

the **S**unday MUSIC



by **ANNA GAULT**

DEF Leppard legend Phil Collen might be pushing 60 but he's never going to cover up on stage.

The guitarist is famous for playing gigs topless and told how ditching booze 30 years ago got him rocking a body that looks far younger than his years.

Phil, who turns 60 in December, claims he ditched his shirt because he doesn't want to get too sweaty – and just happens to look good with his top off.

Explaining his age-defying physique, he says: "I don't feel 60. I don't drink, I am a vegan, and I am working out all the time."

"I don't have a lot of the ailments that affect friends who are my age."

"I will still keep up the bare-chested look after 60."

"Plus, I sweat like a pig. Having a slimy shirt sticking to you isn't great for photos."

"Though, there is obviously a little bit of ego involved – you can't do it if you look a bit overweight so my sweatiness is keeping me fit."

Phil is also celebrating the 30th anniversary of Def Leppard's hit album *Hysteria*.

'Dad asked when I'd get a real job'

The group formed in 1977 in Sheffield, with Phil joining in 1982 after previous guitarist Pete Willis was fired for drinking too much on the job.

Def Leppard have played north of the border countless times but Phil's favourite gig was when he convinced his elderly Scots auntie to come to her first concert.

He said: "My great-aunt Molly was from Glasgow and I remember playing there once in the 90s so I decided to visit her in her little house."

"I asked her if she had ever been to a concert and she goes 'Oh no'. She was in her late 80s but we got her to come and she had a blast."

"That's my favourite memory from playing Scotland."

Phil adds: "When we first started doing well in America we all brought our parents over to watch us in Los Angeles."

"My dad Ken, who was a truck driver, was totally supportive but was like 'When are you going to get a real job?'"

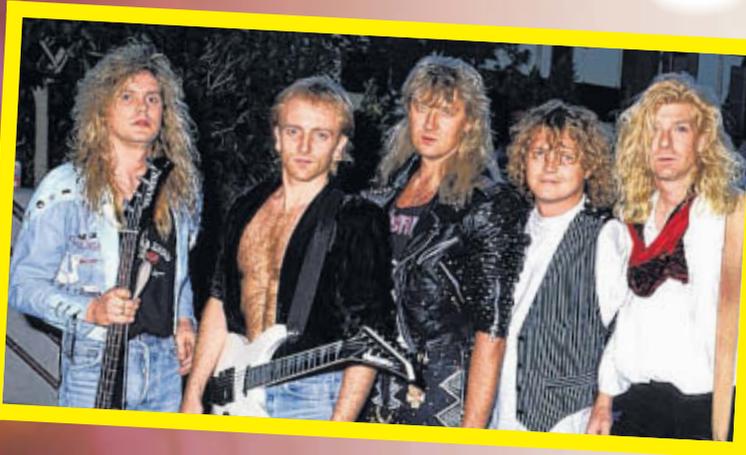
Def Leppard are unique in having a one-armed drummer after stickman Rick Allen lost a limb in a horrific car crash in the middle of recording *Hysteria*.

Phil says: "I look back at the whole *Hysteria* experience with excitement along with fond and



Hysteria still there after 30 years of rocking

CHEST AMAZING ... buff Phil still performs with his pecs out, just like 80s heyday, right, despite knocking on 60



tragic memories. There was obviously all the bad stuff when Rick had the accident.

"Something like that can finish you off if you don't have the inspiration to get up and go."

"I remember going to see him in the hospital and we were really scared to go in – we didn't know how to deal with it."

"But it was just a matter of him getting used to it. He would get up at eight in the morning and play all day long until he got it."

Londoner Phil also recalls how the smash album – which contains rock classics *Pour Some Sugar On Me* and *Armageddon It* – left the band in millions of dollars of debt and they were gutted after it initially bombed when first released.

And he reveals the group were

never smashing up hotel rooms or stage equipment because making that album made them learn the value of money.

He says: "I remember looking at the bill afterwards and it was horrific – like \$20,000 for this and for that."

