

**For Immediate Release**

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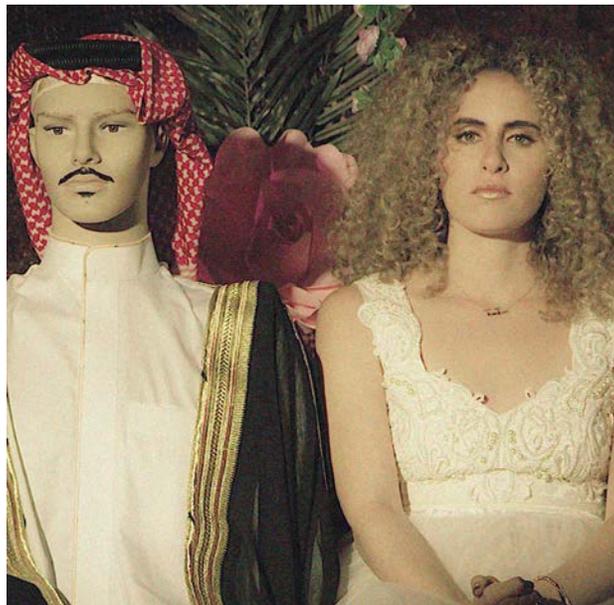
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**Saudi-born, Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Tamtam to release new music video “Rise” written and directed by award-winning Saudi filmmaker Meshal Al jaser, addressing the subject of arranged marriage.**



Los Angeles, CA– On September 19, 2018, Saudi-born singer-songwriter Tamtam will release the music video for "Rise", her third single in 2018, which comes on the heels of the acclaimed video for her second single "Drive", an event that coincided with the passing of new laws allowing women to drive for the first time in Saudi Arabia.

The “Rise” video was written and directed by Saudi-born, LA-based writer, actor and director Meshal Al jaser, who first worked with Tamtam when he cast her as the older sister in his award-winning 2017 short film, *Under Concrete*, which tells the story of a Syrian girl trapped under the rubble of her home in the wake of a bombing. "We started working together and discovered this chemistry," says Al jaser, who was given the lyrics to Tamtam's song—“Started at eleven I would look up at the heavens and cry/Told me not to think ahead/I was lying in my bed, wondering why/I would never listen, no I had a vision it’s true/And I knew/There’s nothing

that I can't do"—and translated this moody meditation about rising above the haters attempting to thwart her musical aspirations into an exploration of arranged marriages shot in the desert north of Los Angeles.

One of nine young filmmakers chosen to represent Saudi Arabia at the 71st Cannes Film Festival earlier this year, Al jaser arrived at the concept as a response to his personal understanding of this centuries-old Saudi tradition. "There's basically a female from Saudi struggling in this song," says Al jaser, "So I wanted to connect that with something you don't typically see in music videos."

The merger of these two parallel visions is a noirish fever dream that begins with Tamtam in a demure floral dress being blessed by a motherly figure carrying a smoking mabkhara of incense at a "lawful sight" (the only place a man is allowed to see a woman when she's not covered in a burqa). "It was extremely hard for me not to laugh because I had to keep a straight face next to a mannequin!" says Tamtam, who played the role of the dutiful wife-to-be. Coming when summoned, serving orange juice, Tamtam's character begrudgingly accepts a dowry and ring from her anonymous mannequin husband whom she weds in a surrealist, tropical nuptial celebration. "When I go home I see mannequins in the stores wearing traditional Saudi clothes but it's not like a Saudi-looking mannequin, it's a Western version, and it just looks hilarious," says Al jaser. "Marrying a person without meeting them is like marrying a mannequin."



Bordering on performance art, this sinister satire also features a series of quotidian offerings in Saudi homes—candles, dates, coffee, Turkish delight—and displays them on rotating plinths, turning these symbols of "a traditional, reparative life" into sculptural art objects. While these offerings might at first read as exotic to a western audience, Al jaser thinks of them as "a good representation of what that

society wants, that's the circle and rules of your life," he says. "If this was an English music video you might see fish and chips."

