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LUCIAN MATIS.

Call me *Carly*

*Canada's brightest new
name in pop opens up on sudden
fame, family ties and
a certain fanboy named Bieber.*

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The first thing to come out of Carly Rae Jepsen's mouth after she rushes into Vancouver's Sugar Studios, fresh off a flight from Los Angeles, is an apology. She wanted to arrive at her first fashion magazine cover shoot early, she tells the crew, but her driver had to "circle around the streets a bit" to shake off the paparazzi. The way she explains the schedule hiccup isn't blasé, showy or even caustic. Jepsen's honeyed tone conveys a blend of amazement and excitement that can only come from being nouveau famous. Unlike new wealth, freshly minted fame is not about flaunting what you have, it's about being humble about what you're worth.

At 26, the Mission, B.C., native has no reason to be modest right now. Ever since her song "Call Me Maybe" was unleashed last year, and fortuitously reintroduced to the Twittersphere by Justin Bieber (Jepsen is signed to Bieber's U.S. label), the track has taken on a career of its own. It became a number one hit in 37 countries, achieving the kind of global success that has Lady Gaga going, well, gaga over it (Mother Monster tweeted "I'm coming after you" to Jepsen).

As of press time, Jepsen's flirty anthem is 2012's longest-reigning chart topper on the *Billboard Hot 100*. Armed with a lyrical hook that brings to mind the mania of Kylie Minogue's "Can't Get You Outta My Head," Jepsen's synth-laced cut is so omnipresent that nobody from her team calls it by its name. It's referred to as "the song." Will she be singing "the song" on *The Tonight Show*? Does she know Will Ferrell is protesting "the song" right now? Oh, my God, did you see what the hot guys on the baseball team from Harvard did with "the song"?

All this "Call Me Maybe" talk—which makes up 80 per cent of the conversation on set—doesn't really stop between outfit changes. When Jepsen's Vancouver-based manager inquires whether she has seen the latest cover of the song on YouTube, her L.A.-based manager asks which one she is talking about: the Obama remix in which the U.S. president's speeches get spliced so he's singing Jepsen's lyrics? The cover done by a little farmer boy milking cows? That bizarre *Star Wars* fan video? The interpretation done by the shirtless Abercrombie & Fitch models? Katy Perry's homage? Colin Powell's weird performance on *CBS This Morning*? Donald Trump's dubious attempt? It's soon revealed that the video in question is one created by the U.S. Olympic swim team. Later, Jepsen admits that she has a favourite (aside from Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez's version): *Sesame Street*'s Cookie Monster's rendition, called "Share It Maybe," about baked goods. As for the Olympians, Jepsen promises to stream their efforts after she finishes the last few recordings on her upcoming album, *Kiss* (out September 18).

The fact is, Jepsen has no time to get sucked into the vortex of YouTube. One look at her schedule and even a veteran pop star would scream, "This is crazy." Working around the clock so that *Kiss* could make its September deadline, she jammed in stage dates, interviews and photo shoots in different countries. Jepsen collaborated with Robyn's producer, Max Martin, in Sweden, finished writing a song called "Tiny Little Bows" in her Left Bank hotel room in Paris, did five photo shoots in five days in London ("insane," she recalls) and worked with Madonna's former producer, Dallas Austin, in L.A. »

Although a host of sonic chefs are cooking in *Kiss*'s kitchen, the sound, Jepsen assures, is decidedly dance-pop. Lyrically, she is staying away from revenge songs of the Pink variety, the broken-hearted beats with which Adele has cornered the market, and Ke\$ha's raging party-girl anthems. She's also clear that she does not want to be the next Britney Spears. "Nobody can do Britney again. She did a great job at it. I just want to be the best Carly Rae I can be."

On her new disc—which includes an LMFAO collaboration called "This Kiss" and uptempo cuts such as "Drive" and "Sweetie"—Jepsen lets her obsessions loose. "Mostly, my fascination with the complications of being attracted to something you shouldn't be," she says. "I definitely have a little attraction to bad guys, but they have to be sweethearts underneath. After all, I like to be treated well."

To further illustrate what she's going for with her post-"Call Me Maybe" sound, Jepsen name-checks two famous fashion houses. "My new songs are like clothes done by Versace or Moschino," she says. "My music is bejewelled, it's colourful, it's romantic, it shines."

