

The 2016 Groove Cruise Offered Endless Beats and Lost Teeth

BY ELVIS ANDERSON

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Groove Cruise founder Jason Beukema took the mic for the morning announcements: “Good morning, Groove Cruisers! Today’s costume theme is pinup pool party, and tonight is cartoon characters. We have deep house yoga today, we have a DJ soccer match – team Dada Life versus team Dash Berlin gets started at 1 p.m. Who the hell knows what’s gonna happen there?” he laughs. “We also have a Markus Schulz new-album listening party for the first 50 fans from 2 to 3 p.m., and on the pool deck, we’ll be having classic sex – I mean a classics set sunrise party with Roger Sanchez.”

On the Groove Cruise, nine-foot-tall LED robots join you in the elevator. There’s more nudity than a Friday night at King of Diamonds, and bass rolls through the ship 24/7. As a kid, Beukema regularly cruised with his parents but felt there were too many old people for his liking. Also, the music and the nightlife sucked.

Flash-forward a few dozen years to Groove Cruise, Beukema's first music-themed cruise. “The first few Groove Cruises were small groups. I had to fly speakers and mixers down from Chicago and Detroit because I couldn’t afford to rent them.” Last year, Whet Travel, Beukema's company, chartered six ships with six flavors: Groove Cruise Miami, Groove Cruise LA, Shiprocked, the Zen Cruise, Salsa Cruise, and Motörhead’s Motorboat.

Sadly, Motörhead’s lead singer passed on December 28, 2015, so that cruise is in limbo.

Whet Travel’s most recent Miami Groove Cruise production was sold out, and the company is already planning trips for 2017. Perhaps we should be thankful for all the shitty cruise-ship DJs. If they didn’t suck so much, then Groove Cruise might never have happened.

