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Eurythmics

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Editor's letter Power plus passion equals soul

Of all the A-list stars who performed for Live 8 in 2005, the one who walked onto the stage and most made it her own was Annie Lennox. There was no need for explosive special effects or battalions of butt-busting dancers; the sheer power, quality and emotion in Lennox's voice commanded instant attention. This woman projects so much soul you wonder where on earth she keeps it all.

But what made it a stand-out performance was an authenticity that extends way beyond her talent. If you could guarantee someone was there because they truly believed in the cause, then it was her. Catch Lennox at any point in the year and you'll find her involved in anything from campaigning over environmental issues or HIV/Aids in Africa to helping raise awareness of indigenous peoples under threat, human rights issues or world poverty, whether the cameras are on her or not.

So for a woman who says both that she can't imagine a world without music and that the planet is "totally insane", it's not entirely surprising that she's found a way of harnessing the power of her music to try to make a difference

This week sees Annie Lennox singing with the BBC Concert Orchestra at a special concert for Radio 2 recorded at London's Mermaid Theatre - including a first performance of three new tracks from her upcoming album, Songs of Mass Destruction. Read our exclusive interview with her on page 12.

Gill Hudson Editor

Contributors this week



MARTIN CLUNES ACTOR

"I don't know anything about traditional Maori greetings...so I end up singing Baggy Trousers [by Madness]. Which they then learn in Maori and sing back to me!" See p10



BARRY NORMAN FILM CRITIC AND WRITER

"Peter Cushing was always the gentleman. His greatest strength was that, regardless of the quality of his material, he always treated it - and his audience - seriously." See p39

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ANNIE LENNOX

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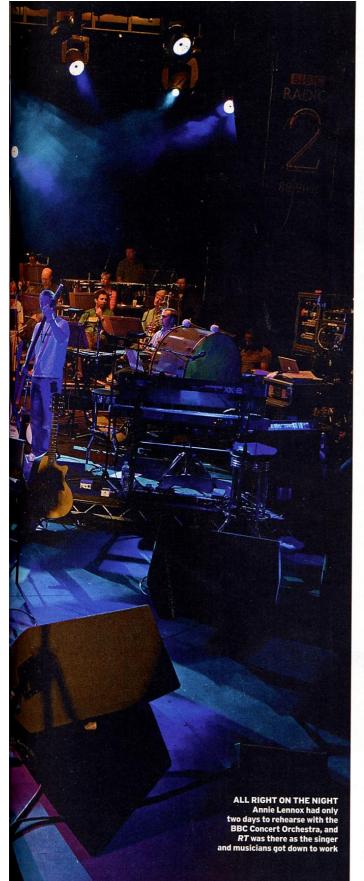
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Eurythmics





From music icon to social activist, **Annie Lennox** is the voice of her generation in more ways than one...

ondon streets seem to be full of Annie Lennox lookalikes. Worked-out women of a certain age, a certain attitude. Cropped blonde hair and straight, squared shoulders in singlets. It's not an easy look to carry off on the far side of 40, but the sheer number of these women – they appear on every corner en route to the west-London recording studio where the real Annie Lennox is rehearsing an exclusive concert for BBC Radio 2 Music Club – is testament to the iconic power of the image worked by the singer in the 1980s as the glamorous half of über-stylish pop duo Eurythmics.

The minute you see Lennox in the flesh, you understand that image wasn't the half of it. Working with Andy Brown, conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra, on new arrangements of classics such as Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This), Walking on Broken Glass and Why?— there are so many to choose from, given the Eurythmics alone had nine Top Ten singles—she's not so much involved in as entered by the music. Her still-boyish pelvis—she's 52 and "the look" works just fine on her—jerks to the syncopated intro of ... Broken Glass, while from the waist up she writhes and weaves slim arms like an avenging Eastern goddess. Minutes later, she's riding the swell of strings on Why? like a surfer, spooling out the melody in that amazing alto voice as if she had been singing with a full orchestra every day of her life.

"It's something I've been looking forward to," says Lennox. "I've always thought how interesting it would be to see how the songs work with a very subtle and creative arrangement. I think we've squeezed the maximum out of the phrasing and the orchestration."

aturday's Music Club concert also features songs from Lennox's new album, Songs of Mass Destruction (released in October). It may not sound like a toe-tapper, but the swirl of influences – from R&B and soul to punk, pop, jazz and blues – is powerfully engaging. "It's the palette of my referential experience," says Lennox, who has never been afraid to take herself, or her art, seriously. "You have no control over how other people will respond to your music but you want other people to hear it and feel something. I love the fact that music has that potential, to emotionally stop you in your tracks and speak the whole business of truth."

