

“I’M LIKE A SPONGE WHEN IT COMES TO MUSIC.”

“I wanted the spectrum of artists to be broad and far ranging, because the issue is focused on women and children, who are taking a huge brunt of the HIV AIDS pandemic. I wanted the artists to endorse the notion of giving voice to those who have none.”

The entire proceeds from download sales of “Sing” will go to the TAC and Nelson Mandela’s 46664 campaign (named after his prisoner number), for which Annie Lennox is a passionate ambassador.

While some other artists use the charity effect primarily to boost their careers, Annie does nothing of the sort. She really wants to help, from the bottom of her heart. She sings and does good deeds, sings and donates, sings and saves, wherever she can.

It did not take long to get Annie Lennox interested in the *Hear the World* initiative. She has been an official ambassador since the end of last year and is helping to raise awareness among the public of the significance of the sense of hearing.

“Sing, my sister ... sing!”, as in the song of the same name: “Let your voice be heard”.

We are certain to hear her voice again soon, for she is already planning her next project. She wants to record a purely electronic dance album. It is a lovely thought that we will hear her voice in combination with minimal electronic sounds. As in the acoustic version of “Dark Road”, it is perhaps precisely the sparing use of instrumentation which sets off her voice best.

In the last 30 years, Annie Lennox has written pop and humanitarian history. A remarkable career, which began with “Sweet Dreams” and continues with Annie’s dreams. With dreams of a better world.

Matthias Westerweller

MODERN

An interview with Annie Lennox about her role as a *Hear the World* ambassador

What was it like shooting with Bryan Adams?

Absolutely great. He’s a dynamo. A very inspiring person. I love the way he heads into life and creativity with sheer enthusiasm. He’s exceedingly well organized too!

Why did you choose to support *Hear the World* by posing for an image by Bryan Adams?

I can’t even begin to imagine what my life would be like without the facility to “hear”. All my creative expression has been focused around it. It’s such a precious gift not to be taken for granted. What a wonderful opportunity to say “thank you”, by simply standing in front of a camera lens and having your picture taken by a great photographer. Painless!

Do you like the idea behind the campaign?

I love it. None of us can afford to take our hearing for granted. It’s such a beautiful and elegant way to communicate the message.

What are your thoughts on the importance of hearing?

It affects every aspect of life. Communication, safety, connectedness, well being, emotions and intellect, information. It’s our major “link” into the external world.

Do you worry when you see how carelessly young people treat their hearing?

We don’t always realize the true gifts we have until we lose them. We take so much for granted until we’re woken up sharply. Unfortunately for some it’s too late, and the damage is already done.

Do you have any experience with hearing loss (personal, in your family, friends, etc.)?

My father suffered from “industrial deafness”, (euphemistic term if ever there was one) which was the result of being made to stand inside the steel hulks of ships, while workers hammered metal rivets into their sides all day long. The sound was deafening literally. He was only fourteen and he used to stagger outside after work, because his hearing was completely shot. There was no protection for his ears, and he never received any kind of compensation. Those were the days ...

Over 10% of the world’s population have some kind of hearing loss. Among musicians, this number is even higher. Why do you think hearing loss is still stigmatized? I think it could be because a person with hearing loss might easily become somewhat socially isolated. It’s hard work when people have to raise their voices in order to be heard and it’s hard work learning how to sing. Generally speaking I think people mainly get interested in making that extra effort if/when it directly affects them.

Do you think hearing devices could ever be “cool”?

It’s weird how we have this concept of “cool” or “not cool”. I think it’s “cool” that people get an opportunity to even get access to a hearing device. In many parts of the world I’m sure it’s not a given. Perhaps the aesthetic of ear pieces could be made more pleasing but the thing is that they’re really supposed to be discrete, aren’t they? I guess people don’t want to call attention to them with jewel colours or multi coloured sparkles. Mind you if I ever have to wear an ear piece I’ll make mine luminous green! That would be super cool!

If there is one thing you could do to make people with hearing loss feel better about their situation, what would that be?

I would expect that modern technology is making leaps and bounds in the field of development in this area. We’ve surely come a long way from those big ear trumpet devices that people had to use in Victorian times but still, as I’ve mentioned before I’d like to see more support for people in impoverished circumstances, who can’t get access to help and support.