

Schizophrenic existence while writing novel

★ **MICHAEL KRETZMER's first book, *The Very Annoying Jew* (Envelope Books, £15.95), is a furious and funny assault on the modern world.**

The idea came after years spent in a very different emotional place.

Before *The Very Annoying Jew*, Michael made the 2023 documentary *J'Accuse*, an expose of Holocaust distortion in Lithuania.

The film revealed how the government had whitewashed the crimes of Jonas Noreika, a wartime figure responsible for the murder of as many as 14,500 Jews.

"After I made it, we had a huge success against the Lithuanian government," Michael said from his Worcestershire home.

"They were forced to surrender their position on Holocaust distortion.

"We went to court, which decided that Noreika was a mass murderer, his statues were taken down and he was removed as a national hero. I believe this is the first time that Holocaust distortion has been effectively challenged."

He was already writing his debut book while promoting the film and giving talks. He described the situation as a "schizophrenic existence" — Holocaust by day, Jewish comedy by night.

The Very Annoying Jew tells the story of a self-destructive television producer called David Britton.

Aging, angry and rejected by his wife, he has lost his looks, his fame and most of his friends, and his child thinks he is an idiot.

"He's enraged with the world and much of the world is enraged with him," Michael said.

"He is the sort of man who passionately hates grievance politics and political correctness because they've made honest thought impossible.

"It is the frustration of a 68-year-old on the decline who just doesn't fit anymore."

Michael, who was born and raised in Rhodesia — now Zimbabwe — never thought anybody would publish the book.

He explained: "Most publishers wouldn't have looked at it for a second. It's stridently anti-politically correct.

"Some may see the book and think it is right-wing, but I see it as a rational response to the world

"I find wokeness revolting — it is strangling our ability to think, to talk and to live, and that is from someone who came from a



FIRST BOOK: Michael Kretzmer

left-wing background steeped in socialist Zionism.

"It refuses free expression, it censors the world — and we've seen, especially as Jews, what happens when free thought is destroyed.

"Because I have seen what is going on in the world, I think this book is the right response to it."

The 71-year-old moved to the UK in 1976 and became a journalist and filmmaker, eventually writing for *The Sunday Times*, and producing television documentaries for the BBC, Channel 4 and overseas broadcasters.

But he insisted that the novel is not autobiographical.

Michael, who is married to Joanna, said: "My friends have pointed out the similarities,

which surprised me. But one key difference is that whereas David Britton grows up not liking Jews, I never disliked Jews or being Jewish.

"It's true that I ceased to have any interest in it for a long time, but I was never hostile, only indifferent. And like my protagonist, I also came back to it very strongly.

"It was not anything dramatic, more an intellectual engagement with Torah and Jewish history that brought me back. I am now a strong and practising Jew."

This Jewish consciousness also helped Michael finally find his voice as a writer after years of unsuccessful attempts at fiction.

In fact, writing *The Very Annoying Jew* became a form of liberation.

"In recent years, I've learned that I can only write as a Jew," he added. "It completely freed me as a writer because I was no longer pretending to be someone else.

"I finally understood the language and the territory, and I wrote this book knowing who I was."

For Michael, the novel's dark comedy is a protest against what he calls "the suffocating stupidity of the age".

He said: "It is a comedy, which is the most important thing. Comedy is the last refuge of honesty.

"You can tell the truth when people are laughing and it is the only weapon we've got left."



★ THE Manchester Jewish Representative Council held a joint event with the Lancaster and Lakes Jewish Community, led by RABBI DANNY BERGSON, minister of St Annes Hebrew Congregation.

More than 40 people attended the event, which was dubbed "celebrating Jewish identity and culture", including Lancaster mayor MARGARET PATTISON and councillors from across the political parties.

There were musical performances by Rabbi Bergson and his son TZVI, and the Ey Up Klezmer band, led by community member FIONA FRANK.

Rabbi Bergson said: "Through vibrant events like these we are able to bring Jewish people together, especially in small communities and help uplift and give a sense of Jewish pride while, at the same time, forging important relationships with local civic leaders who get to experience a glimpse of Jewish life."



PICTURE: ROB CLAYTON

Nadia finds a love Supprey

★ A COUPLE who met while pupils at Manchester King David High and Yavneh Girls' schools were married seven years later.

NADIA GOLDMAN and JOSH SUPPREY were wed at the Adelphi Hotel, in Liverpool, by RABBI EPHRAIM GUTTENTAG, of Whitefield Hebrew Congregation.

Trainee solicitor Nadia is the daughter of REZICA and SHIMMY GOLDMAN, of Salford, while junior doctor Josh is the son of MANDY and JONO SUPPREY, of Whitefield. Best man was JACK SUPPREY.

Joining in the celebrations were the bride's grandparents HILDA and MICHAEL GOLDMAN, of Salford, and JANICE ROSE, of Prestwich, the groom's grandparents PAM and DAVID YOFFEY, of Whitefield, and guests from Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

The couple left for their honeymoon in Cancun, Mexico, yesterday and will settle in Manchester city centre.

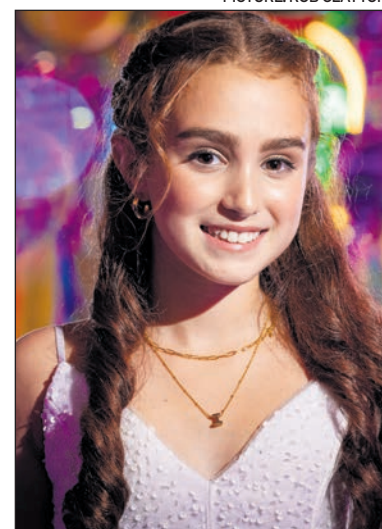
PICTURE: ROB CLAYTON

Izzy takes a starring role

★ DRAMA enthusiast IZZY EDEN took the spotlight as she marked her batmitzvah at Whitefield Hebrew Congregation, Manchester, followed by a celebration at home.

The daughter of KIM and JOSH EDEN, Izzy, who also enjoys singing, is a pupil at Manchester King David High School and has a younger brother and sister, NOAH and AMBER.

Also joining in the celebrations were her grandparents, SHARON and ROBERT EDEN, of Salford, and ROCHELLE and JACK HECHT, of St Annes.



Henry gives comedy pair a stage in Liverpool

★ LIVERPOOL comedian Henry Churney has arranged two shows with Philip Simon and Rachel Creeger next month.

Philip and Rachel made headlines in August when their shows at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe were cancelled because they were Jewish.

The pair lost money having to

find new venues for their shows, which they eventually managed to do.

Jew Gotta Be Kidding Me — supported by the Chief Rabbi's CCE fund — will take place at Allerton Synagogue, Liverpool, on Monday, November 3 at 4pm at 7.30pm.

■ Tickets, priced £15, are available from admin@allertonshul.org.uk