

Julia Jacklin – *PRE PLEASURE* bio

“A lot of the time I feel like I need to do all the work before I can enjoy my life,” says Julia Jacklin of her third album, *PRE PLEASURE*. “Whether that’s work on songs or sex, friendships, or my relationship with my family – I think if I work on them long and hard enough, eventually I’ll get to sit around and really enjoy them. But that’s not how anything works is it. It’s all an ongoing process.”

The binary of casual crisis is a powerful force in Julia Jacklin’s music. Since releasing her debut album *Don’t Let the Kids Win* in 2016, the Melbourne-via-Blue Mountains singer/songwriter has carved out a fearsome reputation as a direct lyricist, willing to excavate the parameters of intimacy and agency in songs both stark and raw, loose, and playful. If her folksy 2016 debut *Don’t Let the Kids Win* announced those intentions, and the startling 2019 follow-up *Crushing* drew in listeners uncomfortably close, *PRE PLEASURE* is the sound of Jacklin gently loosening her grip.

Conceived upon returning home at the end of a mammoth *Crushing* world tour, and finished in a frantic few months of recording in Montreal (“The songs on this record took either three years to write or three minutes”), *PRE PLEASURE* sees Jacklin expanding beyond her signature sound, while conjuring the ripples and faultlines caused by unreliable communication.

Stirring piano-led opener ‘Lydia Wears A Cross’ channels the underage confusion of being told religion is profound, despite only feeling it during the spectacle of its pageantry. The gentle pulse of ‘Love, Try Not To Let Go’ and dreamy strings of ‘Ignore Tenderness’ betray an interrogation of consent and emotional injury (*beneath the sheets you’re just a cave / a plastic bucket, or a grave / who said you’re not what you get / you are what you gave away*). The stark ‘Less Of A Stranger’ picks at the generational thread of a mother/daughter relationship, while the hymnal ‘Too In Love To Die’ and loose jam of ‘Be Careful With Yourself’ equate true love with the fear of losing it. Gorgeous string-drenched closer ‘End Of A Friendship’ offers a grand gesture of post-communication – an effort to bestow fireworks on a friendship that’s fizzled out.

“I care so much about the people around me, so much it makes me want to sleep forever, it feels so overwhelming” says Jacklin. “I wasn’t raised in an environment where language was used to express love and care, part of my songwriting process is me trying to rectify that, force myself to put words to those feelings”

Recorded in Montreal with co-producer Marcus Paquin (The Weather Station, The National), *PRE PLEASURE* finds Jacklin teamed with her Canada-based touring band, bassist Ben Whiteley and guitarist Will Kidman, both of Canadian folk outfit The Weather Station. It also introduces drummer Laurie Torres, saxophonist Adam Kinner and string arrangements by Owen Pallett (Arcade Fire) recorded by a full orchestra in Prague.

“Making a record to me has always just been about the experience, a new experience in a new place with a new person at the desk, taking the plunge and just seeing what happens” says Jacklin, on the decision to travel to Canada and work with a new producer for the third time in as many albums. “For the first time I stepped away from the guitar, and wrote a lot of the album on the Roland keyboard in my apartment in Montreal with its inbuilt band tracks. I blu-tacked

reams of butcher paper to the walls, covered in lyrics and ideas, praying to the music gods that my brain would arrange everything in time.”

You can hear it in the spare drum machine and piano of ‘Lydia Wears A Cross’, which rustles to life on clattering percussion, synths and a solitary dirty lead guitar line. ‘Love, Try Not To Let Go’ (“*I need you to believe me when I said I found it hard / to keep myself from floating away*”) skates along on airy keys and crisp drums, before blossoming into thundering guitar chords under Jacklin’s full-voiced declaration: “*try not to let go*”. The sprinkling of strings, chimes and saxophone lend ‘ignore tenderness’, ‘Moviegoer’ and ‘End Of A Friendship’ a woozy dreaminess at odds with Jacklin’s detailed portrayals of shifting personal politics.

Those musical flourishes can be traced to an inspiration Jacklin rediscovered while questioning her own motivation at the end of the *Crushing* tour. “Once music becomes your job, you can lose the purity of music fandom,” says Jacklin. “I spent the last two years trying to reconnect with that. I didn’t play much, I just listened. Especially to a lot of big pop music like Celine Dion, Robyn and Luther Vandross – music that wasn’t so heavy, big feelings, big production. You lose sight of what putting on a big, beautiful song can do.”

Jacklin remembers being eight years old, sitting at the kitchen bench playing the Canadian superstar’s 1996 hit ‘Because You Loved Me’ on repeat from her dad’s CD player. Listening to it again in 2020, “brought back a lot of nice, uncomplicated feelings about music,” says Jacklin. “Pure joy and feeling. And as someone relatively introverted and trying to be cool, Céline was a good person for me to lock onto during this period, because she’s definitely not that. She’s dramatic as hell and incredibly cheesy. I think listening to her helped me get over myself.”

There are moments throughout the ten songs that reflect this source inspiration, and Jacklin’s willingness to explore new terrain as both a producer and songwriter, but ultimately *PRE PLEASURE* presents Jacklin as her most authentic self; an uncompromising and masterful lyricist, always willing to mine the depths of her own life experience, and singular in translating it into deeply personal, timeless songs.

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