



Dido tunes up

Motherhood agrees with this soul/pop sensation, writes **Sam Kelton**

She was the voice of the noughties but now, UK chart-topper Dido is back with a new album and ready to take on the next stage of her life, motherhood.

It has been four years since we've heard the singer's warm voice on her 2008 effort *Safe Trip Home* and critics have already dubbed the new effort, *Girl Who Got Away*, a comeback. Dido doesn't agree.

"It didn't feel that way to me," she laughs.

"I just kept doing what I'm doing so it just made me laugh."

One apt comparison that the bubbly songwriter agrees with is that the newest effort harks back to her debut album, which sold a staggering 20 million copies.

"It was the excitement of working again," she says of the comparison, with *Girl Who Got Away* feeling like her debut.

"There was a freshness and confidence with this one and I think having a kid makes it a whole new world."

Stanley, now 18 months, is the apple of her eye and Dido is quick to point out the effect her little man had on the new album.

"I'd written a lot of the album before Stanley came along," she explains.

"But I loved having him kicking around (inside me) if it was a song that he liked."

"He's so sweet and he knows it's me when he hears me on the radio; he stops what he's doing and just stares at the radio and points. I love that he can enjoy it too."

Dido adds it was a godsend the majority of the album was completed before he

came along. "Yeah... We might have been waiting 'til 2015," she laughs.

"I'd probably only just be getting in the studio now."

"I don't think I wanted to wait any longer," she continues.

"As soon as I started singing and doing gigs again I realised just how much I really enjoy doing this."

It's a good thing we aren't waiting any longer because *Girl Who Got Away* is a timely reminder that Dido is a powerful stakeholder in the soul and pop realm, collaborating with what seemingly is the who's who of music production including Greg Kurstin, her brother Rollo Armstrong, Rick Nowels and Brian Eno.

"We made friends. I'm hoping he's someone that I'll always get to work with," she says of Eno.

Dido admits collaborating is one of the joys of making music and also teams up with man of the moment, US rapper Kendrick Lamar, on *Let Us Move On*.

It's safe to say the last time Dido teamed up with an up-and-coming rapper, things worked out very well, with the iconic collaboration with Eminem for *Stan*.

"Yeah, not bad," she laughs.

"It wasn't terrible. That's where I started so it makes total sense."

That was 14 years ago, a scary thought for many, including Dido.

"I didn't know what was going on back then; it was a complete whirlwind. I didn't expect any of that (success)... I just kept my head down and before I knew it, it was 2005."

Now, however, the 41-year-old is constantly reminded of that era with her son Stanley, which seems to be an assumption made by many that Dido named him after the mega hit from that era, which she denies.

MUSIC MATTERS

Grammy-winning jazz-blues singer Rickie Lee Jones has come to terms with growing older – but there is still a streak of rebel in her, writes **Sally Browne**

Rickie Lee Jones wasn't planning to attend the Grammy Awards. The then 26-year-old rebellious jazz-blues singer was far too cool for that.

"Who needs that kind of false industry thing where they all go put on stupid dresses and give awards to people whose music sucks."

It was 1980. Jones had just released her debut self-titled album to critical acclaim. She had been nominated for five awards. She was sitting alone in her hotel room at LA's famous Chateau Marmont, staring at a bunch of flowers her record company executives had given her when, suddenly, something clicked. She looked around the room.

"Suddenly I thought, hey, I had those pants taken in for the Grammys. And I have my fox thing, I can wear that with my leather jacket. The capris, the leather jacket, the fox, it's representing, see? I'm old fashioned with the pants, I'm tough with my own everyday jacket, I'm elegant with my touch of fur..."

"Dressing up? What's rock 'n' roll about that? Polyester dresses and Farrah (Fawcett) hair? Come on! I'll dress up as Me."

It was a quick turnaround. She called her friend and mentor Bob Regher who said: "I'll be there in 15 minutes". They jumped in a limo and tore to downtown LA. Sneaking in the back entrance, Jones took her seat minutes before her category was called. She was up against some big names like Dire Straits and Sister Sledge. And then her name was called: Rickie Lee Jones, Best New Artist.

Her acceptance speech – in which she thanked her lawyers and her accountant rather than God like her contemporaries – became infamous.

Now a comfortable 58 years old, Rickie Lee Jones laughs at the memory. She still glances at the Grammys with a cynical eye.

"It's cliché but you are important to them only as long as you are important to others," she says. "You watch these things on TV and it's like royalty: 'One day I will grow up and be a princess too'. But then you get there and realise that those curtains they are standing in front of are not gossamer, they are crepe paper, torn at the edges."

Her Grammy night was a fairytale event, she admits. She was in the company of stars, from Neil Diamond to Blondie and George Burns. A real "Warhol" event. Bob Dylan even came over and shook her hand.

"He so sincerely said: 'Don't quit, you're a real poet,'" she recalls.

"So, I thought, what happens now? The poet of the age has told you you are a

