

Samantha James - Rise (2007)

Written by bluelover

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1 *Rise* 4:26 2 *Enchanted Life* 5:32 3 *Breathe You In* 5:21 4 *Angel Love* 6:24 5 *Come Through* 4:35 6 *Living Without You* 5:48 7 *I Found You* Featuring [Vocals], Acoustic Guitar – Celso Fonseca 4:33 8 *Deep Surprise* 4:50 9 *Send It Out To The Universe* 6:20 10 *Rain* 3:57 11 *Right Now* 4:27 Acoustic Guitar, Guitar [Electric], Bass [Ebo], Effects [Zvex Landscapes] – Robert "Crit" Castillo Drums, Percussion, Cymbal [Ambient Texture Cymbals], Percussion [Claps] – Davey Chegwiddden Effects [Beats], Synthesizer [Moog, Synths], Bass, Electric Piano [Rhodes], Mellotron, Piano – Sebastian Arocha Morton Programmed By [Additional Programming], Bass, Electronics [Decks], Drums [Hi Hats], Percussion – Andreas Allen

Although Los Angeles singer/songwriter Samantha James claims 1980s cocktail-pop singers Sade and Basia as two of her primary influences, her debut album, *Rise*, sounds as if her true heart lies in that period in the mid-'90s when those singers' contemporaries Everything But the Girl lost their taste for twee U.K. indie guitar pop and jazzy torch songs and transformed themselves into a downtempo electronica act. It was a transformation that worked surprisingly well, not least because Tracey Thorn's smoky, wine-dark vocals and Ben Watt's knack for languid minor-key melodies both suited the style unexpectedly well. Samantha James is no Tracey Thorn, and her songwriting and production partner Sebastian Arocha Morton is no Ben Watt, but albums like *Walking Wounded* are no embarrassment as musical touchstones, and James doesn't embarrass herself in her re-creation of the style. The best songs, like the dreamy "Enchanted Life," the lushly tropical "Rain," and the bossa nova-influenced "I Found You," a duet with Celso Fonseca, are those that leave the dancefloor in favor of those dark, intimate banquettes in the quiet corners, where James' honeyed voice and the duo's fondness for mellow late-night atmospheres are best suited. On the more overtly dance-oriented tracks, like "Breathe You In" and "Living Without You," James sounds like just another anonymous dance club diva, and the '80s-throwback rhythm boxes don't help her cause. ---Stewart Mason, AllMusic Review

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