

STAR PARTS

SINGING

BY
**TONY
HADLEY**



Interview by Paul Simper

From the day that Spandau's 'To Cut A Long Story' hit the charts Tony Hadley has been one of pop's most distinctive performers. Love him or hate him, you can't mistake him.

But Tony's tones aren't just down to the luck of the draw when they were giving out vocal cords. He's had to work hard to perfect his style – and to keep his voice in shape.

SHAKY KNEES

"The most important thing to get over when you start singing," he

says, "is nerves. Unless you do that you're done – your voice goes all shaky and your throat's not loose enough to hit all the notes. Your pitching's all over the place."

For Tony his first chance to sing – "except for those embarrassing parties when you're a kid" – came when he was twelve at a holiday camp in Cornwall.

"It wasn't actually a talent contest," says Tony. "I was part of the show that they decided to put on. I sang 'With A Little Help From My Friends'. But not like The Beatles – I did it Joe Cocker style.

"Of course I was really nervous but I got through it alright and after that I knew it was what I wanted to do.

"I'd sing along to records on the radio and tape them on my little cassette recorder with me singing along to them."

Tony doesn't recall any particular influence on his singing.

"Any pop song. I've always liked songs rather than a good drum sound or a lead guitarist . . ."

FAMILY CRACKERS

His mum wasn't over-impressed by young Tony singing round the house – or his declaration at 13 that it was the popstar life for him.

"They weren't at all sure then because the world of pop music seemed so far away. I used to watch *Top Of The Pops* and all those people seemed like they were from a different planet – Slade, Queen, David Bowie. You could hardly expect them to believe that their lad from Islington was going to be like that – 'local boy makes good'. It just didn't seem very likely.

"I met someone the other day who said the same sort of thing to me. He was amazed how ordinary we were. You just don't imagine people who you see on the TV to be like that."

While Tony dreamed of *TOTP* his schoolwork suffered.

"Once I'd decided what I was going to do I didn't really bother

much at school," he says.

"That's why I didn't pass many exams.

"I guess it wasn't a particularly good approach, as I think Spandau were very lucky. There are loads of great singers that never get recognised but we had our first hit when I was only just 20."

WHAT TO DO WITH A VOICE

Spandau's first hit in many ways heralded the end of an era. During punk, to shout and scream had been sufficient. Hadley's arrival brought back 'singing'.

"There were no really great singers with punk or new wave," says Tony, "although there were voices you liked."

Appreciating the need to improve his voice, Tony had singing lessons.

"I took two years of lessons," he says. "Some people told me I was mad to do that. That I shouldn't let someone else shape my voice. But it's done me nothing but good."

One of the main reasons for Tony's singing lessons was to combat the strain of touring. A strain that even strong singers like Annie Lennox and Paul Young have buckled under.

"I always knew there would be a day when I would have to go on tour and sing maybe five nights in a row. The biggest help for a singer is playing live – it's always likely to bring more out of you than working in the studio because you've got a crowd to encourage and inspire you – but if you don't look after your voice it's lethal."

GETTING IN THE MOOD

But if you have to protect your voice live, you also have to be just as aware when and when not to push yourself in the studio.

"When I first went into the studio I'd just keep singing until I got it right – go on for hours. But if you're not in the right mood the situation will never improve.

"Singers are the most temperamental to work with. You might not be able to sing well

because you wake up and it's raining. But it's always better to put it off and take two weeks than just have done with it."

Another voice problem, which George Michael has also complained of in the past, is hotels and their air-conditioning.

"It's the worst thing in the world for a singer," says Tony. "Your throat dries up and you've got parrot breath. Unless I use a humidifier *and* keep the window open I tend to wake up at five in the morning then every hour after."

Thankfully Tony's voice has never given up on him.

"I used to be really paranoid about it," he says. "The moment I had the slightest croaky voice I'd be down the road buying up half the chemist.

"The worst time I've ever had was on the last British tour when we did eleven nights on the trot. I got a respiratory infection and for three gigs it was a real effort to breathe.

"I went to a throat specialist and he said the thing that saved me from doing any serious damage was the fact that I sang from my stomach. Again thanks to the singing lessons."

ABSTINENCE

Spandau have never been a band to shrink from a drink or two after the show. But it's not something Tony will indulge in every night.

"Sometimes I can," he says, "but you have to be careful.

