



Matt Erwin

## JESSIE J

### The U.K. pop star kicks off her quest to conquer the U.S. with a Bang Bang

JESSIE J IS HOPING SHE FINALLY HAS America's attention. With the out-of-the-gate success of "Bang Bang"—the lead single off her latest album, *Sweet Talker*, that features red-hot pop star Ariana Grande and rapper Nicki Minaj—she's longing to score her first No. 1 album. "I've never had one before

anywhere, so that would be my biggest achievement," she says.

A star in the U.K., Jessie J—born Jessica Cornish in London—has struggled to find mainstream success in the U.S. In 2011, she garnered attention with "Domino," and "Price Tag," off her debut album

*Who You Are*. But the momentum came to a halt when she broke her foot and couldn't tour or promote the record. "It's all about timing and being able to be there," says the 26-year-old entertainer. "The hardest thing is just being heard, because the U.S. is such a huge country. You can work hard, but it's still difficult to get people's attention. So I'm starting from the bottom up again."

Aside from "Bang Bang," Jessie J's biggest U.S. hit so far came in the form of a co-writing credit on Miley Cyrus' "Party in the U.S.A.," which reached No. 2 in 2009. But she isn't a songwriter-turned-performer. "People think I was a songwriter before I was an artist," she says, "but I had been signed for four years when I wrote that song, and had been performing on the U.K. underground for years."

Jessie J returns to those dance-pop roots on *Sweet Talker*, which features her powerhouse vocals and big beats from the likes of Max Martin, Diplo, The-Dream and Tricky Stewart. "I pushed my boundaries and let go, allowing others to take me in a different direction," she says. "On my first album I was so high-strung—I had to get everything right and be involved in every little thing. On my second album, I tried to conform more. But it didn't work. I don't think it was a failure, but it wasn't as hard-hitting. I'm a big character, a big voice, and I exploited that on this album. It feels like me."

Still, she admits performing live is her strong suit: "I think I sing better onstage, because nerves give you adrenaline, and you can use that to your advantage. I wouldn't say I'm more comfortable onstage, but I am freer. You've got an audience that wants something from you, and the feeling is mutual."

—Katy Kroll

