

The Big Interview

Episode Number: 219

Episode Title: Annie Lennox

Description: She's an Oscar and Grammy award winning superstar who talks about her latest hit album with Dan Rather.

ACT 1

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW... THE INCOMPARABLE VOICE THAT'S BEEN DAZZLING AUDIENCES FOR DECADES... ANNIE LENNOX

A LOOK AT HER LIFE...AND HER REMARKABLE WORK...INCLUDING HER MOST FAMOUS SONG ...THAT ALMOST DIDN'T HAPPEN.

ANNIE LENNOX

I was really ready to pack it in and to go back to Scotland. I had realized that there was no hope and it wasn't going to happen. And so I was like--

RATHER

You were thinking "we're done here."

LENNOX

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TODAY LENNOX IS BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM... OF OLD CLASSICS.

RATHER

Why do you continue to do what you do, to do your work?

LENNOX

I'm a musician, I'm an artist, I want to express myself, I want to communicate. And I'm very, very passionate about life and what makes me tick is to get engaged with the things that I feel passionately about.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANNIE LENNOX...STILL WITH A VOICE FOR THE AGES.

LENNOX

(SINGS) *Well there was a time, when they used to say that behind every great man there had to be a great woman.*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SINGER, SONGWRITER, ACTIVIST AND TRAILBLAZER ... ANNIE LENNOX...
TONIGHT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW.

ACT 2

Georgia On My Mind by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*I said Georgia, Georgia
No peace I find
Just an old sweet song
Keeps Georgia on my mind*

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HER VOICE IS SO DISTINCTIVE, SO RICH...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS,
ANNIE LENNOX IS BACK ON TOP.

I Put A Spell On You by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*You know I can't stand it
You're runnin' 'round
You know better Daddy
I can't stand it cause you put me down
I put a spell on you because you're mine*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE CAUGHT UP WITH HER AT THE GRAMMY MUSEUM IN LOS ANGELES AS SHE
DEBUTED SONGS FROM HER NEW ALBUM...*NOSTALGIA*. IT JUMPED TO NUMBER
ONE ON THE JAZZ CHARTS, WITH A COMPILATION OF GREAT AMERICAN
MUSIC...AND JAZZ CLASSICS...I SAT DOWN WITH THIS FAMOUS NATIVE OF
SCOTLAND TO FIND OUT WHY THESE CLASSIC AMERICAN SONGS DREW HER IN.

RATHER

Thank you very much for doing this.

LENNOX

Oh, it's such a pleasure.

RATHER

I appreciate you taking the time.

LENNOX

Oh, and I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

RATHER

Well, first of all let's talk about your new album - *Nostalgia*. Why this album, why now?

LENNOX

Well, I have never recorded in the jazz genre before and it was something new for me, and that's always an interesting challenge and a bit of an adventure. The idea occurred to me -- the notion occurred to me that actually my voice could tackle something of this kind of material. It's -- it's not music that I necessarily grew up with and contrary to people in America who've grown up with this all their lives -- their grandparents, parents, their children, you know, everybody knows the songs. I know -- I knew the material sort of but more from an arm's length so it was really stimulating to sort of encounter it fresh in that way, because I didn't have a history.

RATHER

Well for example, and this is just one of many examples you can take off the album. *Georgia On My Mind* has been recorded by Willie Nelson, among others. Why *Georgia On My Mind*? Seems a long way from Scotland.

LENNOX

(LAUGH) Absolutely but there's nostalgia in that song. It's—it's about -- this whole song is saturated in a nostalgia; either it's a -- it's a geographical place or it could be a woman because Georgia is also a woman's name. And I -- you know, when you come to a song and it's not your song you don't necessarily really know what the composer was thinking so it's about your interpretation. But what I feel from that song *Georgia On My Mind* it is just so potent and it's filled with this longing and reflection and that's a feeling I think -- you know they call it maybe homesickness. Many people feel that way from time to time.

Georgia On My Mind by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

I said Georgia, Georgia

LENNOX

How amazing that there is a song and it encapsulates a human emotion like that so perfectly.

RATHER

Well, captures a human emotion so perfectly. Is that what you try to do with each and every song on the album?

