Having entered 2023 as one of UK pop’s hottest prospects, BBC Radio 1 Sound Poll, MTV Push and Amazon Music Artist to Watch shortlisted artist Dylan might only be at the beginning of her journey as one of the UK’s most exciting new pop talents, but she’s had her sights set on big things since her childhood.

Her candidness and determination is part of what has already scored her praise from the likes of BBC News, The Times, NME, Rolling Stone UK, i-D, Notion, Vogue Italia, The Line Of Best Fit, Dork and BBC Introducing; amassing an incredibly loyal and passionate fan base to form around her via her own sold out headline performances across the globe – whether it be multiple nights at Shepherd’s Bush Empire in London or an appearance at the iconic Baby’s All Right in Brooklyn –, a mammoth UK & US stadium tour alongside Ed Sheeran, and support slots with Yungblud, Bastille and Tate McRae.

“My dad had me and my brother on the kitchen table from a very early age with plywood guitars, screaming to various different songs,” the London-based artist recalls. “I would stand there and shout, ‘hello Wembley!’ – that’s how I started a gig with my band when I was 11 too.”

The 23-year-old – whose real name is Tash Woods – might be destined for pop glory, but the influence of more alternative sounds colours her tongue-in-cheek characterisation of herself as “a wannabe rock star in a pop star’s body”. “In my head, I’m so rock’n’roll, but I don’t look it,” she laughs. “I’m super pop! Everyone will expect something slightly more mainstream but I’m obsessed with guitars – with the only four chords I can play.”

Growing up – as hinted in those kitchen table jam sessions – Dylan was raised on a diet of classic rock and big riffs. “My career is entirely my dad’s fault – he’s a very straight-down-the-line insurance man but he brought me up on a lot of rock’n’roll like AC/DC, Guns N’ Roses, and Rainbow,” she explains.

Despite her salutes to Wembley from a young age, Dylan hasn’t always been steering herself towards the spotlight. She began writing songs as a child instead of learning the work of other artists and soon found it to be the perfect outlet for expressing everything she was feeling. “I was a pretty sad kid and songwriting was a way of escaping,” she says. “It took me away from school and friends and bullying, and into my own space.” After her confidence in her performing skills took a knock in her teens, she focused on the dream of being a songwriter.

At sixth form, she met a teacher who went on to introduce her to producer Will Hicks, who invited her to her first writing session. Together they wrote ‘Drinking About You’, from her 2019 EP ‘Purple’ and he told her: “I think you could do this, but you’ve got to do the whole thing or nothing.” That push might have been what she needed to put her on the path to being one of the most relatable and sharp songwriters coming up right now, and to owning her songs in front of the world.

Since 2019, she’s been on a journey to find her own voice, moving through more electronic-focused, synth-pop songs (‘Good Enough’) and mournful piano ballads (‘IKWYDLN’). After two EPs (‘Purple’ and 2020’s ‘Red’) worth of finding her feet, 2021 brought three singles in ‘Nineteen’, ‘You’re Not Harry Styles’ and ‘No Romeo’ that started to shape the real Dylan sound – big pop hooks driven by crunchy guitars, dissecting her life and loves into incisive, memorable lyrics.

“I spent so much time wanting to be anyone else, but it’s just so exhausting,” she explains. “When it comes to writing now, though, I know exactly what I want – I can walk into a session and say, ‘This is my sound, this is what I want to do’. I don’t want anyone to ever say ‘Oh, this is a nice song’ about my music. I want them to be like, ‘That song punched me in the face!’”

Dylan’s first mixtape – and debut release for Island Records – packs a hefty wallop; an eight-track record that doesn’t give you any choice but to sit up, pay attention and sing every word back in your head for days afterwards. Called ‘The Greatest Thing I’ll Never Learn’, it encapsulates the rising star’s experiences with “learning to love and be loved”. “How does anyone love and be loved?! It’s cringy,” she laughs. “But the songs are so un-cringy that it’s very easy to take in without icking myself out. But I feel like I’m writing a soundtrack to my life. This is my movie soundtrack.”

“*I can be what you want, I can be what you need / Anytime that you like, be whatever you please*,” goes the bouncy ‘Girl Of Your Dreams’, a reaction to people the young musician liking not wanting to date her. “It’s saying, ‘You will love me’ – it’s like with people that listen to my music, I don’t give them much choice whether they’re going to like it or not,” she notes. ‘Treat You Bad’ details a dalliance where Dylan broke things off only to hit him back up in the middle of the night months later. “*Can’t make up my mind / Only want you late at night*,” she sings over the fizzing riff. “*Tell me why you let me treat you so bad*.”

That soundtrack is one that is unfailingly frank and thrillingly unbothered by society’s expectations of female artists. On each song, whether she’s serving up a dose of realism to a partner (‘Nothing Lasts Forever’) or searching for answers about herself, as on the ballad ‘Home Is Where The Heart Is’, Dylan is incredibly direct.

At her gigs, the ever-growing crowds don’t just sing along politely here and there, but echo back her every word. “If you’re a fan of my music, you know all of it,” she smiles. “I feel like I’m creating a little fucked up family who are all just a little bit crazy and need to scream about people that are screwing us over.”

Dylan’s impeccable pop anthems look destined to continue hooking people into her world. As they do so, she’s keeping her ambitions fittingly bold. “I want to be respected as a songwriter – for me it really is just about the music,” she explains. “And I want to headline Wembley – that’s everything I’ve had my sights on.”