

TAMTAM

Saudi-born, Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Tamtam releases music video “Drive” to coincide with the passing of new laws giving women the right to drive for the first time in Saudi Arabia.



Saudi-born, LA-based singer-songwriter Tamtam will release “Drive”, a meditation on women’s liberation and gender equality, on June 22, 2018 to coincide with the passing of new laws allowing women to drive for the first time in Saudi Arabia, where movie theaters just opened up to the public in April of this year—ending a 35 years ban— with the Marvel hit *Black Panther*.

“The song is a celebration” says Tamtam, who first drove at the age of 18, when she was studying economics at the University of California, San Diego. “I want to stand up for this amazing positive change that’s happening in Saudi and in the world”.

Tamtam has always explored themes of identity, women's empowerment, gender equality, and perseverance in the face of adversity in her music, but as a Saudi woman her bravest act may just be her work in video. "I want my music to start a conversation about life, humanity, and love," says Tamtam. "I want to bridge a gap between the Middle East and the West so people can begin to see each other as one."

That wasn't always the case in Tamtam's career. For her first single, "Little Girl" she caved to the will of her family and friends, who urged her not to show her face on a public forum like YouTube. That experience forced her out of the shadows and ever since she's used the medium of video to make statements about combatting societal pressures as a progressive Muslim woman. For the upcoming "Drive" video Tamtam and her girlfriends cruised around Orange County in a vintage yellow Mustang convertible—"my dream car," she jokes—exercising their freedoms as quintessential California girls.

Despite the pop overtones, the metaphors behind the "Drive" video run deep as do those in the soon-to-be-released single and video "Rise," which was directed by Saudi-born actor and director Meshal Al Jaser - whose short film *Sumiyati Going to Hell* will be screened at the first "Saudi Short Corner" during this year's Cannes Film Festival, and who took Tamtam's lyrics—about pursuing her musical dreams since age 11 and rising above the haters and naysayers ever since—and translated them into an exploration of arranged marriages shot in the desert north of Los Angeles.

"I wanted a Saudi director who would understand the struggle of forging a career in the arts and living a progressive life as a Muslim woman in 2018," says Tamtam.

Tamtam's performed at the recent fourth edition of Kuwait Rising, a festival of emerging music from the Arab world and beyond, produced by multimedia artist and social entrepreneur Zahed Sultan. The 2018 edition featured performances by Grammy award-winning British soul singer Joss Stone, Indian-American jazz composer and producer Sarathy Korwar, and Franco-Lebanese electro artist Hadi Zeidan.

TAMTAM IMAGES

High-resolution Media images can be downloaded [here](#).

ABOUT TAMTAM

Born and raised in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, singer-songwriter Tamtam began exploring her voice at age 11, but didn't perform until two years later when she was living outside the Middle East. Despite some resistance from the music teacher at her school, Tamtam performed Michael Jackson's "Thriller" at the school's annual talent show and

won the competition. In that moment, she realized that she wanted to pursue a career in music.

At the age of 15, Tamtam moved to Ojai, California to finish high school, and after two years of vocal lessons she reached out to Kuwaiti producer Zahed Sultan, who listened to the first song she'd written, "Little Girl", and went on to produce it as a single and direct a video, which premiered on YouTube in December 2012. After listening to the reservations of her Saudi friends and family, who warned Tamtam against showing her face online, she agreed to blur her face in that first video.

However, the experience inspired the artist to adopt the moniker, Tamtam—a nickname referencing an African drum—and to write her second single in December 2014, "Gender Game", which contains the catchy, if poignant, chorus "I won't share my face, I won't share my name in this gender game. If I say my name or I show my face, I should be ashamed."

The release spurred Geena Davis to ask Tamtam to perform at three symposiums—in New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles—for See Jane, the Oscar-winning actress's non-profit organization promoting gender-equality in media. In March 2015 the blog Upworthy wrote about the song and accompanying video—revealing her face for the first time—and it garnered 100,000 views over a 24-hour period on International Women's Day.

At the end of 2015, inspired by her breast cancer survivor aunt, Tamtam released the single "We've Got Wings" to help promote 10KSA, a Saudi breast cancer awareness organization founded by Princess Reema bint Bandar. The song served as a soundtrack to the 8,264 women in Riyadh, who formed the world's largest human ribbon to promote the non-profit, and has been used ever since in support of the cause.

In April 2017, Tamtam released her second EP, "Identify Myself", and a year later she dropped her hit single "Blue", a song about a dissolved romantic relationship that reaffirmed her dedication to promoting positive messages while sharing her own experiences through her art. On June 22, 2018 she is set to release "Drive", perhaps the most ambitious single of her career, to coincide with the passing of new laws allowing women to drive for the first time in Saudi Arabia.

Tamtam has been featured on CNN, CNN's Great Big Story, and Upworthy, as well as in Arab News, Wear Your Voice Magazine, AMFM Magazine, Substream Magazine and Vogue Arabia, among other international media outlets.

Image credit: Tamtam driving, photo by Taylor Lacayo, courtesy Tamtam.

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