LENNOX

Yes, absolutely. Music is the language of the soul, it's the language of the intellect, it's the language of aspiration, beauty, pain...human emotion. And you know, I was never a trained singer. I started -- my first steps into music really were when -- I was very young I was always singing, you know but when I went to school and I was about 7 years old and someone said, "I think your daughter is very musical and would she like to have piano lessons?" And so I kind had the bonafide stamp of yes, I am going to start studying music, how to read music, all of those processes that you go through and that's such a journey you know, because you're learning the notes, you're learning so many aspects of music and yet ostensibly it's -- it's like you're learning a language, a different language and it is this extraordinary important language that could make people cry, that could make people dance, and they connect with music, everyone connects with much in such a way that it's so meaningful to people so you know, I kinda realized that down the line. When I started to think about it when I was older, "What is this music that I am so drawn to? Why do we make music?" I kinda figured it out from there for myself and that's when I really I started to sing and write songs. I walked away from what would have been maybe a classical background -- I had gained a place at the Royal Academy of Music in London back in the early 70s and I realized that really wasn't going to suit me -- I didn't suit the place and it didn't suit me and then I spent 3 years trying to figure out who am I, what am I supposed to be doing and should I go back to Scotland next week (LAUGH) and just give it up, you know? And then the notion of becoming a singer songwriter occurred to me very, very strongly and when the idea hit me I knew that's what I had to do. And -- I didn't know how I was going to do it because I don't think there is a formula for that, even to this day. It is a challenge you know you say, "Oh, I want to do something" and it's something so removed from your experience of life and it's not like a job. Let's say you want to have a job working for a company, so they will say ok so you need to have these qualification and you have to start at the bottom rung of the latter and you work your way up, isn't it? But, you know, being a singer songwriter doesn't work like that.

RATHER

So how does it work?

LENNOX

Whoa -- well, it takes a lot of -- I would say it takes a lot of aspiration. It takes a good deal of whatever talent is. Whatever -- I don't even know what talent really is like a capacity, an ability to place music, to create music, to touch people thought that. To make an impact, to make a room stand still when people are listening to you. That's the kinda impact you want to have - people need to kind of stop talking, listen to the music. And when you see them moving then you know okay it's working -- it's working, this magical thing. But in terms of career, that's a whole -- that's music industry, the industry of music and that as everyone knows has been changing so dramatically from the old role model that it use to be back in the day. I mean -- I was born in 1954 so as an adult I was like a young adult in the 70s, mid 70s and I've seen the 80s and been through all of that and the 90s, and I see how interesting it is that actually there is a way you can sort of track the zeitgeists of a culture through a decade -- what that decade stands for, you know?

RATHER

I want to go back to your album. You first released it on vinyl?

LENNOX

Yes.

RATHER

Old fashion. Why did you do that?

LENNOX

Oh, it's just a cool thing to do in my view. I have always loved the artwork-- the artwork fashion, the visual aspect of music so I've enjoyed being --taking part in the packaging and the artwork and the--and the visual presentation of this music, I think it's terribly important. And so, with a--with--with vinyl we ac-actually with *Nostalgia* it has a beautiful gatefold sleeve and inside there's a beautiful brochure with photographs that each one of them I've been involved in the creation of it. And so it feels like something tangible but this is old school. And the thing is also that these albums, these songs, first came out on vinyl so it's a little bit of a nod and a wink to its original format.

RATHER

I like the nod and a wink.

LENNOX

Yeah.

Strange Fruit by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck

*For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS IS LENNOX'S TAKE ON "STRANGE FRUIT"... A CLASSIC FIRST RECORDED BY BILLIE HOLIDAY IN 1939...IT TELLS THE PAINFUL AWFUL STORY OF LYNCHINGS IN THE SOUTH.

RATHER

What about the tune *Strange Fruit*. It seemed to me somewhat odd to include it in this album. Let's talk about it *Strange Fruit*.

LENNOX

Well it's sort of interesting, you know, going back into a massive catalog of songs, and I didn't really have an agenda per se. I was just like --I wanted to find songs that I'm drawn to. And you know, you find nostalgic songs that are very sentimental, they're very loving, they're about sweetheart and flowers and the perfume of oleander and all of this which is wonderful and gorgeous and romantic. And at the same time, going back in time, back to that period of the thirties you also know that economically, historically, socially, there were so many struggles going on. So it wasn't this beautiful landscape of aspiration and romance. At the same time this is pre-Civil Rights Movement, there were some very dark things happening here. There are dark things happening around the world forever. But in American history particularly you had this difference between races. And, for me it's painful. You know, I didn't live then but to hear the stories of lynchings -something very painful for--for me to--to know that these things take place.

RATHER

Did anyone say to you, suggest, "*Strange Fruit* is about lynching, don't put it in the album it's too dark."

LENNOX

No, no, no, no, no. I wouldn't have let anybody stop me do that because in any case it was so important, it's a statement in a way. It ha--*Strange Fruit* is placed very specifically at the very end of the first half of the vinyl record. And it takes you down to that point; it's something to be reckoned with. It's an aspect of the darkness of humanity, of the shadow of ourselves, and it's something that you--you look back in time there it is, it hasn't gone away. It must --I mean from my perspective, making this piece of work, it had the balance of that darkness as well as the beauty and the sentiment and the light. It had to be there.