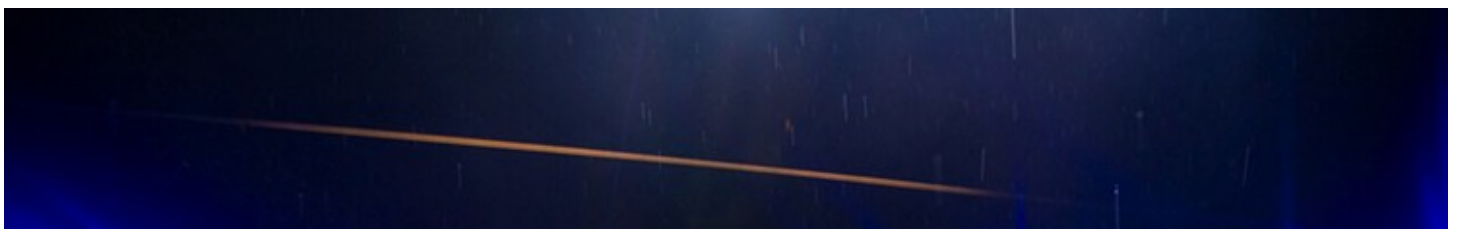


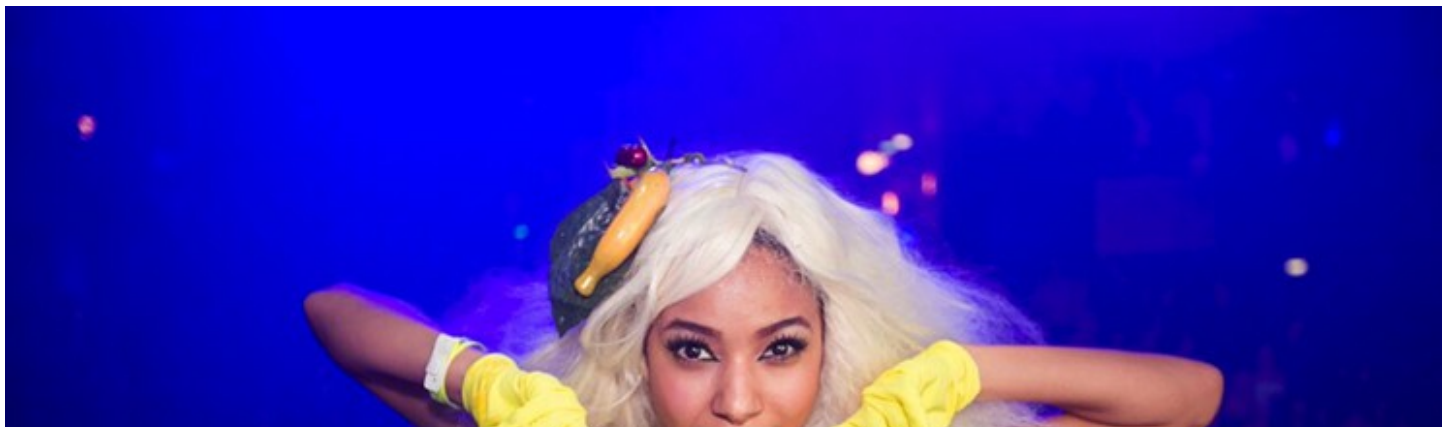


Photo Courtesy of the Groove Cruise

This year's trance, house, progressive house, and techno lineup offered more than 50 DJs and some of the biggest names in the business. There were six stages aboard the ship and no shortage of options. Day one presented Kristina Sky, Dean Mason, Sydney Blu, Croatia Squad, Markus Schulz's six-hour set, and after-hours on the pool deck from Chus & Ceballos from 4 to 7 a.m. Boris worked the morning shift, 7 to 10 a.m.

Good music was cranking from the stern to the bow on day two; a small setup on the back of the ship offered consecutive sets from a barefoot Nora En Pure, EDX, Croatia Squad, and Lavelle Dupree. At the main pool, Roger Sanchez followed Chocolate Puma.

On day three, the ship arrived in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, for a beach party and a bit of good will. Whet Travel's philanthropic effort, the Whet Foundation, worked with the Salvation Army to coordinate the delivery of items such as clothes and school supplies to local kids. "Several of our Groove Cruisers have traveled with us for five-plus years, and the charitable portion of the trip is a highlight for them," Beukema told us.



