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Following her successful West End debut in *9 to 5: The Musical*, Oxshott's Louise Redknapp is getting ready to take to the stage as a solo star once again. **Simone Hellyer** speaks to her ahead of next year's album release and tour

After an 18-year break from the music industry, Oxshott-based singer Louise Redknapp could be forgiven for feeling some trepidation about going back into the studio to record a new album. It turns out that could not be further from the truth – far from being nervous, Louise is excited for the release of her new music (the album is due out in January) and is itching to perform live again.

"To make a new album is so exciting; it's something that I've wanted to do for ages, but with timing, opportunity and all the rest of that, it hasn't happened. It has been really great to get back in the studio, but it has taken me quite a long time to write and record – it's been an 18-month process," she reveals. "I don't think I felt nervous, I think it's like anything you do – you just want it to be the best that it can be and you want it to be received well. The nice thing is that I don't have a lot riding on it, it's not like I had an album out two years ago and feel like I've got to match that. I just want to enjoy it and hope that other people do too."

Louise first rose to fame in the nineties as one quarter of R&B girl group Eternal, before launching a successful solo career, securing several TV presenting jobs and launching *A Style Album*, a successful fashion and lifestyle blog with her best friend. But it was her standout performances on *Strictly Come Dancing* (especially that memorable Argentine tango) in 2016 that can be thanked for rebooting her career.

In January this year she made her West End debut as Violet Newstead in *9 to 5, The Musical* that is based on the classic 1980 film of the same name and over the last few months she has been performing across the UK and Ireland on the touring version of the show too.

"Musical theatre is a different world to the pop industry, but just as great," Louise enthuses. "The audiences have been brilliant. It's such a fun show to do with such a great message of female empowerment."

'The boys are so into their music, so if they didn't like a song, it didn't go on the album'

"My character is so different from me – she's really organised, she runs the office and does her job and more. But there are similarities as well; she is a mum to a teenage son and really believes in equality between men and women and fights hard for what she believes in. The other two girls in the office are so different to her, but become her closest allies and between the three of them, they try to make a change. So, even though it's really different to my life, there are lots of elements that I can really relate to," she adds.

Next year Louise will be taking to the stage once again, this time as a solo performer, debuting songs from her soon to be released album, *Heavy Love*. With several tracks from the album already out, Louise's new music has been getting lots of great reviews and radio airtime, much



to her delight: “To me it’s a strong album and when you hear that people are enjoying it and that it’s been reviewed well, of course, as an artist that’s all you ever want – that what you are putting out there publically to be received in the best light and for people to enjoy it and, so far, that seems to be happening.”

But it is the opinions of her two sons that really matter to Louise, as she explains: “The boys are so into their music, so if they didn’t like a song, it didn’t go on the album. Especially my 15-year-old as he’s so into all the latest songs and artists – some that I’ve not even heard of. But it’s something that we really enjoy together; he loves getting me in the car and playing me the latest artists I should be listening to. So, it’s been great to take that into the studio as well – these artists are a lot younger than me but I’m still inspired by what they’re doing.”

‘We will definitely be taking a trip down memory lane with all the old songs like Naked, Two Faces and old Eternal stuff’

One of the standout tracks from the album, *Lead Me On*, was premiered on Ken Bruce’s Radio 2 show in July and was produced by hit makers Clean Bandit. Louise has also worked with the likes of Sinéad O’Connor, Raye, JoJo and Sia, who she describes as “great empowering, strong female influences”.

Louise’s divorce from ex-footballer Jamie Redknapp has been much publicised and some commentators have already linked the more emotional tracks on the album to her recent marriage break-up. On this Louise simply says: “It’s quite a



ABOVE: Louise is looking forward to getting back on stage

personal album, obviously, just due to life and everything.” But she also says the overall sound of the album is much closer to Eternal’s early sound: “Our first album had a soulful, funky element to it and there’s lots of that on this album too”.

Take a look on Louise’s social media and you’ll see that she has been posting lots of throwback videos of her old hits lately, a potential hint of what’s to come on her tour next year.

“We will definitely be taking a trip down memory lane with all the old songs like *Naked*, *Two Faces* and old *Eternal* stuff on the set list – all with a bit of a twist, though. I think it’s really important that they are brought in to 2019/20, but I won’t ruin them, I promise,” she jokes.

Louise says the tour, which comes closest to Surrey on

March 26, 2020 at London’s O2 Shepherd’s Bush Empire, is set to be the most exciting part of her comeback.

“Everybody has different processes when they’re making albums – some people like the writing process, the recording or the promoting,” she says. “But I think for me, it’s all about the tour at the end of it. I love being on tour and I think this album really lends itself to gigging.”

Going forward Louise says she “100 per cent” wants to do more musical theatre, as well as finding more time to focus on her blog. But for now she is just enjoying making music as well as spending time with her sons in the comfort of her Surrey haven. ♦

For tour dates and updates on Louise’s new music visit:
louiseofficial.co.uk