Strange Fruit by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees*

ACT 3

Here Comes The Rain Again by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

*Here comes the rain again
Falling on my head like a memory
Falling on my head like a new emotion*

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANNIE LENNOX WAS CLASSICALLY TRAINED AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN LONDON BUT SHE DROPPED OUT...AND IN ONE OF THE GREAT STORIES OF FATES COLLIDING IN MUSIC ...LENNOX FIRST MET DAVE STEWART AT A LONDON RESTAURANT IN THE LATE 1970'S.

Sex Crime (1984) by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY WOULD GO ON TO BECOME ONE OF THE BIGGEST POP MUSIC DUOS OF THE 80'S WHEN THEY FORMED *EURYTHMICS*.

Missionary Man by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

*Well I was born an original sinner
I was born from original sin*

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LENNOX'S HAUNTING VOICE AND STEWART'S ELECTRONIC MUSIC WIZARDRY MADE THE DUO Hugely successful around the world. The rich sound was not the work of a band or orchestra but it was the work electronically produced in a London music studio.

RATHER

Tell me about the start of the *Eurythmics*. How did it start?

LENNOX

Well *Eurythmics* came out of the ashes of a band that Dave and I had created before. We made three albums with *The Tourists* and we had a certain amount of success in the sense that we traveled the world. We went to Australia and Japan. We were-- we've been on television and radio. For me I look at it as a kind of rehearsal for the *Eurythmics* really. I--I cut my teeth --is that a saying that you cut your teeth on that?

RATHER

Yes, of course.

LENNOX

I cut my teeth on *The Tourists*. I really had the--the hardcore experiences: touring, performing, night after night, you know, in front of sometimes quite rough audiences because in the 70s it was the punk era so you went on stage it was dangerous, it wasn't easy. By the time *The Tourists* sort of broke up, if you like, that was when we had the idea, Dave and I, okay this is maybe what we want to do now, it will just become a duo. And at that same point, very interestingly, synthesized keyboards and little drum machines and computers, just the little early prototype of computers, started to be available in the shops. So with, you know, with some money you could purchase these things and you could create your own little home studio. And really Dave was the great visionary in all of that because he has an extraordinary facility for recording and technical things like that. And he just set the whole thing up. I was there kind of but more for the musical perspective. I've never been --I'm a bit of a technophobe. But Dave got that started and we had like a little, I think we started with like a four track machine and we--we just started. And it was in this reduced space. I mean now that just sounds like everybody does it. It's generic. Everybody records in their bedroom and they all have ProTools and their, you know, their computer. And that's all they need. Anywhere, you can do it anywhere. But in those days that was really radical.

RATHER

Now tell me about *Sweet Dreams*. First of all, would you agree or not it's probably your best known work

LENNOX

Oh absolutely.

RATHER

No question.

LENNOX

Absolutely. I think it's hmm

RATHER

So when did that happen and how did that happen?

LENNOX

It's, it's really, you know, when you think back (LAUGH) it's a funny story in a way. Because on the day that we started to create this song, *Sweet Dreams*, I was in a terrible mood and I was really ready to pack it in and to go back to Scotland. I had realized that there was no hope whatsoever and it wasn't going to happen. And that was the mood I was in. So I was like--

RATHER

You were thinking "we're done here."

LENNOX

Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And I was, you know, I was really depressed about it. And Dave was just like --you know he's a very buoyant individual so he's like, "Okay, you're down, okay. You won't mind will you if I go and do this" and he started to program a drum beat that was like that (DRUM NOISE) And then I was sitting, sort of mooching in my corner of my --of the studio that we had, that we were working in, and I heard him doing this and I was like, "Hm, that's interesting." So then I got onto the keyboard so I started to, "Okay I'll play with this, I'll play with this." And so it went on because when you create music this way you kind of start with a layer of the beat and then you kind of come in with something else, and then you add something else. And it started with this notion (LAUGH), somewhat self-deprecatingly, "Sweet dreams are made of this." It wasn't a good story. It was actually very self-deprecating, "Who am I to disagree? I traveled the world and the seven seas. Everybody's looking for something." And it was a statement about myself, ourselves, and then everybody else.