The first track on the album, Dark Road, which will also be released as a single, is a classic Lennox cri de coeur, with no convincing promise of light at the end of the tunnel. "It's an introductory track in every sense," she explains. "The world has never been a light place for me. I don't think it ever will be. I know people who are naturally sunny; they take things so smoothly and easily and they don't have a dark side. But I definitely have a very dark side. It's not immensely self-destructive, and my creativity is fed by it, but it's always there. I don't want to be dark," she insists, and you can readily believe it. The hard-edged, hard-earned truths of Songs of Mass Destruction couldn't be farther from the adolescent cult of misery.

"It's music for grown-ups," she says. "It's music for people who have really swallowed a lot, suffered a lot and had to get up and deal with it."

The trials of life kicked in early for Lennox. An only child, she was brought up in Aberdeen where her father was a boilermaker and her mother a school cook. "I felt very curtailed in Scotland," she recalls. "I longed to be free and to be able to develop my own

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sense of what was appropriate or not appropriate."

The tartan dance bands that characterised local culture in 1960s Scotland offered little release to a sensitive teenager but, gradually, Lennox found her voice. "I was about 15 when I started to listen to music on the radio and I realised that I loved Dusty Springfield and Petula Clark and Cilla Black, and I could copy that. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life, but I did get a place at the Royal College of Music in London to study flute and piano. Quite quickly, though, I knew that I wasn't ever going to be a flute player, I wasn't going to play in a chamber orchestra, and I didn't want to teach."

was really stuck," she continues,
"but then I heard Joni Mitchell—
her early albums—and because
I liked to write poetry, I started
to think that maybe I could write
songs, maybe I could put poetry
to music. It was all very intuitive—
nobody discovered me or told me
I could do this or should do that—
and eventually I realised, 'I want
to be a singer-songwriter'."

Flunking out of RCM just before her finals, Lennox was waitressing in a vegetarian café in Hampstead in 1976 when she met studio guru Dave Stewart, whose opening line was, "Will you marry me?" She didn't, but a four-year relationship established the creative tension of Eurythmics. Stewart's hi-tech rigour provided the perfect matrix for Lennox's vocal/visual opulence, and they became pin-ups of the MTV generation.



Despite a three-year "creative gap" after Eurythmics split up in 1991, when the couple reportedly didn't speak, Stewart remains part of Lennox's creative life (the producer

MIXING POP

WITH POLITICS Meeting Nelson

Mandela on the

campaign trail

(right), and with

Dave Stewart in

heyday (far right)

Eurythmics

Effectively bowing out of public life to bring up her daughters – this is only her fourth album in 15 years – Lennox remains a reluctant celebrity. ("The term is beneath me. Way

"My artistry is at its peak, my voice has never been better"

of Songs of Mass Destruction was hired on his recommendation, and a friendly meeting in LA sparked the impromptu Eurythmics album Peace in 1999). Subsequent relationships proved less durable. Her first marriage, to Hare Krishna monk Radha Raman, barely lasted a year. Her second, to film-maker Uri Fruchtmann, the father of her two daughters, ended in 2000.

"As a heterosexual, to be a mother unsupported and not sustained emotionally by a male figure is the last thing I ever wanted. It's been immensely painful, but I'm doing it. I adore my children. I think they love me back. And there comes a stage where you must accept things for what they are."

beneath me. I'm an artist. I've done something to earn recognition.")
"I'm not reclusive," she says, "but I am slightly antisocial; nothing bores me more or makes me feel more uncomfortable than being with people I'm not really connected to."

he's always ready, however, to get up and out for a cause she believes in. "I think it's an intelligent use of fame. But you have to choose carefully and learn your subject," she says. Recently returned from South Africa, where she has for some years worked with HIV-Aids charities, she cleared space on the new album for a rocking, feminist anthem, Sing, which calls for the implementation of a programme to prevent mother-to-baby HIV



Lennox also signed up a "chorus" of female stars - Madonna, Joss Stone, Gladys Knight, kd lang, to name a few - with all proceeds from internet downloads going to South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign: "People in my position, internationally renowned women artists, have a voice to express themselves, and a bridge, via the media, to make themselves heard. I wanted to do something for women in another part of the world who, because of endemic poverty, have no voice. I think that's a lovely partnership.'

The opposing elements of Annie Lennox – thin-skinned diva and kick-ass activist – have fused with the years into a more flexible persona. "I've been evolving all these decades, developing my own sense of selfesteem. My artistry is at its peak, my voice has never been better. I'm 52 and I feel so sharp. I'm at my own cutting edge." E. Jane Dickson Dark Road is released on 24 September, Songs of Mass Destruction on 1 October

LINKS

www.annielennox.com



Brown first worked with Annie Lennox 20 years ago, which may explain how he was able to prepare for this concert with just two days' rehearsal. "It helps that Annie embraces the orchestral treatment of her songs," he tells RT. "When she joined us for the last day's rehearsal, it lifted the sound by 30 per cent. She's got such a powerful voice!" Left: the BBC Concert Orchestra work hard to perfect the concert playlist (inset)

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