

WHOLE OF THE MOON

JESSI MORRIS

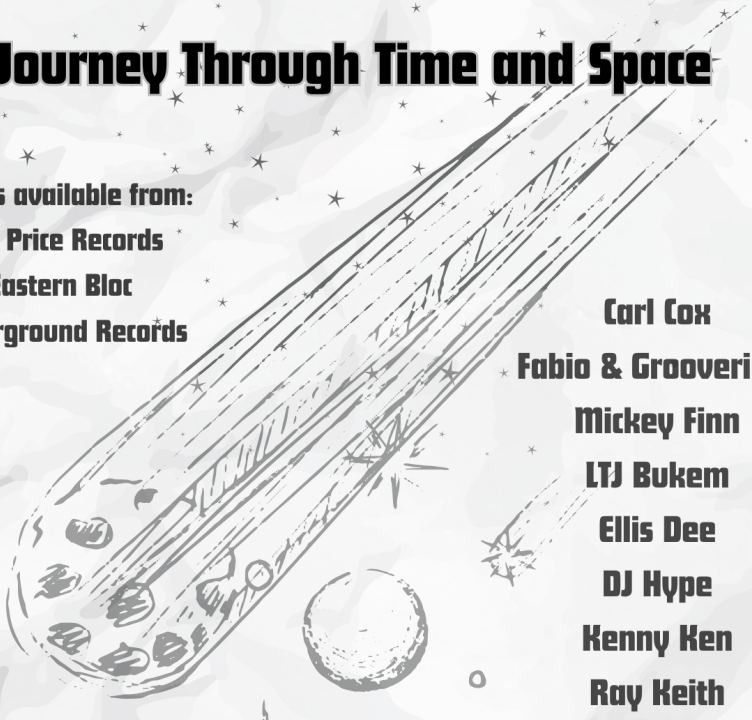

I am the glitter on the dance floor.

Friday 7th March
8pm - 7am

STRICTLY OVER 18s

Comet Groove 1992

A Journey Through Time and Space



Tickets available from:
Our Price Records
Eastern Bloc
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Carl Cox
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The Sanctuary Music Arena
V7 Saxon Street
Milton Keynes

Chapter 1
Playboy

Pure heaven, this moment. I'm off my nut in some warehouse in Hackney, three pills deep and riding that peak where everything just makes sense. The strobes catch all them bodies moving like one massive creature, and I swear I can see the music making patterns in the air. Bass so heavy it's rattling my back teeth, sweat running down the walls, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

It's all hitting at once - the scratch of sequins against my skin, heat of bodies pressed close, air thick with smoke and Vicks and cheap body spray. Colours bleeding into each other while the music surges through my veins like liquid electricity. Some geezer slips an ice cube in my mouth and the shock of cold sends shivers down my spine. This is what being alive feels like - pure, unfiltered feeling. No rules, no holding back. Just me and the music, going absolutely mental.

That's when I spot him through the lasers - this fit as bloke throwing shapes near the speakers. Dreads flying as he moves, muscles straining against his vest, skin gleaming under the strobes. Way he's dancing, all fluid grace, has my heart going mental.

Gemma catches me staring, her mad curls flying everywhere as she follows my gaze. 'Go on then!' she shouts in my ear with a knowing

grin. 'I'm off to make shapes!' Then she's gone, swallowed up by the heaving masses.

I follow him to the chill-out room, where he's settled in a corner, expertly rolling a spliff. Up close he's even fitter - all high cheekbones and full lips, those dreads tied back now. He catches me looking and smiles, this dangerous grin that goes right through me.

Next thing I know, he's pushing off the wall, cutting through the scattered bodies like he owns the place. Slides onto the cushions next to me, pulling out some Tiger Balm. I'm tilting my head back eager as anything, his fingers on my skin send shivers down my spine as he rumbles in my ear, 'Name's Alex.'

'Steve,' I manage, flicking my lighter. The flame catches his face just right, and bloody hell - that third pill's hitting now. Swear I can feel my skull glowing from the inside.

His fingertips trail down my back as he leans in close. 'Got something better for you to suck on,' he purrs, lips ghosting the corner of my mouth.

I'm rushing off my tits, but then I spot Chris going mental on the dance floor, and my stomach drops like a stone. Best mate since school, knows everything about me except this bit. But then Alex's hand slides up my thigh, sending electricity through every inch of me, and I think, fuck it. Crash my mouth to his and the warehouse, the music, Chris, all of it just... turns to smoke in the lasers.

We're going at it proper filthy, his hands everywhere, when Gem appears in a cloud of glitter, waving another pill. 'Last one!' she squeals. 'Let's blow the roof off this place!'