Sweet Dreams by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

*Sweet dreams are made of this
Who am I to disagree?
I traveled the world and the seven seas
Everybody's looking for something*

LENNOX

It was about that dreaming of --an aspirational dream everybody has, and then whether or not it comes true, whether or not it's fulfilled. And in the case of *Sweet Dreams* ironically, (LAUGH) what the song was all about actually fulfilled itself which is so strange when I think about it because at the time I really had no thoughts that the song would have such a sort of powerful trajectory.

RATHER

Well it certainly has had a powerful trajectory and it resonates in so many places around the globe.

LENNOX

I know

RATHER

Why do you think that is?

LENNOX

You know, it's so interesting. There's something about *Sweet Dreams* that people latch onto, that they identify with, and whether it's because they want to celebrate a victory from a football match or it's someone's birthday, I don't really know, but there's something in the song that people just love. And it's a very peculiar song because it's like a little mantra it just goes around and around. It just says the same thing over and over and people just have --identified with it.

RATHER

Do you have a favorite *Eurythmics* song?

LENNOX

Many, many favorite *Eurythmics* songs. You know, we made so many albums and there's so many songs that we made

There Must Be An Angel Playing With My Heart by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

LENNOX

From *There Must Be An Angel Playing With My Heart*

Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

LENNOX

Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves, Would I Lie To You?

Would I Lie To You? by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

Missionary Man by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

LENNOX

Missionary Man. I don't know, there's a whole catalog of songs there (LAUGH)

RATHER

Is there ever. When and why did you decide to go solo?

LENNOX

Well we were very fortunate in that, you know, we did have this momentum. And every year we would write, record an album and release it along with videos that went along with that because it was the MTV generation. And we loved making videos and we were very --we were particularly visually orientated in any case so this was just a bonus for us. We just loved it. But it does require a lot of work. And, you know, we were just touring and rehearsing, traveling, traveling --a decade of that, for me, started to be quite onerous and I started to lose the sense of, you know, myself independently, autonomously. And I think also Dave felt the same way. So it was a natural thing. I mean, sometimes you just run out of steam. And we both sat down on a park bench, we were in Rio de Janeiro, we were performing in the --the big festival there and we were also making a film as we always do multitask and do many things. We're sitting on this park bench on top of this mountain in Rio, or hillside, and we were both just saying, "Okay, time to leave, time to do something else." He went his way, I went my way and that was that. We have come together to do the occasional thing together but I really think we've had our time. You know, it was an incredible decade.

Missionary Man by Eurythmics (SOUND CLIP)

*There was a woman in the jungle and a monkey on a tree
The missionary man he was followin' me
He said, "Stop what you're doin', get down upon your knees
I've a message for you that you better believe"*

ACT 4

No More "I Love You's" by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*No more I love you's
The language is leaving me
No more I love you's
Changes are shifting outside the words*

DAN RATHER

Where do you get the inspiration for your songs? Or is it just a case of "Listen, I'm not always inspired I work at it"?

ANNIE LENNOX

Yeah, no I haven't written a song in a long while. There was a time when I was --that was my theme, that you know, I was a songwriter and I write songs and I must find a keyboard cause I need to sit at this keyboard and I need to write a song; or I'm—I'm going into the studio and I'm sort of like, "Hm, I have to write a song." But it's so strange, the songs come sometimes --I can't -- if you could write it down like a shopping list and send it off and it would be delivered to you, wouldn't that be great? But it just doesn't work like that. It's almost like --sometimes I noticed there would be a very big dip in my mood before a song came and I would be feeling like really the opposite, like dark, and then somehow or another (SNAP) the song came. It was part of the process. I don't know how to explain that to you.

RATHER

Well, so many of your songs are about heartbreak.

LENNOX

Yes.

RATHER

Why is that?

LENNOX

Because I --there was a lot of heartbreak and in my life I felt very heartbroken. And I think many people do feel heartbroken. I think it's--

RATHER

Biggest heartbreak?

LENNOX

Biggest heartbreak. I don't even want to think about my biggest heartbreak because my biggest heartbreak was so so incredibly rough, you know. Losing my child to be quite frank with you, delivering a stillborn baby. You know, that's probably the most heartbreaking thing that could happen to anyone. So that's the lowest point of things but certainly a lot of romantic heart--heartbreaks and relationships that never really came into fruition. Living in a lifestyle, being on the road, being quite isolated, you know, kind of brought a lot of baggage to the table I think.

RATHER

Being on the road, being isolated, being lonely. You didn't use the word, I did. Did you go through a period that you felt like, in retrospect, that you had too many partners, bed partners and otherwise?

LENNOX

Woah, you came right to the quick there. (LAUGH) It's just too-too I don't know, I don't even want to go there it's just too painful. You know, it's just --I don't really want to go into my relationships that failed because they're painful. So I'm now in a really stable, beautiful relationship and so happy and it's just like, everything that went before me, I don't even want to think about it.