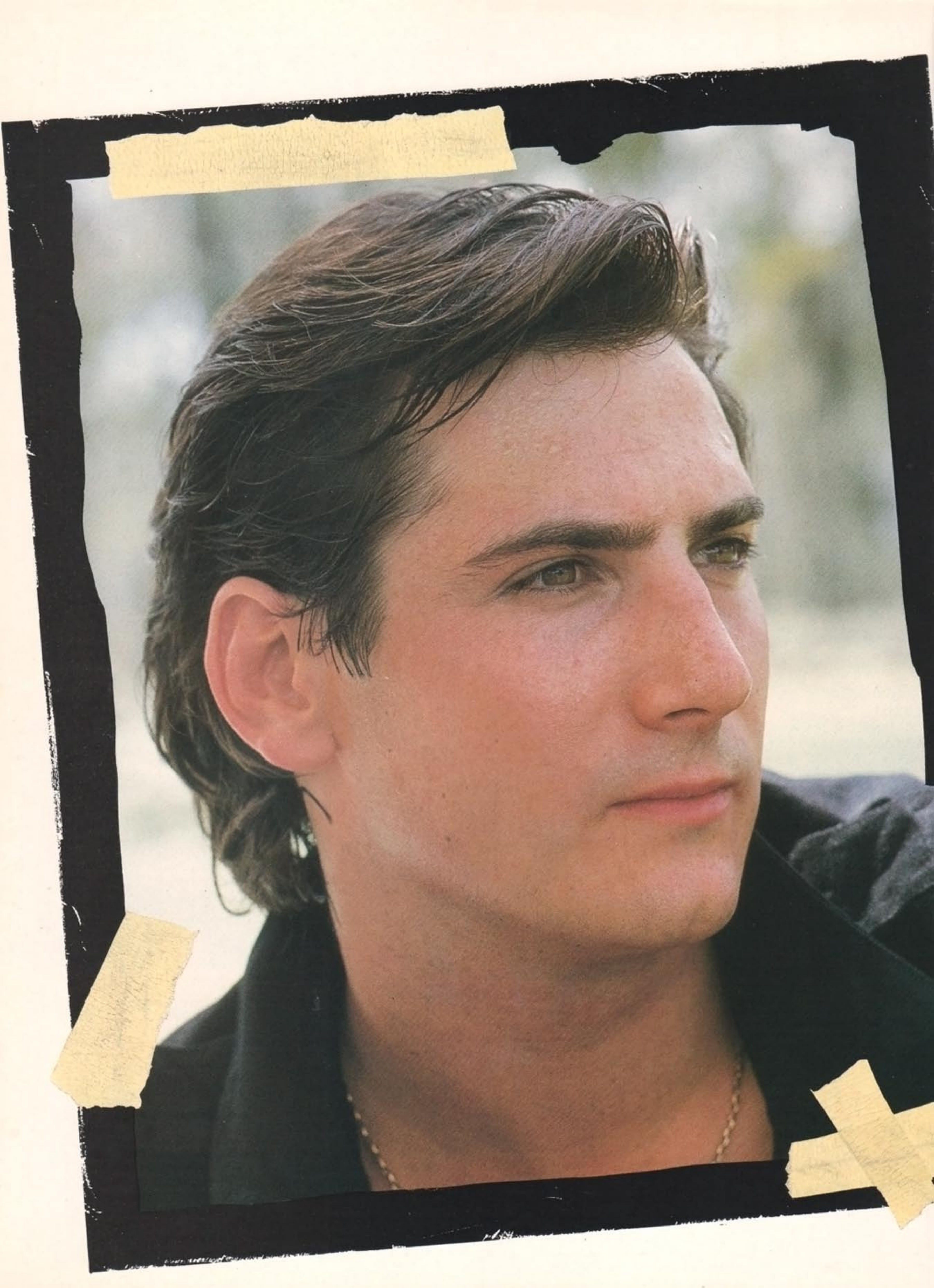
"Actually the worst thing after a show is just trying to wind down. The music's so loud onstage that to suddenly have to sit down and hold conversations with people is a real strain."

The only other problem Tony has with singing is the words.

"It doesn't happen now really, but in the early days I used to be terrible remembering the words. Especially on 'Confused' for some reason. Now it only happens if you get really excited. I just sometimes have to lean over to Martin or Gary to check what the next song is!"

