

1988. What a year that was.

Me & Steve had completed a 5 year journey from duo, to trio, to four-piece, back to duo. Many fun times en route. A learning curve. A stylistic path.

When it began, 1983, we met Dominique Brethes. He answered our advert for a keyboard player. We met in his Brixton flat, behind the Ritzy. He had a home studio. Wolf.

Synths and machines and a desk and effects units; and Gallic insouciance. He didn't join the band. I think he turned us down! But we returned to his flat with ideas and excitement, and tried to record music that existed only in our heads.

Demos with drum machines, unconfident voices. Both of us singing, shyly and quietly. But we learnt and we grew then emerged in January 1985, somehow more rock than electronic.

Two years later we're in Wolf again. The music we're listening to so machine-driven. Where to go, when your heart drifts away from your sound? Forever Dancing the consequence. All the joy of the new and such potential, in one single recording. The inevitable death-knell of Beloved mark 1.

The pain of the separation, it had to be done. We had plans and a hunger and an explosion of ideas. The obvious place to explore these was Wolf. So easy to work there with Dominique and his ever-expanding palette of equipment.

Some sketches, some fully-formed, some improvised with the pure thrill of technology. And a backdrop so new to us - house, acid, techno, Balearic. Furiously exciting and unfailingly influential.

Every week another new record, new sounds, new rhythms, new emotion, to hear and absorb. The desire to explore how we could make music that contained that energy, that release, that joy.

No limits, no rules, no specific agenda, just fun, experimentation, and melody. Some were demos for publishers or labels. Some self-financed. Always working quickly, very focussed, very driven, very happy.

Dom, at the centre of it all, helping us realise our thoughts, translating abstract feelings into sonic form. Very good at suggesting synths or effects for specific sounds, and always manipulating the mood and the atmosphere in his quietly purposeful manner.

The songs on this disc are a chronological document of those sessions. Not only recorded in this order but written also, except the final track.

The variety here, the breadth of it all, a collision of our histories and future selves. I can hear specific influences in everything, but also the entire spectrum of what we distilled and crystallised on Happiness. Four are demos of songs on that album, and on two you can hear us already remixing our own songs because why would you not?

Any chance to try ideas, or styles, or variants - always fair game. Quite often our start point a record we'd try to emulate and our naivety or lack of certain machinery led us somewhere quite different and unique. Our sound, in gestation, developing apace

Then the four songs we only recorded at Wolf, but never took further. All valid and valued but we moved on relentlessly.

Jackie: a Mark Ronson blueprint. Steve's sampling ear already tuned in for a drum sound that sets the whole mood.

Sally: trying out a higher vocal octave, wishing I could sing like Prince.

Heart's Desire: a waltz-time Cocteau Twins homage, with Onedin Line theme tune strings.

Jennifer Smiles: Lloyd Cole/Aztec Camera with a loved-up lyric.

Then the b-sides. Again we decamped to Wolf for a day, or two, making tracks just for clubs, not for radio. All house tempo, all quite different.

Acid Love, in the first flush of ecstasy delirium. Jazzy M on LWR, Danny at Shoom, Chicago via South London and all points in-between.

Paradise (MDMA). What's that all about then?

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Pablo: Italo-house tribute to Augustus and our Greensleeves 12"s.

We played everything, Dominique operated everything. His pivotal role and ear for sound incredibly important. A trust. A working relationship.

Through all this we were unversed in programming skills and owned very little equipment. Both with Martyn Phillips making Happiness, and with Dom at Wolf, the importance of the third party cannot be overstated. But we produced these tracks. Their rawness is ours. Dominique knew the software and hardware, and engineered, but we had less time to make them and none of Martyn's sample library!

The final track, the Sun Rising mix, was for a radio broadcast promoting Blissed Out. I allegedly remixed this in real time for a live programme, but of course logistically impossible in the days of analogue tape machines. You can fool some of the people etc. Again it's in Wolf, mix engineer: D. Brethes - same room, same desk. It was never released, just a single acetate for a competition winner. Finally heard, completing its journey.

This disc has coherence as a time-capsule, as an odyssey. 1-10 from 1988, 11-13 1989, the last two from 1990. Charting the rapidity and scope of our development. A companion to Happiness, like a sketch book. So much creative endeavour in one room in a flat. A precursor to the way people work in the now.

And Wolf was to feature in the future Beloved, there at Homer House, and later in Dominique's new location. He's a constant in a 13 year trajectory and I'm happy to salute his importance on here.

I hope the music gives a broader insight into that incredible period in our lives. Me & Steve doing our own thing. Absolute Musical Freedom.  
Jon Marsh. June 2020.