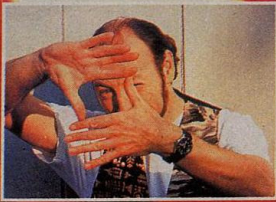
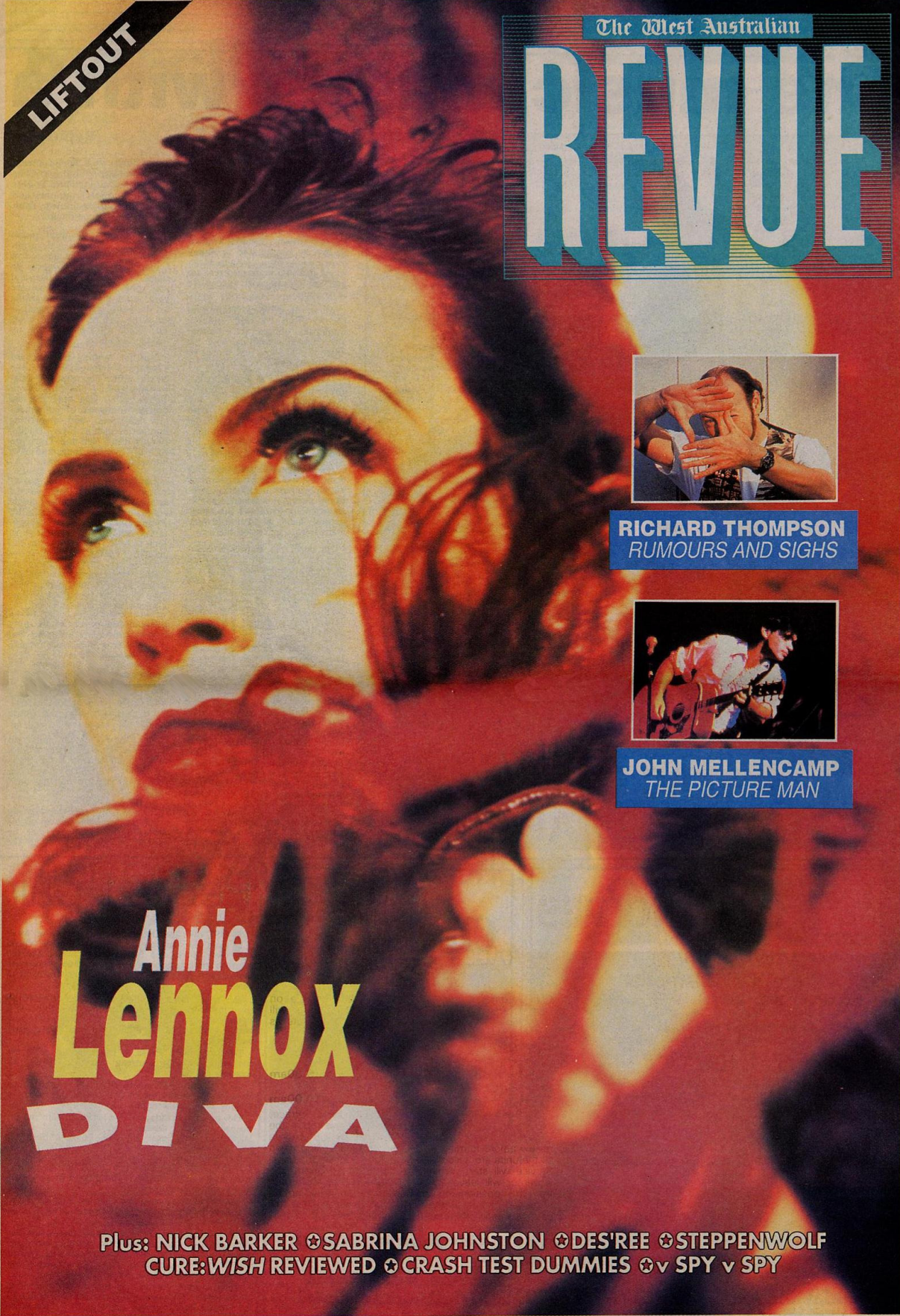


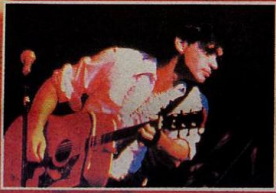
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN THURSDAY APRIL 23 1992

LIFTOUT

The West Australian  
**REVUE**



**RICHARD THOMPSON**  
RUMOURS AND SIGHS



**JOHN MELLENCAMP**  
THE PICTURE MAN

Annie  
**Lennox**  
DIVA

Plus: NICK BARKER ⊕ SABRINA JOHNSTON ⊕ DES'REE ⊕ STEPPENWOLF  
CURE: WISH REVIEWED ⊕ CRASH TEST DUMMIES ⊕ v SPY v SPY

**DANCE DISCS : CRUCIAL CUTS REVIEWED - WIN A PAIR OF PUMA DISCS**



revue

# Lennox soars in

## interview

mike gee

**T**HE woman on the end of the phone sounds nervous.

Annie Lennox is back in the spotlight she has shunned since the break-up of the highly successful, chart-topping Eurythmics and her creative divorce from her partner in music, Dave Stewart.