Jepsen's verses and choruses weren't always as sparkly as a Donatella-dominated runway. When she signed to the MapleMusic label for her first disc, *Tug of War*, her songs painted her as a singer who would feel more at home in a Lilith Fair lineup than as an opening

in the columns," she says. "After I went through that book, I decided that if you can actually take in being present and enjoying the process as much as the end goal, then you really can't fail."

With her new frame of mind, Jepsen went back to doing what made her happy—composing music for the sheer joy of it, a practice that began when she was a nine-year-old in Mission (her first composition was a protest song called "Cutting Down the Big Tree"). "I was really blessed to grow up in a small town," she says. "Mission had a strong music community, and I had two fantastic kind of *Mr. Holland's Opus*-style teachers, Beverly Holmes and David Fryer. When I was in high school, they put on these grandiose productions." She played lead roles in musicals such as *Grease*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Annie* during her time at Heritage Park Secondary School.

"I am the girl I am because I grew up in Mission and because of my parents and the way that I was raised. I grew up in two houses and I have four parents," she says, explaining that her biological mother and father divorced when she was young and both eventually remarried. "All my parents were working for the school district. My father and stepmother were principals, my mother was a teacher and my stepfather was a principal. So there was a stress on education and making sure that no matter what you chose as your passion in life, you were definitely planning for a future and a career."

"They did an impossible thing," Jepsen adds. "They made a strange reality and divided evenly between both houses from when I was four. They really normalized it. They'd have weekly meetings as parents to decide the rules for raising me, my [older] brother and my [younger] sister. Living that way really helped me to relate to a whole rainbow of personalities."

One of the songs recorded during the *Kiss* sessions, "Sun On You," explores Jepsen's relationship with her mother. "It's about the bond we have. It was her birthday and I sent a demo of the song over the internet to her as a gift and wrote the lyrics out in a card," she says. She describes her musical appreciation as if it were an heirloom. "My mom's place was a bit more hippie-ish—she was the type to have music-listening parties with me and dissect lyrics from Leonard Cohen's 'Famous Blue Raincoat,' and I was like nine years old!"

Her mother's affection for folk superstars has affected not only Jepsen's taste in music but the way she dresses. With the help of New York stylist Lauren Shane—someone she calls a "braver version of myself"—she's been able to update a few pages out of the Carly Simon lookbook. Most of Jepsen's favoured promo shots have her in big floppy hats of the "You're So Vain" era, peasant dresses, and more fringe and florals than a combined crowd at Coachella and Lollapalooza. "I think Carly Simon's got wicked style," she says. "Her whole image is something that I've been inspired by and taken pieces from. She took some cool risks, and I want to do that as well."

Another artist she thinks has been "killing it" is Katy Perry. "I respect what she's been doing, and she's been really supportive," says Jepsen. "She offers a lot of good advice and we really hit it off. I remember I lost my voice at a performance she was at, and she ran to the car with her assistant and got me throat stuff, which helped—and was just the sweetest thing ever."

"Last time I saw her, I ended up partying with her and ['Call Me Maybe'] came on in the club. It was such a strange feeling," Jepsen says, just before a car pulls up to drive her to her next appointment. "I don't know if I'll ever get used to this." □

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act on Justin Bieber's tour (her current gig). As the legend goes, the first day she met the Biebs, he asked her to collaborate with him right then and there. "I went into the studio to meet him, and he played me a ballad ['Beautiful'] and said, 'So, would you like to do a duet with me on this song?' And I was like, 'Yeah!'"

Years before there were golden ticket moments like that, Jepsen—in dire need of hype—decided to join the insipid ranks of the now-defunct TV series *Canadian Idol*, in 2007. Instead of winning, she ended up mirroring Jennifer Hudson's trajectory and becoming the most successful entrant in *Canadian Idol*'s history. Jepsen shrewdly threw her hat in the ring during season five, when the producers finally allowed musicians to play instruments and sing original songs (previous seasons focused on covers). "I always wanted to be known as a songwriter and not just a songbird," Jepsen says. When she was 17, she received her first guitar for Christmas. "Ever since then, I haven't stopped writing."

Not winning *Idol* was a bit of an ego crush for Jepsen, but one thing kept her from veering off to a plan B. She had an epiphany after reading a self-help book called *The Power of Now*, which Jepsen swears should be taught in school. "I actually took notes and wrote

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