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James Roy's

# Rise

to fame

By Matt Kailey

If you've ever had a dream and wondered, with all the day-to-day hassles of life, how you would manage to fulfill it, take heart – and take a lesson from James Roy. This up-and-coming Denver singer/songwriter is pursuing his dream while working a full-time day job as an engineer. Roy writes and records songs in his own apartment, produces his own CDs through his private recording company, Blue Disco Records, manages his own publicity, and is cultivating a loyal fan base with his meaningful lyrics and edgy dance-club beats. His first CD, *Don't Let Me Go*, is available at Tower Records and Heaven Sent Me, as well as on iTunes and through his personal Web site. His combination CD and DVD, *Rise Above*, will be available beginning May 1.

Born in Canada 26 years ago, Roy took keyboard and dance lessons as a child, but felt destined to pursue a more practical and stable career. After his family moved to the United States in 1995, Roy gave up his childhood musical fantasies and eventually attended college, receiving a degree in engineering.

"I pretty much followed the path of the parental, this-is-an-acceptable-career kind of thing," he says. "But the music never went away."

And although Roy landed a very good and solid position as an engineer with a Denver firm, he knew something was missing.

"The snowstorm of 2003, I was really trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life," says Roy. "And I had no idea, because I had discounted anything I really liked as something that just couldn't be done. So that's when I wrote my first song. That song is called 'Understand,' and it hasn't been released yet. ... But it's ironic that it's a song about not knowing what I wanted to do, and that was the beginning of doing what I wanted to do."

From there, Roy began buying recording equipment, a piece at a time, and setting up a studio in his home. He kept writing songs as he was studying his recording equipment and learning about all the technical aspects of his new path. When he was ready to start recording for the public, he started the Blue Disco Records label, and in 2004, he released *Don't Let Me Go*.

"All my songs are very personal,"

he says. "They're all about life and everything I've been through. 'Don't Let Me Go' was a breakup – something that was already over, but I was trying to hold on, I knew it was already done, but I just kept trying. A lot of people like Track 3 on this album, which is 'What Would You Do.'" In one song, it's the entire set of challenges that I've been going through and that I still am going through with pursuing music on the side."

Luckily for Roy, he has a good job and an understanding boss and coworkers who support his career in music. He has been able to arrange his schedule so that he works four 10-hour days, allowing him blocks of time to pursue his musical career. But even so, his music still takes up most of his free time, and having a personal life is a little bit of a challenge.

"That's been one of my sacrifices or decisions now," he says about not having a current partner. "It's a matter of time and energy."

And most of his time and energy now is being taken up with the release of the CD/DVD *Rise Above*, as well as preparing for a performance at PrideFest and working on his new CD, *I Believe*, which is scheduled for release later this year. The DVD portion of *Rise Above* features a video directed by talented North Carolina filmmaker Steve Murray and offers a rather pointed surprise for those who oppose same-sex marriage.

"'Rise Above' was written in 2004," says Roy, "right after the elections, of course, when they started having those state amendments that were passing to define marriage as between a man and a woman. And it personally affected me. I think all that legislation was based on the unwillingness to understand people who are different. And I know a lot of people just

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reacted with some counter protests of sorts, but I wanted to take a different route. So 'Rise Above' is pretty much saying, ultimately, try to understand everyone and forget about differences and realize that everything you do will come back to you."

And *Rise Above* has not only served as a musical statement in response to same-sex marriage discrimination – it has also helped Roy's physician father take his musical career seriously.

"At first, he was supportive but he was very hesitant," says Roy. "He was wondering why I wanted to do that. ... Now he loves it. I just sent him a copy of the DVD a few weeks ago, and he was floored. He gets it now. He knows that this is something that I'm not just fooling around with. It's really something that I work through nights and give up sleep in order to do."

But it is worth all the hard work when Roy finally creates the finished product and his fans get to hear it as well. He values his fans and spends a lot of time communicating with them through a monthly newsletter and through his Web site. His down-to-earth friendliness in the face of his rising fame, along with his serious commitment to the quality of his product, has endeared him to many.

"People believe in me to the point that they want to help me," he says. "And that's a great feeling. ... As for fans, I think the most fulfilling thing is when someone writes and says that a song really affected them and it personally meant a lot to them, so that means that they're able to take it and make it theirs. To me, it's not just music – it's really trying to connect with people."

So far, the connection has been good – and, like James Roy's star, it promises only to rise to new heights in the future. ■

*For more information on James Roy, go to [www.jamesroymusic.com](http://www.jamesroymusic.com). Rise Above is now available for pre-order through the Web site and will be available for purchase on May 1. Look for Roy on the Main Stage at PrideFest on June 25.*

