Dua Lipa

London and Pristina, collaborative pop songwriting, touring, Sunny Hill and Service95

Dua Lipa is a British singer and songwriter of Kosovo-Albanian heritage, known for the songs “New Rules,” “Don’t Start Now,” “Levitating” and “Dance the Night.” Born in London in 1995, she spent part of her adolescence in Pristina before returning to London to pursue music. Her self-titled debut appeared in 2017; Future Nostalgia (2020) established her particular combination of a low, strongly identifiable singing voice, tightly constructed dance songs and increasingly elaborate performance; Radical Optimism followed in 2024. She has won three Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist and Best Pop Vocal Album.[1, 2]

Her work now extends beyond recording and touring. With her father and manager, Dukagjin Lipa, she has developed the Sunny Hill festival in Kosovo and the Radical22 group of music and media businesses. She founded Service95, an editorial platform whose book club has become a substantial interviewing and programming practice.[3, 4] These activities grew alongside her music career: the young singer learning to write in other people’s studios became a performer choosing collaborators, rehearsing a show and taking on organizations with continuing commitments between record releases.

[External image / 外部圖片] Close-up outdoor portrait of Dua Lipa smiling at the SWR3 New Pop Festival in 2016.
Dua Lipa at the SWR3 New Pop Festival, 16 September 2016. Photograph: Harald Krichel, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0. Full composition retained.

London and Pristina

Lipa was born on 22 August 1995.[5] Her parents, Anesa and Dukagjin, had come to Britain from Kosovo. Her father sang in the band Oda, giving her a close view of music-making, though within a much smaller musical economy than she would eventually enter.[6]

At weekend classes at London’s Sylvia Young Theatre School, nine-year-old Lipa sang with teenagers; she recalls this helping her become comfortable performing. At eleven she moved with her family to Pristina for her father’s work. Already an Albanian speaker, she had to learn to read and write the language. Classmates’ accounts brought her closer to families’ experiences of the Kosovo war.[7]

Books were part of this adjustment. In her 2022 Booker Prize speech, she recalled reading Ismail Kadare’s The Castle in Albanian: language learning and an encounter with her family’s history happened together. Her later account of reading as something that

restores emotional openness during touring belongs to this longer history, not merely to the launch of a celebrity book club.[8]

International rap concerts were major events in Pristina. Lipa remembers seeing Method Man and Redman, 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg, while wanting an international career herself.[9] At fifteen, with her parents' agreement, she returned to London and shared accommodation with an older family friend. She was already correcting the runaway version of this story in 2016 interviews.[10]

She attended Parliament Hill School, made internet covers and worked in retail and hospitality. Modelling meant occasional catalogue work; she also worked at La Bodega Negra and on a nightclub door. Music had to find room alongside school and paid shifts.[11]

Finding a sound and a team, 2013–2017

Posting covers gave Lipa a way to make her intention public. In a January 2017 interview, she remembered wanting schoolmates to know that she sang; SoundCloud recordings also led producers to contact her.[12] Ben Mawson and Ed Millett's TaP management organization then helped make studio work a regular practice.[13] She was learning to move from interpreting other people's songs to finding material for her own records.

She imagined a combination of J. Cole and Nelly Furtado: low, rhythmically shaped verses opening into a large pop chorus. "Hotter Than Hell," initially much barer in production, made that proposal legible to a record label.[14] Warner became the recording partner, while TaP supplied management and publishing support.[15]

"New Love," made with Emile Haynie and Andrew Wyatt, arrived in 2015, followed by the externally written "Be the One."[16] Her work encompassed co-writing, choosing material and developing a recognizable delivery: several distinct contributions to a pop record.

Her self-titled debut appeared in June 2017, gathering dance-pop, R&B inflections and quieter material from a prolonged development period. "Homesick," written with Chris Martin, gave the album a piano-led ending. Lipa recalled playing him her material in Malibu, then recording melodic experiments together. She listened back, chose an idea and arranged a second session. She also had to overcome her initial reluctance to record "Be the One," fearing that accepting someone else's composition would undermine belief in her own writing. Its success helped bring listeners to the songs she had written.[17]

[External image / 外部圖片] Dua Lipa sings at a microphone beside a drummer and other band equipment in the small VERA venue, with audience members in the foreground.
Lipa performing at VERA in Groningen during Eurosonic, 13 January 2016. Photograph: Ludo Raedts, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0. Full composition retained.