TONY'S PICKS: SEE OVER

☞ Singers are so temperamental. You might not be able to sing well because it's raining . . . ☞





SINGING STARS
BY
TONY HADLEY



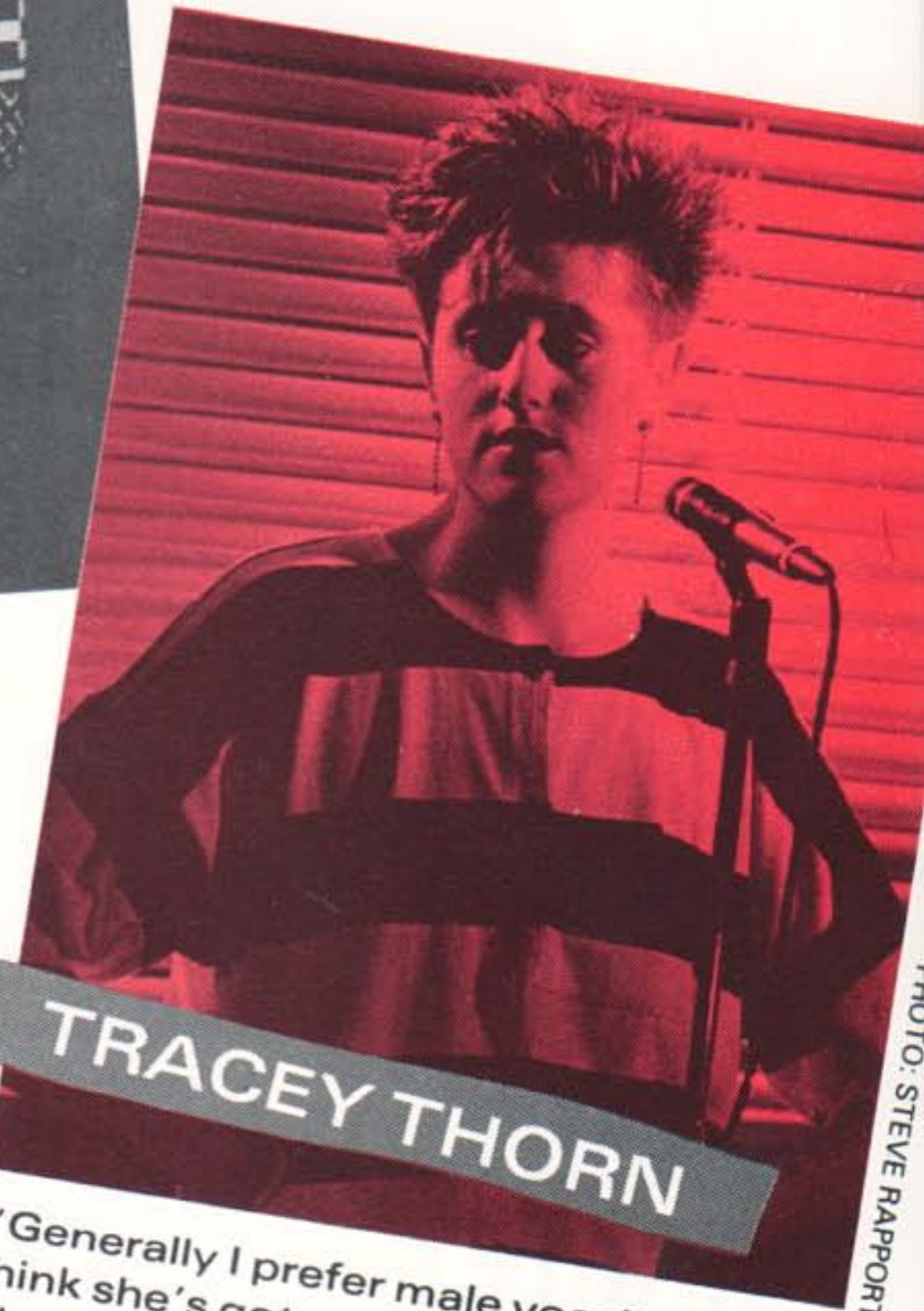
DAVID BOWIE

"The first Bowie LP I had was 'The World Of David Bowie' and my mum thought it was Anthony Newley. His voice was a bit OTT then. It's more easy going now. A bit like my change from 'To Cut A Long Story'. Maybe I thought I was Mario Lanza then!"



