

CUT

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LENNOX**
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Some Good Humour

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BEHIND BLUE EYES

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interview

There's a personal side to ANNIE LENNOX that never normally gets anywhere near the printed page. She doesn't think the world's media always do her honest justice, and as a result, isn't prone to giving too much away...

TREVOR PAKE and NEIL DALGLEISH discover something of the real person behind the Lennox image.

Upstairs, on the 11th floor, Annie opens the door. She smiles. Ahh... that smile. Close up she seems smaller and more slightly built than she does in real life. Real life. You know, where you're just another sweaty, star-struck punter in the SECC or at home with The Tube or a video.

Annie Lennox perches cross-legged on the sofa of her spacious Glasgow hotel suite, sipping black tea and nibbling at a chocolate biscuit. She's not dressed for the stage. A black and white striped top, beige trousers and black lace tights. Her make-up's softer and there's a mole on her right shoulder.

Annie Lennox is explaining why she's talking to us, or rather, why she nearly didn't...

"There are so many interviews that I probably could do, but there are two things to consider. The most important one is that I am in the middle of a world tour. Every time I step on stage I want to give the best performance of my life...in order to do that and conserve my voice at the same time I have to cut down interviews. And really, on the one hand I quite like it because I don't really like to have to explain something that speaks for itself. And a lot of the times people ask me rather bland questions that don't really stimulate very interesting answers from me. So you must ask me some good questions..."

INDEED WE MUST... YOU'VE NOT STAYED IN ANY ONE PLACE FOR MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. DOESN'T THAT MAKE IT HARD TO KEEP A PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD AS IT IS TO MOST OF YOUR RECORD-BUYING PUBLIC? DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE LOSING TOUCH?

"What is losing touch? Living in Dunfermline or travelling from Brussels one day, then Madrid and up to Paris. I mean, can you imagine how much information I take in? I've just had the students' riots, I mean not exactly riots, but huge student demonstrations, right in front of my apartment in the Rue des Ecoles, and it's just incredible. To be aware of what's happening in France, what the Prime Minister has done there to affect students, and to see them out on the streets. Or to go to Scandinavia, to know that there was nuclear fall-out. To go and see my neighbour in Switzerland who tells me, 'Well yes, we did eat the vegetables after Chernobyl, because they were in the garden, and after all, if I eat other vegetables, how do I know where they've come from?' I don't need to read The Face magazine to feel that I'm alive. I'm just not interested in that scene. What I'm trying to say is that there is too much bullshit here and not enough action. Too many pretty people in magazines. It's not like that abroad. When the students are opposing something they're out demonstrating and getting militant. Not getting their hair cut in a flat-top or taking heroin. There's a whole load of problems in this country. Somebody has got to start getting militant about it, and very, very quickly too."

Her voice is soft and slightly hoarse, she is speaking articulately and deliberately, choosing her words with obvious care. You get the distinct impression that here is a woman who is very keen not to be misunderstood. Again.

The interview very nearly didn't happen. Eurythmics had planned to talk to no-one in Glasgow. Dave Stewart had already gone on ahead to Birmingham. Annie Lennox had planned to have a quiet day off with her family.

We were just drifting though yet another lazy Sunday afternoon. The last minute change of mind gave us just two hours' notice. And then the train was late. TAXI!!! The Holiday Inn, please.

"You lads should have been there last night. I hear that that Annie Lennox from the Eurythmics was staying there."

"Funny you should say that... 'She's from Aberdeen, isn't she?'"

With some bands a potted history seems entirely superfluous. If you don't know the basics of the Eurythmics' story just ask any taxi-driver. And even some of the facts seem almost incidental. Annie may have been born in Aberdeen, but Eurythmics are now very much an international phenomenon, and she has been quoted as saying that there is no longer any place which she calls home. Wherever she lays her hat...

But back to the 11th floor, in yet another anonymous and temporary hotel room, we can't help but wonder if Annie never gets just a little home-sick.

"Ah. Well. Homesick regarding Scotland is a kind of non-reality - I left to go to London because I felt very hampered by the provincial attitudes that exist in all towns, not just in Scotland, but all over the world... You know, essentially, somewhere deep down in my spirit, there is a very Scottish person, but the homesickness that I experience is not for a place that probably exists now, it's more a kind of romantic notion. It hankers after the Scotland that was dwindling out as I was just emerging into this life. Round about '54, when the world was not so full of exhaust fumes and high-technology and a dwindling, industrial revolution.

"My grandfather was alive at the time; my special grandfather, who was a game-keeper and lived up in the hills, and exposed me, inadvertently, to life in a cottage without electricity, and the whole of the sort of game-keeperish existence. It's a very, very rich, fertile part of my memory, and a part I harken back to with a great deal of, not false sentiment, but a sort of sadness.

