

I'm pretty pink

Budding superstar Ellie Goulding has seen the ugly side of fame – but with people like Elton John in her corner, she's up for the fight

MUSIC



**Danny
McElhinney**

INTERVIEW

Ellie Goulding

Her hair was bright, buzzy pink but her demeanour couldn't have been less energetic. Ellie Goulding flopped down beside me in a comfy couch in Dublin's Westbury Hotel, wrapped her baggy cardigan closer to her and curled up like a cat.

She looked tired, worn out even. When we spoke a year ago, before the release of her debut, *Lights*, she'd just come top of the BBC's Sound Of 2010 poll and was giddy about what fame and success might bring.

Zap forward to the week after last month's Brit awards and the giddiness is long gone. She had been nominated in a couple of categories but left empty-handed. Then there was the pink hairdo, which attracted some pretty catty comments.

The musician before me is certainly not concerned with playing



the fame game. She is keen to project herself as a credible singer-songwriter, and treats with contempt the comments about her appearance.

'You know something?' she says, running her hand through the pink hair. 'I do not give a crap at this stage. I wouldn't get fazed by someone not liking my hair. I've read that I've got a big nose... a Jewish nose. I get that I'm flat-chested. I also hear that I'm fat and that I'm ugly, all the time. I've seen it all.'

Up close there's not a spare ounce on the arresting 23-year-old, who had a brief Irish connection – she's said to have dated Dylan Haskins, the RTÉ presenter and unsuccessful general election candidate.

'Oh look at me,' she sighs as she has a malfunction pouring her tea. The water, the strainer, the leaves, and the pot – the old-fashioned presentation has confused her tired mind and a record company aide has to manufacture the cuppa.

Ellie sips and contemplates. 'It has been the most hectic year of my life,'

she says. 'The beginning of last year was really quite mad. But I've learned to deal with the demands

better now. You don't get anywhere without working and pushing really hard.'

The hard work earned her a No.1 album with *Lights*. Re-released as *Bright Lights* with six extra songs, it went on to sell a further half a million. She calls Tinie Tempah 'a great friend' and sang on his mega-selling *Disc-Overy* album. One of the extra songs on her own album was a cover of Elton John's *Your Song*, which after being used in the John Lewis Christmas campaign powered to the Top 5 here and in Britain.

'Sir Elton said he loved it,' she says proudly. 'He thinks it's really amazing that there's a calibre of artists like me coming through and that it's really promising for music.'

Of topping the BBC poll, she says: 'I belonged on the top of that list.'

That might come across as cocky, but she has reason to be self-assured. 'I was working bloody hard before that poll. If I hadn't been on the list, I would have worked really hard to succeed somehow. It would be terri-

ble if I'd been placed there and then a year later had to say, "Actually it didn't do me much good". That would be absolutely terrible.'

Being rejected by a covers band at college helped drive her determination to succeed. She says: 'At first I was like, "Yeah, f*** you I've made it", but then, I don't know... it must be quite weird for them because they must be genuinely bewildered by it.'

Ellie is certainly not losing much sleep over it, even if she was tired the day we met.

A trip to America, where Rolling Stone tipped her as one of five acts to make it there this year, is coming up so it's no wonder Ellie relished the relaxed pace of life in Kerry recently. 'I went for the Other Voices TV programme and that's when I discovered Dingle,' she says. 'Then just before the Brit Awards, I went over for two weeks and lived alone down there. I saw the Dingle dolphin. It was bizarre. I never thought I'd see a dolphin and certainly not in Ireland. I got loads of inspiration for songs and now that I'm home that's continued.'

For one whose ascent has been so rapid, Ellie remains refreshingly

grounded: 'This is all a dream come true for me and back in my home town they think I'm the bloody queen or something. But in other places they haven't a clue who I am and couldn't give a toss.'

● *Bright Lights* is out now.

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YOUNG
THING:
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