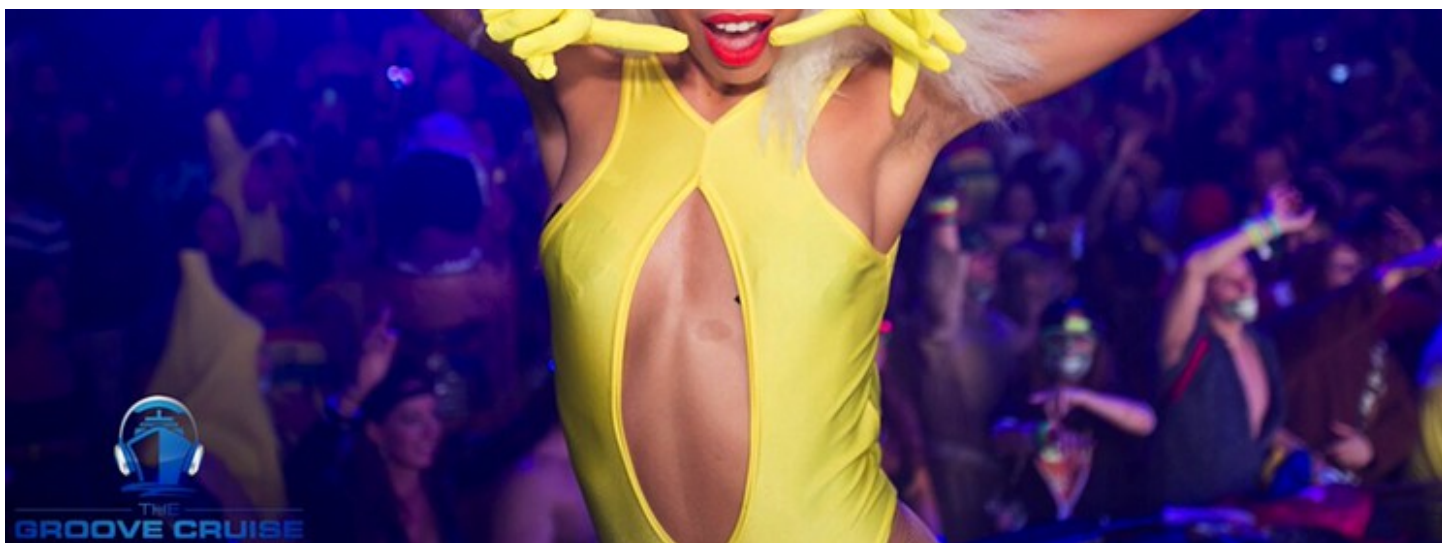


Photo Courtesy of the Groove Cruise

After spreading some good will, cruisers moved to the two-stage beach party. One stage was devoted to progressive house with Le Youth, Bingo Players, and Pierce Fulton. The other, techno stage hosted Doc Brown and Vanjee. Back on the ship, cruisers were greeted to a classics dance party in the atrium. Vocalist Jamie Lee Wilson joined Sydney Blu.

Wilson is from Miami, Australia, on the Gold Coast in Queensland. Apparently her hometown was named after our Miami because their mayor likes the 305: “The Miami in the U.S. is an on-steroids version of the Miami I come from in Australia.” Midway through her explanation, Markus Schulz walked by and offered major praise for Wilson. “I heard you singing onstage, absolutely singing your heart out. The whole crowd was into you. You stole the show.”

Like a marathon, the final day of the cruise was a battle of endurance of determination. In the team Dash Berlin versus team Dada Life soccer match, DJ Adam Scott lost a tooth, and the stretcher was brought out to help EDX off the playing field. EDX would later return to action, and the battle would finish in a 4-4 draw. Both teams declined sudden death due to exhaustion.



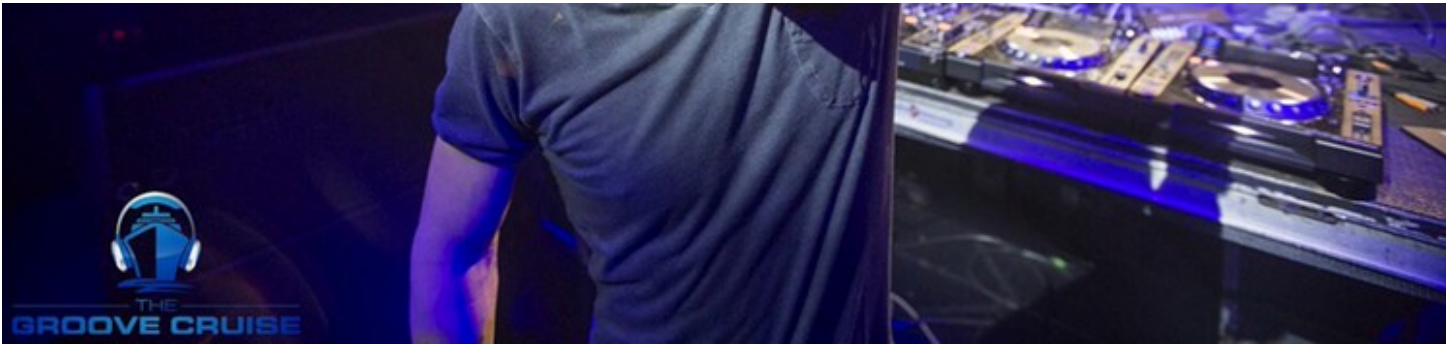


Photo Courtesy of the Groove Cruise

“It was fucking amazing. It started beautiful, it got ugly, a guy lost a tooth – I have to sit down. I’m exhausted, “ said an out-of-breath Stefan from Dada Life.

Sebjak, Sander Van Doorn, and Kristina Sky properly closed the theater, and the party moved to the pool for Roger Sanchez’s classic sunrise session. Arriving back at Port Miami with the sun coming up, Sanchez offered the crowd his legendary track “Another Chance.” When the music finally ended, the Groove Cruisers shuffled onto dry land, sunburnt and exhausted, ready to hibernate until 2017.

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