"To me that's a sort of spirit of Scotland - standing in the little village and thrilling to the pipe bands as they march down the street, just feeling sore about the pipe band music and the drums as they marched past and then faded off in the distance."

"I feel very much at odds as an individual on this planet. I feel confused, I feel alienated, I feel lonely."

THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, ON STAGE IN THE SECC, THERE HAD BEEN ONE MOMENT IN PARTICULAR WHEN ANNIE HAD LOOKED PARTICULARLY DELIGHTED TO BE THERE - AS DELIGHTED AS THE 10,000 BEFORE HER - IF THE EARTH HADN'T ACTUALLY MOVED, HAD IT AT LEAST BEEN A BIT SPECIAL? WAS IT REALLY ANY DIFFERENT?

"Ehm. I have to say something. Patriotism is a healthy thing, to be proud of one's country is definitely a healthy thing, but it can be thwarted into something, a sort of nationalism, that is very close to prejudice, and then it goes sour for me. But there is a place for it, for everybody. I like to think that I have the world's spirit at heart. I'm well travelled, and it's enriched my life very much. In a sense when I come back to Scotland, if I have anything to say to anybody, it would be as a person who has left the place, coming back with that sort of maturity of view. And last night there was a moment that was very special to me, but it was a very personal moment. Because my family were there, without my father - my father died this year. I won't say we had an easy reunion, because we didn't, but nevertheless it was something very private and very personal..."

WAS THE TRANSITION TO BECOMING A "WORLD PERSON" SOMETHING THAT CAME EASILY? WOULD YOU SAY YOU FELT DIFFERENT FROM THOSE AROUND YOU AS YOU GREW UP IN ABERDEEN?

"My upbringing was essentially working class. I don't like that term, but from a financial point of view I

was brought up in a tenement house. The kids played out in the street, there were no motor cars really. It was very safe. Maybe I have a romantic notion of it, but there was something great about that, it's something in my memory that I cherish. I went to a school where most of the kids had parents who were maybe teachers or professors or whatever. I stood out a bit because I'm from an environment that was working class, and my mum and dad worked very hard to allow me the uniform.

"I was never victimised at all - I'm not a deprived child talking about a deprived childhood, in fact my childhood was very enriched by those slight differences. But there was that sense of 'I'm not really like this kind of kid, and I'm not really like that kind of kid.'

"So I was at this rather repressed sort of school for girls. I just followed the very strict, conservative, conformist type roles, right up to the point of being about 14. It's about that age when your sexuality emerges and you become more aware of the outside world, and question who you are and what your purpose is in life, why you're there."

THE TYPICAL TEENAGE REBELLION?

"I would say that inwardly I was incredibly rebellious, but there are different kinds of rebellion, and mine was a secret one. As a girl from a girls' school in the provincial town of Aberdeen, I knew that if I let my rebellion show I would be chastised for it and I wouldn't be allowed to fulfil the destiny which I wanted, which was to leave. The Academy for me was just a way to get out..."

AND BECOME ANNIE LENNOX THE TOURIST AND NOW EURYTHMIC?

"I never thought I was going to do what I'm doing now, but I always believed that things are not what they seem. I'm not a conformist by any means, although I may appear so through the many ways that you have perceived me. Even now as I articulate who I am to you, you'll only see one side of me, and there are many sides to me. But I would like to represent myself as articulately as possible, because I have reasons for being here, and I feel at times that I'm misunderstood, and misinterpreted - as if people don't really get the point - because I'm not happy-go-lucky, popy Annie, and I think that that's often how the media portrays me.

In the general swirl of the information that we are all either attracted or repelled by, I don't feel that I have ever really revealed myself, or maybe even had the opportunity to. This whole music business absolutely stinks in so many respects. It rife with sycophancy, self-importance and fashion obsessed superficiality. That I have to work around, always feel that I'm working around everything.

CONFORMIST OR NOT, SURELY SUCCESS IN THIS BUSINESS MEANS GOING ALONG WITH THE SELF-SELLING AND CRASS PROMOTION ROUTINE...

"Say in the early stages of a new group, maybe they get an offer to appear on a children's TV programme, only they have to get a pie in the face. You're not going to turn that down, because you need the exposure. Or maybe you take a stand like The Smiths or whatever, who say they're not going to appear. And yes, I can understand that, too. But that can become too much like a Holy Child, and I don't think anything is ever that reverent in the pop scene. It's quite an animal that has all sorts of facets and dynamics to it, and somehow or another Eurythmics fit in.