What “New Rules” changed

Producer Ian Kirkpatrick’s account of “New Rules” begins at a writing camp for another act. He, Caroline Ailin and Emily Warren made the song; after it was declined, it remained on a hard drive until his manager sent it to Lipa. Her decision to record it became a turning point for everyone involved, establishing relationships that would last well beyond the debut.[18]

The video made the song’s social world unusually concrete. Director Henry Scholfield and choreographer Teresa “Toogie” Barcelo arranged women in a Miami hotel into a moving system of support: beds, corridors and the pool became places where a breakup could be collectively managed. Scholfield described the influence of flamingos’ movements and grouping. Lipa had already worked with him on “Lost in Your Light” and understood what choreography could do for the new song. The clip was not just a dance demonstration appended to an audio recording; its spatial story helped people grasp and reproduce the song’s premise.[19, 20]

Warner announced her first UK and Irish number-one single in August 2017. It also emphasized fans making their own versions of the video, a reminder that her breakthrough depended on imitation and circulation as well as radio play. The image of women helping one another was easy to recognize without knowing anything about the singer’s life.[21]

The next collaborations widened her reach. Calvin Harris’s “One Kiss” put her voice at the centre of a house record; “Electricity,” with Silk City, the Mark Ronson–Diplo partnership, extended that dance-music setting. At the 2019 Grammys, she won Best New Artist and shared the Best Dance Recording award for “Electricity.” [22, 23]

Writing Future Nostalgia

With the second album, Lipa could organize sessions around a clearer proposition. She wanted the bodily pleasure and remembered atmosphere of music she had grown up with, without making an archival reconstruction. Her reference points included Prince, Blondie and Jamiroquai; the title Future Nostalgia gave the project a practical criterion for choosing sounds. A song needed both familiarity and a reason to belong to the present.[24]

The making of “Levitating” shows how this operated. Lipa dates its writing to 28 August 2018. Before the session, she sent producer Stephen Kozmeniuk, known as Koz, notes about what was inspiring her. He had prepared a track around a Roland VP-330 synthesizer’s choir-like sound. In the room with Sarah Hudson and Clarence Coffee Jr., Lipa began finding melodies almost immediately; a phone recording preserved those first responses. Coffee helped develop the melodic ideas, and she recorded lead and backing vocals that day. Their account emphasizes the usefulness of a familiar group in which an unfinished or silly suggestion could be voiced without embarrassment.[25]

“Don’t Start Now” took another route. Kirkpatrick, Ailin and Warren already knew the

voice and attitude they were writing towards. Kirkpatrick describes developing numerous reference tracks and talking with Lipa before, during and after the process. Her recorded performance and alterations helped resolve what the track should become. It was a more directed collaboration than the earlier transfer of “New Rules”: the same people now had a particular artist, a developed relationship and an album context in mind.[26]

The album credits disclose a wider network: Jeff Bhasker and Coffee co-wrote the title track; Kirkpatrick produced “Don’t Start Now,” with Josh Gudwin mixing it; Koz and Stuart Price share production credits on “Levitating.” Chris Gehringer mastered most tracks, while Miles Showell cut the vinyl at Abbey Road. The stylistic concentration depended on work at several scales, from a melody discovered in a room to the final balance and physical manufacture of a record.[27]

Female co-writers were particularly important to Lipa, who has described how intimidating rooms of older men had felt when she began writing.[28] A continuing relationship could make an unfinished personal account easier to voice before it became a public performance.

Released on 27 March 2020, Future Nostalgia arrived just as ordinary clubgoing and touring were becoming impossible. It reached number one in Britain and won the 2021 Grammy for Best Pop Vocal Album. The discrepancy between music designed for shared physical pleasure and the circumstances of its release became part of its reception, but it was not the condition under which the songs had originally been conceived.[29, 30]

Performing through lockdown and learning to dance

The pandemic required a different means of making the album visible. For Studio 2054, broadcast in November 2020, Lipa and her team built a performance specifically for the camera. Creative producer Pete Abbott described moving away from simulating a normal concert towards an evolving musical film. Choreography, successive environments and guest appearances could carry the audience through a party they were unable to attend physically. The production joined musicians and dancers to set, lighting, filming and streaming teams under Covid restrictions.[31]

Its commercial result needs careful description. The widely repeated figure of more than five million viewers was a management estimate that assumed multiple people watching some streams; the announcement separately reported 263,264 tickets through regular ticket platforms, alongside large numbers of log-ins in China and India. These are different measures. The episode nevertheless demonstrated that her team could sell a specially constructed screen event, not only use free performances to promote an album.[32]

Lipa’s development as a dancer required sustained training. After early performances attracted ridicule, she spent two weeks in a Los Angeles studio rehearsing with Charm La’Donna. She told GQ that the resulting “Don’t Start Now” performance at the 2019 MTV Europe Music Awards was a moment when she felt able to command the presentation.

