

PERTSHIRE – EXPLORE BIG TREE COUNTRY ON THE PERFECT AUTUMN ESCAPE

THE Scots MAGAZINE



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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Jackie Leven

Archetypal Outsider

Straight Outta Caledonia celebrates Scottish songwriter Jackie Leven

MICHAEL KASPARIS was in the car when he heard the song that would change his life.

The musician was on his way to Manchester for a gig with friend and labelmate Molly Nilsson when she played him what she described as "the best song ever written" – *The Sexual Loneliness Of Jesus Christ* by Scottish songwriter Jackie Leven.

"I was gobsmacked," Michael says. "The car tyre blew out literally five minutes later – it all felt prophetic, in a good way."

"I knew immediately I had to do something to introduce this music to more people – how did a Swedish singer living in Berlin know about this music and I didn't, living 50 miles from where Jackie was born?"

With hijacking the car stereos of every music fan in Scotland out of the question, Michael hit upon the next best thing – *Straight Outta Caledonia*, a 10-track

compilation released on School Daze, the archival imprint of his own independent label Night School Records.

It opens with that same song – an audaciously-titled, humanising retelling of the life of the son of God as a lonely, sexually-frustrated victim of the plans of his father, spiritual ancestor of the unemployed Clydeside shipbuilders whose own pain punctuates the track.

Born Alan Moffat in Kirkcaldy, in June 1950, he released more than 30 records under his adopted name of Jackie Leven, as well as the aliases John St Field and Sir Vincent Lone, and as the frontman of new wave band Doll By Doll.

His music drew from folk inspiration, immortalising outsiders and the broken – *Fairy Tales For Hardmen*, as one album title put it – but his tools included blues, soul, synth-pop and spoken word.

A brutal mugging in the 80s almost cost him his voice



Michael Kasparis



Jackie Leven

and triggered a descent into addiction, which he overcame through a mixture of acupuncture and psychic healing. He established The Core Trust with his then-wife Carol – a holistic centre for the treatment of addiction.

Jackie died of pancreatic cancer in November 2011, with *Straight Outta Caledonia* kicking off something of a 10th anniversary celebration of his career. Cooking Vinyl, Jackie's label from 1994 onwards, released a 22-track tribute album in September, featuring reinterpretations of his work by friends and fans including James Yorkston, Eliza Carthy, Boo Hewerdine and the author Ian Rankin.

The label is also re-releasing Jackie's 1994 Cooking Vinyl debut, *The Mystery Of Love Is Greater Than The Mystery Of Death*, on double gatefold marbled vinyl and

“Maybe he would have been nonplussed”

a newly-designed double CD digipak, in November.

But how to fully capture the breadth of Jackie's back catalogue? "I just picked songs that meant something to me," says Michael.

"Night School is music I feel is under-represented and I want to rectify that. Others have called it 'outsider' music, and Jackie was the archetypal outsider.

"I never met him – maybe if I had approached him 10 years ago he would have been nonplussed," he says, when asked where the songwriter fits into an eclectic label back catalogue that includes Ela Orleans, FREE LOVE and Rose McDowall of Strawberry Switchblade.

"I'm really grateful for all the positivity and warmth towards Jackie and his music, and the small part we've played in introducing it to some new folk."

***Straight Outta Caledonia* is out now on Night School Records. *The Wanderer: A Tribute To Jackie Leven* is out now on Cooking Vinyl. 📍**

On Our Radar



Mänran

Mänran

The award-winning Celtic rockers release their fourth album *URAR* on October 1. The album is the seven-piece's first since Gaelic singer Kim Carnie and guitarist Aidan Moodie joined the band in late 2019.

Man Of The Minch

Founder of the Bogha-Frois queer voices in folk collective, Pedro Cameron's music blends traditional Celtic music with electronic and pop sounds in debut album *The Tide Is At The Turning*.

Jazz At The Third Eye

Curated by Stewart Smith, this multimedia project celebrating The Third Eye Centre, Glasgow's historic hub of jazz, countercultural and improvised music, goes live to the public on October 22.

Ewan MacFarlane

The former Grim Northern Social and Apollo 440 frontman wrote and uploaded a song to YouTube every day during lockdown. *Always Everlong*, his debut solo album, is out on October 29.

Andrew Brooks

Visual artist Andrew Brooks's instrumental debut album, *East*, evolved out of compositions created to accompany his installations, along with field recordings made near his home in Dunbar.

TeenCanteen

The much-missed Glasgow indie pop four-piece marked their debut album's fifth anniversary with *This Is How It Starts*, a collection of live favourites and early recordings.



Ewan MacFarlane