

STILL SMOKIN' - TAMIA TALKS AHEAD OF TONIGHT'S CONCERT AT LONDON'S KOKO

Written by Charles Waring

Friday, 01 March 2019 13:17 - Last Updated Friday, 01 March 2019 16:08



"I can still feel the jetlag from the first time that I came to London," laughs a radiant **TAMIA**, who is casting her mind back 24 years to 1995 when as a 20-year-old ingénue she accompanied **Quincy Jones**

to Europe to promote the legendary record producer's silky ballad,

'You Put A Move On My Heart,'

which she sang lead vocals on.

"It was surreal,"

she remembers

. *"We went all over the world - even Japan - and it was such an amazing learning experience."*

□ Fast forward to 2019 and six-time Grammy nominee Tamia Hill is back in London to promote her seventh album, **'Fire Like Passion,'** which she'll be supporting with a much-anticipated live show at Camden Town's KOKO venue tonight on Friday March 1st. The angelic-voiced soul chanteuse is older and wiser now - she'll be 44 in May - but as the title to her new project confirms, her commitment to her craft and music is still burning as brightly as it did back in 1998 when she released her self-titled debut album. *"I*

wanted people to know that I'm still as passionate about music as I was when I made my first album,"

she tells me

a propos

the new album, as I sit opposite her in a reception room in an upscale West London hotel.

"The best part of doing new music is being able to get out there and promote it and connect with people through it. I want to see what the songs do to people and how it makes them feel."

Unlike some visiting R&B singers, Tamia won't be backed by a UK pick-up group for her London show. *"I've brought my own band,"* she reveals with a sense of pride. *"We've got keys, drums and two background singers. I've been with them for over 15 years so we've been touring forever and we're pretty in sync. If there's something that's spontaneous that I feel like doing they know where to follow me. We love performing, so any time we get up there on stage, we have a good time for ourselves and the audience."* □

Tamia's keen to emphasise that her performance will be a well-conceived and properly thought-out show. *"We're not just going out there singing five songs that take 45 minutes,"* she

STILL SMOKIN' - TAMIA TALKS AHEAD OF TONIGHT'S CONCERT AT LONDON'S KOKO

Written by Charles Waring

Friday, 01 March 2019 13:17 - Last Updated Friday, 01 March 2019 16:08

says.

"We'll be putting on a show. I want to take you on a musical journey from the beginning of my career to where I am now."



With seven solo albums under her belt and a host of collaborations with other artists - including 'Spend My Life With You,' an award-winning duet with **Eric Benet** - she has a lot of material to choose from, which means that it's not going to be possible to please everyone.

"The most difficult thing in putting my show together is time so you have to leave something out,"

she explains.

"We're talking 20 years worth of music so someone's bound to say you didn't sing this or that particular song but there are certain songs that I have to sing - like 'Officially Missing You,' 'Stranger In My House,' 'So Into You,' and 'You Put a Move My Heart.'

Though those particular songs are familiar to her devoted fans, her live show for the London gig won't be entirely predictable. *"There is a little surprise,"* she confides. *"I do a tribute to artists who have passed that I feel a connection with musically."*

When pressed to reveal the names of those she pays homage to, she laughs and says, "I could tell you but then it's not a surprise."

For Tamia, singing live in front of an audience is the ultimate thrill. *"I like making albums but I love performing,"* she purrs.

A seasoned professional, she admits that she never feels nervous about performing in public but is very mindful of the special gift she has and her ability to communicate on a deep level with her audience via the cathartic power of music.

"I understand the position that I'm in and feel a lot of gratitude for it,"

she says.

"Music can make people very vulnerable and some of my songs remind them about love and loss. There are certain ones that I do like 'Me,' or 'Missing You,' that really take people to a place and make some of them pretty vulnerable. So I could be up there singing and someone's crying. So I really appreciate and understand how powerful music is. I'm really there just to act as a vessel for the music and to connect with people and go on a journey together."

STILL SMOKIN' - TAMIA TALKS AHEAD OF TONIGHT'S CONCERT AT LONDON'S KOKO

Written by Charles Waring

Friday, 01 March 2019 13:17 - Last Updated Friday, 01 March 2019 16:08

The recording studio, she says, requires a different mindset compared with live performance. *"I work in the studio 9 to 5,"* she says.

"So I'm there all day or as long as I need to be there in order to get it done. I'm pretty hard-working in that sense though I'm not a huge fan of the studio. I don't like to hang out, I don't have my friends meeting me there and vibe. I'd rather have the producers come by to my house and we'll hang out and vibe but there's no studio vibing. It's a working environment. I feel like you should flesh out your ideas before you get in the studio, even though there are some things that pop up on the microphone or when you're talking in the studio. I think it's important to get a connection with the producer or whoever you're writing with outside of the studio and then it will flow while you're there."

Tamia's certainly had her fair share of heavy-hitting hot shot R&B producers over the years; everyone from Babyface, Mario Winans, and R. Kelly to Missy Elliot, Jermaine Dupri and Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. She's been lucky with her choice of collaborators - *"I've been fortunate,"* she admits - because despite the different and sometimes contrasting sonic approaches they brought to her music, she managed to retain her own sense of identity as well as creating a cohesive and coherent body of work.

The reason she's had so many collaborators, she says, is her desire to keep her musical options open and be receptive to new ideas. *"I think as an artist it's important for you to explore and remain open and see what happens,"* she ventures.

"Every collaboration I've done has never been anything that I went to seek out, whether it was working with Eric Benet, or Babyface. Every collaboration has been very organic and spontaneous. I think as an artist it's important to stay open, and even if that's open to working with a producer who has a slightly different sound. Whether you choose their song or not is fine, but at least you have to try it. I'm not the same girl now as I was at 17 so I think that the music should also evolve as well. Sometimes things are complicated and sometimes, you just want to sing a nice little sweet tune to get through the day, but I think that musically you should evolve - and vocally as well."

□□□□□□ □

STILL SMOKIN' - TAMIA TALKS AHEAD OF TONIGHT'S CONCERT AT LONDON'S KOKO

Written by Charles Waring

Friday, 01 March 2019 13:17 - Last Updated Friday, 01 March 2019 16:08



www.thesouth.co.uk/entertainment/161751/tamia-in-concert/