Next thing I know she's dragging me off, the pill already dissolving on my tongue. Catch one last look at Alex before he disappears like smoke in the lasers. Gutted, but that's how it goes sometimes, innit?

Rest of the night's pure magic. Just riding that last pill, hands up reaching for them strobes, sweat flying off my hair as I stamp about like a nutter. Can't feel my feet anymore, can't feel nothing except the music pulsing through every cell. Broken glass crunching under my trainers, but I couldn't give a toss. Got Gemma next to me, both of us screaming along to some tune, grinning like we've lost the plot.

The sunrise hits us like a slap when we finally stumble out. London's got this weird beauty at dawn - all quiet streets and morning mist, like the whole city's coming down with us. The sky's gone this mental shade of pink, making everything look soft round the edges. Air's proper sharp after that sweaty warehouse, has us pulling our jackets tight and huddling together like penguins.

Night bus is rammed with ravers, everyone got that thousand-yard stare. Streetlights leaving gold trails through the windows while Laila's still going at it with her glowsticks. My jaw's aching something chronic, and them tiles on the bus floor are starting to breathe.

By the time we make it back to mine and Chris's flat, the comedown's creeping in like a bastard. Laila's bouncing about like she's made of rubber, her blonde pigtails flying everywhere, still full of beans. Chris is trailing after her like some lovesick puppy as they disappear into his room.

Me and Gem end up sprawled on the sofa, my body feeling like it's made of concrete.

'Roll us a spliff then,' she demands, nodding at the baccy tin. I grumble but my fingers are already moving. Tell her about Alex while I'm at it, the fit bloke I was snogging.

'Bloody hell, Steve!' she laughs. 'Falling arse over tit for anything with a pulse!'

I just shrug, going red. 'What can I say? Twenty-two, free and single. Just playing the field, figuring out what I like.' Give her a cheeky wink. 'Equal opportunities, that's me.'

She just smirks, nicking the spliff. 'Lucky Chris didn't catch you though. Can you imagine? He'd have a proper mare!'

We crack up at that, them manic comedown giggles. That's what I love about Gem - she just gets it. Gets me.

MTV's on in background, and I'm getting well lost in that Losing My Religion video. Laila's high-pitched giggling filters through the wall while me and Gem pass the joint back and forth, her hair tickling my face, still smelling of vanilla even after all that sweating. The weed's doing its job, mellowing out that comedown edge when Gem breaks the silence.

'Gutted I can't come to Portugal,' she sighs. 'Would've been mental.'

'Could've caused all sorts of trouble,' I agree, trying not to show how much I wish she was coming. Three weeks in the Algarve without my Gem. 'You in that tiny bikini...'

She shoves me, grinning. 'You'll have a right laugh without me. Probably pull some fit Portuguese bird... or bloke.'

'Maybe,' I say soft, tucking her hair behind her ear. 'But they won't be you, will they?'

Something shifts in her eyes then, something that could change everything. But I ain't ready for that. Not yet.

So I just lean in, kissing her gentle. We get lost in it for a bit, while Michael Stipe does his tortured artist thing in the background. Maybe Portugal's exactly what I need - sort my head out, figure out what I want. Who I want.

But that's tomorrow's problem. Right now, I'm happy just being here with her, coming down easy while the sun comes up outside.

Chapter 2
Yellow Sunshine

Stepping into Hugo's is like falling through the looking glass. Dark wood, cosy booths, and British accents - place is rammed with sunburnt expats trying to make it feel like home here in the Algarve.

The buzz is already mental when this three-piece band struts on-stage. They launch straight in, and fuck me - I can't take my eyes off the tall drink of water up front. Proper fit in his knackered Ramones tee and cowboy boots, and this voice that's got me sitting up straight like I've been shocked.

Nearly chuck my snakebite down my front when he catches my eye mid-song, giving it this proper smouldering look that cuts right through all the screaming birds down front. Christ! Reckon I'll have scorch marks on my jeans after that.

He's bloody mesmerising. His fingers dancing over the guitar strings, hips swaying to the beat. Then the cocky bastard launches into 'The Whole of the Moon' like he's leading an army into battle. Pointing and winking, working the crowd - some of the girls look ready to pass out.

Proper gutted when it's over. But he shoots me this sly nod and wink as he hops off stage, cutting through his fan club like it's nothing.

And I'm just standing there, heart going mental through my shirt, trying to get one last look at that leather jacket before he vanishes. Chris and Laila are on about leaving, but I can't move. Not yet.

Last orders is done, and Chris is off his face, inviting every bugger and their mother back to his uncle's. I spot him by the bar - our rock star from earlier - chatting with the barman. His shirt rides up as he grabs the tequila bottle, flashing tanned skin that makes my throat go dry.

