

Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar bring sweet Juno-nominated sounds to Blues Fest

“A high-energy, fast-paced soul and rock and roll extravaganza,” laughs singer-songwriter Samantha Martin. Having just been asked to give audiences a bit of a teaser on what she and her band Delta Sugar plan to bring to Theatre Aurora later this month when they hit Town, the Juno-nominated singer gets as far as “extravaganza” before ultimately deciding a teaser might spoil it.

“I have no idea how to explain it!” she says.

So, you're just going to have to come out on March 20 and see for yourself at the opening of the annual Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival opens the Festival, alongside Glenn Marais and his Mojo Train band.

“A dynamic frontwoman, she possesses a stunning voice that can summon up tidal waves of spine-tingling emotion in one instance while delicately bringing out the nuances of a gut-wrenching lyric in the next,” say festival organizers of Ms. Martin. “A torrid force of nature, night after night she takes audiences to emotional peaks while leaving them stunned with her sheer pin-you-against-the-wall power.”

Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar is a hot commodity after their nomination at the 2018 Juno Awards, which has left their dance cards pretty full.

“The nomination definitely elevated our profile in the Canadian music scene,” says Ms. Martin. “People who may not have heard of us before or saw our name in the category and being nominated for a Juno means you're in the Top Five according to your peers. It was definitely a wonderful thing to be recognized that way; people are impressed by it, which is wonderful.” “I was impressed by it! It is definitely a career elevator.”

Delta Sugar was born in 2013. Initially, it was a group of just vocals and guitar, performing as a four-piece band. The group expanded over the years and now often performs as a band of seven or ten.

“I knew I always wanted a larger sound, but it is quite difficult to tour the larger bands, it's more money for expenses, so we made the decision to do it as a four-piece,” says Ms. Martin. “Nobody else was doing it, so we stood out. In 2018, we released the (Juno-nominated) Run to Me and expanded the band.

“Both musically and in the writing process, my focus has always been vocals and melodies and I centre a lot of the music around my vocals and the backing vocals. When I am writing a new song for the record, I always keep in mind: what are the backup vocals going to do here? Everything else becomes secondary focus, equally as important, but I like a lot of space in the music. I don't like to just be a wall of sound all the time.”

It's a winning formula, but also one which has helped her create music that is both deeply personal yet universally accessible.

'I feel like my inspiration for writing is usually the ability to stay still a little bit because we have been on a lot of crazy tours lately and I was having writers' block, but mostly because I couldn't slow myself down enough to go inside to find the words in which I wanted to say, the story I wanted to tell,' she explains. 'When I write, I need quiet and I need to be still and reflective. The last two records have been about relationships, whether they be romantic relationships, relationships with family members and all that kind of stuff. I tend to write about experiences that I know and things that have happened to me, or things I have experienced but I hope I do it in such a way that is not too specific, so that it can be relatable. There are stories behind the songs but I try and write them in such a way that they are relatable and applicable to many different situations.'

Ahead of their upcoming Aurora gig, Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar are putting the finishing touches on their new album, *The Reckless One*, which is expected to drop this Spring.

'We'll be playing a lot of songs off the new album coming at the show,' she teases. 'We're going to be touring Europe in May and June and we're excited to share some of the music we've got cooking.'

To sample some Delta Sugar, come out to the Aurora Winter Blues Festival for its opening night on March 20. For more information, including tickets, visit musicaurora.ca.

By Brock Weir