RATHER

I can understand that. Where I was going with that, I think many people don't realize how really difficult it is to be on the road, even when you're successful. There's a loneliness to it.

LENNOX

Oh god, yes. And the other thing to it is there's a camaraderie with--with men. It is a man's world very much on the road. And I love the company of men, I get on --I think I get on very well with men; and I'm talking on a platonic level here.

RATHER

God bless you.

LENNOX

(LAUGH) I like men, I love men, and I admire men. You know, when I see this kind of extraordinary team spirit that you have to have on the road for example, for example, all the technicians and the crew, you know, when they set it up and all the lights and the sound and they work so damned hard and they come into town, they set the whole thing up for you to do your show, I mean I have such gratitude and such appreciation for that kind of very arduous lifestyle.

RATHER

Tell me about *Sisters Are Doing it for Themselves*, one could argue it's become the female album and anthem of your time. How did it come about?

LENNOX

Well it's funny. I, this is so strange; again there's no formula to songwriting. I woke up one morning as the legendary blues phrase always says. I woke up in the morning and I was in that sort of semi dream state and I grabbed a piece of paper and I'd been thinking, I want to write an anthem for women, I want to write an anthem for women. And it just came out, line after line

after line. And there it was, *Sisters Are Doing it for Themselves* that's how that happened. Strange.

RATHER

Could you say for me or maybe sing for me your own favorite lines from that anthem.

LENNOX

(SINGS) *Well there was a time, when they used to say that behind every great man there had to be a great woman. Well in these times of change, you know that it's no longer true. So we're coming out of the kitchen cause there's somethin we forgot to say to you... we say Sisters are doin' it for themselves.*

RATHER

Did you know from the beginning that it would be big, very big?

LENNOX

No. No. No. No. No. Everything goes like chicken and egg so start with the song, sort of in this instance that was a completed song. A lot of the songs that Dave and I wrote together was like the two of us working it out. This one really was I mean obviously Dave's not going to wake up and write an anthem for women... he's like, "Ok, what do I do in this?" So interestingly enough we thought it'd be really nice thing to do- to partner with another woman. And I think it was Clive Davis at the time, I don't remember exactly but put a call in to Aretha Franklin and suggested that she might be interested in this. So then we get a call to say yes actually Aretha Franklin would love to meet you please go to Detroit.

RATHER

Had you met her before?

LENNOX

No. No, no, not at all. So then another adventure opened up. Going to Detroit to meet Aretha Franklin to record *Sisters*, ok (WHISTLE) Ooh I can't, this is kind of, wake me up, you know, this can't be happening. So you know we did that. Amazing.

Sisters Are Doin' it for Themselves by Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin (SOUND CLIP)

Sisters are doin' it for themselves.

Well there was a time,

When they used to say

That behind every great man there had to be a great woman.

ACT 5

Why by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*How many times do I have to try to tell you
That I'm sorry for the things I've done*

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AFTER ANNIE LENNOX AND DAVE STEWART DECIDED TO GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS, LENNOX EMBARKED ON A SOLO CAREER. IN THE EARLY 90S SHE RELEASED HER FIRST ALBUM -- *DIVA*-- WHICH INCLUDED HITS LIKE *WHY* AND *WALKING ON BROKEN GLASS*

Walking On Broken Glass by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

...IT SHOT LENNOX BACK TO THE TOP OF THE CHARTS. BUT SHE WOULD RELEASE ONLY ONE OTHER ALBUM THAT DECADE AS SHE DECIDED TO TAKE A STEP OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT TO FOCUS ON RAISING HER CHILDREN.

RATHER

You mentioned before that music is the aspiration of the soul. When did you come to that conclusion? I love the phrase, by the way.

ANNIE LENNOX

Well, I think it's something that you know subliminally as a child, as a very young child because you're just connecting with it. You don't have language for it. You look at little children in a pushchair -- buggy and some music comes on and they will start. There's lots of lovely music clip -- you know YouTube clips with children in the back of cars and they put some music on and the child is like "whoa!" Comes alive, and you know so what does that tell you? It's a powerful thing and it doesn't have to be explained, but how you come into it as an adult and how you come into it as a music maker. And what it means to you; is it about being famous? Is it about huge success and making money? How sustainable is it? What does it mean, you know? All of these things. Those things come a bit later.

RATHER

You said you went through a point of saying, "Who am I, what do I want to achieve?"

LENNOX

Yea

RATHER

Well, who you are, who are you really?