What Annie Lennox doesn't know is that for some reason I'm nervous as well.

This is a solitary woman of extremes; a woman who can shed her bra in concert and flash her breasts at the audience yet away from the glare of the spotlight shuns the trappings of stardom.

The last time I spoke to Lennox was in October 1980. She was sitting in the Victoria Park office of RCA Records (now BMG), hair close-cropped, a scarf wrapped round her throat. A whispered "hi" and several stifled laughs would be all Lennox would contribute that afternoon. She was trying to get her voice back in time for a show at the Herdsman Hotel that night.

Opposite sat what on first glimpse appeared to be a jet black-haired Scotch terrier crossed with a mop. From within the tangled hair Stewart peered out.

Here, then, was the creative heart of the Tourists, the band that had expanded from 70s trio the Catch and in doing so changed its name.

The interview goes easily. Stewart is wry, slightly cynical, twisted. That night on stage the Tourists announce they are breaking up.

Lennox laughs when I tell her it seems fitting the next time I should talk to her is at the start of a new chapter in her life and career.

"Kind of like Spinal Tap only I haven't lost another drummer," she says. "I suppose it is like a Phoenix rising from the ashes. Didn't you ever interview the Eurythmics?"

Yes, but both times I got the other half.

"It's strange how things work out like that."

I reckon there's a stack of Twilight Zone stuff flying around. She laughs. I give her a message from a close friend of hers in Australia. She's delighted. The ice is broken. She has a rich laugh. Seriously, you want to hear her laugh again.

Back to the plot. Lennox, after a sometimes traumatic period of weaning herself off the Eurythmics, has finally offered her first solo outing *Diva* — and it isn't half good once you spend the time to get acquainted with its more genteel and contemporary ways.

It's been a long time coming, Annie. Is *Diva* everything you wanted it to be?

"I guess the simplest explanation is that the record was never totally planned or scheduled. I had an inkling of an idea that I wanted to do something like this and I slowly pursued it, got the right elements together and ...

And?

"And I'm more satisfied than I believed I could or would be."

That's a good way to start a comeback. But you've certainly opted for a different style and feel. Was that a gamble?

"Everybody who really knows me knows that all I've wanted is to produce a piece of work that people will be interested in.

"For me it was a test of my sincerity. There is more of this artist on *Diva* than they've ever heard before.

"And I'm the taste master. I have to be ultra-satisfied. I'm doing it for myself — making music. If other people like it that's a huge bonus. I want to communicate my ideas to other people but they have to be expressed to my own standards. If they aren't then I'm letting myself down and anybody who listens."

**‘I feel that I am less at odds with life. That's not to say everything is perfect.’**

Intense?

"Not as much as I used to be. I've learnt to relax a little, to ease back, not to take everything too seriously."

**The sound is sparse, pared back, at times haunting. You must have been happy with Stephen Lipton's work. (Lipton produced *Diva*.)**

"That was something that could so easily have gone wrong. Stephen was brilliant yet it could have so easily been somebody else and all gone horribly wrong.

"His first claim to fame was working with Trevor Horn for many years.

"Stephen's also done Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Propaganda, the last two Simple Minds albums. I was introduced to him by my manager. I guessed that he would understand what I wanted.

"I didn't want lots of overdubs on the record. I'm not a band and didn't want a band sound. I guess what Stephen had to do was create an Annie Lennox sound.

"He knew I didn't want the album to be glistening and slick and the sound you hear reflects that desire. The feeling comes through in a more tactile and sensual way. It's in the spaces, the voice, each note, rather than be drowned out by multiple overdubs of everything."

**The album ends with a 30s music hall, *Pennies From Heaven* style song. It's a very up ending but a very strange one in context of the rest of the record.**

"It's kind of a joke; a bit of light relief. The penultimate track *The Gift* is very sombre, melancholic yet at the same time optimistic. I wanted to lighten things up for the end of the album, show another side.

