

MUSIC / POP

Dua Lipa's "New Rules" Proves A Great Video Can Still Change Everything

How memes and an elegant visual helped this women-positive bop become an undeniable summer smash.

By OWEN MYERS



Pop is fickle and fast-moving, but a knockout video can still be a game changer. Dua Lipa's "New Rules" is an infectious summer pop sundae, and a knockout visual is getting it the plaudits it deserves. The Ian Kirkpatrick-produced bop is currently number one in the U.K., and is set to take over the U.S. after being serviced to pop radio on August 22. (On iHeartRadio stations monitored by Mediabase, "New Rules" gained a 40% week-on-week increase in spins for the week ending Aug 22, up to 4 million plays.) The must-watch video, a bright collision of highly GIF-able imagery featuring young women in pastel bathrobes performing elegant slumber party choreography and reminding each other that they're better than their fuckboy ex, dropped on July 7. Lorde said it was the "dopest video [she'd] seen in ages," and fans seem to agree; as of this writing, the video has 132 million YouTube views. Two years after the release of her distinctive and well-crafted first single "New Love," Lipa's early promise has crystallized.

Since her launch in August 2015, a steady stream of singles and features have ensured that Dua Lipa's been constantly visible, whether in curated streaming playlists, glossy magazine spreads, or in pop fans' YouTube autoplay algorithms. Not all her singles were as big as you'd expect for an artist of her omnipresence, but her chart performance wasn't a source of embarrassment either — 2015's "Be The One" made the top 10 in nine European countries including the U.K. Lipa put in work in the U.S. too, with late night TV performances, lots of press, and a number 71 Billboard hit with 2016's flirtatious "Blow Your Mind (Mwah)."





Dua Lipa in "New Rules" YouTube

But how much do these traditional metrics of chart success really matter for a digital-era artist like Dua Lipa, anyway? It's debatable. Her performance on streaming services today is pretty much unrivalled by any other new artist, with singles "Blow Your Mind" and "Be The One" surpassing 100 million plays on Spotify, and "[Hotter Than Hell](#)" and "New Rules" closing in on that number too. An extended lead-in period to her album release in June 2017 also furnished her with a more ephemeral marker of success in the digital age — social reach. She has [2.4M Instagram followers](#), and keeps a [fun Twitter](#) where she'll engage with fans and RT memes. It's made her a beloved artist for her international fans, who skew younger and towards women.

You have to wonder whether the demographic of her supporters was in mind when she recorded the titular commandments of "New Rules": "One, don't pick up the phone/ ...Two, don't let him in/ ...Three, don't be his friend." Even before the video dropped, Lipa's "rules" took on a life of their own. After her debut album *Dua Lipa* came out on June 2, Tumblr user zelvars placed the lyrics [over peachy pastel colors](#), a fan site overlaid the track with a young girl [losing it](#) with hardstyle-esque moves, and user @imaustinbye captioned a [bossed-up freestyle over Nicki Minaj's "CHIRAQ" beat](#) with "New Rules by Dua Lipa (2017)."

The release of "New Rules" gave Lipa something else that until then mostly eluded her: credibility. She has often talked in interviews about her [feminist beliefs](#), and taking pride in her involvement with [every aspect of her music](#). "New Rules" stylishly foregrounded those views in her visuals for the first time, with the inclusive, all-women clique uplifting each other with moments of self-care. (Hey, it said a lot more about Lipa as an artist than [an Ansel Elgort cameo](#).) In an interview with [The Cut](#) about the video, Lipa was clear about her intentions: "I had saved pictures on my phone to use as reference points for the video. There was [an image I'd saved of Naomi Campbell in the '80s](#) — I think it was a Versace campaign — where she is basically holding another girl on her back. I loved the idea of girls looking after each other like that, holding each other, that sense of humility, that sense of strength."

Maybe "New Rules" works so well because we're seeing more of Lipa's switched-on point of view than ever before. But it's also just a really good video, and its success shows that even though so much has changed in pop since the halcyon days of TRL, videos still play a crucial part in how we connect to artists. Lipa's album certainly has other tracks that deserve similarly thoughtful treatment, from the defiant [MNEK](#) co-write "[IDGAF](#)" to the honest, yearning "[Genesis](#)." She's consistently had buzz, but "New Rules" shows that there's focus to the hype. Best of all, it finally feels like we're actually getting to know her.

"New Rules" is out now.