LENNOX

You know, it's that existential question that some of us ask constantly -- the seekers of the world they ask this question. And some of us maybe don't ask the question and we live a different sort of life, and I don't think that there's -- I probably don't have the answer, who am I? But it's so intriguing because, how come you're born? You didn't -- some people think you choose to be born. There's a certain particular belief in reincarnation and what have you, but ostensibly here you are, here's your mother and father. Here's your home, here's your city or your rural place, here's your school, here's your college. Here's your job, here's your children. Here are the clothes that you wear. Are you those things? And they are -- I don't think you are. I think you are partly that, but in any case all these things just constantly change so you go from the child to the adolescent to the adult to the older person, and ultimately to death and you never know when that's going to happen. So, I mean whether we realize it or not, we are all living in this strange existential moment that is only now. The past that we've experienced is just now a memory. The future hasn't happened yet.

RATHER

At your core, at your essence, about what do you care the most?

LENNOX

That's a very good question. About what do I care the most? To live a life that is somehow able to deal with the challenges that one faces. To not succumb to the overwhelming sort of potential of being crushed and being in a place of despair. I think everyone of us, rich or poor, is in that position like how do I create a life of meaning and value. Now, to a person who has nothing and I mean in material terms, that individual is merely trying to survive-- So, if you ask that person, what is life for you? It's just getting by, that's something. And then other -- other people might say I want to make a million dollars by the time I'm 25, you know? Everybody has their own notions of what it is to be alive and to be successful.

RATHER

Well I often think that a measure of one's life is one's service. Now whether you agree with that or not--

LENNOX

I do agree with that actually.

RATHER

Well, in your own case what has been your greatest service?

LENNOX

I don't feel comfortable answering the question because -- I think I say, "Oh *my* greatest service is this or that." I think for me I have responded to -- first of all my life has gone through different phases so first of all I was responding to music very much, even as a child very much so, and then as a young adult still music, and music and how do I do that. It was like a muse and it was like I wanted to make this music, and I want to record this music, and I want to write these songs and I want to do -- and I met Dave Stewart and we created -- ultimately we created *Eurythmics* together, together really as a partnership and it was -- it had such momentum, you know.

And then, life -- life takes you on these journeys, on these trips if you like and towards the end of that phase with *Eurythmics*, which lasted a decade. It was, "Ok so now I think now I want to go in another direction." I was in my early 30s at that point and I felt like I wanted to just stop the world and get off it for a bit. And as it happened, as things turned out I actually had children, I have 2 daughters. In those days in the 90s they were little tiny toddlers so I had the opportunity to become a mother and that was life changing, life transforming. So I've been through these phases and now -- like my daughters are older so I'm back again doing something else.

RATHER

How did becoming a mother change you?

LENNOX

Oh becoming a mother changes everyone hugely, radically. It teaches you, unconditional love. Right there and then, the moment that that baby is in your arms.

RATHER

It's been written and I among many others agree with it, that a mother's love for a child is the truest, most powerful love in the world.

LENNOX

It is. So I went from you know um, I'm not a selfish person but you know I was fairly self-centered in a way, my life kind of trucking on like that to being a mother where you would just lie down for your children, you know you'd do anything for your children.

RATHER

I find this so interesting because obviously you can't be a performer, perform in front of tens of thousands of people and not have a narcissistic streak in you.

LENNOX

Yes there has to be an element of narcissism in it.

RATHER

But when you become a mother... it balances... you're still gonna perform

LENNOX

None of that... it goes away, out the window. Well actually when I had my babies, you know my young children, I just you know, I stepped back. I mean I made an album because I didn't want to lose my artistry completely but you know I was like, "Well I'd like to make a record but I can't tour the way that I'd been doing before." So with Diva which was my first solo album, I think I made one appearance, one performance and that was actually in Central Park in New York in a summer evening, a late summer evening and I didn't perform again after that so it was like a one-off you know I had these two little toddlers with me. It's challenging you know, it is to be a woman in a profession let's say, I don't think of music as a profession but it is kind of partly.

RATHER

What do you consider it if not a profession; do you consider it a craft?

LENNOX

I consider it to be a way of life; really, it is a way of life. And to think of it as a profession is too much synonymous with a job.

RATHER

Can you write good music, can you write great music if you're happy?

