## IRONICALLY, REFLECTS JOE KENTISH, HEAD OF A&R AT WARNER RECORDS UK, DUA LIPA'S SECOND ALBUM, FUTURE NOSTALGIA, WAS CONCEIVED AND MADE AROUND A SINGLE, SIMPLE CONCEPT: THAT IT SHOULD WORK LIVE IN FRONT OF A GROWD GOING ABSOLUTELY WILD.

to be a record that, whilst still to be played to a field full of fans, shifted Dua's career, global profile, and critical standing through several gears (at the time of writing, global sales stand at over 3.3 million album equivalent sales).

Kentish, who signed Dua when she was just 18, describes Future Nostalgia as "the absolute apex of what we try to do as a label, which is combine commercial success with creative excellence".

It was, he says, the result of a strong, close and trusting partnership between label, artist and manager. "I'm lucky, because Dua always wants to be engaged. We never stopped talking about music and about what the second record would be like.

"The best artists come with all the raw materials in place, so you end up listening to what someone like Dua wants to do and then using your experience and relationships to create the environment where she can achieve that. You're facilitating someone else's ambition, basically, maybe even expanding it, believing in them, and doing whatever they need to create what they want and get where they want to go."

There were nearly three years between albums one and two, and Kentish concedes all involved were aware of the clock ticking. "There's a natural pressure for artists to get back out there and there's a natural pressure on us as a record company to put out music from big artists.

"But there was understanding on both sides that we needed to stick to our guns, that she had a vision and that we had to wait for the songs to do that vision justice."

As a result, Kentish explains, a side benefit of the success of a record like Future Nostalgia is a ratcheting up of confidence for everyone involved, starting with the artist. "The relief is palpable, because they think, I've made difficult decisions, I've stuck to my guns, and it's worked. Same for us. And then next time, when you're feeling a bit nervous about a project, maybe you'll back yourself a bit more."

eleased in late March 2020, circumstances conspired to Everyone, he admits, would have been even more nervous if prevent that live experience from happening, but it proved they had known that *Future Nostalgia's* release would coincide perfectly with the onset of a global lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – and that this was to be no short-term situation.

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"We still thought we'd be playing Glastonbury! As the reality dawned, the temptation to put it back was massive. The single was doing really well, so why take a chance?

"I think the first cue came from Dua. She just said, 'If it's meant to be it's meant to be. Let's put it out and have faith in the record we made.' I felt the same – we knew we had a great record and it felt wrong to sit on it."

As for the record's raison d'etre, to be played and enjoyed live, the closest alternative was November's Studio 2054 livestream show, which pulled in over 5 million views, including over 1.9 million unique logins from China and 95,000 from India.

Warner Records adapted and, as Kentish says, "that became our world tour, and we did massive amounts of promotion in every significant territory based around that event – it was different, but it was also sort of the same."

He adds: "I watched it again the other day and I'd almost forgotten the whole point of this record, - it is basically a party. And I have to admit, I thought, 'This would have been so good at Glastonbury'."