



# WILD ROSE

STORY FIONA MCCARTHY

HAIR AND MAKE UP CHRISTIAN VERMAAK

*Australia's beloved singing export Kylie Minogue is spinning around, bringing the world some disco joy with the 15th album of a stellar career and celebrating the launch of her own wine label*

If ever Kylie Minogue needed an excuse to open a celebratory bottle of her own rosé (more of which later), it would be now. Since the release of her 15th album *Disco* in early November, "our Kylie" has hit the top of the pops, rocketing into the number-one spot on both the Australian and the UK album charts. Having appeared morning, noon and night on TV screens and radio shows across the globe, in person or via Zoom, in an effervescent array of fantastic frocks and always with a flash of her signature ever-bright smile, the ARIA, Grammy and Brit award winning Minogue is back again, to capture not only our hearts but our dancefloor moves as well.

A little Kylie disco joy is exactly what we all need right now. While she might be teeny tiny in stature – and look decades younger than her 52 years – Minogue's influence as one of the world's best loved pop icons remains impressively mighty. "I think it [dance music] suits me," says Minogue about her return to dancefloor form. "I can go down roads I haven't been down before, infusing my

world with country or a bit of indie, whatever it might be, but I will always come back to pop music."

The success of *Disco* has also made Minogue the first female to top the UK album chart in each of five consecutive decades. That takes in her late-eighties debut album *Kylie*, produced by the British hit factory Stock Aitken and Waterman, and the 2001 hit-laden *Fever* (think *Can't Get You Out of My Head*, *Love at First Sight*, *Come Into My World* and *In Your Eyes*) up to the more recent, country-inspired *Golden*, released in 2018. "I don't know what to say, I'm lost for words," Minogue squealed in an Instagram video posted the night the accolade was announced.

For our very own disco diva, reinvention is nothing new. Minogue has gone from soap star (*Neighbours*) to pop princess (*I Should Be So Lucky*), indie singer (*Confide in Me*) balladeer (*Where the Wild Roses Grow*), seductress (*Slow*) and torch song sentimentalist (*The Abbey Road Sessions*). If the songs written for *Golden* were more introspective – "trying to get back on terra firma, dealing with a break-up

[from actor Joshua Sasse], reclaiming my sense of self", she recently told Apple Music DJ Zane Lowe – *Disco* is about "trying to reach different places, to get better, to do something new and exciting".

She is right at home with this new album, which is jam-packed with great songs set against a sophisticated sweep of piano, funky bass guitar and strings, and infused with hints of seventies classics such as *Love's Theme* by Barry White's Love Unlimited Orchestra, the riffs of Nile Rogers' *Chic* and a frisson of French discotheque. It lives as a whole album, not just as a series of hits – "there's a lot of melody, a lot of lyrics, and as little filler as possible", Minogue enthuses.

The idea for *Disco* came after the fun she and her dancers had during the closing "fantasy Studio 54" section of the *Golden* tour two years ago, and last year's star turn in the "Legends" slot on the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury, which the BBC estimates was watched by 3.2 million people around the world. It was a joyous

moment for Minogue, who had to cancel her appearance in 2005 after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

The love for her that day was palpable, and during *On a Night Like This*, as she followed the line “seems I’ve known you a lifetime” by shouting out “for some of you it has been a lifetime”, the near 200,000-strong crowd roared with approval.

By its very name, *Disco* naturally captures the twinkling, infectious grooves of the late seventies’ dance movement, when “people were just letting go and expressing themselves”, says Minogue. But the singer was also mindful that the album not be simply a pastiche of the past. Rather than just wash the songs with disco sounds, it was important to Minogue that they pay true homage and respect to the era – when inflation soared, the economy slowed and unemployment was high – “remembering that behind all those shining lights there were real stories of emotions and troubles”.

For inspiration, she also drew on the music of her youth – “being about eight or nine, when ABBA was peaking in Australia and I was peaking with my ABBA socks”, she laughs – and listening to her parents’ records by the likes of The Bee Gees, Earth Wind & Fire and Skyhooks, and of course the soundtrack to *Saturday Night Fever*. A recent clear-out at the singer’s London home also unearthed an early cassette recording of Minogue, just 17, singing Donna Summer’s *Dim All the Lights*. “I sounded like a little mouse,” she said recently on singer Jessie Ware’s *Table Manners* podcast, about hearing it again decades later.

From the new album, *Dancefloor Darling* is one of her favourite tracks. “There is something in its sound that pleases me, and it’s a song I feel like I’m singing along with rather than just singing,” she muses. “Then something like *Say Something* feels like some of it just fell from the sky,” she says. Its lines “we’re a million miles apart, in a thousand ways, can we all be as one again?” perfectly sum up the mood of the moment.