LENNOX

Probably, I don't know. You know, I have to ok so; I'll give you a broad answer for that, I'm not going to be specific because you can't really be specific. For, I would say just to qualify that for all the years that I was making music there was a very strong undercurrent of discontent within me and I think that discontent and that sort of low grade anxiety, whatever you want to call it, that little bit of darkness, I think that fed into the need to express something. But it wasn't all dark, there was a beauty in it so it was kind of like the dynamic between aspiring for the beauty but at the same time on the other hand the darkness is there to kind of ground it. At my stage of life now and the other thing that has been so impactful for me is the last decade of campaigning and advocacy, where I've become more of a spokesperson in a sense rather than a sing- just a singer. I wanted, I wanted to, to use my speaking voice to, well in the case, in my case it was

about amplifying women's rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. That was the issue that I felt very strongly drawn towards but happiness... my goodness if you, what is happiness maybe it's a fleeting moment or maybe it's a state of mind that is a continuous feeling that you bring into your life so that ok something bad happens as it does, you don't get rocked so much by it you just that little bit more stable it isn't just a catastrophic like oh now that's the end of the day. When you're a little bit less stable, something happens it can just tip you off. So I acknowledge that I'm in a better place personally.

RATHER

Well it shows and I think you've said this is a happy time in your life. So back to the question, are you writing much these days?

LENNOX

No I haven't. I mean, if I had wanted to write there would have been an album of songs by me. I didn't want to write.

RATHER

Whereas this album is a cover of other people's music.

LENNOX

Well I don't, see yes, covers if you like but, I could have made a covers album and I would have simply done this: called up an arranger, booked a studio, booked an orchestra, learned the songs, that's it: covers album. That's what you do. It's takes a couple of weeks to get it mixed out it goes.

RATHER

Ah well this album is not that, *Nostalgia* is not that.

LENNOX

No, it is distinctly different for me. Other people might say it's a covers album, that's fine but my approach to these songs was to dig deep and to find an interpretation, it's about the interpretation and I didn't want to go down the route I've just described, I wanted to really get to the numb of the songs, to strip away all of the extraneous arrangements that have happened before, wonderful, I just wanted to get down to the bare bones of the songs. And what I found when I got down there was blues, not with all of them but the blues is something really powerful. And there it was. And that was, that, that drew me in because if it had just been like jazz you know jazz on the surface, which is beautiful and lovely - I wouldn't had a connection to it so much.

RATHER

I want to come back to this question of happiness, you've hinted, I think; correct me if I'm wrong, that you might retire.

LENNOX

Yeah!

RATHER

You're very young for that.

LENNOX

Do you think?

RATHER

I do.

LENNOX

I don't know

RATHER

But remember you're talking to an 83 year old man.

LENNOX

Oh my goodness, oh my goodness.

RATHER

So naturally I'd think you're young.

LENNOX

Well now, you've got 23 years ahead of me so, maybe you can teach me a few things about that.

RATHER

I doubt it, I'm still learning.

RATHER

I want to shift gears here for a moment cause you've talked about it, and I quote you here "Feminism is a phenomenal empowering word don't abuse it and don't take it for granted." Let's talk about that.

LENNOX

Ok, ok, well the world feminism is a powerful word; people react to it in all sorts of different ways. It can be very divisive and it can be very polarizing, people get very head up about feminism and all you know. For me, it's very simple; it's simply about the empowerment of women and girls. Logistically, in terms of their rights and in terms for their access to education, to having the opportunities in a job, to have the same amount of pay as a man for example, to have the same possibilities to become a professor or lawyer or a doctor. We've seen these huge strides taking place over the last hundred years or so. But there's still so much work to be done. And when I go to the developing world and I see for example a country like Malawi, a 15 year old girl who's pregnant with a baby on her back already and I know that ch- that girl is not getting access to reproductive health care, contraception for example, these things and she's in poverty, I know that when she goes to the hospital to deliver that baby it could well be on the floor and she could well die cause there's no maternal care for her. The maternal mortality rate for women in these countries is so high, that's where feminism needs to come in. That's where feminism needs to come in, to protect these women, to empower them.

Sing by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*Sing, my sister, sing
Let your voice be heard
What won't kill you will make you strong
Sing, my sister, sing*

ACT 6

Wonderful by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*I wanna have you 'cause you're all I've got
Don't wanna lose you 'cause it means a lot*

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANNIE LENNOX HAS SOLD MORE THAN 80 MILLION RECORDS WORLDWIDE, SHE'S BEEN NAMED ONE OF THE 100 GREATEST SINGERS OF ALL TIME BY ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE...SHE'S WON AN OSCAR, GOLDEN GLOBE AND GRAMMYS. BUT HER WORK WITH CHARITY HAS GARNERED HER NEW RECOGNITION. SHE WAS MADE AN OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE BY QUEEN ELIZABETH FOR HER WORK RAISING THE AWARENESS OF AIDS IN AFRICA. SHE'S TRAVELED TO AFRICA OFTEN AND EACH TIME SHE

DOCUMENTS WITH A CAMERA THE STORIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN
INFECTED WITH HIV...WHICH LED TO THIS DOCUMENTARY.