"Dave and I believe that music is a very positive force, with or without the capitalist music industry as it stands. I am fascinated by the fact that I can put some sounds on a tape and it can affect me in a certain way, or I could go to a concert and be deeply and genuinely moved. Not just by the people on stage but the people who have come, and who are together

"Life's so fast nowadays, we don't know how to talk to each other, and we put the television on or we



CLAUDE GASSIGN

stand in a club or a bar and we pose. We try to attract each other because we want to sleep with somebody tonight, and then we want to drop them because something wasn't quite good enough. It's a very complicated society. Somewhere in the midst of all that I think that the pop culture has its place, and I want to be in there."

HOW CAN THAT FORM OF POP CULTURE EXIST AS SOMETHING VALUABLE IN WHAT IS A VERY CAPITALIST BUSINESS? AND EURYTHMICS ARE AS IMAGE-CONSCIOUS AS ANY BAND...

"It exists in a very diverse way, it can exist in a totally superficial way... I really have to condemn this kind of hype we're so surrounded by. People say to me 'So your latest look is...' or 'this is your new image' and I have to say wait a minute, this is not my look, this is me! I'm working in this field and I'm just presenting myself to people. Like I choose to wear this today, and I don't really want to analyse it too much.

"Yet when we go on stage I do analyse what I wear, and it's very calculated because we're interpreting songs, and it's like a big flag to get people's attention. And it's very necessary, just in the same way that it was necessary for me to present myself in a more masculine form initially, because I felt that if I presented myself in a girlyish fashion, I would be completely misunderstood, because I wasn't some kind of sex symbol. And it worked, it really worked.

"The trouble was that simultaneously Boy George came up and we got the gender-bender label, which I didn't mind because it was interesting even if wasn't accurate. After that I thought, 'Okay, I must re-invent', because it's necessary for the artist or musician to be one step ahead of the game. But it's not image or fashion...that's something else."

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR IMAGE NOW? APPEARING ON STAGE IN A BRA FOR INSTANCE...

"Yes, but you know that's a very confident thing to do, because it's not titillating...pardon the pun...but I realise that if I was to stand there and kind of do a little striptease on stage, and remove my blouse very slowly, and say 'Wow! Here we are now', that would be something else. But it's a very workmanlike thing to do, in a way it affords me a sense of freedom. All the times I've done this I've never had anybody go 'Whaurr!' - it's not like that. I think that nowadays when you see so many topless page three women, you've got to re-invent what is real sexuality and what is just titillating. I think that I can quite confidently go out there and feel that this is another kind of sexuality. It's mature, it's real. And I want to be sexual on stage. I don't want to be a prude, and the stage is a great place to project sexuality. Not sexiness, but sexuality, which is a very important part of all kinds of music. I had kept that out of my line, and I'm exploring it a little bit more now. I'm

taking steps into something, you have to, you know, you can't stand still.

Eurythmics is not *The Eurythmics*, it's Eurythmics, and that is a term for a whole lot of creative ideas. We can't have a group in the conventional sense, it stifles our creativity, our songwriting and our presentation.

"Everybody wants to label you, to put you into a nice, safe, little bag and actually we defy that kind of thing. I don't see why Eurythmics can't be a folk group next time around. Why not? If we think that that is the place that will move people somehow, why not re-invent?"

SO DO YOU THINK YOUR MUSIC CAN DO A LOT TO SPARK THE KIND OF MILITANCY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THIS COUNTRY?

"I think music's always done something about that. What else have we got? Not governments. I'm very, very cynical about politics and politicians. I don't trust any of them, I think they all suck. I'm getting... But this is how I *feel*. Have you ever read anything that said, 'This is how I feel'. Have you? They want to know about Lennox's love-life or the wacky world of Eurythmics. It's boring, it's irrelevant and it doesn't matter. People matter. Music matters because it brings people together.

"You can read into Eurythmics music in many different ways. They're not simple little love-songs, they're full of symbolic imagery. I feel very much at odds as an individual on this planet. I feel confused, I feel alienated, I feel lonely. On the one hand you have third world countries and on the other hand you have high technology, it confuses me and I try to express that wierd, symbiotic relationship. I won't say that this is what Eurythmics music stands for. It's too easy to put some kind of label on it. But it lurks around, that consciousness. There's a whole lot of pressures put on us to make appearances, to do this thing there, and be part of the game. And of course, I am part of the game, but you want to slip into it without selling out the basic things that got you there in the first place. And I am still essentially the same person with the same values."

DOES THAT FACT NEVER GET LOST BEHIND THE WHOLE MUSIC BUSINESS THING?

"No, no not really. Not when I read letters from people who have been moved by what we've written, deeply moved. And that's not sold through anything, those are our words, that's our music, and nobody can mess that up..."

JUST ONE LAST QUESTION ... WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS?

"I would be very happy if Reagan and Gorbachev really did something. I mistrust all of them, but the best Christmas present the whole world could have would be some sanity in politicians, and a start to genuinely reduce the nuclear missile programme on both sides. For me personally, I don't care, I have everything I need...maybe some nice bath salts."