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JESSIE J

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JESSIE

“IT’S JUST HAIR!”

*She’s the UK’s fastest-rising pop star and owner of the most famous fringe in showbiz. **Jessie J** tells **buzz** about playing Wembley in bandages, taking on her bullies and why she’s so chilled-out about her hair that she plans to chop the lot off*

With US megastars like Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Beyoncé and Rihanna hogging all of the best seats, there hasn’t been much room recently for a globally-successful British music phenomenon. But then, wouldn’t you know it, just like buses, two of them rock up at once. First, squillion-selling Adele, and now fellow BRIT School graduate Jessica Cornish, aka Jessie J.

Watching Jessie, 23, sending 75,000 music fans bonkers on a sodden Sunday evening at London’s Wembley Stadium for Capital Radio’s Summertime Ball, it’s remarkable to think that her first single, Do It Like A Dude, was only released on download last November. And her debut album, Who You Are, has barely been around as long as the lads and lasses of Geordie Shore.

“This is the most amazing moment of my career to date,” hollers the girl from Redbridge, Essex, who’s clearly on her way up pop’s pecking order as she leapfrogs old hands like Enrique Iglesias and J.Lo on the Wembley bill.

Of course, for Jessie it’s as much about the upload as the download. Since she started posting her demos on YouTube back in 2009, sitting cross-legged on her bedroom floor in her lucky Prince T-shirt, she has racked up over 70 million hits online. Throw her intriguing sexual ambiguity and

WORDS
PAUL SIMPER
PHOTOGRAPHS
MARY ELLEN
MATTHEWS

that fringe into the mix and you’ve got a proper 21st-century pop star.

But how’s she coping? Well, she broke her foot after tumbling off the podium at Wembley Stadium during a dress rehearsal, and now she’s got a load of summer festival appearances lined up, including headlining T4 On The Beach in Weston-super-Mare next weekend. So thanks for asking, **buzz**.

How is your foot, Jessie?

It’s a really bad injury, but it’s getting mended. To be honest, I’m just trying to ignore it and carry on like it didn’t happen. After all it’s only a foot. I’ve got another one.

Would anything have stopped you from playing in front of 75,000 people at Wembley Stadium?

No. I said to my mum that even if I had fallen over and banged my head, had cuts all over my face and couldn’t walk, I would still have performed. It’s Wembley. I wasn’t going to let my fans down – they’d been there standing outside in the rain for so long that I don’t think they could feel their feet, and in a selfish way I wasn’t going to let myself down either. I didn’t want people to think that I was looking for sympathy. I’m not that kind of chick.



Will you be OK to perform at T4 On The Beach?
 Yes. It's not like I'm a full-on dance routine girl. It's kind of nice for people to just be able to focus on the vocals. As long as they understand that I might not quite be my usual energetic self, I will try to do everything.

Do you have time for a relationship?
 [Laughs.] How did I know that question was coming? It's got to be a mystery. Am I gay? Am I straight? Am I in a relationship or am I not? You know what, I've got to focus on loving *me* right now. Love is a very powerful thing and I think I have to live my life how I want to live it, and there are some things that I've learnt you have to keep private to keep your sanity.

If you are retaining that mystery of your sexuality, do more guys or girls hit on you?
 No one really hits on me at all. I think they're scared of me. People are intimidated. I've always been that girl who people are a little scared of. I think when they see me, they're disappointed that I don't have crystals on my lips.

Your next single, Who's Laughing Now, talks about you being bullied at school. What happened?
 It wasn't horrific, it was more about not fitting in. But it is tough for anyone to be called names or have stones thrown at them. It's not about physical bullying these days. With Facebook and Twitter, it's about cyber bullying – those things people write but would never say to your face. That hurts as much as if someone punches you. It shouldn't be allowed. Sometimes I retweet the things I get sent.

Someone tweeted calling you a "f***g unbearable *****" and you retweeted, very classily: "And you my darling are a bully :)"**
 It just shows my young fans that I get it too. I didn't realise it was such a big thing that I retweeted that, but I shouldn't have to deal with those kind of comments and nor should anyone else. I'm not going round killing people or beating people up. I'm just trying to make a difference with my music. I know I'm not a horrible person.

Have you ever heard from the kids who bullied you at school again?
 God yeah. People have said: "Come to my 21st birthday party." I'm like: "Wait a minute, the last time I saw



I TRIMMED MY FRINGE AND GAVE MYSELF A MULLET

All-star cast: Jessie J had to perform in bandages at Wembley after falling off a podium during rehearsals



you were 15 years ago, you were calling me names and saying I had green skin and was an alien." That sticks with you. It's very funny how success changes some people's perspective on the past.

Do you compare notes with Adele on what's happening to you both?
 Every now and then we send each other a text. She texted the other day saying: 'I love your song Who You Are' and I was like: 'Babe, your album got me through some serious turbulence.'

You've been working non-stop for months here, and in America and Australia. Do you ever get a chance to sleep?
 You know what, I slept the other day for 17 hours. I didn't think I was as tired as I was. I went to bed at the hotel at four o'clock in the afternoon. Sometimes I don't get enough sleep but you learn how to take naps during the day.

Do your mum and dad nag you about looking after yourself?
 Yeah, I phone my mum and she's like: "Have you eaten enough? Are you OK?" No matter who's looking after you when you're on the road, nothing beats your mum and dad. Every time I come home for a night, my parents come round and fill the fridge. My mum vacuums my flat for me and cooks me dinner.