"You couldn't say he's got a great voice but it's got a lot of character. You always knew who it was when The Boomtown Rats came on the radio."

BOB GELDOLF



TRACEY THORN

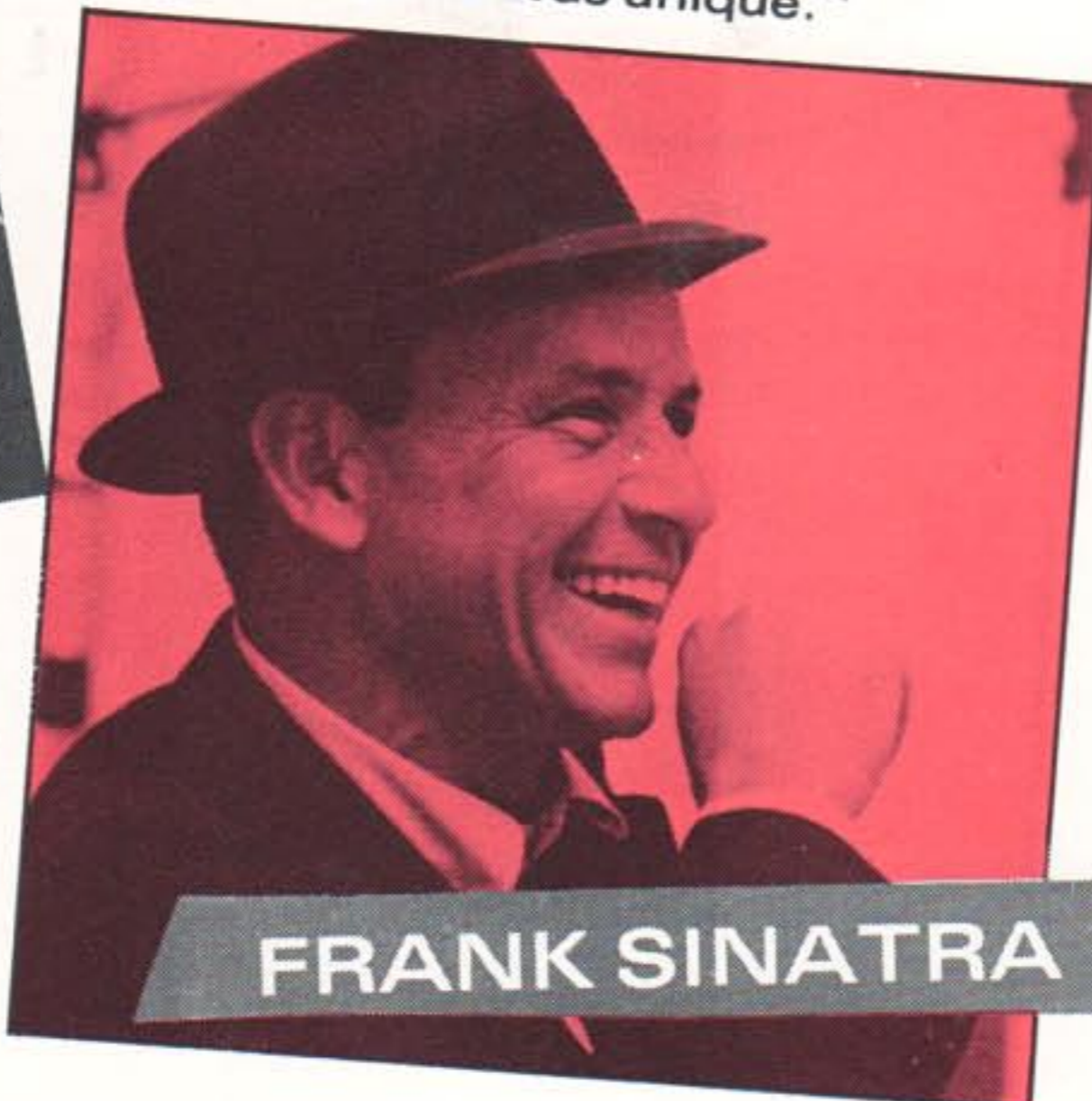
"Generally I prefer male vocalists but I think she's got a really sweet voice. The only other female vocalists I love are Annie Lennox and Alison Moyet who are both hard and raunchy."

