



Antony's the only guy that could bring ya to tears with a Beyonce cover. The man's got a dreamy way with words. But what makes him tick? If he were a crayon, what color would he be? We forgot to ask, but we do know he'd like to sing a duet with a dead tiger. This interview by Daiana Feuer.

Did you go outside today?

Antony Hegarty (vocals): Yeah, I did.

What three things did you notice when you were outside?

I noticed the wind—it's raining. I noticed my friend's shoes in the water when she was standing in a puddle. [Hums a tune.] I noticed some trees. I'm always looking at trees. I tend to notice the lonely New York City trees coming out of the concrete.

Do you go to Central Park?

No, I never go uptown. I'm always below 14th street. I just hardly ever, ever go uptown. It just never was a part of my culture, I guess. It never occurs to me to go up there unless I have to go to a museum or something.

What are some of your spots?

I like the Earth Room on Wooster St. They have this really beautiful installation that's been there since the '70s. I go there a lot and take a look. I like the rivers. I like the East river—the Hudson. I like to see the water.

That first song on your new EP—'Another World'—gosh, that might be the saddest thing I've ever heard. Pulls your guts up to your eyeballs.

That song pretty much wrote itself. It's pretty minimal. It's an impression of how I feel today, right now—just looking at things. So it's pretty direct. That one's very simple. A teeny bit of thinking and a teeny bit of feeling and just sit down and make noise. 'Another World'—it's more about what I'm sensing in the natural world and the way I'm seeing things changing. And it's not so much about me, though it's about my feelings. I'm just responding to the environment. Responding to how I'm seeing life passing. It's more an inventory of the things around me more than it is an inventory of my feelings.

Like the bees?

The simple things. Really simple.

Are you a spiritual person? I don't mean religious but in your perception of nature.

I'm really into nature. I'm kind of pagan. I think everything contains the same radiance. It's all important. Everything's just as important. I'm not really into that idea that only people are important.

So you never kill bugs?

No, I do—I do sometimes.

Do you have any plants?

Yeah, I have a lot of plants. Different ferns, an aloe plant, some different types of plants that can do okay in New York City. Sometimes it's hard to keep plants here.

What's your imaginative landscape?

It's interesting that you mention that because my new album—it's all landscapes. You know, that's how I've been thinking about it—just all landscapes. Sort of in my looking out at the world more from an external landscape. Well, it's the landscape of today. Of the present. You know, maybe a non-pedestrian present. Not through pedestrian eyes. Just through more sitting. Like when we sit still right before going to sleep. Like maybe through the eyes of a sleeping person. Today's landscape through the eyes of a sleeping person.

If you could be any body part, what would you be?

If I only inhabited one part of a body, it'd probably be hair.

If you could be made of any element, what would you like to be made of?

Sunlight.

What painting would you like to be?

The Shroud of Turin.

If you made an album of duets, who or what would you want to duet with? Alive or dead.

I want to do one with Tatiana the San Francisco tiger. The tiger who ate those two boys, and then they killed her—back in Christmas. I want to do a duet with her. I want to do a duet with Benazir Bhutto. She's that lady that just got killed—they assassinated her. And maybe I'll do one with the island of Manhattan—the Indians that lived here before they sold it, on the day before they sold it. But it wouldn't really be a duet. It'd more just be, 'Let's have a listen.' I'd go and ask them for some advice.

You like history?

Oh yeah, I love. I'm into looking at pictures. I love looking at pictures by Eugene Atget. The French guy who took all those pictures of Paris at the beginning of the 20th century. He was worried that it would all get lost. They were tearing it down and building it all fresh. So the old guy went around and took pictures of everything and now he's considered one of the greatest photographers. Founding fathers.

You make art, too, don't you?

A little bit. I do drawings. Abstract isn't the right word but more just scribbles and stuff. It's more just lines. I think of it more like it's a trying space. It's a place to try and be free. Fumbling to find freedom through this very specific channel.

**Does music serve a similar purpose?**

I would say it's a similar purpose. Trying to take flight. Trying to find freedom. Giving voice to a greater freedom. Flight of freedom.

Sonically or through actual meaning? Is it experiential?

In expression—more in expression that really manifests. I think we spend a lot of time inhibiting. We've learned our whole lives how to inhibit our expression. To be the most microscopically contained, socially contained expression. I think singing and all the creative expressions give form to a more expansive expression as a human being. And then we let a few people do it in society. God forbid everyone started doing it at once. That might be dangerous. If everyone started expressing their heart's desires—their creative desires at once—no one would get any work done. And then those guys wouldn't make any money.

What's the difference between the catharsis you get from something melodic that you sit down and listen to, as opposed to something that makes you dance?

For me they can go hand in hand. Often times the things that make me feel the most make me want to move. Move around. Again it's kind of a freedom thing. I know they're separated in terms of genres of music, but honestly the kind of music I like to dance around to is also the kind of music I cry to—like Cocteau Twins or something. A lot of our most beautiful songs are slow songs, and they fill me—they make me want to move around.

That makes sense in the way you perform. The music is slow but your body's really moving.

