

IN MY OWN WORDS

Edited by Claire Bradley



Annie Lennox

Growing up in Scotland, Annie Lennox, 54, dreamt of being onstage. Now, after 30 years as one of the most revered and influential singers in the industry, she's discovered sweet dreams really are made of this

For me, making music and performing was just a crazy dream. There was no guarantee anything was ever going to happen. I was so close to leaving London and going back to my hometown of Aberdeen, in Scotland. I don't know how you actually make success happen – I swear to God, I don't think there's a formula for it. The journey has been extraordinary. How can I have been a singer/songwriter for 30 years? I'm very grateful.

I don't remember not singing. My mum told me I used to sing myself to sleep as a toddler. I remember when I was three years old, I had this toy piano and she said I used to pick out tunes on that. I must have had an early propensity for music. It always moved me; if it was sad, I'd feel it so strongly. When I heard Motown, it changed my life.

There was a huge generation gap between me and my parents. They're both gone now. My father died a long time ago. He was 61, which is only seven years older than I am now. There's no comparison between my generation and theirs. The opportunities I was afforded as opposed to someone growing up during the war... My goodness, life was tough for them. But Mum used to say life was simpler. She told me, "I was happy. I used to cycle for miles to get to school. We didn't have much, but I was happy."

For kids who live in the suburbs, Scotland can be very drab and angst-ridden. I remember looking through the window at the Aberdeen horizon and

thinking, there has to be something beyond this. It wasn't that I hated it, I just felt like an outsider and couldn't relate to it 100 per cent. And I thought, I'm not here – I don't know where I am, but I'm not here.

People have always commented on my androgynous look. David Bowie was the precursor to a lot of that. He just came in with this incredibly free, liberating presence; this kind of visual, incredibly cool, rock'n'roll arts thing – it was a revelation. All the greats – such as early Roxy Music and the Rolling Stones and The Beatles – gave us colour when we only had black and white.

When I first met Dave [Stewart, Lennox's former partner and bandmate], I thought he was such a crazy person. I thought he was wild, and was like, I'm not sure about this person. Then I met him again and thought he was sweet. He was so enigmatic, so out of the box. When I got to know him, I realised he understood me, he got me, and I felt other people just hadn't. I'd never met a man who understood me. I had a picture in my mind at the time of drowning at sea, then finally landing on a beach, and that was Dave. It was the beginning of our partnership and our relationship, in all kinds of ways. It was a good feeling, meeting Dave.

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Eurythmics were founded in Australia. In the late '70s, we were in the band The Tourists, which broke up just before we got to Australia in 1980. Dave and I were like the cocoon that burst into the butterfly in Australia.

We even made our early videos there. We found a gold bracelet on the street and, when no one claimed it, we took it to a pawn shop when we arrived in Sydney and bought a video camera. That's how we first started playing around with videos. It's a funny little synchronistic story. My life's been peppered with those kind of stories, and Dave's has, too; those funny little breaks that made things happen along the way.

When Eurythmics were at their peak, it was like a juggernaut. We embraced it. It was a big door we'd been knocking on for years. We were trying to make a special kind of sound, a special kind of statement, and we did.

The music industry is a bloody nightmare. The egos, the slightly criminal elements, the betrayers, the ones who want to screw you, the ones who were in it for this, that or the other. Sometimes I've been so shocked at how vile somebody has been. But you just have to let it go, otherwise it could drive you completely mad.

I don't see myself as a celebrity, I see myself as an artist. The idea of celebrity is cringe-worthy, to be frank. I've lived that kind of big fame where everybody knows your name; you're on TV 24/7; you're in every magazine. I've lived that. By the time the '90s arrived, I thought, this isn't healthy. And when I had my daughters [Lola, 18, and Tali, 16, with ex-husband, Israeli film and record producer Uri Fruchtmann], I felt I didn't want them living this life.

I live a very quiet life, really. If my kids happen to become well-known for any reason, and they ask for my advice, I'll be happy to give it to them. They know they can come to me because I'm pretty savvy when it comes to these things and I have people who can advise them. It's a Faustian game and you have to play it elegantly.

I've never felt I'm leaving a legacy. But, in a sense, it's like leaving a little letter behind – it's an example of a life. It hasn't been an easy life. I don't think life is necessarily easy. It comes with joy, with sorrow, with sadness and with beauty. It comes with grief, with loss, with hopelessness. And it also comes with great moments and highs and lows.

I've been right into the abyss many, many times. I'm no exception. I've wrestled with the demons of depression and anxiety. It's obvious because it's in my music and it's been an artistic source. That sadness has been expressed through music. You

remember the wonderful things – whether it was a song or a moment – and it just gets you through because it's a spiritual thing.

Music is a language by itself. It crosses through all cultures, all colours, all boundaries, and it can facilitate peace-making. It's the accompaniment to our lives. **TIFFANY BAKKER**

The Annie Lennox Collection (Sony Music) is in stores March 27.