Songs like *Magic* and *Miss a Thing* come close to matching the phenomenal addictive quality of hits such as *Can’t Get You Out of My Head* (which went to number one in 40 countries when it was released in 2001). Is the pressure of replicating this success always there when she goes into the studio?

“I do think about it – not all the time I’m writing, because you need to believe in every song you’re doing in order to get it done and then you can decide whether you love it or not – but I don’t go into an album thinking I’m just going to write songs I like,” says Minogue. “I want songs that a lot of people will like.” Writing or finding



the song that’s bigger than the sum of its parts “and somehow transcends whatever zeitgeist is at the time, is difficult”, she says.

Take *Celebrate You*. With its rousing chorus of “Everything I like about myself is better with you”, it seems destined to become the most requested wedding song forevermore. “That would be amazing,” enthuses Minogue, “but weirdly I always think of *Dancefloor Darling* as the wedding reception song. *Celebrate You*, to me, is like the last call at the pub, where Auntie Rose has definitely had one too many, people have fallen out and made up, everyone’s hugging; it’s a love fest. So that felt like a perfect closer for the album.”

To launch *Disco*, Minogue – the highest-selling Australian-born solo artist of all time, with more than 80 million records sold internationally – ventured into new territory with *Infinite Disco*, a livestreamed performance with a staggered broadcast, on a Saturday night in November, across different time zones around the world. “Part concert, part music video”, as she described it, almost a hundred thousand fans logged on to watch as Minogue brought her usual showmanship and panache to 50 minutes of great tunes, spectacular dancers, brilliant lighting effects, and a guest appearance by London’s House Gospel Choir as atmospheric backup singers for *All the Lovers* and *Say Something*.

Despite “losing track of how long I did nothing, just going to the fridge 17 times a day, rotating the same three T-shirts and two track pants, and cleaning” during those first few weeks of pandemic panic, Minogue says setting up a makeshift studio at home – teaching herself the basics of recording and mixing on the Apple app GarageBand – helped keep the creative juices flowing while she finished the album during the first lockdown.

“I didn’t have proper sound insulation but I had the basics – and determination,” she quips.

Her willingness to try anything new also led her to launch her own wine collection this year. On her birthday in May, Minogue debuted her Signature Vin de France Rosé – a “fresh, light and perfect pink rosé”, she says – made with grapes sourced from small local vineyards in Provence, the south of France’s premium rosé-producing region.

The wine was produced in collaboration with Benchmark Drinks, a British wine and spirit company founded by fellow Australian Paul Schaafsma.

The singer was closely involved in every aspect, from choosing the shape of the bottle and determining the taste of the wine, to designing the pared-back label and the iridescent silver packaging.

The idea of having her own rosé struck Minogue a couple of years

ago while she was recording in Nashville for *Golden*. “It was my first trip away with one of my managers, Polly,” she explains, “and as Nashville lived up to its reputation for not working crazy hours, she and I would do quite a lot of bonding together over alfresco dinners and always a glass or two of rosé,” she recalls. At one point, “I had this fanciful moment of thinking how lovely it would be to have my own rosé.”

Having one’s own wines is certainly not an idea lost on others in the public eye – Benchmark Drinks also works with several celebrities. The Delevingne sisters – models turned actresses Cara and Poppy, and science graduate Chloe (co-founder of the Lady Garden Foundation, aimed at raising awareness of gynaecological cancers) – this year launched their own vegan Della Vite prosecco in collaboration with the Biasiotto family, owners of the sustainably focused Foss Marai estate in Valdobbiadene. Film director Francis Ford Coppola’s Napa wines – including the collection of white and rosé wines and champagnes named after his daughter Sofia – are highly sought after around the world.

Post divorce, Brad Pitt and Angelie Jolie still part-own Miraval, run in partnership with the Perrin family. Its bulbous-bottled organic Côte de Provence wine is largely responsible for the resurgent interest in rosé, and last year the winery added Muse de Miraval, a prestige rosé cuvée made from the vineyard’s best and oldest parcels of fruit. Fleur de Miraval, a rosé champagne made with renowned winemaker Rodolphe Péters using the rosé de saignée technique, appeared this year with an eye-watering RRP of €340 a bottle.

Schaafsma started Benchmark Drinks after 20 years working with major wine brands such as McGuigan and Hardy’s, where he aimed “to make buying wine a bit more



Clockwise from far left: Performing at Glastonbury last year; with Michael Hutchence, who taught her an appreciation of wine; appearing on the Graham Norton Show in a shimmering vintage dress; the famous hot pants; and in the beginning, as Charlene on Neighbours



Minogue’s love for rosé developed after she tried it with then boyfriend Michael Hutchence during a trip through the south of France

fun”, also distributes wines in collaboration with Sarah Jessica Parker, Graham Norton and Ian Botham. When thoughts turned to launching a rosé, Minogue was at the top of his wishlist.

