as a 'fashion statement', an 'image-maker' [spat out]. The whole thing is fairly horrendous. Most groups' idea of image is buying a new suit in Joseph or something; they haven't got a clue. A song like 'Beethoven' was a very extreme, nightmarish, hellish sort of vision, like getting inside someone else's head and ripping it apart. But people just say, 'That's just your new image, your new fashion.'"

She hates this. Lennox places fierce value on her integrity, gushes with a kind of conviction, defiant pride, defensive bitterness at an implied lack of recognition, for what she represents as 'a female singer', for the way she has always turned down "selling myself as a product" (a reputed £3m for Vidal Sassoon, the cover of *Vogue*, various modelling and advertising contracts). "I've never really exploited my sexuality, never taken the lucrative offers that have come my way. Those options have always been open to me."

Nevertheless, after the relative failure of *Savage* and its stranger singles ('Beethoven', 'Chill' and 'Shame'), the stamp of careful commercialism on *We Too Are One* is clearly no accident, particularly given that Eurythmics can be anything Lennox and Stewart make it, re-invention being the staple of modern pop and their hallmark.

"I think we wanted to make an album this time that was more accessible to people. Why? [pauses] Just... because we felt like it."

Yes but why?

"I don't know why we felt that! I don't know the answer to that question. I'm sorry."

The contradiction of calculating, cold, cynical pop next to the sort of

to time, in the past, I've felt, that as a performer, I've gone too close to that kind of blustering stage performer. That's what *Savage* was all about. I'm not perfect. You shouldn't let bluster turn you into something that is meaningless and devoid of any kind of danger."

Still, their videos apart, Eurythmics have lost something of their strangeness. Are you still interested in the effect of androgyny? Disturbing people's idea of sexuality?

"Absolutely, of course. I really like the sense of something that's dangerous and challenging and a bit perverse. Unpredictable. But at a certain point it became such a cliché that I had to get of it, when the media picked up on it. My interest really came from my experience in *The Tourists*, a very invaluable, bad experience. By the time I'd gone through all of that I knew who I was a lot more than I did before."

Do you think women are more intelligent than men, in their idea of sexuality?

"I think that's a stupid question, a really stupid question. I don't know anything about the majority of men or women, the majority of people. I don't understand the human race. I think it's just fucked up anyway. Out there's madness to me, you know. England is such a curious place. English people, English men, really limit their potential by being too closed to most spontaneous feelings. I see people in England like sea anemones that close right up. There's a great deal of pressure on men to go and drown themselves in pints and pints of lager and then go out and screw as many women as possible. Men created that society, yes, but women collaborated. Women use it and abuse it – the Sabrinas of the world."

Are you less introspective now? Less alienated?

"I feel alienated most of the time, from most people. Given enough time on my own I get back into that. I need to have people around to help counterbalance my tendency to slip into the destructive, negative, pessimistic tendencies that I've got. It's dangerous, yes, a whirlpool and you get right down there. I've been there and I don't want to be there. There's just no point."

You still write about death – on 'Sylvia', for example. "She wants to fall into a deep, deep sleep, so she can forget herself". Is that as much about you as the character?

"Oh, absolutely, how often do I have that tendency? Well, less now. I think if I was not married to my husband, it would be so hard for me. I think I could be there, that feeling of a numbing of all sensation, all experience, because it's all too painful, too heightened and too dreadful. I tend to let my feelings get the better of me, yes. But I'm not that morbid. I like to read. I walk, exercise, I think and I talk to people, listen to music. There's nobody that's ultimate – Prince's 'When Doves Cry' maybe. The Cocteau Twins are incredible."

Do you wonder if the Eurythmics have come too far to get back to the stranger element?

"Well, maybe once you get to a certain point it is difficult to be critical

**"I don't know anything about the majority of men or women, the majority of people. I don't understand the human race. I think it's just fucked up anyway. Out there's madness to me, you know."**

hand-clapping rabble-rousing that is purely Pavlovian, distasteful and meaningless, is one that her main defence doesn't ever begin to explain away, as she resorts to pretending indie labels and 'underground cultishness' are the only alternative to stadium antics.

"I know exactly what you mean, but you're not a very spontaneous person. You're probably afraid of showing your feelings. I'm aware, sure. I'm aware of all of that stuff. Just being a total ham. I'm aware of the fact that everybody in the audience is just singing along just 'cos they're all pissed, of course I am! There isn't anything in the whole of existence that is just one thing, completely pure and untainted. I must admit, from time

of yourself. I believe you can do what you want [firmly]. That's very challenging. I think you can change yourself, yes, absolutely. The difficult thing would be if somebody tried to make me stay in one spot because it's natural for me to change. The possibility of change is essential for me."

When it ends the press officer says, "It sounded really interesting." "Nah, it wasn't," I tell him, joking, hopefully. But she doesn't laugh. Her relief that it's over, the day, the launch, the whole circus, is evident. She waves us all away – her 'Personal Security Consultant', her manager and myself – and walks decisively towards the seafront. It's part of the contradiction that Annie Lennox looks like the right person, doing the right thing. ●