



# ALESSI'S ARK

## “Time Travel”

(Bella Union – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011)

*"Oh, by now, I must have grown"*, Alessi Laurent-Marke croons beautifully, four songs into her stunning sophomore album **Time Travel**. And hasn't she just - not yet 21 but already a seasoned pro, having recorded her debut album aged just 17, with members of Bright Eyes, and touring with the likes of Laura Marling, Mumford & Sons and Brighton cult faves the Willkommen Collective. "Time Travel" is the first Alessi's Ark album since signing to Bella Union, where her acutely melodic and exquisitely tender folk-pop charms haven't just grown; they've blossomed into something extraordinarily mature.

And that's not all Alessi's talents. Drummer, fanzine writer, exhibited artist, expert knitter. She might never have sung and written songs if she hadn't had to compose a song for her school music course. Growing up in Hammersmith in West London, Alessi had discovered music through her mum's copy of Graham Nash's much-loved folky (and aptly named) "Songs for Beginners", but drums were her first calling after watching White Stripes' Meg White thump away. Fired up, she launched the Brain Bulletin fanzine (which still exists as a blog). But her music entry 'Glendora' was so strong - good enough to make her EMI/Virgin album debut Notes From The Treehouse.

Before then, she'd released the 2007 EP Bedroom Bound herself under the name Alessi's Ark so there was no confusion with '70s soft-rockers The Alessi Brothers. *"I liked the idea of a boat"*, she says, *"where everybody is welcome, even friends that are geographically far away - we are together"*.

The first Ark inhabitants were Notes from the Treehouse producer Mike Mogis, with Bright Eyes' Nate Walcott and Neva Dinova's Jake Bellows also on the session. But EMI's financial dip saw her free of her deal, and when it became clear Alessi and Bella Union were mutual fans, she soon found her spiritual home.

Intimacy is the key not just to Time Travel's sound but also its soul. *“This is a collection of songs that have mostly grown from travelling and touring, away from the familiarity of home, family and friends.”*

The experience of recording Time Travel - in Brighton's Electric Studios with Willkommen Collective's Marcus Hamblett and at Bryn Derwen in Wales with David Wrench (Beth Orton, Bat for Lashes) - gave the album its name. *“In Brighton, we did 12 hour days and had no idea what was going on in the outside world. In Wales, there was no phone signal, and it felt far away from everything.”*

The 12-track Time Travel keeps alternating between anxiety and joy, between childlike wishes and grown-up truths - how change can force us apart but also signify growth. 'Run' acknowledges that you must let friends go, *“to chase their dreams, even if it takes them away from you”*. 'Wire' imagines a man who knows he hasn't chased his dreams, and time is running out.

The album's one cover version, Lesley Gore's 1965 smash 'Maybe I Know', is a classic from the '60s girl-group glory days of teen angst disguised as sweet and innocent pop. *“On the surface, the song is very pretty but the lyrics are very sad and dark”*.

The cover of Time Travel is Alessi in an ice cream van, which she discovered in Morecombe after playing in nearby Lancaster. *“Those old towns are like the land that time forgot, and I got talking to the owner of this beautiful ice cream van, she had a wartime haircut and a beautiful dress and I couldn't work out where she'd landed from. I later contacted her about having the van on the cover and she was up for it”*.

Such is Alessi's ability to look for the good in others and hold out hope for the rest of us. Oh, and one more fact; with her mum, nan and aunt, she runs a little cottage industry knitting bags for every item sold through her website. Where indeed has Alessi landed from? Be prepared to be transported.