Yeah, I tend to move around like a crazy person. The ballads—the ballads are the best ones. Having feelings is a physical process so if I'm moved by something, I'm probably having feelings. It tends to engage me physically. Music, when it is effective, it does engage you physically. Crying is physical. Crying is a kind of a dance. It's a dance of water in your body, coming up through your eyes. Your body's muscles moving and changing in a beautiful pattern—you know, a sequence. You can think of any physical movement as dance—I mean, it is.

Do you get the same experience from listening to music as you do from performing it?

When you're performing it, you're out in front of the ship. When you're listening to it, you're following in a movement that's happened before you or is happening around you. Like birds in formation. One goes in front and the others fall in the wind pattern of the ones that go before. Listening to music, someone's gone ahead making a wind pattern and you're following in the shadow of that pattern and moving through it. When you're in the front singing, you're the beginning. And you can be affected by the people around you. It can be in turn inspired by the group, the group experience, or the group yearning for experience. So it's kind of circular. The chicken or the egg. The cart or the horse. If you're the singer, you're the horse.

If you had to give up your ears or your eyes, which would you choose?

One of each.

VISIT ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS AT ANTONYANDTHEJOHNSONS.COM OR MYSPACE.COM/ANTONYANDTHEJOHNSONS.

<http://larecord.com/interviews/2008/10/14/antony-and-the-johnsons-if-youre-the-singer-youre-the-horse/>

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 At the time, it was hard to know what the world would make of the Sussex-born, New York-dwelling, Anglo-Irishman. Six foot-plus and built like a farm labourer, yet defiantly transgender and blessed with an uncanny, androgynous singing voice, he seemed like an emissary from another, more unusual universe.

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 "When you dress up, even in a pedestrian way, like putting on a little make-up to go to work, you're honouring a little deity, an inner beauty."

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 "I'm 37 now, and as you get older, you revisit the issues that sit with you in the course of your life. I always felt so self-conscious, and I didn't let myself be beautiful for so many years, but by the time you've made your face worthy of being looked at by anyone, you've abandoned yourself in the process. You show up with a pretty face and an empty heart. Life's too short to be slaving around to other people's expectations. We should put on a little make-up to honour the specific dignity that we have within ourselves, but I'm never putting a spot of make-up on for a man again."

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 Hercules gave him a chart hit with Blind, though his guest vocal was recorded in 2003, before he became famous. He'd like to make more dance music. "The challenge of getting people to dance is such a nice reason to sing," he says. "It's a hoot." Not that there are any floorfillers on The Crying Light: "I don't think it quite fits under this moniker. If it's miserable enough it makes its way on to my record."

He's joking, of course. Antony doesn't regard his music as miserable and says, "I do recommend that anyone that sees my records as miserable stops listening to them immediately, because they're not helping." He's horrified that Hope There's Someone is purportedly popular at funerals. "Oh God, that sounds like a nightmare. It's a song for the living, not a tribute to the dead."

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 He says his new lyrical desire to engage with the world at large is a consequence of him feeling "more confident as a transgender person".

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 His Catholic upbringing in Chichester, Sussex made him feel "that I was an alien from another dimension".

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 The family moved around a lot, living in Amsterdam then Santa Cruz. His teachers weren't impressed with his singing: "In second grade I was told, 'He loves music, if only his prowess matched his enthusiasm.'"

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 Antony graduated from playing nightclubs to putting on plays in more conventional spaces with his new theatre group the Johnsons. By the middle of the decade, however, "it became clear that there wasn't any support for that kind of work. Also I'd been waiting for someone to discover me, and it didn't happen. I got this one grant and I thought, 'This is my ticket out - I'm gonna make an album.'"

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 A beacon of intelligence and imagination in a drab music scene, it's tempting to conclude that Antony may well be the last of the great pop stars who rose from the subculture to weird out the mainstream. Yet the man himself is having none of it: "People aren't that different from generation to generation. We're basically the same old sludge reincarnated over and over again. Every generation has all the colours - it never stops." It's just that Antony's colours are that bit bolder than everyone else's, now with a welcome preponderance of green.

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/jan/16/antony-and-johnsons-crying-light>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/jan/18/antony-and-the-johnsons-album-review>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/nov/02/antony-and-the-johnsons-barbican>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/apr/13/women.fashion1>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/jan/03/antony-hegarty-and-the-johnsons>

END.

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 As a child, I knew
 That the stars could only get brighter
 [?]That we could get closer
 Get closer
 Mmm-mmmmmm
 As a child, I knew
 That the stars could only get brighter
 [?]That we could get closer
 Leaving this darkness
 Behind
 Mmm-mmmmmm
 Ooooooh
 Now that I'm older
 The stars shed light upon my face
 And when I find myself alone
 Find myself alone
 Ooooooh
 Now that I'm older
 The stars shed light upon my face
 And when I find myself alone
 I feel like I
 I am blind
 [?] I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel
 Like I
 I am blind

I wish the stars could shine now
 For they are closer
 They are near
 But they will not present my present
 They will not present my present
 I wish the light could shine now
 For it is closer
 It is near
 But it will not present my present
 It makes my past and future painfully clear
 To hear you now
 To see you now
 I can look outside myself
 And I must examine my breath and look inside
 Ooooooh
 To see you now
 To hear you now
 I can look outside myself
 And I must examine my breath and look inside
 Because I feel blind
 Because I feel blind
 [?] I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel
 Like I
 I am blind
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