MADONNA



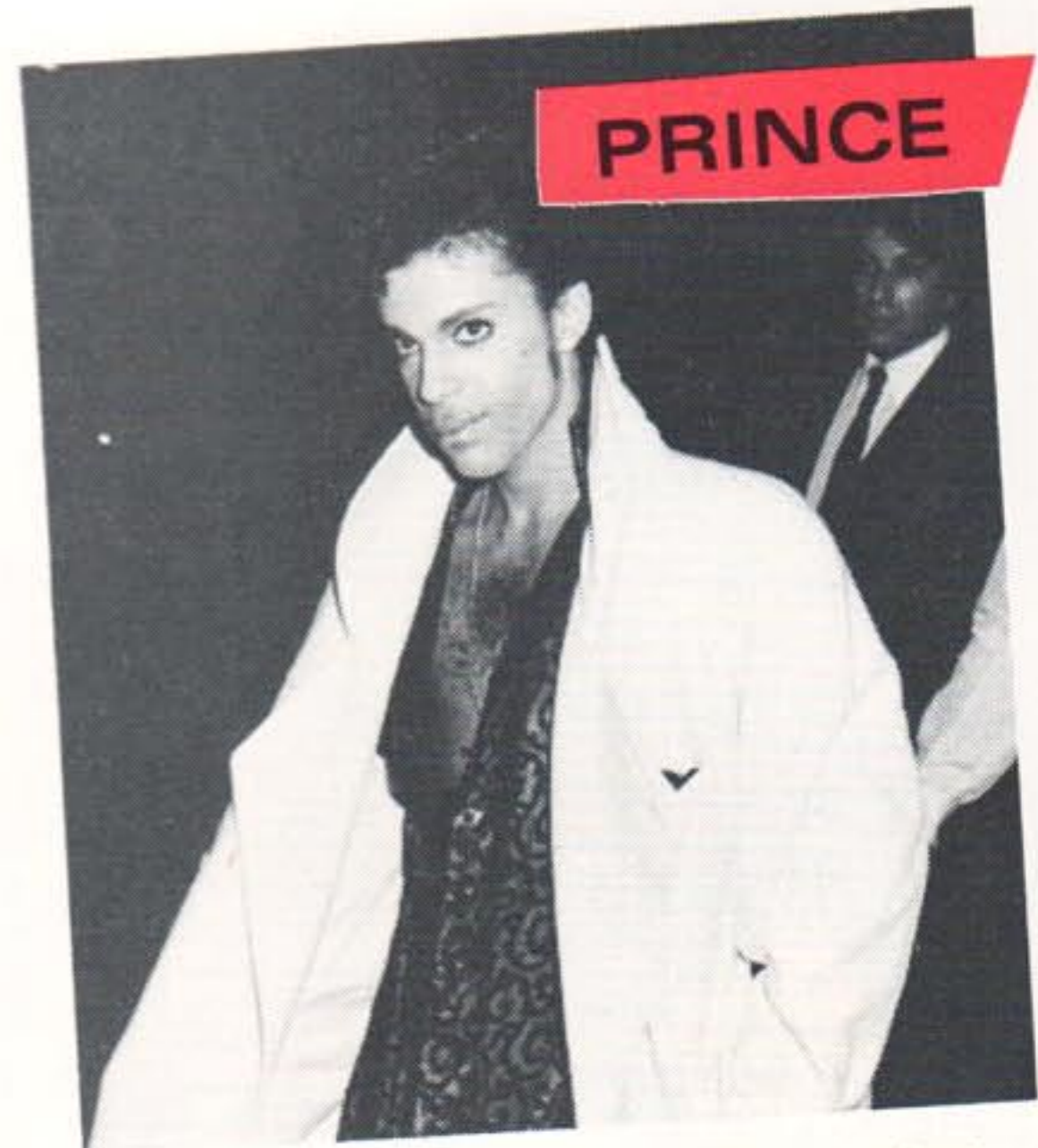
"Too squeaky for me, I'm afraid."

"He's the main man. He croaks a bit now but I'd still go and see him whenever he sings here. In his Capitol days he was unique."



