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collaborations won't fall to the wayside. Minogue says the Furtado project “is still outstanding, and I am looking forward to getting in the studio and doing it, because I know Nelly and we would have a great time together. I love the way she has reinvented herself, and we have so much in common. It was all such a race horse because you have to send the songs out and see which ones end up flying around that final corner.”

Besides navigating the sound of *X*, Minogue feels the look and the aesthetics of the album became “just as important as the recordings.” Which makes perfect sense: Looking through Minogue's body of work, the stunning visuals she's been able to turn out in the past decade have been memorable, to say the least. A YouTube search through Minogue hits such as “Spinning Around” (where Minogue sports the gold hotpants that had lad magazines vote her tush as the most beautiful in the world) to “Can't Get You Out of My Head” (where Kylie dons a Fee Doran-designed white jumpsuit with a seductive, plunging neckline), it's understandable that one of the most popular exhibits of the past two years at the National Portrait Gallery of Australia and London's Victoria and Albert Museum was a showcase of Kylie's video and tour costumes (see it online at portrait.gov.au).

Kylie says all the haute hype is largely due to her lead collaborator, long-time stylist/creative director William Baker. “He's my gay husband,” she says. “Basically, we decide what images will make the Kylie look. For example, we studied the style of Kabuki theater and combined it with the aesthetics coming from London dance clubs like Boombox. We always want everything to be slightly larger than life and memorable on the cultural landscape. That's our definition of iconic.”

In terms of the motivation she had to get well and start creating her latest album, Minogue is quick to list off her top inspirations. “To get through all the hard times after I was diagnosed, I was listening to a lot of Rufus Wainwright—it was definite comfort music,” she says. “When my sister [pop singer Danni Minogue] would come over, she'd crank up the iPod with samba music to try and inject enthusiasm into her visits. My mother, my sister and I all danced quite a bit around the lounge room. Dancing gave me so much good energy, so I hope my music does the same for people who need it as much as I did.”

To say that the past few years have been challenging for Australian pop singer Kylie Minogue would be a vast understatement. She's endured a widely reported breast cancer diagnosis, dealt with an extremely public break-up with actor Olivier Martinez and stopped her Showgirl Greatest Hits tour so she could undergo a series of medical treatments (the tour came to a halt in the spring of 2005 and was restaged—and retitled the Showgirl Homecoming tour—in Winter 2006).

But with the backing of an A-list support team and a Cher-like drive to rise above the scandal and the trauma, Minogue managed to pull through the de-fame game with flying colors. Not only did she pick up where her tour left off (finishing all postponed Australia and U.K. dates), but the 39-year-old decided she would make a documentary (titled *White Diamond*) of her on-the-road/road-to-recovery experience. Part of the healing process was heading back into the studio to begin working on her finally-released-in-America album, *X* (it was released around the globe last November).

One would think the pressure of making a comeback disc would seem daunting for most performers—especially ones who have undergone major health setbacks—but for Minogue, it's business as usual. Admitting her whole career has been a “series of major and minor comebacks,” she gives off an incredible confidence when talking about the ups and downs of her life in pop via phone from her London-based home. “I used to say that being a diva or a gay icon, you had to have tragedy in your life—and all I've ever had is tragic hairdos and outfits,” she says. “Obviously I have to modify that statement now. A diva really needs to learn how to cope, too. Many scathing critics do tend to rear their ugly heads in this industry, so I'd say knowing how to survive is what being a diva is all about.”

Surviving—and succeeding—is something at which Minogue has become a pro. From bloggers at Pitchfork (“Her first single, ‘2 Hearts,’ ticks all the Minogue comeback boxes—it's an unexpected stylistic move, it plays to her strengths, it's not copying herself or her close peers”) to music industry staples such as *Billboard* magazine (“*X* is truly a welcome return”), her new disc's reviews have been supportive and generous.

All this acclaim is for good reason. One listen through *X* and you can hear how Minogue reclaimed her title as the grand dame of dancefloor for good. Tracks such as “Heart Beat Rock” (assisted by electro “it” boy Calvin Harris), “The One” (courtesy of a troupe of housekeepers called the Freemasons) and a flashy pop nugget called “Speakerphone” (produced by Swedish producers Bloodshy & Avant—the duo who produced Britney Spears's “Toxic”) bring to mind the same energy and freshness that past hits such as “Love at First Sight” and “Come Into My World” enthused. Although Minogue says that “Speakerphone” was “the hardest track to record, since it is so heavily produced and they chopped and changed my voice around so drastically,” she does feel that “the result was well worth it and breathtaking.”

Just as interesting as the songs on *X* are the tracks that didn't make the album's final cut. Last year, Nelly Furtado leaked plans regarding a track she was set to duet for *X*. Minogue also recorded with Boy George, Goldfrapp and the Scissor Sisters; while those tracks didn't make it onto *X*, there's still hope that at least a few

PRINCESS OF POWER

ARMED WITH AN ALBUM OF BEATS,
POP ROYALTY KYLIE MINOGUE COMES BACK
STRONGER THAN EVER

BY ELIO IANNACCI