DONOVAN FRANKENREITER
MUSIC MEETS SURF

By Hayden Seder

World champion surfer and musician Tom Curren once said, "There's really only three things you can write music about: girls, cars, and surfing." Fellow surfer and musician Donovan Frankenreiter, often called the protégé of musician Jack Johnson, certainly has no trouble following that adage, bringing his passion for surfing and his experiences in love and life to his notoriously sweet, surf-inspired folk tunes. A musician for 20 years and professional surfer for over 28, Frankenreiter brings the sounds of the ocean to Ketchum's Whiskey Jacques on March 14.

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As a kid growing up in southern California in the early '70s, it was only a matter of time before Frankenreiter became interested in surfing, as well as the music that accompanies it. "First, I asked for a surfboard at the age of 10, then I asked for a guitar when I was 16," explains Frankenreiter. "My parents had no experience with either so I think they thought I was an alien!" Frankenreiter moved from California to Hawaii after getting sponsored by surf company Billabong at the age of 14. In what would later be seen as a twist of fate, his family rented their Hawaiian house from the parents of future famed surf musician Jack Johnson. Johnson and Frankenreiter soon became friends and began surfing and learning music together. "Jack and I have been friends forever, he is a legend," says Frankenreiter.

Frankenreiter went on to form the band Sunchild in his late teens, while Johnson began to start the musical career he is now known for. But Frankenreiter soon tired of playing covers with Sunchild, saying "I wanted to play original music. I was so sick of playing covers and being a live jukebox." With encouragement from his wife, Frankenreiter wrote his first song and soon released his debut album on Johnson's label Brushfire, with Johnson and fellow musicians G.Love and Koool G Murder of The Eels making guest appearances on the record.

After that first record in 2004, Frankenreiter went on to release eight more albums and form his own label, Liquid Tambourine Records, after parting ways with Lost Highway Records. "It's all about having fun and making the best music that you can," says Frankenreiter of recording albums on his own label. "It doesn't really matter where or who you are with or what label—it comes down to the songs and the execution."

Frankenreiter's most recent album, 2015's *The Heart*, was a new recording process for the musician with the decision to live stream each recording session during the two weeks Frankenreiter booked at Blue Rock Studios in Wimberley, Texas. "I just thought, 'Why not use what we can to make this record?' and it was possible to stream the making of it," says Frankenreiter. A departure from his typically happy, surf-vibe songs, *The Heart* delves into quite sentimental material with intimate and honest lyrics exploring different areas of his life. "There is a lot of happiness in this record and a lot of sadness. I lost my dad during the making of the record and that was the hardest thing I've ever had to go through. 'California Lights' is a song I wrote for him on the album."

But the direction of this album is no surprise considering Frankenreiter's long musical career; with wisdom and experience comes a certain change in material and approach. "You're always changing, just like the industry has changed," explains Frankenreiter. "As a songwriter and a person, I've changed and so has every one of my albums. It's just what happens in music—you keep changing a little bit here and there, just like in life."

Frankenreiter has just finished a new album with new band Jamtown, formed with Cisco Adler and G.Love. "It's the best stuff I have ever been a part of," says Frankenreiter. With the album being mixed, it's just a short time before audiences learn what else is up Donavon Frankenreiter's musical sleeves. In the meantime, come to Whiskey Jacques to hear old favorites and a few new tunes from the heart.

Donavon Frankenreiter will play Whiskey Jacques on March 14, 2017. Buy tickets and learn more at whiskeyjacques.com.