FRANK SINATRA

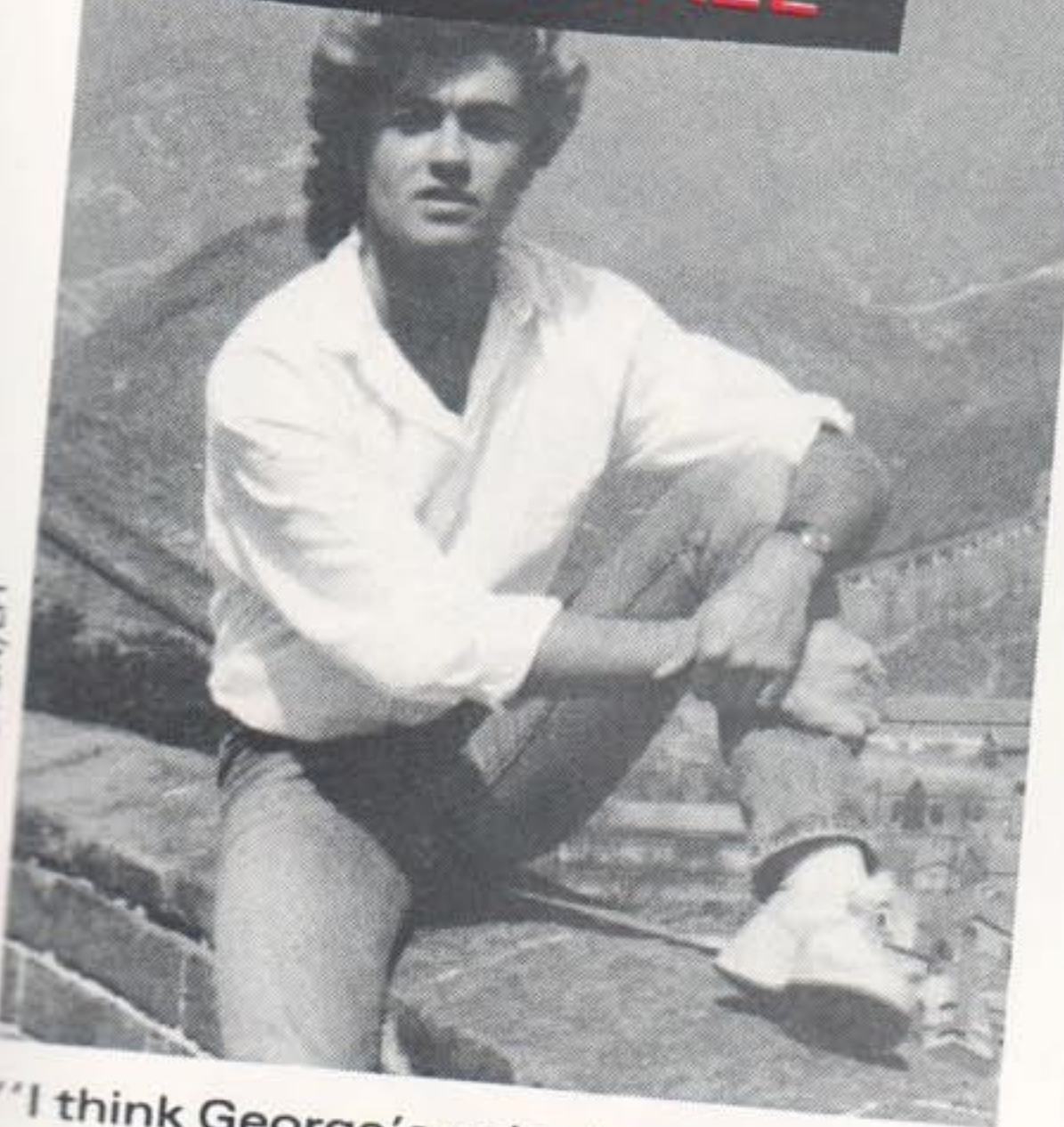
PRINCE



"I'm not a big fan — especially that weird squeaky falsetto on 'Kiss' — but I think he's a very clever guy. The best thing he's done has been to bridge the gap between rock and soul. Black soul music has got so bland. It's like the 70s. What Prince has done is a breath of fresh air."

GEORGE MICHAEL

PHOTO: NEAL PRESTON/LFI



"I think George's voice has improved immensely. He's very sensible because he writes for his voice. I didn't like 'A Different Corner' much but I only heard it a few times.