The video concludes in dramatic fashion with the mannequin husband set on fire. Tamtam, who wanted to work with Al jaser in part because he was a Saudi director who would understand the struggle of being a progressive Muslim woman in 2018, argues, "I know people might see it as aggressive, but it's a metaphor." And in reality, this conflagration would pale in comparison to the submissive existence these women find themselves in at a very young age—often for the remainder of their natural lives. "It's not like this is happening to one or two women, this happens all the time to many women," says Al jaser. Adds Tamtam, "I want to start a conversation and, sometimes, if you don't shock people they just won't pay attention."

One final revelation, at least for observant viewers, is offered in the final sequence of the video when Tamtam’s character re-emerges after the fire, carrying the same tray of orange juice. “She never really burned anyone,” she says with a laugh. “It was all just a fantasy, a vision of what her future life might have looked like had she gone through with this arranged marriage.” Whether this revelation is a dream or nightmare is all a matter of perspective.

### **“Rise” worldwide premiere to take place at NeueHouse Hollywood.**

The worldwide premiere of “Rise” will take place on Tuesday, September 18, 2018 at NeueHouse Hollywood. The premiere evening will include the first Los Angeles screening of award-winning short film *Under Concrete*, written and directed by Meshal Al jaser and starring Tamtam. A Q & A with Tamtam and Al jaser moderated by Madeline Di Nonno, CEO, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, and a special live performance by Tamtam will follow.

**For media access, please contact [livia@lynwinter.com](mailto:livia@lynwinter.com)**

## **ABOUT TAMTAM**



Saudi-born singer-songwriter Tamtam began exploring her voice at age 11, performing for the first time two years later when she was living outside the Middle East, winning her school’s annual talent competition with a performance of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller”.

At the age of 15, after two years of vocal lessons in Ojai, California, Kuwaiti producer Zahed Sultan produced her first single “[Little Girl](#)”. Despite reservations of her Saudi friends and family, who warned Tamtam against showing her face online, she agreed to blur her face in the accompanying video directed by Sultan, which premiered on YouTube in December 2012. 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](#)”.

The release spurred Geena Davis to invite Tamtam to perform at three symposiums—in New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles—for the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, the Oscar-winning actress’s non-profit organization promoting gender-equality in media. In quick succession, in March 2015, on International Women’s Day, the blog *Upworthy* wrote about the song and her second video, which revealed her face for the first time, garnered 100,000 views in a single day.

In 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.

Earlier this year Tamtam performed alongside Grammy award-winning British soul singer Joss Stone at Kuwait Rising, a festival of emerging music from the Arab world and beyond, produced by Sultan.

On June 22, 2018 Tamtam released a single and video "[Drive](#)", to coincide with the passing of new laws allowing women to drive for the first time in Saudi Arabia. A further single and video "Rise", directed by acclaimed Saudi-born writer and director Meshal Al jaser, which explores the subject of arranged marriages, will premiere in Los Angeles in September.

Tamtam is a Global Change Ambassador for [Roundtable Global](#) and will present an award and perform at the organization's Global Youth Awards in Los Angeles later this year. In this role, she joins a dynamic group of leaders, policy makers, entrepreneurs, educators, activists, artists and young people passionate about changing the way we exist on this planet.

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

Images: "Rise" video stills, courtesy Tamtam.

Follow Tamtam on social:

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<https://open.spotify.com/artist/0L8dLj3QGxHctqkzapPfo>

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**ABOUT NEUEHOUSE**

NeueHouse is a private membership workspace where creatives connect and new ideas are ignited. Located in New York and Los Angeles, NeueHouse builds best-in-class workspaces for a private membership base of creative entrepreneurs and cultural innovators in fashion, media, music, art and design. Catering to the unique needs of the new creative class, NeueHouse has reimagined the ideal working environment, providing an experience centered on design, hospitality, programming and membership. Each house contains a carefully curated community of thought leaders who are able to inspire one another and collaborate to spark new ideas, as well as connect amidst a calendar of unprecedented cultural programming and events. This year NeueHouse launched its own series of discussions including "Creative Couples", "New Pioneers" and "The Year of the Woman". For more information, visit [www.neuehouse.com](http://www.neuehouse.com)

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