"We were just borrowing the money off the record company and thinking 'Yeah, we'll worry about that later on'."

'I used to go on crazy benders and black out'

"But then that day came and they told us we owed them \$5million and we had to sell three million albums to break even – that came as a bit of a shock. So we were mindful that it was costing a

lot of money and there were a lot of nervous people."

"And then when *Hysteria* came out, it initially didn't do that well at all – it actually kind of tanked until the fourth single in America, which was *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. We were sweating a little bit."

And while the band weren't wrecking rooms they still lived a rock 'n' roll lifestyle, which Phil admits he had to ditch.

But the hard partying did claim the life of Phil's fellow Def Leppard guitarist Steve Clark, who died of respiratory failure brought on by a combination of booze and prescription drugs in 1991.

Phil adds: "Steve and I used to go out on these crazy benders and black out and not remember anything. I decided to go cold turkey

and it worked and it really made a difference. My best friend Steve wasn't able to do it, though..."

Phil admits he rarely celebrates special occasions – thinking they are self-indulgent – but he is making an exception for the anniversary of *Hysteria*'s release.

He says: "It's a bit weird to be celebrating a 30th anniversary."

"I am not really big on birthdays and anniversaries but this one seems like quite a big deal and profound."

"I always feel a bit egotistical to celebrate a birthday – it was the same even when I was a kid."

"But it's great to see the album back in the charts and people freaking out about it a bit."

"It was a very special record."



SKJØR

WHO: Louise McCraw (vocals/guitar), Callum La Barre (guitar), Jack Dorrian (bass), Toni McVey (drums).

WHERE: Edinburgh.

FOR FANS OF: Florence+The Machine, Two Door Cinema Club, London Grammar.

JIM SAYS: Last week's Electric Fields festival at Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfries & Galloway was a real voyage of discovery. Incredibly it was my first time seeing the legendary Jesus And Mary Chain, along with happening newcomers such as Glass Animals, Rascalton and Whyte Horses.

And after an explosive performance from Kate Tempest it's hard to see past her when the Mercury Prize is announced on Thursday.

Much of my time was spent watching emerging acts on the Tenement TV and Big Pink stages. Vic Galloway from BBC Radio Scotland curated the Big Pink tent on the Saturday, giving me my first experience of Skjør playing live.

On my way over to the tent I overheard some folk mispronouncing their name. One of whom had already bought their T shirt.

I must have seemed like a right know-it-all when I butted into the conversation to correct them. It's



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

pronounced "sure". Singer Louise McCraw told me: "It's inevitable that people will pronounce it wrong. I totally would considering it took me years to pronounce Björk properly! It comes from the Norwegian word for fragile, after a trip I took to Norway back in 2015."

That in turn inspired the band's first song *Norway*. It's no wonder some folk might think they are Scandinavian.

Louise joked: "People can be quite shocked when a mumbly Scottish voice comes out!"

Skjør came about a couple of years ago when Louise and Callum met at the Totally Sound youth music project in Edinburgh. Louise continued:

"Our music has developed a lot. We started off as four different people playing four completely different things on a stage. It was a funky and reverby mess! But over the last year or so, after Jack and Toni joined, things have suddenly become clearer. We've cut the funk but tried to keep this sort of dark, mysterious and atmospheric vibe, but a lot of work still lies ahead!"

Perhaps not as much work is needed. At Electric Fields they did come across like a band on the edge of greatness, effortlessly creating some dreamy indie pop. The crowd lapped it up.

Skjør got off to a flying start last year when their debut single *Self Control* got Single of the Week status on *The Janice Forsyth Show* on BBC Radio Scotland. Vic Galloway also named Skjør as ones to watch for 2017, so maybe it's no surprise he asked them to play his stage at Electric Fields. The festival appearance also came on the back of their glorious second single *Living Without You*.

Louise said "The atmosphere was just amazing. It was only our third festival and we enjoyed it."

More: www.facebook.com/skjoofficial
● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays 2-4pm.

www.amazingradio.com
www.jimgellatly.com

▶ Watch a video of the band playing at: www.thescottishsun.co.uk