"The lyrics of *Keep Young and Beautiful* were performed by men in the 1930s — now I'm performing them in the 90s, so it also marks the change of attitude that took place in the 1960s."

**I think the emotional and lyrical peak and power comes in the trio of songs before *Keep Young* — *Primitive*, *Stay By Me* and *The Gift*. They work extraordinarily well in sequence. There's a lot of pain, a lot of hope, some obvious soul searching.**

"You're right, I'm not bitter and angry any more. Those songs come from a more whole perspective. I feel that I am less at odds with life. That's not to say everything is perfect.

"Sometimes I feel it all sounds so laboured when I try to express feelings of disparity and love. But I have the benefit of hindsight now."

**The couple of years post-Eurythmics have obviously given you space to find yourself.**

"I took up life. It is as simple as that. Once the Eurythmics ended I took up life.

"Five years before the demise of the Eurythmics, life was like a dream I was chasing after but never got to touch. The pace was eating me up. I had to take my life into my own hands and change it.

"I have. Now I'm here to sing, to rely on my own singers, musicians and performers.

"If I have to cope with pressure then it will be relative to what I want to achieve."

**How much pressure is songwriting for you? You've penned 10 of the 11 tracks on *Diva*. Does the added responsibility affect you?**



revue

# first solo flight



**Annie Lennox: the solitary woman of extremes is back in the spotlight.**

"At times songwriting is easy. The words really flow, the melody flows. Then there is no pressure. Other times it is tough. You really tend to go away and bang your head against the wall.

"It can be as maddening as wrestling around on the carpet trying to find a word to rhyme with orange."

**I'd change the colour.**

"But you can't because you don't want to change the song as it is. It becomes a matter of honour and self-respect. It can become an impossible dilemma."

**How challenging will it be to you to go back on the road?**

"To be honest I don't have plans to tour. I'm waiting to see what

happens. If there is a demand for me to perform then I will address it.

"But I haven't got myself in the situation where I get back to the old routine — release album with tour organised in advance, then do another album, tour and so on. Now I'm playing it by ear."

**It's a nicer way to run your life.**

"It's more civilised. I can afford that type of luxury. I can afford to sit back. If there is a demand I'll be there."

**What did you do in all that time you were away?**

"I'm not telling you."

**It was that good?**

"Yes and no. It's the old thing of when you don't have any time off

you think of all these things you would love to do. Then when you get all this time to yourself you suddenly don't have anything that really seems pressing. Then you start to feel guilty that you should be doing something. It's the dilemma of never being totally satisfied.

"At one stage I got to thinking they should put me out to grass on some remote island.

"In the end I realised that of all the things I wanted to do perhaps the most important was to write an album, to see if it was possible and surprise, surprise, finding it was possible."

**That seems an optimistic note on which to end.**

"Indeed it is."



# Fabulous farewell to rock superstar

**T**HIS was the tribute to end all tributes. Some are saying it was the greatest rock show of all.

More than 72,000 people crammed Wembley Stadium to see a galaxy of stars pay a final tribute to Freddie Mercury, the legendary lead singer of Queen who died from AIDS last November.

Queen reformed for their first live concert appearance in six years. Brian May, Roger Taylor and John Deacon — who last played together on stage at Knebworth in 1986 — belted out a string of 23 Queen hits which were sung by a succession of the biggest rock stars in the world.

Earlier rock super group Guns 'N' Roses stole the first half of the concert as lead singer Axl Rose bounded on stage in a Union Jack leather jacket with the letters UK on the back. Axl, wearing a red head band and tartan kilt, had the crowd roaring as he charged around stage, kicked his microphone 5m into the pit, swigged whisky from a glass by the drum kit and wore a T-shirt bearing the image of Jesus with the words "Kill your idols" on the front.

A sparkling Liz Taylor was jeered by hecklers as she took to the stage but she gave back as good as she got. "I'll get off in a minute — I'll get off, but I've got something to say," she told the yobs who shouted at her to leave the stage.

The movie queen, dazzling in a flashy jacket and black pants, paid glowing tribute to Freddie, describing him as: "An exuberant rock star who rushed across all our lands like a comet across the sky." And she pleaded with the crowd to continue the fight against AIDS.

Def Leppard singer Joe Elliott kicked Queen into action launching into their hit *Tie Your Mother Down*. He was followed by Who star Roger Daltrey who burst into a brilliant performance of *I Want It All*.

Roger Taylor delighted the crowd with a three-minute drum solo at the start of *A Kind of Magic*. Extreme's Gary Cherone came back on stage to sing *Hammer to Fall* and Led Zepplin front man Robert Plant planted out *Immundo* and *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*.

