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**CANNY ANNIE**  
*Viva la diva*

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The past few years have been hard on ex-Eurythmic Annie Lennox – she lost a partner in Dave Stewart, and a baby. But now she's back, with a new career, a solo album, a husband and a baby daughter

# HOW ANNIE FINALLY GOT HER FUN

**I**knew Annie Lennox was going to be a challenge. She announced two years ago she was taking a break from music and public life. Fed up being harried by the media, that's what stars usually say, that or they're going off to find themselves. Either way, it's a worrying sign. When they come back, as you suspect they will, they'll emerge all soppy. Or even more uptight.

No hold on, I have the cutting here. Ms Lennox said she was going to do some charity work and devote herself to starting a family. So. Serious intentions.

I got the call saying, come to Venice, Ms Lennox will see you. That was nice. Till I discovered that the other person being granted an audience was a young man called Alan Jackson, originally from the music press, who had already interviewed her five times. Oh no. Practically part of the family.

But Ms Lennox also needs one dollop of ▷

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REPORT BY HUNTER DAVIES

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MAIN PICTURES BY GEOFF WILKINSON

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# 'With my so-called androgynous look I was trying to disturb'

< hard-edged mega exposure, which in this case means YOU Magazine.

We are in the Danieli Hotel in Venice where I am staying. Ms Lennox et al are in a more humble establishment, the Metropole. She chose to come to my hotel as a change from her own. Two minders are with her, silent and stone-faced. Very inhibiting.

Ms Lennox, you were quoted in February 1990, when you received your third award for best female singer of the year, as saying that you were going to work for Shelter. What exactly have you done for them in the last two years?

'Oh God,' she said, clutching her pretty head, sorry, attractive head. It's dark auburn, by the way, her natural colour, not the bright blonde it once was. 'That remark was taken out of context. Helping Shelter was just one of the things I wanted

to do. It came out as shock horror story, "Pop star turns herself into Mother Teresa".

'It's always dangerous when people in my sort of position make those remarks. I get a lot of approaches from serious causes and I try to take them seriously. But you can't win. The press get at you for being naive, not knowing where the money is really going, or for trying to behave like a saint. You can actually do damage, because it can look as if you are trivialising a Third World problem, or people just become bored. Look at the attacks and mockery Sting has had to put up with. Look how horrible people have been to Vanessa Redgrave.'

Yes, I sympathise, and I admire anyone who does stand up for what they believe, but did you actually go out and work in Shelter's office?

'Of course I didn't. I helped them with contacts,

and I made contributions. That's all I want to say about it.'

Now for the rest of those two years. Well, she did have a baby, daughter Lola, aged 14 months, with her in Venice, being looked after by a nanny in her hotel. What was the birth like?

'I don't intend to let people impinge on my private life. I know some people can parade their children, their home, their Jacuzzi, which I think is amazing. I consider it invasive. I would give up being a famous person if the private part of my life became as public as that.'

For a moment I thought the interview was over. All I'd been trying to ask, clumsily, was where and when she'd had the baby, what was the weight, that sort of harmless stuff. I said sorry, but really I was just wondering which hospital, as her home is near me in North London.

'Oh, I thought you wanted me to exude about the "joy of childbirth", she said, smiling. 'The glory of being a mother, how I felt when I first saw her, comparing it with what happened the first time... ' The first time her baby was stillborn.

Phew. We got that sorted out. She does have a good smile, which comes quickly, out of nowhere, just when you think she's becoming too heavy and serious. She is of course a serious person. Even the throwaway questions were examined for size and content and duly agonised over.

For most of the two years she did very little, messing around at home with her baby and her husband Uri Fruchtmann, an Israeli-born film director. They met when he came to do a programme about her and they married in 1988. Before that, she had been married for about a year to a German Hare Krishna monk who came to cook vegetarian meals for her. Most people assumed she married on the rebound, when her long-standing relationship with Dave Stewart, the other half of the Eurythmics, came to an end.

For most of her working life so far Dave has been her partner. He came up in conversation several times, and she was more than willing to talk about him and exactly how he came into her life.

She was born in Aberdeen on Christmas Day 1954, an only child, daughter of a railway worker who was made redundant and became a boiler-maker. He was musical, in that he played the bagpipes and loved Jimmy Shand and his band. She went to Aberdeen High School for Girls, a rather smart school, where at parties she was surprised to find girls had their own bedrooms and staircases inside their house. She and her parents lived in a one-bedroom tenement.

She played the piano and then took up the flute when a teacher said there was one left over, and if she played it, she'd get in the school orchestra. At 17 she toyed with going to art college but chose music instead, winning a place at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She hated it from the beginning. 'The atmosphere was Victorian, the teaching mediocre and I felt out of it.' She stuck it three years, despite losing all interest in classical music, and left just before her finals, deciding she was going to be a pop singer.

She answered an advert in a music paper and found herself being auditioned by a self-styled >



The stylised Annie Lennox - some of her many images, on her own and in disguise with Dave Stewart





< impresario. 'He teamed me with another girl and got us some pub work as the Stocking Tops, dressing us accordingly.'

You what? Annie Lennox, feminist icon, leader of a generation of independent-minded women, you did what?

'Oh God, I wish I'd never mentioned that. I was very young, didn't know anything. It seemed the only way to get started. We only did it for a couple of weeks, then I was out of work.'

One day, while working as a waitress in a veggie restaurant in Hampstead called Pippins, now gone, in walked the bold Dave, a hairy person from Sunderland, out of work, but a rocker in disguise. They teamed up, in both senses, and formed a band called the Tourists which did reasonably well for a while, then there were rows, legal arguments with various companies and mounting debts. They came back as the Eurythmics, dominating the charts throughout the 80s, winning endless awards and plaudits, selling millions, making millions.