Es Devlin supplied the staging.[33]

The rehearsal account makes improvement concrete: a teacher, a room and time allocated to repetition. The finished performance would combine that acquired movement with the voice audiences already knew.

[External image / 外部圖片] Dua Lipa, wearing pink and holding a microphone, is surrounded by dancers in red costumes onstage.
Lipa and dancers at the O2 Arena in London, 2 May 2022, during the Future Nostalgia tour. Photograph: Raph_PH, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0. Full composition retained.
The postponed Future Nostalgia tour finally brought the songs into arenas in 2022. In a Vogue report from the tour, her day included learning new choreography for a forthcoming performance with Megan Thee Stallion of their collaboration “Sweetest Pie.” New work had to fit inside an already functioning travelling show. The tour was therefore not simply the repetition of a completed studio project: arrangements, guest appearances and performance skills continued to change on the road.[34]

Radical Optimism and the small writing room

Lipa began writing towards the third album in 2021, returning to the studio between tour legs. In a November 2023 SiriusXM interview, she identified “Houdini,” written a year earlier, as one of the songs that clarified its direction. She also described writing close to an event and then leaving the lyrics alone long enough for her perspective to change. The initial diary-like response and the final released song were not necessarily identical.[35]

The principal group brought together Ailin, Kevin Parker of Tame Impala, Danny L Harle and Tobias Jesso Jr. Parker supplied an experienced instrumentalist and recording sensibility; Harle brought electronic production and an ear for the emotional possibilities of pop melody. Ailin was a continuing writing relationship across several phases of Lipa’s career. The group was small enough to develop shared knowledge of the album, while individual tracks could bring in other contributors.[36]

Harle’s description makes the workflow unusually visible. Parker might be playing guitar while Harle built electronic arpeggios on his computer, sending material by AirDrop to vocal engineer Cameron Gower Poole to assemble in Pro Tools. Harle could then take a session back into his own setup when he needed to alter the whole track. He also tracked the album’s developing lyrical territory, noticing when a proposed idea had already appeared elsewhere. This was production as continuous participation in writing and selection, not a final polish applied after everyone else had left.[37]

Lipa’s contribution included deciding what the record should feel like and insisting on finding it. Parker told Elle about her sustained pursuit of an elusive sound; Ailin described conversation and emotionally unguarded moments as material from which songs could emerge. The songs largely work with attraction, uncertainty, ending relationships and recognizing patterns. “Houdini,” “Training Season” and “Illusion” turn those

situations into repeatable musical shapes rather than extended autobiographical narratives.[38]

The album, released on 3 May 2024, debuted at number one in the UK with 46,300 chart units in its opening week.[39] Critical responses were more divided. In Le Monde, Bruno Lesprit found the production more persuasive than much of the songwriting and questioned whether the advertised stylistic departure amounted to enough.[40]

Songs for a film, an orchestra and a stadium

“Dance the Night” required another kind of discipline. For Greta Gerwig’s Barbie (2023), Lipa worked with Ailin, Ronson and Wyatt to fit a specific scene. She described Post-it notes, whiteboards and intensive discussion; an early, more troubled lyrical version had to become lighter after they saw the dance sequence. Working to picture meant that character, action and timing constrained the song. She was also visible in the film as Mermaid Barbie, but the musical assignment involved a more substantial process than that brief acting appearance.[41, 42]

Elton John’s “Cold Heart,” released with her in 2021 in a PNAU remix, had already placed her inside another artist’s catalogue. Their performances together, including his 2022 Dodger Stadium farewell concert, joined contemporary dance production to an older repertoire. Such collaborations bring different generations of listeners into the same song, while giving Lipa ways to inhabit material she did not originate.[43]

On 28 June 2024 she headlined Glastonbury’s Pyramid Stage. The festival and BBC made her set, alongside Coldplay’s the following night, part of their first global livestream of headline performances: the event reached beyond the audience standing in the field.[44]