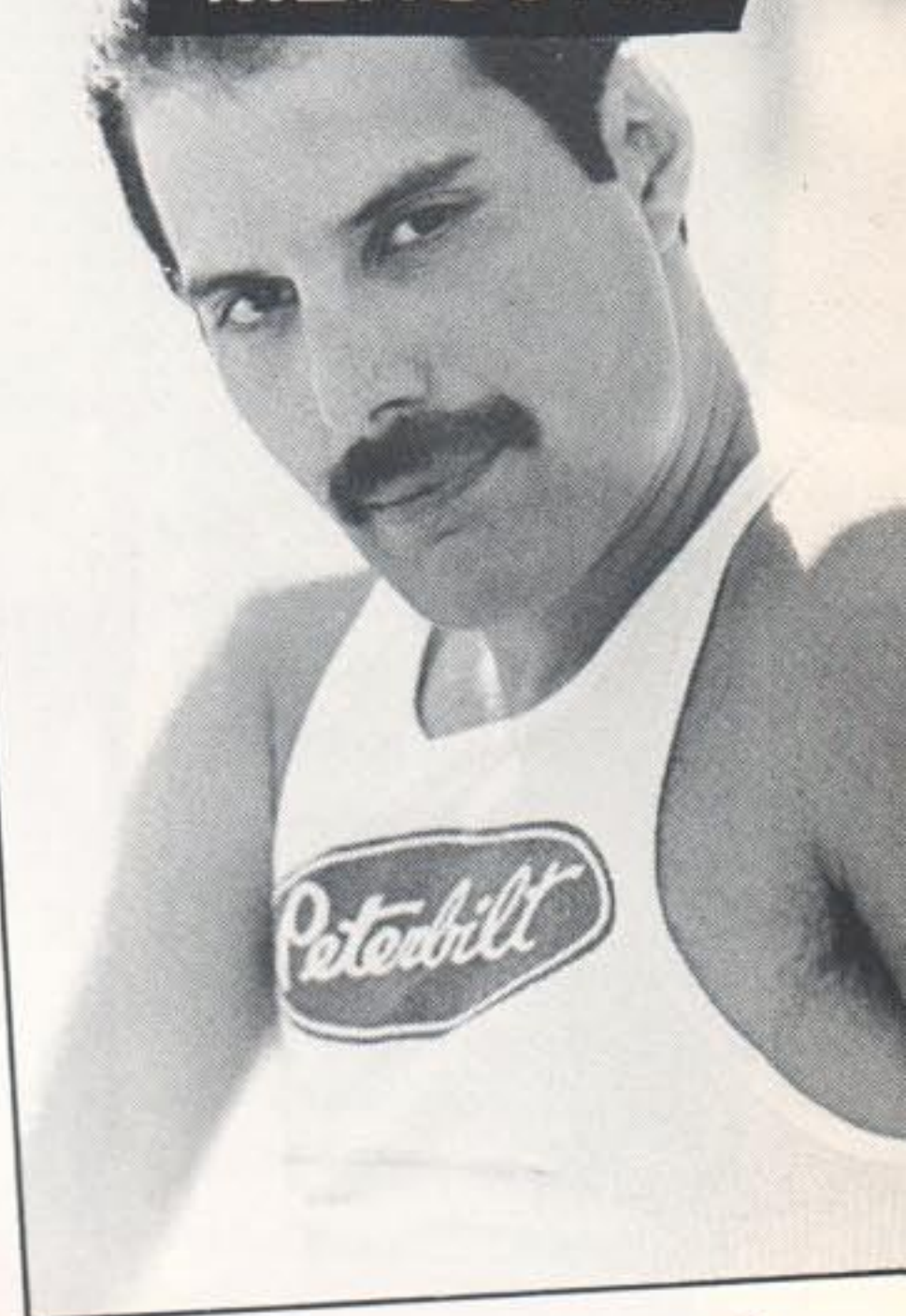
"George's strength does seem to be ballads. I like singing ballads but I've always been a bit of a closet rocker."

"Apart from a unique voice, Kate Bush is an exceptional performer. She doesn't care whether the Europeans or Americans are going to like it. She just does what she wants."



