



Bio information: **JACK O' THE CLOCK**

Title: **LEAVING CALIFORNIA** (Cuneiform Rune 477)

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FILE UNDER: **AMERICANA / AVANT-GARDE / AVANT PROGRESSIVE / ALTERNATIVE ROCK**

JACK O' THE CLOCK
Reveal Their Deep Musical Roots on
LEAVING CALIFORNIA
a Wide-Ranging Musical Adventure Six Years in the Making

*“One of the most original and compelling groups I know, playing some amazing compositions that seem to tread effortlessly between Van Dyke Parks and folk music from an as yet unidentified culture, while making all the things you've always thought of as difficult sound as effortless and natural as breathing...
Amazing production. Extraordinary compositions. You need to hear it.” – Fred Frith*

Jack O' The Clock's *Leaving California* is a highly-detailed musical adventure that reveals new layers with repeated listens, from the opening strums of “Jubilation,” which introduces the record with whimsical folksy fanfare, to the angular harmonized violin lead on the closing track, “Narrow Gate.” Throughout, the songs of bandleader **Damon Waitkus** recall artists such as David Sylvian, Fairport Convention, and Elliott Smith, while creative musical arrangements showcase the band's high-level compositional and instrumental chops. Upon first listen, *Leaving California* offers plenty of hooks, but this is music that truly reveals its depth upon the scrutiny of repeated spins.

In the title track, “Leaving California,” the album's most direct and emotional song, Waitkus grapples with environmental and cultural themes that surround his experience in California while also revealing a personal dimension that informed the album. Waitkus and violinist **Emily Packard**, who are married, made the decision to move a few thousand miles away from the Bay Area to Brattleboro, VT in 2019, thus separating themselves from the rest of the band with whom they've been playing since 2007. Ultimately, the song “Leaving California” provides a mission statement for the album amidst lush acoustic guitar and string arrangements and a supple groove driven by bassist **Jason Hoopes** and drummer **Jordan Glenn**.

Elsewhere on *Leaving California*, the message is more enigmatic, which is reflected by the music on tracks such as “The Butcher,” where windy riff-age leads the song's verses into a dramatic chorus. The song's ever-shifting feeling settles into the jazz-inflected instrumental sections that develop through refined group interplay. It's here and on tracks such as “You Let Me Down” and “Narrow Gate” that reveal Jack O' The Clock at their most progressive.

The group initially met as students at Oakland's Mills College and since 2013, Hoopes and Glenn have played in the Fred Frith Trio with their former professor and one of the original visionaries of British progressive rock. Waitkus initially conceived the band as an acoustic songwriting group, but a wide range of influences — from jazz and free improv to folk musics from around the world — and his own experiences as a contemporary classical composer helped create what he has referred to as “majestic junk folk.” Since Jack O' The Clock's first record — 2009's *Rare Weather* — Jack O' The Clock has become a tight and formidable ensemble whose music has evolved through a prolific stretch of releases.

Despite their steady release schedule, the songs on *Leaving California* have been gestating for about six years of rehearsals and performances up and down the West Coast, and Waitkus knew the time had come to document this music before he and Packard left for Vermont. The result is a set of songs performed at the height of the band's collective powers, recorded and mixed by Waitkus from between 2018 and 2020 and mastered by Myles Boisen. *Leaving California* is a testament to Jack O' The Clock's patient and committed process and it encourages listeners to keep coming back for more for quite some time.