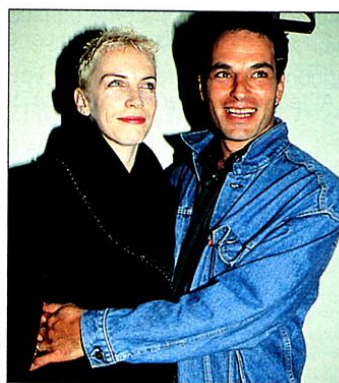
She perfected an androgynous, gender-bending look with her short, spiky blonde hair, angular body and ambiguous boy-girl clothes which influenced a whole generation. It was a reaction to the blatant sex appeal girl singers were supposed to have, pouting at the audience, flicking back their long hair, flashing their bodies. Boy George was doing it the other way, disturbing people and conventions by cleverly assuming a girl-boy

persona, so you watched fascinated, wondering what he was really like.

In Annie's case it was true but false, real but assumed, serious but ironic. She was getting across a point, teasing the audience about accepted values of femininity. Her style and personality were as much a reason for the success of the Eurythmics as their music.

Now they are no more. Dave got married (to Siobhan Fahey, formerly of Bananarama) and in the last two years, while Annie has been resting, he has gone his own way, producing a couple of solo albums, neither with a great deal of success.

*'If Diva sinks without trace I'll be crushed'*



Left: Annie and husband Uri Fruchtman

Annie is about to unveil her first solo album called *Diva*, released April 6. She became broody, in a musical sense, some four months ago, going into her little studio at home and amusing herself on her keyboard, improvising tunes. When one seemed to have a spark, she wrote it down, in musical notation. See, those years at music college were not wasted. 'I have a bad memory, that's the reason I write music down.'

The title of the album, *Diva*, has no connection with any of the songs. That's just the visual concept. 'It's meant to be partly ironic. My life is divided into the public me and the private me. In the public me, I am seen as a woman on a pedestal, an artifice, who glides from place to place, a grandiose creature with no other life. That's the one I'm projecting. It's not me, of course. It's myth making, the lifestyle of the persona I am creating.'

The main point is visual. She sees *Diva* as a rather faded 30s star, and she has been collecting a suitable and rather extensive period wardrobe with massive floral hats and long frocks. She will appear in these in the video. >





Annie in classical repose, left, and as a mother, with daughter Lola, below

stylists. I create what I think will be suitable. With my so-called androgynous look I was not trying to provoke sexual outrage. I was trying to disturb, to create a sense of power. The diva look is new for me, but it seemed to suit the mood of this album.'

Was she worried, going it alone? Her eight albums with the Eurythmics were done in tandem, words and music, with Dave. Now she will have to take all the blame. Or the credit.

'If it sinks without trace, well, I'd be crushed. I'd have to rethink my strategy, but I won't give up music. If I lived in Russia, where I probably wouldn't be able to make albums, I would still be making music for myself.'

She has had some wild moments in her life, with several surprising liaisons between marriages, and then, of course, the German Hare Krishna interlude. They don't quite fit in with what appears to be her real personality, as a strong, controlled, serious feminist, or her sombre off-stage looks. She had arrived in a long dark overcoat and was now sitting in a sensible cardigan and dark trousers. Er, it is a cardigan, I said. The lighting was a bit subdued in the Danieli. 'A sad cardigan,' she said. 'I go in for victim dressing.' She paused, watching me write it down. 'Joke.' Hmm, got me there.

Talking in generalisations, not getting at you personally, don't you think it's interesting that so many strong-willed young women, who appear in control of their lives and their actions, keep on falling for the 'wrong' sort of man?

She took this in, slowly. 'It's probably true, as a generalisation. The answer is simple. Hormones.'

Another joke? There hadn't been many. I then threw in a question about Dave Stewart. How had their relationship ended?

'It had ceased to be fun. We had both grown into different people. There were many rows. Not really in the professional sense, as we still worked well together. We just couldn't get on as people. But I have goodwill towards him. I still feel affection for him. He happens to be staying near Venice at the moment. In fact I'm having dinner with him tonight...'

For the first time, the two minders betrayed some emotion. Perhaps even amazement. They clearly knew nothing about Dave's arrival. Annie smiled to herself.

What about the future? Will it be back to business as usual, now that she's done the rest and recreation bit?

'I don't see myself having a long future. The shelf life is short for women singers. And I don't intend to have a face-lift.'

'I have my family now. Perhaps we'll have some more children. Perhaps I'll go to art college, do a foundation year, the one I never did when I was 17. Oh and I'd like to learn to drive. Anything else you want to know?'

I said thanks, she'd been very helpful. Welcome back to being interviewed. Hmm, she said. You were scary. Moi? How had I done that? But she was off. To her dinner date. **[YOU]**

< That's the reason she was spending ten days in Venice, to make the video. These days the video is as important as the music it is meant to promote. Perhaps even more so. The style and excitement suggested by the video brings in the punters, or so the experts in the music business like to believe. Venice, however lovely, seemed to me a bit corny as a location. Isn't it full of film crews, shooting gondolas, guzzling Cornettos, shooting each other?

'It is a cliché, but I love Venice. It felt right for the video, all that mist and mellow fruitlessness. Everywhere you turn there is something aesthetically stimulating.

'I always enjoy the visual bit, making the video. It's easier than writing the music. That is soul searching. This is fun. I don't want to sound pretentious, OK, let me sound pretentious. I love bringing visual images out of a song. I don't use

'My strength was in looking striking, not pretty'