At the Royal Albert Hall on 17 October 2024, she reworked her own catalogue with a 53-piece Heritage Orchestra conducted by Ben Foster, a fourteen-person choir and her seven-piece band. The filmed concert, produced by Fulwell 73 and Radical22 Productions, became a television special and live album. The change in instrumentation made the songs available for another kind of listening, with the voice framed by orchestral arrangements rather than the full machinery of an arena dance show.[45]

The 2025 Radical Optimism tour required that machinery on a large scale. Abbott told IQ that preparation continued during the late-2024 Asian dates: construction and integration followed in Wakefield in February, while video and musical direction were developed in parallel. He gave crew ranges of roughly 180–200 for arenas and 230–250 for stadiums. Different lighting and staging configurations had to preserve a consistent show for the performers. At the five opening Melbourne dates, the team made adjustments each morning in response to the previous night.[46]

TAIT’s account identifies the physical infrastructure: a wave-shaped band-riser structure, integrated lifts, automated elements and a circular secondary stage whose scissor lifts could

raise Lipa above the crowd. Luke Halls Studio’s credits distinguish David Black’s creative direction, William Bowerman’s music and sound design, Matt Pitman’s lighting and production work, Jason Ardizzone-West’s set design and the choreographic team. A star’s apparent freedom to move through an enormous room is produced by coordinated technical work and repeatable cues.[47, 48]

[External image / 外部圖片] Dua Lipa leans beside a standing microphone in a black fringed and sparkling costume, with purple-lit stage imagery behind her.
Lipa performing at the Kia Forum in Inglewood, California, 5 October 2025. Photograph: Justin Higuchi, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0. Full composition retained.
The tour also made space for local songs. Its Mexico finale included “Oye Mi Amor” with Maná’s Fher Olvera; the live album released on 22 May 2026 preserves this encounter alongside Lipa’s own catalogue. The official shop describes three sold-out final shows in Mexico City and promotes the wider tour as ninety-two shows across five continents. These are the artist’s retrospective promotional totals, rather than an independently audited account of the tour’s finances.[49, 50]

Ownership, management and commercial work

Lipa left TaP’s management in 2022. Her father became her manager, and in November 2023 TaP confirmed the sale of her publishing rights back to her. The confirmed transaction concerns songwriting rights; it does not establish ownership of every master recording or co-writer’s share.[51]

Radical22 then signed a global publishing-administration agreement with Warner Chappell in 2024. The arrangement illustrates why owning rights does not mean doing every job internally. Administration, collection and international representation can still be supplied by a large music company. The reported Radical22 structure brought publishing, production and Service95 under Lipa’s ownership, with Dukagjin as chief executive.[52]

The production arm worked with Lightbox and Day One Pictures on Camden, the documentary series about the London district’s musical history. Lipa and her father were executive producers, extending a professional and geographic world she already occupied into television.[53]

Fashion and beauty constitute a further kind of labour and revenue. In 2023 she co-designed Versace’s La Vacanza collection with Donatella Versace; the house identifies an archival butterfly-and-ladybug print as a shared starting point. This is a different role from appearing in an advertising campaign. DUA, the skincare line developed with Augustinus Bader and launched in November 2025, adds a named product business. The company describes it as an AB Science-powered collaboration.[54, 55]

Sunny Hill and Kosovo’s musical infrastructure

Sunny Hill brings Lipa’s international career back into the place she had once left to pursue it. The festival grew from a charity-show idea within the family into a recurring event in Pristina, beginning in 2018. Its official history identifies Dukagjin and his family as founders. The accompanying foundation lists Dua as founder patron, Dukagjin as founder chairman and Rreze Kryeziu Breznica as executive director.[56, 57]

[External image / 外部圖片] Crowds face the lit Sunny Hill Festival stage beside a raised VIP stand, surrounded by trees at dusk.
The stage, VIP stand and crowd at Sunny Hill Festival in Pristina, 10 August 2018. Photograph: MarcRKS, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0. Full composition retained.
Writing after the 2025 festival, Lipa described her brother and sister helping with the lineup and artists’ experience, her father driving the project, and her own return to its stage. She sang “Era” with him, reconnecting the event to his band Oda. She also reported a partnership with the University of Prishtina’s Institute of Psychology to provide mental-health support at the festival. These are specific forms of organization beneath the larger language of representing Kosovo.[58]

The foundation’s work includes assistance to cultural organizations and community services. The National Association of Autism in Kosovo recorded a €5,000 donation in August 2018, used for educational and recreational materials, a small library and support for families unable to meet service costs.[59]

