

LENNY KRAVITZ

Sweet faced dreadlocked troubadour Lenny Kravitz led a bunch of hippy minstrels through a sun drenched field on his debut video, 'Let Love Rule', and became an instant star.

Even though the LP sold a mere half million copies, Lenny quickly became the celebrities' celebrity, the new pop star all the old pop stars wanted to be snapped by the paparazzi with. Young and gifted, black and beautiful, Lenny had arrived just in time for the redawning of the Age of Aquarius with his 60s threads and Lennon shades, peace and love with a boho edge, genre blending and colour crossing. For Lenny creates music steeped in the spirit of his heroes — John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Stevie Wonder — he is the spirit of '69, distilled and giftwrapped for a new generation.

All this and marriage to Lisa Bonet too. But as any avid reader of *Woman's Day* can tell you, a couple of years and one baby later, the Kravitz-Bonet romance has burned out. They may have looked like cosmic twins and preached the doctrine of love, peace and harmony but as inexorably as Lenny's star has risen, so his romance with Lisa has waned.

As usual in these affairs, lovely Lisa is left holding the baby while Lenny has been sighted all over town with a different blonde every night. So much for rumours of an affair with Yoko Ono.

Unfortunately, interviewing Lenny over the line in an LA recording studio at 11 pm their time, I chickened out of asking him the question about Yoko, but by all accounts he's been adopted by the Lennon clan, and is best buddies with Sean, who he met backstage after last year's Lennon memorial concert in Liverpool. Their friendship has since been cemented

by a collaborative effort on Lenny's new album *Mama Said* which Sean co-wrote and on which he plays piano.

I was prepared to be dazzled by Lenny Kravitz on the telephone, the 26 year old who oozes emotional intensity in song, who's earned himself a reputation for talking as snappily as he dresses. But whether it was the lateness of the hour, or that he's been spending too much time on the Jack with Slash (who co-wrote and plays guest guitar on 'Always On The Run'), or whether it was just because somebody as cool as Lenny Kravitz was about as interested in talking to someone from New Zealand as he would be a bus conductor from Abu Dhabi — whatever it was, his words slipped lazily, incoherently, and not at all rivetingly from his perfectly formed lips.

It goes like this. Obsequious journalist carefully couches opening question about artist's very famous (and very obvious) influences. Is it hard to transcend your heroes to create something uniquely your own?

Lenny: "I think what I do is fresh and original. I like those people."

Don't you find it hard to get their legacy out of your head when you're creating?

"I don't think about writing music, it just comes out of me. It's not something that I control, I know that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

I'm aching to ask him what Slash is like (they went to high school together, both are children of liberal intellectual '60s parents), what Sean



Lennon is like, what Madonna is like (Lenny wrote and produced her great comeback single 'Justify My Love') but you just can't spend an interview with a rock star asking him about all the stars he hangs out with, it offends their sense of self-worth and makes them clam up. So instead we steer onto questions about the catharsis of songwriting ("I went to some pretty sad places and I'm glad to be not there now"), about how the studio is his favourite place (Lenny records at New York's Hoboken Waterfront studios using vintage, vacuum-tube equipment and twelve year old tape to give his music that ring of '60s authenticity), and how he is in danger of being submerged in a tidal wave of 60s revivalism, just another symptom of the trend.

"I'm definitely not, you might think so but I'm definitely not. I'm just doing what I wanted to do and it has nothing to do with the '60s. What I'm doing is very much now, my life now, I'm not trying to be linked."

What about your Jimi, John and Jim dress sense?

"One might argue that point, but it's just the way I like to be. When I grew up in the late '60s, '70s, my parents were artists, we had an exciting free time in New York, they influenced me very much."

Fortunately, Lenny has imbued *Mamma Said* with all the lustre he lacks in conversation. An album oozing emotional longing and regret, lit up with occasional flashes of guitar lightning (as on the Slash track). Sometimes Lenny's way with a lyric lets him down (song titles like 'It Ain't Over Till It's Over' or 'What The Fuck Are We Saying' lack a certain *je ne sais quoi*) but the music is amped up angst and takes you on a convincing trip to the land his musical mentors first laid bare all those years ago.

If you love Lennon, Hendrix and Led Zep but were too young to be there the first time, then you'll probably love Lenny too.

DONNA YUZWALK

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