ANNIE LENNOX (DOCUMENTARY CLIP)

It's hard for me to describe how this wonderful little girl got to me. She's so sick but so incredibly strong

RATHER

You have passion for a number of causes one of them has long been AIDS/HIV. How did you get interested in that, why so passionate about it?

LENNOX

Well, there was a turning point; it took place in 2004, November to be precise when I was invited to be taking part in Nelson Mandela's launch for his HIV/AIDS foundation. And he said, people in my country, people are dying like flies--I'm not quoting verbatim--but women and children are at the forefront of this pandemic and we need to do something, we need to stop this happening. And from that experience and realizing that here's South Africa, a country that had overcome apartheid and so many challenges, and he was trying--he was trying very, very much to get that message across to the rest of the world, to get support for the people of South Africa again, in a completely different way. This time, a deadly virus, but you know, it's a preventable disease, you know? If you have access to treatment, you don't have to die. They weren't getting access to treatment. This is what he was saying. There was a bottleneck because of the president's view and the health minister's view. People couldn't get access to treatment at that time. Subsequently, things have changed. But it's a dire situation and I was given the privilege of going to townships and clinics and hospitals and people's homes where I saw the HIV pandemic face-to-face, a human face, you know. And it changed my whole paradigm. When I came back to my comfortable life in the United Kingdom, I wanted to tell everybody what I'd seen. That's the feeling that you get if you go there and you see what's going on. It's like I can't believe this crisis is going on. Now we have Ebola. You know, a healthcare crisis that could be out of control. So these things, they come and the effectiveness of the response is so, so important.

RATHER

Indeed it is. I understand you have a big birthday coming up on Christmas Day.

LENNOX

Not as big as yours but kind of--I'm keeping up with you.

RATHER

Well, why do you continue to do this?

LENNOX

What? Have birthdays, or—(LAUGH)

RATHER

No, no, no. (LAUGH) Birthdays are inevitable. Birthdays you have to have. But why do you continue to do what you do, to do your work? You're at an age, you don't need the money, you had more fame, more notoriety than many, many people have--

LENNOX

Yeah, I don't want fame and I don't want notoriety. I certainly--that has never been the reason why I've made music or done anything. Fame and notoriety, goodbye. Stay out away from me. I don't want that. Music I've loved to make because I'm so drawn--I'm a musician, I'm an artist, I want to express myself, I want to communicate. And I'm very, very passionate about life and, I think what makes me tick is to get engaged with the things that I feel passionately about. I'm not trying to be an example to anybody; I'm not telling people what they should do either, really. Sometimes I might suggest that you might want to do this. But by and large, I just want to live a life that's energized, inspiring, is engaged, and is as peaceful as I can make it, you know, avoiding all sorts of controversy, if possible.

RATHER

By the way, as a child, was having a birthday on Christmas Day a problem or a blessing?

LENNOX

Well, as I've always had a birthday on Christmas Day for the last 59 years, I don't know any different. So it's never really been a big issue for me, you know, because as I say, "Jesus Christ has always eclipsed me."

September In The Rain by Annie Lennox (SOUND CLIP)

*The leaves of brown came tumbling down
Remember, in September, in the rain
The sun went out just like a dying amber
That September in the rain*

RATHER

At the memorial service for you, after your time on this earth is gone, what one song would you like to be played or sung?

LENNOX

(GASP) You can't ask that question! You can't ask that question. In my, in my service, I just want some Tibetan monks with--I just want some chanting. And when people come in they can have bagpipes and at the end they'll have the Tibetan monks chanting, and then it's gonna be, I don't know, some *Stax* music to walk you out. Something like that. Just broadly speaking.

RATHER

You being from Scotland I could have guessed the bagpipes. What question have I not asked you that I should have asked you?

LENNOX

I think we've done really well.

RATHER

I really appreciate you taking the time. You've given us so many things to think about.

LENNOX

Yeah, I'm just one of those people that just really curious about everything. And the world perplexes me, you know? Always has. And I think just the fact that you're here as a human being, what are you supposed to do with this life? What, you know, how do you live a life of value, of real--how do you get to be feeling good within yourself? That's very important. And also, how do you get to live this life where you're not desperately unhappy in your job, and then you're sort of miserable. I--I--that's really why I feel so incredibly grateful to be an artist and, you know, it hasn't been an easy road but now at this stage in my life, this is like gravy. You know, making music like this? It's fantastic.

RATHER

Anne, thank you.

LENNOX

Thank you, thank you.

RATHER

You've been great.

END TRANSCRIPT