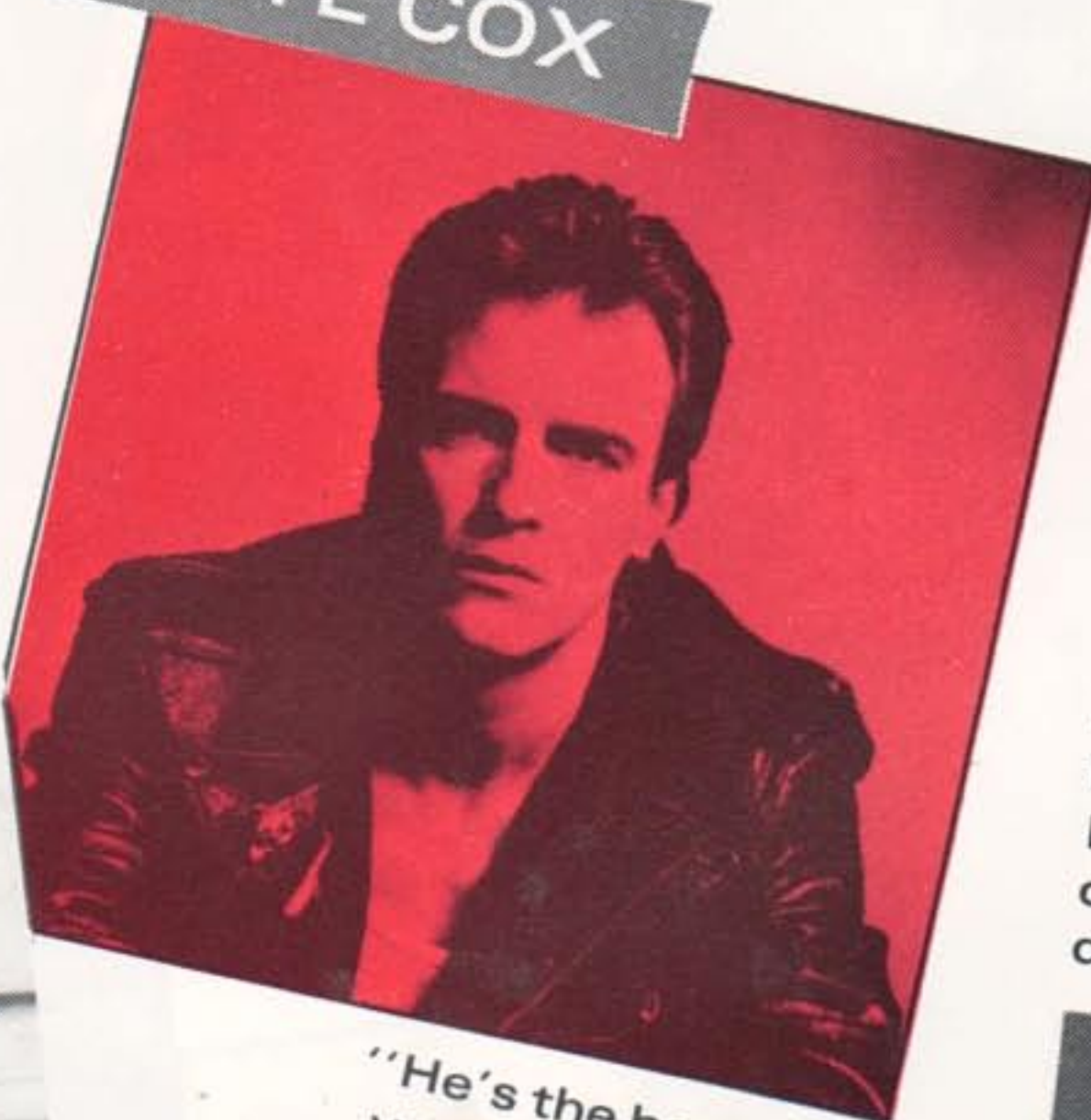
KATE BUSH

FREDDIE MERCURY



"There are two really great singers round today. One's Daryl Hall and the other's Freddie Mercury. I've been a big fan of Queen and Hall & Oates right from the beginning. Both groups' singers just have such a lot of soul, passion and unbelievable range."

PETE COX



"He's the best new vocalist I've heard, though Paul King has a very distinctive voice."

"It's very fashionable to knock A-Ha — I hate all those internal music politics — but when I saw them do the Grammys in America live Morten was very good. He sang 'Take On Me' which is quite a difficult song. He went very easily from deep to mid to falsetto."

ELTON JOHN

"Elton and Bernie Taupin are one of the greatest songwriting partnerships of all time. One of the great things about both Elton and Freddie Mercury is that their voices are unmistakable. As soon as one of their songs starts you know who it is.

"I think the reason that Elton and Queen have come back into fashion is that the music scene is really awful right now. It needed some class."



MORTEN HARKET

PHOTO: WOLFSON/LFI