

Leslie Clio

BIOGRAPHY

From the moment Leslie Clio starts singing on her debut single, „Told You So,“ it’s clear that she’s captured the essence of great soul music and updated it for a new era.

The ingredients she uses are timeless: a lone piano or acoustic guitar, a simple drumbeat or tambourine, a worried church organ or even all of the above woven into a wall of sound. But it’s Leslie’s self-written lyrics and take-charge singing performance that announce the arrival of a bold and refreshing new musical artist.

Leslie Clio oozes the type of soul and authenticity that her forbears like Dusty Springfield or Lauryn Hill had. It’s the paradox of a woman young enough to still feel the promise and tingles of first love, but worldly-wise enough to know that men will be men and boys will be boys.

Throughout her first single and the broad range of material on her first album, „Gladys“, Leslie and her producer Nikolai Potthoff have fashioned a new sounding cosmos out of an attic full of simple instruments, spare electronica and powerful emotions. There are nods to dark trip-hop and bouncy Motown beats. Many tunes are held aloft by a simple bassline, spare drums, and a blurry-eyed organ. And just as this slim woman’s shoulders bear the heavy weight of loves ups and downs, her lightweight sounding music leaves room for deep drama and emotion.

Some may see a young blonde woman and decide to call Leslie’s music blue-eyed soul, but it’s not cold, manufactured or distant. Leslie Clio is as direct as a 3 a.m. come-hither stare or a slap in the face. It’s bloodshot-eyed soul.

Her talent as a singer and performer is impressive enough, but considering that she has written or co-written all the material on her debut album makes Leslie one of the most impressive new artists to appear on the scene. That authenticity gives her an air of confidence that’s rare in these days of anonymous pop packaging. She doesn’t need a stylist to give her a strange new look. She is not defined by a hairdo. She is at home in her skin and ready to bare her soul.

All her life, Leslie was The Singer. „I was always singing, even before I spoke“ she says of her early years, drawing pictures of stages where she was singing. And despite the distractions of growing up, Leslie always returned to singing. She took the solo parts in her choir. When friends made music at home, they came to her for the singing. She started writing songs back then, filling journals with poetry and song ideas, but they remained private writings, locked away after graduation from high school. The world

was calling to be discovered. India, Thailand, New Zealand, Australia, America, all over Europe, wherever the warm winds pushed her or old amigos beckoned. Seeing the world „made total sense.“

Yet the moment she returned home from her journeys, her destiny – to be a singer – seemed to have been waiting patiently at her doorstep. A chance encounter with a friend led to her getting the idea to audition two weeks later for a vocal education program. Leslie showed up unprepared and „just sang“, which was all it took. She was accepted, and suddenly found herself getting to spend every day doing her favorite thing: sing. By now Leslie was feeling like the universe was making plans for her.

After a year she moved to Berlin, and through a friend she met producer Nikolai Potthoff. He had made a name for himself as a guitarist with the indie artist Thees Uhlmann and had been producing up-and-coming acts. As a first experiment, Potthoff gave Leslie an instrumental track upon which to collaborate. „I took it home, sang the lyrics and melody, and BAM, it was there,“ she says. The „it“ is in fact her hit debut single, „Told You So,“ a musical kiss-off with one of the most memorable opening lines in pop music:

„You said <<forget about Francesca, you’ll always reign supreme.>> You’ve just been spending time to pimp your self-esteem. „

„It was so good, we decided to do a record,“ Leslie recalls. „Before I met Nikolai, I never wrote pop songs before. But then when we’d go to a co-writing session, it felt right, right away. Our first co-writing session, we said what’s the topic, and I said „Gotta stop loving you.“ I write the lyrics in two minutes and thought, <<that’s me, that’s what I want to do for the rest of my life.>>

„I had written little bits and filled notebooks, but this was my first full, contained stuff. I always had a journal with me. I always listened to the lyrics, I was always good at English. I had some idols growing up like Lauryn Hill, new soul stuff, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, jazz like Chet Baker and Sarah Vaughan,“ Leslie says. „I always went to record stores instinctively. What moved me is the voices and what they were singing about. So I came with a lot of content; I had folders.

„I had the land and the bricks; I just needed someone to help me build the house. „ The house that Leslie has built, with Potthoff’s help, is mainly one of living rooms and bedrooms, full of romance and hard talk, where life plays out in big dramatic scenes between young lovers. While there is always a bit of autobiography in songs about love and relationships, Leslie says she’s not giving the finger to former boyfriends; she’s just making art, recording the soulful sounds that have been echoing in her head all these years, and following her dream.

„Whoever gets something out of it, that’s a gift to me, the prize, like applause after a show. I didn’t live to be a pop star or something at any price, just use it if you may and if it gives you something,“ and she pauses, then sees her next word printed on a t-shirt nearby, and says with a triumphant smile, „swell.“

„I’m still relaxed, but I want to do it,“ she says of her life as a singer.

„I’m totally on and it’s cool. It’s like when I travelled; I just travel and know it’s gonna turn out ok.“

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