

## Samantha James Interview - Interview with Samantha James

By DJ Ron Slomowicz, About.com Guide

Voted to be one of the "Next 100" in Urb magazine, Samantha James has exploded onto the electronic dance music scene with the number one club chart hit "Rise." Working with producer Sebastian Arocha Morton (aka ROCAsound), her recently-released debut CD is a tasty mix of electronic sounds, tropical beats, and world vibes that showcase her sultry vocals and soulful songwriting. Lovers of the West Coast Om vibe will definitely be grooving to the songs "Deep Surprise," "Angel Love," and "Rise" for a long time to come.



Samantha James

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**DJ Ron Slomowicz:** This past weekend, I drove around listening to your CD "Rise." Its like the perfect chill CD. How long has it taken to put it together?

**Samantha James:** It's been a two-year process, actually.

**RS:** The title track "Rise" was a big buzz record at the 2006 WMC.

**Samantha James:** Right, so that was about two years ago. We had been working on the song months prior to that. It's been a while now in the making and I'm so glad that it's finally done. I can't believe that this was all happening, it's kind of surreal.

**RS:** When you're working on music do you write a song first or do you work with the producer on a track?

**Samantha James:** We collaborate on a track together, or he would start a beat and then I would come in. We'd either come up with a melody together or he'd give me the track to take home with me and I'd usually listen to it in the car on the way home and I'd just start coming up with the melody and write lyrics to the melody. It would either be us in the studio together creating a beat or him sending me off with a beat that he created himself and me coming up with the melody, or us doing it together.

**RS:** When you say 'he,' who is he?

**Samantha James:** He is Sebastian Arocha Morton and he's a phenomenal producer that you might know as ROCAsound. As you can tell, I've been blessed to be able to work with this man because he's incredible. He started off doing remixes back in the day and then went on to produce songs for Sting, Counting Crows, Vikter Duplaix(CHECK SPELLING OF NAME) and a group that I'd loved a really long time called Fila Brazilia. He's an amazing musician who went to the Berklee School of Music. Although this album is a very electronically-driven album, he is a trained musician who plays the piano and every instrument that you could imagine.

**RS:** I really get the Fila Brazilia connection on the CD – it has a mellow, tropical feel in places and a real electronic groove in others.

**Samantha James:** I'm such a lover of electronic music and our intention when we were making the CD was to make songs with that electronic foundation that were real songs. Songs that could kind of cross over into a different scene of music listeners and not just stay in the electronic dance world. We made a point of it for the format of the songs to be traditional with a chorus, verse, hook, and B section.

**RS:** Electronic music that is actually songs and not tracks, what a concept.

**Samantha James:** There are a lot of electronic and house tracks where there are vocals and songs, but I don't know if they're formatted as real songs.

**RS:** What's the electronic music that you like to listen to?

**Samantha James:** It started off for me when I used to go to house club when I was a teenager. I loved listening to like Mark Farina and a lot of the Om music, which is kind of crazy because I am now part of the Om family. I listened to Donald Glaude and all of the DJs in the late 90s. I started listening to Fila Brazilia, Kruder & Dorfmeister and Thievery Corporation. Portishead was an influence for me as was Morcheeba and the Sneaker Pimps. I loved Everything But the Girl, Tracey Thorn is one of my idols. Another woman that I looked up to was Lady Miss Kier from Deee-Lite, whom I love more than you know.

**RS:** I notice that Deee-Lite is a common thread among just about ever female artist I speak to. What about Lady Miss Kier was so inspirational?

**Samantha James:** First of all, she's an amazing artist, both lyrically and vocally. She sang really fun songs and when you'd hear a Deee-Lite song, you'd want to get up and dance or sing along. There was just something about her that was so unique. I don't think anybody had ever really done what she did and her sound was something different and I think she definitely set a foundation for a lot of female vocalists in electronic music.

**RS:** You mentioned Om being part of the music you loved, how did you become part of the Om family?

**Samantha James:** A friend of mine, Dave Curtain, introduced the Greenskeepers to Om Records. Then when he heard my music, we were trying to figure out where would be a good home for my music and we were in conversation and there were all these different independent labels and Om came up. We contacted them and they ended up falling in love with "Rise" so they signed me for a single deal. Then they signed my song "Angel Love" as a single and then after that it was kind of an organic process to have them sign me to do a full-length album.