So where are you living now you've moved out of your parents' house in Essex?
 I have to live near the airport so I'm in West London. I couldn't be travelling back and forth from Essex. A lot of my team and friends are around me in London but I'm very rarely there.

You were diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat when you were 11 and had a mini stroke at 18. How has that affected you?
 A lot of people ask if I'm teetotal because of my heart and I say no, I'm teetotal because I want to be healthy. I want to get up every day at 4am and not

be hungover or smell like cigarettes. It's changed me in that it's put me in a place where I have to go for what I want, because life isn't guaranteed. However athletic you are, health sometimes isn't on your side and unfortunately I've always been someone who's been in and out of hospital. It's something that made me grow up very quickly but I also think it made me appreciate life very quickly. I actually think it's a good thing.

You went to the Bahamas with three of your best friends recently. How was it?
 Amazing. I went with three mates who I grew up with – people who understand whether I'm in a bad mood or happy. They're the friends I need around me who don't just want to talk about me. They know me as Jessie with no make-up on, looking rough. They can totally tell me when to shut up. I can't have friends who kiss a**e. No thanks. I need someone to tell me when I'm being a d*** and I can say the same to them.

What prompted those pregnancy rumours?
 That was so hilarious. I have no idea. I just think maybe I had too much rice and chicken in the Bahamas. My mum was like: "Is there something you're not telling me?" But I'm definitely not pregnant. I mean one week they're saying I'm anorexic and the next minute due to my weight gain I'm expecting a baby.

In terms of Jessie J global domination, where do you think you are compared to Rihanna?
 I just think: 'Hold up a minute. Rihanna has had five or six albums out. I've only released one album five months ago.' I don't think it's a fair comparison. I've got a whole heap more work to do. I will feel like I've been successful when I'm rich enough to be able to start campaigns and charities, and I'm not there yet. I could be invited to a thousand parties but that's not really my thing. I want to make a difference.

Lady Gaga dotes on her 'Little Monsters' fans. What makes your fans – your 'Heartbeats' – so special?
 I love that they understand me. But what I love most about them is how much they support each other. I see hundreds of them living across the UK and around the world who all meet up and come to my shows. There are a few fans who come everywhere who are suffering with cancer and they have become really close. They go to each others' hospital appointments together. I can see them on Twitter giving each other advice and almost being each others' therapy. That's an amazing thing. I feel like Mama Heartbeat.

What do you think of record producer LA Reid getting the job as a judge on The X Factor USA?
 I remember when I met him and he went mental and locked me in a room and wouldn't let me leave. He wanted to sign me – it was when I first went to America as a songwriter. I'm a very respectful person and I said I wanted to meet every label before deciding, but he was such a nice guy. It's funny, I was so scared. I'd only been in the USA for three days when I met him. But it's great that The X Factor will have someone like him as a judge who's actually been there and done it.

What's your most disgusting habit?
 Farting. I fart a lot, often in front of people I don't know very well.

Do you trim your own fringe?
 I used to, but then it went really wrong when I was in Australia and I gave myself a mullet. Now I have the most amazing hairdresser called Lyndell, who also fits my wigs. She did my big change of hair for a recent awards ceremony when I got rid of my fringe and everyone went mental. The funny thing was when I went into the hotel to get ready that evening, I said: "I want to wear a dress," and there was a sharp intake of breath. I'm not anti dresses, I just don't often go to events where I'm not performing and I don't think that singing Do It Like A Dude would work in a dress. You've always got to be one step ahead of the game. It was fun. It was like dressing up. But people need to chill out about my hairstyle and not take it so seriously – it's just hair.

Have you decided when it will be time to say goodbye to the fringe?
 I already have a plan and it's going to involve raising a lot of money for charity. I would like to get rid of my hair completely.

WATCH IT! JESSIE J IS AT T4 ON THE BEACH 2011 SUNDAY 10 JULY 1.45PM CA/4MUSIC & T IN THE PARK FRIDAY 8PM & 10.30PM BBC3
 JESSIE'S NEW SINGLE, WHO'S LAUGHING NOW, IS OUT IN AUGUST

Vs UK JESSIE USA JESSIE

She is a star on both sides of the Atlantic, so is Jessie still an Essex girl at heart, or has she gone all stars and stripes on us?

WELSH US X FACTOR HOST STEVE JONES OR AMERICAN IDOL PRESENTER RYAN SEACREST?
 Steve Jones – definitely. I just like his accent and he's really tall. There aren't many men who are taller than me when I'm in heels.



RED SAUCE OR TOMATO KETCHUP?
 Tomato ketchup all the way.

CHERYL COLE OR NICOLE SCHERZINGER?



It's got to be Chez. What I love about Cheryl is she's a true survivor. She's so talented and she gets so much st. She deals with it so well. Every time I've met her she's been so lovely and sincere.**

WHO'S HOTTER - RUSSELL BRAND OR KATY PERRY?



It's got to be Katy Perry all the way. She's so fit and has the most amazing face and boobs.

"BILL" OR "CHECK" AT THE END OF A MEAL?
 Bill.

TOWIE OR THE HILLS?
 Ooh, I'd probably say The Hills. I'm a sucker for that show. I'm obsessed with Whitney and Lauren.



ADELE OR ALICIA KEYS?
 That's a toughie but I'd say Adele. The thing is that Adele is both the UK and the US now. She's earned her right to be in both places. I'm so proud of her.



Verdict
 Crack open the crumpets – Jessie's still a true Brit!

Pictures: Mary Ellen Matthews/Corbis Outline.