Working with a recognisable name such as hers makes good business sense. “It is reassuring for someone perhaps scared of buying the wrong wine,” Schaafsma explains. “Because Kylie is someone they know and understand, they’re more likely to give it a try. And if we can ensure the wine is really good quality, the right price and stylistically what they’re looking for, they’ll come back again and again.”

Minogue’s genuine love for rosé developed after she tried it with then boyfriend, Michael Hutchence, during a trip through the south of France and Italy on the Orient Express, when she was just 21.

“Michael was au fait with that lifestyle but it was all new to me, incredibly glamorous and intoxicating,” Minogue told *The Drinks Business* magazine when the wine was launched in the UK. “It was during that trip that I first got a full-bodied appreciation of wine.”

Minogue’s easy-drinking Vin de France rosé, priced at \$25 a bottle, has been the most successful brand launch in Schaafsma’s career. “It was just extraordinary how quickly people took to it – we ran out of wine three times when we launched in the UK and the first five containers that arrived in Australia in late October sold out in three days,” he says. “People love her, and they love the wine.”

“Kylie is very genuine – she says she’s not a wine maker, but she knows what she likes and she has a fantastic palate. People appreciate that honesty.”

The collection now includes a higher-end 2019 Côtes de Provence rosé – made with a mix of single-estate grenache, cinsault and rolle grapes sourced from the 27ha

Château des Anglades near Nice, which is marked by a “purity and the intensity of fruit”, says Schaafsma. There’s also a leers-aged sauvignon blanc from Gascony, and a Pays d’Oc merlot. Next will be a chardonnay produced with Margaret River’s award-winning Howard Park in Western Australia – “it’s just luscious”, says Minogue – and a pinot noir, produced by expert Steve Webber at *De Bortoli* in the Yarra Valley, is due in 2021.

For the singer, the success of the current wine collection, with more than 500,000 bottles sold across the UK, Ireland and Australia in just six months, has also provided “another way of connecting with people”. Much as with her music – she knows her songs are “going to mean different things to different people, and I’m so thankful when I hear those stories, because it takes them out of my little world into theirs,” she says – when fans message about the wines “I feel like I’m part of their moment. It’s gorgeous.”

Despite this year’s obvious challenges, including not being able to take the new album out on the road and being too far away from her family in Victoria, today Minogue seems to be in a good place.

She’s in love with her boyfriend Paul Solomons, the Welsh-born creative director of British *GQ* (whose family apparently lived close to Minogue’s maternal grandmother, Millicent, before she relocated to Queensland as a child), and professionally at the top of her game.

Stylistically too, Minogue is showing an increasing sophistication – gone are the famous *Spinning Around* gold hot pants, now safely stored for posterity at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia in Melbourne and replaced for *Infinite Disco* by a shimmering, cinched-in Alexandre Vauthier gold lamé jumpsuit and booted heels.

On the cover of this issue of *WISH*, she appears to float on air in layers of pleated Bouguessa chiffon. With help from stylist Frank Strachan, Minogue’s wardrobe is peppered as much with couture – Jean Paul Gaultier, Schiaparelli, Balenciaga, Lanvin and Kolchagov Barba – as it is with cutting-edge labels such as Teller Marmo, David Koma, Ulla Johnson and Nadya Dzyak.

“I’ve found my happy place sartorially for now,” she says, looking the epitome of elegant sophistication in a long mirror-sequin vintage dress last month on *The Graham Norton Show*, for example, in contrast with the barely-there dresses of her youth.

“I confess that some of it is through necessity – because I’m not 20 or 30 anymore, and I’m not sure I’m going to wear it as well – but I do really feel a sense of liberation not having to be wearing the crop top because I was that girl for a long time.

“Maybe I’ll get more outrageous in my advancing years, or I’ll just say, screw you all, I’m wearing a tent and that’s it,” she laughs.

Now that *Disco* has been released, in hindsight Minogue realises that many of the lyrics on the album are about wanting to provide people with a portal of escape. “I don’t want to pretend people don’t have any problems, especially right now,” she says, but maybe “I can distract them for a minute.”

Forever passionate about the themes of “possibility and togetherness”, Minogue has long been a “light beam” for her fans (as Nick Cave’s wife and designer of *The Vampire’s Wife* Susie Cave describes her). So whether you’re having a boogie around the kitchen to *Disco* or enjoying a cheeky glass of one of her wines this Christmas, “savour that moment”, says Minogue. “Life is just made up of lots of moments, so try to have as many good ones as you can.” ☺