

Jason Donovan interview

It's been 36 years since Jason Donovan released his first single, the No.5-charting Nothing Can Divide Us. Already a star through his role as Scott Robinson in Neighbours, he followed this hit up with a string of successful releases, including the Kylie Minogue duet Especially For You, and the chart-topping Too Many Broken Hearts and Sealed With A Kiss. Currently touring with The Rocky Horror Picture Show, he's recently announced he's going back on the road next year, for the Doin' Fine 25 tour.

How does it feel going back on tour in your fifties? Is it harder than when you were in your twenties?

There's a bit more physio these days, and a lot more stretching. There's even a bit of steam and inhaler just to keep the vocal cords pretty!

It must be great going on the road again and getting to sing these songs?

I love creating my own show. I guess the difference with this and what I do in theatre is that I'm sort of the boss. For me, if I was to just rely on my own shows and those pop songs as my only bread and butter, I probably wouldn't enjoy it as much. But because I get these gaps, and because I do a lot of theatre work, I get the opportunity to exercise those songs every four or five years and not get tired of them.

Though the tour's called Doin' Fine 25, it'll actually be 35 years since your original Doin' Fine shows. Are you a nostalgic person at all?

When I listen to my own records, I get a little bit scientific about them, like was that vocal good or not good? But doing that 1990 world tour was important to me, because it was a matter of proving to myself and my audience that I was in this for the long term.

What can fans expect from the tour? Aside from the hits, will there be some deeper album cuts?

That's always a tug of war, because you've got to try and deliver what people want, but educate as well. It's about trying to find that balance between what the crowd wants and what you want creatively. You want a show that engages with an audience and doesn't put them to sleep as well.

Apart from your own hits, will you be playing any songs from any of the musicals you've been associated with?

I do Rocky Horror songs, because they work really well in my shows. There are a couple of songs from Priscilla Queen Of The Desert that my audience loves, and some covers too. I did Don't Leave Me This Way years ago – that's always gone down well. My act is an

unusual one, but there's an audience out there that seems to want to listen to what I've got to say and what I've got to sing.

Obviously Especially For You is a duet. How will you be performing that? Will you have a guest vocalist or will you pipe Kylie's original vocal in?

I normally have a backing singer that I do it with, but that's an interesting idea. But I'm a little bit conscious that records like that, whilst they're defining moments, you also just don't want to be defined as just Kylie and Jason. There are a lot of other moments to what I do and what I've done. You've got to pay reasonable respect to that, but, but not saturate.

Will you be performing the Neighbours theme tune at all?

When I used to do these personal appearances in the early 2000s I'd sing the Home And Away theme, but I'm a bit like that. People would say, "That's Home And Away, that's not Neighbours!" and I'd go, "Exactly!" But more recently, when Neighbours was rebooted on Amazon, the producers asked if I wanted to re-record the song, and I turned it down. I did have a think about it, but I thought going back to appear in what we thought was the last episode [in 2022] was enough done. It's a great song, but does it work in a show? It's a bit twee.

It's been 12 years since you released an album. Do you have any plans to record again?

I do. The problem is, it takes a lot of energy and the market is very different now. You've got to dream big, I get that. I'm definitely not lazy, but I just feel that maybe my time is better spent on stuff that engages a little bit more. I'm playing to full houses with Rocky Horror at the moment – what more could I want?