One of the most touching moments was when Brian May sang *Too Much Love Will Kill You*. He looked overcome by the occasion as fans cheered and stamped their feet.

As spotlights panned the stadium Paul Young launched into *Radio Gaga*, and Wembley's crowded pitch turned into a sea of clapping hands. Excited fans sang along, danced and some formed a conga at the back.

Before he sang *Who Wants to Live Forever*, Seal, who was wearing a white suit, told fans: "This is very special to me, I remember when I first heard it."

Seal had the crowd singing along with a brilliant ballad version of Freddie Mercury's poignant hit. Wearing glasses and a gleaming white suit the 1.93m African singer had the audience lighting cigarette lighters and Queen drummer Roger Taylor wiped away tears as the chords died at the end of the song.

## FREDDIE MERCURY MEMORIAL CONCERT Wembley Stadium April 20



**Axl Rose: Guns 'N' Roses stole the first half of the show.**

After Seal, Lisa Stansfield brought back the smiles as she came on stage in red hair net and yellow curlers pushing a vacuum cleaner in a wonderful mickey-take of Freddie Mercury's famous drag act in the video for *I Want to Break Free*.

As darkness fell, David Bowie and Annie Lennox ran on stage in a light green suit and dazzling black sequinned ball gown respectively, and shrugged off ear-piercing feedback from the sound system to perform a scintillating version of *Under Pressure* — the song that Bowie had taken to No. 1 with Freddie more than 10 years ago.

Annie, making her stage comeback after two years in the pop wilderness, looked typically unusual with slicked back hair and blackened eyes. But as the superstar duo hugged each other at the end of the song, the crowd erupted into wild applause.

David Bowie stunned the audience by paying an amazing tribute to a close friend of his called Craig who is dying from AIDS. Bowie, who had just finished a spectacular set, sank to his knees and led the sell-out crowd in saying the Lord's Prayer.

Wembley Stadium was hushed for more than a minute as Bowie went through the prayer.

Before kneeling he said: "There are possibly members of your family who have been troubled by this relentless disease. I would like to extend my best wishes to a friend called Craig. I would like to offer him something in direct fashion in the only way I can think of doing it." Then he broke in to the prayer. The crowd roared their approval at the end.

George Michael also shocked the crowd by stopping the show to launch an attack on the AIDS complacency of heterosexual people.

"If you think just gay people or drug addicts are at risk you're lining up to be one of those numbers," he said. "Please be careful."

He made the attack in between singing a brilliant duet with Lisa Stansfield of *These Are The Days of Our Lives* and his solo rendition of *Somebody To Love*. Fans were clapping and singing along as George, backed by the London Community Gospel Choir, sang the Queen classic.

But Freddie Mercury reigned supreme — as he stole the show at his own tribute concert. The late great Queen singer appeared on two giant video screens dressed as a king to take his final bow as the sell-out crowd roared with delight.

In a scene from Freddie's last concert at Knebworth Park six years ago the flamboyant singer strutted to the front of the stage in a long red and white robe, doffed his crown to the crowd and gave his famous rendition of *God Save the Queen*.

It was a sensational finale as \$50,000 worth of fireworks erupted around the videos and the dozens of stars who'd appeared on the show came back on for a final encore.

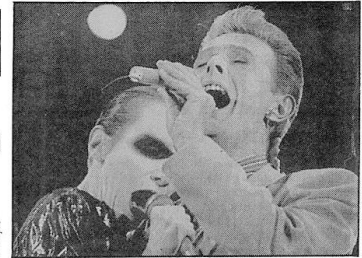
Led by Liza Minnelli the stars sang a rousing version of Freddie's anthem *We Are The Champions* which had the whole crowd singing and waving banners. But not even Liza's wonderful performance could eclipse Freddie's last farewell.

Queen drummer Roger Taylor walked to the microphone as the image disappeared and said simply: "Goodbye Freddie, we love you".

Minutes earlier an emotional Elton John, was reduced to tears as he sang two of Freddie's greatest hits, *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *The Show Must Go On*. As Elton finished his performance, he left the stage without looking back, clearly overcome by the occasion.

The show overran by almost an hour but nobody minded. Forget Live Aid, this was the greatest rock show of all times. A fitting tribute to Freddie Mercury.

**Peter Willis and Piers Morgan**



**ABOVE: David Bowie and Annie Lennox.**



**BELOW: Together again — Queen.**



**Liza Minnelli leads a chorus of superstars in *We Are The Champions*.**