

## **Jesse Caine – The Journey Out (The lockdown recordings)**

Way back in the day, well way back in my day, punk began not as a street fashion involving safety pins and bin liners, but as a reaction to the overblown, corporate controlled, music business. It wasn't just meant to be a kick up the arse to wallowing prog rock bands that took the best part of a year to record a half decent album costing millions. (And a quick thank you to the Ramones for reminding us of the immediacy of the two minute single). It began when Mark Perry and Sniffing Glue magazine printed the diagrams of three chords on its cover telling its readership that, now they know three chords, to go out and form a band. It began when that kid and his three cords then discovered they could record their own stuff on a Portastudio and take the resulting tapes down to a pressing plant that would master it and print up a hundred or so vinyl singles. Then they'd get their mates to design a sleeve and off they'd go. However distribution was always the problem. Various independent distribution channels tried (The Cartel) and failed to get the product out there. Punk was about do-it-yourself, it was hit and miss, and soon the big music business swallowed it up, by promising the holy grail of distribution. Major labels bought it up with recording contracts and issued product and created a new genre to file in racks beside soft rock and cheap Clash t-shirts.

It's only now, fifty years later, that technology has caught up with that punk DIY ambition. Now we are blessed with the technical ability to really do-it-ourselves with a laptop, a microphone and a bunch of software. Now an individual can produce an album that can rival anything a studio can produce, and there's no need for the pressing plant, now the essence of DIY goes as far as distribution (the missing link from the Punk ideals) and the ability for a musician to get their music out there on a variety of global platforms.

So why the lecture? Well Jesse Cain proves this DIY point with his brilliant new album "The Journey Out". Here are a set of recordings that were created during the great Corvid lockdown, using a battery powered mini recorder in a small office in Filey, and it's as good, if not better, as anything else I've heard this year from any label, both in content and for its production values. OK I haven't listened to it on high quality vinyl, I've downloaded the tracks and listened to them via a computer and external speakers. So fucking what, let the purists burn me at the stake, but guess what, this is the way most of us listen to music now, whatever platform we choose to use. We are in the digital age that allows bands and artists to do their own thing and release their music it into the world. Where's the bad in that?

Yes, these sets of recordings do have a slight roughness to them, but that's what makes their sound rather special, unique. It hasn't been smoothed, dubbed and over dubbed to buggery, little things haven't been ironed out. It comes to you fizzingly fresh and unsanitized, a sonic personification of that famous Sex Pistols photo with a can of exploding lager. The guitar comes across sharp and clear, each string ringing with passion and commitment. The slight use of double/multi tracking adds to the playing and to the power of the voice without being overbearing.

Each track has character chiselled from experience, and that character carries authenticity, something that a 64 channel digital mixer tends to smooth out. Authenticity shows vulnerability, it echoes a live performance, for which Jesse is rightly famous for. The vocals are excellent, powerful and as clear as a bell ringing out on a frosty March morning, and even better than we've come to expect of Jesse. Funnily enough his playing tends to overshadow his vocal dexterity, this set of tunes right that wrong. Like a lot of things, the man, his voice and his playing just get better with time.

How Jesse is a secret to only a limited number of coastal dwellers always amazes me. There again this pandemic has forced performers to make their own videos and put them out there via Facebook and they are seen by more people than they can gig to in a year. Watch Jesses on-line output and check out just how many people watch them, they come to a damn sight more people than he could play to in a year! Now if they all buy a copy of this set of tunes Jesse could be a rich man. Oh yes it's well worth putting your hands onto your debit cards to own your very own set of these songs. Not only is it money well spent, but your cash makes up for him losing his income from gigging in the real world (wherever that may be). Oh, and if you chose to listen to it via platforms like Spotify and Amazon Music, chuck a couple of quid in his direction by way of paypal and his website. Digital music is great but by fuck its listeners have got to learn to pay for it.

I'm not going to go through each track and give you my opinion or explanation on what Jesse has created, that's the job of you, the listener. You listen and you make up your own mind. Listening to music and songs is like listening to the radio – it provides words without pictures, you make up your own mind and form your own opinions and pictures. I have my favourites, you'll have yours. Suffice it for me to say each track is an insight into the creative artist that is Jesse Caine and where his head and body is and has been in this year of the plague. Sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes challenging, sometimes just toe curlingly nice. It is so refreshing that, after performing so many Americana covers for so many years he has come up with a bunch of songs with lyrics and tunes that can rival the likes of Paul Simon, Neil Young and Richard Thompson, but don't get me wrong, these songs are not pale copies of the masters, they are originals and they are masters in themselves. Sometimes you'll sigh, sometimes you'll cry, sometimes you'll smile. It's an interesting journey, jump on board and give yourself a treat, just don't forget to pay your fare.

Track List – Skin of Spanish Leather ; A Hollow Moon; A Girl has said a Man is No One; You could be my lover; The Lady and the Scales; Oh Francesca; We Take Prisoners; A new Known; In Your Armour; No one Here; Taking Up My Time; Twin Flame Chaser.