Next thing I know, he's sauntered over to fall in step with me and Chris, flashing this killer grin. The sort that's probably left a trail of swooning girls across continents.

'Jack,' he says, cool as you like. I just about manage to stutter out my name before he's turned those baby blues on the fit little brunette dangling off his arm. 'And what might your name be, love?'

'Mandy!' She's practically gagging for it. But he's already off, winking like a right charmer. 'Sarah, was it?' She's giggling, insisting that it's Mandy, honestly! But she couldn't give two shits what he calls her, long as he keeps laying on that accent.

'And which rainy corner of dear old Blighty do you hail from, darlin'?' Mandy's just getting into her whole life story, when this gaggle of shrieking birds comes tumbling out a side street, nearly taking us all out. One of them waving her heels about, going on how they'd thought Mandy was lost for good.

'We were about to call the flying squad, Mands!'

Jack shoots me a 'get a load of this' look, leaning in close to mutter, 'Reckon these might be the rest of the Cardiff hen party, eh?' But he keeps one big paw resting proper possessive on Mandy's lower back, steadying her on her wobbling pins. Smooth bastard.

We come crashing through the door of the flat like a proper tidal wave, Chris already bounding over to get some rave tunes shaking the foundations. Jack makes straight for the kitchen, banging down shots like they're going out of fashion. I get stuck chopping lemons while this lot go absolutely spare. It's way past 2am and the noise level's creeping up to 'police intervention' territory. Jack's loving it, course - holding court in the middle of the chaos, soaking up all that dazzled female attention. He's got his tongue halfway down Mandy's top, making a right show of the salt before he downs another shot, and the girls are just losing their minds over it.

I'm gagging for a smoke, desperate for a breather from the madness inside.

Jack perks up like a meerkat, grinning. 'I'll come with you, mate! Could murder a ciggie myself. There's a shop by the all-night petrol station.' He plants this messy kiss on Mandy's flushed cheek. 'Keep my seat warm, Mands!'

Can still hear the girls cackling as we stumble out into the warm night. Door slams behind us and thank fuck for that - my ears are ringing something chronic. Just us now, walking down the cobbles under the orange glow of the streetlights.

I'm sneaking little looks at Jack, trying to suss him out now we're away from his fan club. 'Cheers for coming with,' I say, trying to play it cool but my heart's going like the clappers. 'Thought I was going to go proper mental in there, tell you the truth.'

Jack flashes me a grin, running a hand through that messy hair of his. 'Ah, I was dying for a chance to stretch me legs! That Mandy's a clingy one - would've had me in a chokehold all night if I hadn't done

a runner.' He mimes being strangled, tongue lolling out like a proper nutter. Gets a right laugh out of me.

Then those baby blues are pinning me in place, intense as anything. 'So, you're a southern boy, eh? Whereabouts you from then?'

'Surrey,' I reply, trying to keep my voice steady. 'Guildford way. You?'

'Liverpool lad, me. But I haven't seen that corner of paradise in donkey's years. Been living out here a couple years now, and before that, I was in LA for a bit.'

'And how's the Algarve life treating you?' I aim for breezy, even as my heart's doing double-time in my chest.

He shrugs, scuffing the toe of one battered cowboy boot on the pavement. 'Can't complain, I suppose. Beats going back to Blighty, don't it?'

'Too right, mate. And LA, though? Bet that was a trip and a half!'

'Bloody madhouse. Everyone's on the make, aren't they? Real cut-throat, the entertainment game. Felt like a little guppy swimming with them sharks out there.'

'Ah, but you've got the chops, Jack!' I insist, stretching the truth like taffy. 'That voice of yours? And the way you work a crowd? Magic, mate. Pure magic.'

'Listen to you, little charmer!' He's laughing now. 'Nah, I thought I had what it took to be a contender once upon a time. Had these daft notions of selling out Wembley, being the next Bowie or something? Been singing my heart out since I was a wee nipper. I have. But my dad, salt of the earth type... he always said I ought to keep my expectations low. I mean, the stuff I play at Hugo's, it isn't exactly Pyramid Stage material, is it? But you know how it is - punters want what they want, eh? A man's gotta eat!' He cuts me this significant look then, head tilted. 'I reckon you're a bit of a musician yourself, though. Saw you

vibing to a couple of our numbers. Takes one to know one, and all that.'

'Too right,' I reply, flashing him the Raver Salute with a cheeky grin. 'Them electronic choons especially. I'm mad for it, mate.'

'Should've guessed from the getup, shouldn't I?' Jack snorts, eyeing me up and down like I'm glowing in the dark. 'You're a little raver through and through. You are. Clocked your sort, coming from a mile off!'