Lipa’s stated ambition is to make it easier for young people to experience international performers and pursue creative work without treating departure as the only route. That does not erase the unequal resources that made her own London return consequential. It does explain why a festival, rather than only an honorary title or a visit home, became a durable part of her working life.[60]

Her public advocacy also reaches beyond Kosovo. UNICEF documented her 2019 visit to refugee children and young people in Lebanon. In 2024 she connected her support for a Gaza ceasefire to her family’s experience of displacement; she is listed among Artists4Ceasefire’s signatories.[61, 62]

Service95 and the work of interviewing

Service95 launched in February 2022 from an existing habit: Lipa made lists of places, books and other discoveries to exchange with friends and family. In a launch interview with Sleek, she emphasized both her own recommendations and the contributions of writers, photographers and artists. The weekly newsletter and the At Your Service podcast turned informal recommendation into recurring editorial work. Readers could encounter reported subjects as well as the founder’s tastes.[63]

The book club began in June 2023 with Douglas Stuart’s Shuggie Bain. Its accompanying

material shows the format’s substance: an author interview, writing-process discussion, contextual material on Glasgow, images, a playlist and further reading. The book was not merely photographed in Lipa’s hands. It became the centre of an editorial package that gave readers several ways into its world.[64]

She also took that first selection to a reading group at Downview women’s prison through Books Unlocked. In her account, the women’s reactions challenged and enriched her own reading; she published recommendations from the group. The encounter matters because it reverses the usual direction of the celebrity recommendation. Here she was also receiving a reading list and listening to people whose relationship to books was structured by incarceration.[65]

The interviews are a different kind of public performance from singing. Lipa must prepare closely enough to ask about a writer’s choices, listen and sustain a conversation beyond a promotional soundbite. Her October 2026 account of her own reading is practical: books travel in her bag; she reads in cars, on planes and in spare intervals, and has used an app to limit social-media access.[66]

The organization has staff whose work should remain visible. In 2026 Keshia Hannam became global editor-in-chief; the announced team also included a production and chief sub-editor, a commissioning and features editor, visual and video specialists, and people responsible for business, production, marketing and community. Service95’s own author pages confirm Hannam’s editorial role. Lipa’s name, ownership and interviews are central, but the daily publication is not a one-person newsletter.[67, 68]

Distribution and partnerships further shape the project. The book-club video interviews expanded onto Spotify in June 2025, carrying both new conversations and archival material. The site also discloses affiliate commissions on shopping links, combining editorial recommendation with a commercial mechanism.[69, 70]

In June 2026, Service95 and Porto’s Livraria Lello opened the permanent Manifesto Library, a selection of one hundred books organized around power, control, voice and memory. It occupies the bookshop’s new cultural auditorium designed by Álvaro Siza. The physical setting gives the reading project a different form, with access included in Lello’s paid ticket-voucher system.[71, 72]

At the time of this profile, Lipa and Service95 are curating the Southbank Centre’s October–November 2026 London Literature Festival. The programme places her conversations with writers within a larger set of events, including free programming. It is another change in scale, from selecting a monthly book to helping organize a festival in an established cultural institution.[73]

The working day and the next record

A June 2025 British Vogue report describes her touring preparation: a 6.30 a.m. wake time, bed by midnight, exercise and dance rehearsal. She worked with a singing coach and a speech therapist. Before a Madrid show, the reporter observed vocal exercises, soundcheck, hair and makeup, then dance warm-ups. This is a dated account, not a permanent schedule.[74]

The same report found her writing new music during a tour break.[75] In October 2026 she declined to explain how recent reading might be entering the next project, saying she would discuss it closer to releasing music.[76] Meanwhile the catalogue had grown through Live from Mexico and the August 2026 Training Season's Over EP, which presents versions of an existing song rather than a new studio album.[77, 78]

For now, Lipa's calendar includes a completed tour preserved on record, new songs not yet fully disclosed, and conversations with writers in London. Recording, performing and interviewing ask different things of her voice. Each also depends on people whose work continues around the moment when she steps into public view.

Sources and notes

This profile uses public interviews, production accounts, credits and institutional records checked through 24 October 2026. Promotional totals and personal recollections are attributed as such. It does not claim access to private schedules, contracts or company accounts. Earlier interviews consistently place the move to Pristina at age eleven; some later profiles give a different calendar year, so the childhood chronology retains the age rather than false precision.

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