I shrug, sheepish. Scuff my battered Nikes on the cobbles. 'Ah, but I've got wide-ranging tastes, I have! Not just the old boots and cats, y'know.'

'Oh aye, I'm a man of eclectic interests myself,' he agrees, easy as you like. 'Got into grunge and all that when I was out in the States. First time I heard 'Nevermind', it was like a bloody bomb going off in my brain! You know Nirvana, yeah? Kurt Cobain's a bleeding genius, swear down. Mark my words, that lad's got a long and bright future ahead of him. Grunge is the real deal - your Mudhoneys, Molly Peaches, all that lot. I could bang on about the Seattle sound 'til the cows come home, truth be told...'

'I know Nirvana, 'course,' I admit, 'but you've lost me with the others.'

'Ah! You're missing out!' Jack cries, clapping me on the shoulder. The brief touch sears me through my thin t-shirt, sparking up my nerve endings. 'Seminal stuff, that is. Tell you what, I'll educate you while you're out here. Broaden them musical horizons of yours. Fancy popping round mine sometime for a grunge crash course? How long you here then?'

'Three weeks,' I reply. 'Just touched down yesterday.'

'Sweet, we have plenty of time then,' he suggests breezy.

I'm nodding like a nutter, trying to get my head straight. But I can't stop staring at the way his hips move as he walks ahead of me, those tight jeans showing off every bit of his arse. Then he turns to push some branches out of the way, and watching his muscles shift under his shirt makes my mouth go dead dry. And just my luck, that's when he looks back over his shoulder - catches me right in the act of checking him out. But he just smirks, cocky git that he is. Like he's well used to leaving a trail of lovesick girls and lads wherever he goes.

'Yeah,' he goes on, 'for now I'm just killing time in this sunny paradise, ain't I? Waiting to see where life takes me next. Not giving up yet, mind. Still got big dreams, me.'

'I get that,' I stammer, my heart proper going for it the way he's eyeing me up.

We get to the petrol station, the fluorescent lights making everything look brutal.

Jack spins round to face me, grabs my shoulders, and fuck me - wasn't ready for that. 'So what about you then? What's the big dream hiding in that handsome head of yours?'

I just stand there like a plonker, mouth opening and closing before I shrug. 'Dunno, really. I...I'm not sure, to be honest.'

His grip on my shoulders gets tighter and his eyes go all fierce. 'Oi, don't waste your youth arsing about, mate!' he growls, giving me a little shake. 'Get out there and grab life by the balls, you hear?'

He laughs, squeezing my arms in a way that goes straight to my dick. 'Listen to me, sounding like some wise old man! I'll be going grey soon at this rate. Already racing through my 30s, ain't I!'

I stare at him, letting out this weird little laugh. 'Wait, how old are you, actually?'

'32, if you must know. Ancient, eh?' He wiggles his eyebrows, looking a bit manic.

'Practically one foot in the grave, grandad!' I give it back, trying to keep it light even though my head's spinning with the numbers. 32 to my 22... bit mad, that.

We both laugh, but it's well awkward, like we've run out of words. The bright shop lights can't come quick enough - and I can still feel his eyes on me as I walk inside.

Flat hits us like a proper rave - Laila's lost the plot to 'Groove is in the Heart', doing one in the lounge like she's at Ministry. Chris is giving it large from the couch, whistling fit to wake the dead. I grab a couple of tinnies from the fridge, chuck one to Jack, then crash next to Chris.

Course, it takes about two seconds for Mandy to be all over Jack again. Watching him suck her face has my jaw clenched so tight my teeth hurt. Then he looks up and catches my eye - gives me this proper intense look that goes right through me. I whip my head away sharpish, necking my lager like it's water. But I can feel him watching me while Mandy's grinding on his lap. Fucking hell.

Rest of the night's a blur of me getting more wound up by the minute while everyone's having it large around me. Then Jack's trying to peel himself off Mandy who's wrapped round him like ivy. Says he's got to head off, all his groupies giggling as they stumble for the door.

My stomach drops watching them go. Can't bear him just disappearing after getting me all worked up like this. Follow them to the door like some desperate twat, trying to look casual while Jack throws me one last killer smile over his shoulder. 'Cheers for a top night,' he goes, voice all rough. 'Catch you on the flip side, eh?'

And just like that, with a wink and that cocky grin, he's gone - back to his flock of birds as they all stumble down the stairs, shrieking with laughter. I'm left propped against the doorframe like a right muppet, trying to get one last look before he disappears. Even after I can't hear

them anymore, I'm still standing there staring into the dark like a complete bellend.