

When I first got sent the material for the Juv album I was completely blown away, especially by the fact that this was made almost 14 years ago, while you guys were nothing but youngsters. Can you tell me the brief history of how you came to work together?

We met in high school where we were in the same year. We started talking about music, trading CDs and went to concerts. When I went to the US as an exchange student we started writing to each other and when I got back it had grown to a tight friendship. The first summer after high school we went around Europe by train to make field recordings, recording hours and hours of audio. I built a makeshift studio in my parents' garage and started working with music there. A year after we both got into the art academy in Oslo and it became our full time studio, gradually taking over the loft in the tower of the old building.

ARM came together around this time too, which we started with Alexander Rishaug, Øyvind Stoveland Berg and Steven Cuzner. ARM was our main focus in the beginning, and we envisioned ARM as a collective with multiple outputs. I guess Juv was part of that, one of the many beginnings that were a result of the sheer joy of discovering sound and music. Whereas ARM was based in improvisation I was making compositions both on my own and with Marius. I remember that we formulated a vision of our own quite early. We were collaborating quite intensely for three years, from 1996 through 1998. We were about 19 when we started.

You say you never got to finish the album when it was made back then, your friendship abruptly ended just before its completion. What exactly happened during the making, and how come you never spoke again until now?

I will spare you the details but I think it was bound to happen at some point – as with many early collaborations. Starting that young it is no wonder that we would undergo a lot of personal change along the way, part of which required us to define a personal space at one time or another. For three years we were working constantly together, sharing studio, equipment and eating most meals together. It was an all or nothing attitude, so the moment we tried to do work individually it fizzled out quickly. Add some personal drama to that and you have twelve years of silence.



Are, London 1996

Also, our ambitions were sky high and quite abstract– and at the same time we were just getting into the basics of sound and recording. What really gets me today is the sense of time we had back then. No deadline for an album, endless recording sessions, an extreme patience and curiosity in listening back to recordings and the sound of the surroundings. A lot of what is on the record was considered studies – the REAL work we always assumed would come later. We must have imagined always working together.



Field recording, Berlin 1996

You had to cut down hours of recorded material to fit it into the album format. How was it to work on the music again after all those years?

Very ambiguous! Being so long ago I was in many ways removed from it and therefore could edit it with more ease than when it was fresh. At the same time my main motivation was to somehow honor that time and reconstruct something that in reality was fractured and fragmented – and in doing that there is always a danger of projecting current preferences onto the work. Also, the distance to the work was somewhat an illusion – I found that the music still resonates strongly with me and I still enjoy working with self-imposed limitations similar to the ones in Juv.

What prompted you to go back to it?

The sad ending of our collaboration stuck to my memory of the project as a whole, and it just seemed a big failure. We knew little about production back then so I just assumed the sound quality was crap too, especially since some of it was made on a 4-track tape recorder. But listening to things like minimal metal and early tape music triggered my memory; it seemed familiar and close. I finally got the DAT tapes out of storage and started listening back to it. I did not realize the sheer quantity of music we had made over quite a short period. When I started compiling the album I it was only natural to make contact with Marius again and he has joined me in the completion of the album.

The album feels to me almost like an occultist, droned out version of early black metal, or like mourning, dragged out classical music made with blackened guitar sounds. What is your own interpretation of the Juv sound?

With Juv we wanted an organic, minimal and ever changing sound. We tried to rid the instruments of their signature traits, for example by removing the attack and looping them, to make them more undefined as well as constant. We were looking for a ringing, vibrating sonic presence of an anonymous orchestra or abstract entity. We wanted to equal the status of the sound sources, mixing our own recordings with field recordings and sampled music, both “low” and “high” culture. A deep listening band (we actually met Pauline Oliveros while we were making the album, and were inspired by her deep listening music).

What is it about?

To me it is music awaiting some sort of dramatic change. Death awareness, awareness of self, of time passing. Mourning the end of innocence, maybe. Transitory music. It was music that we needed to do, almost like a sonic shelter, something to be surrounded by. Releasing it, having a name, was secondary, which is why it never came out. Finding the name was the last thing we did, and that was only a month ago!

Having been talking to Marius these last months I have discovered that to him it was addressing the outside world more directly. Kind of an emotional output or transcription of the experience of political realities into sound: imperialism, wars, and environmental disaster. The dark sides of this civilization, really.



Marius, Lofoten, Norway 1996

How did you make music with Juv? What kind of sound sources did you use?

In Juv we had some self-imposed limitations that affected the music profoundly. We never used synthesizers or electronic effects, even though we were surrounded by those possibilities. However, we did use the sampler, and massively so. It was the central tool since it allowed us to distill sounds from improvised and found recordings, tune and loop them to form a constant flow of sound. The limited memory of the sampler forced us to think about music in an economic and minimal way, a limitation we enjoyed and cultivated. We gave the loops uneven lengths so that they would gradually shift and create constant variation within an otherwise static sound. We sampled ourselves as we improvised in various settings, field recordings from our surroundings and existing music.



Are, field recording in Venice, Italy 1996

A lot of the improvised recordings became compositions of their own, or simply layered with the sampler-derived work. These sessions were small rituals, and often done outside of the studio. Like the vocal part on *Sut*; it is part of a one-take recording we did in the woods on the city border of Oslo. We took the train to the last stop one night, walked into the woods until there were no more light from the city and screamed our throats sore. On the title track *Juv* the wailing tones are chairs dragged along the floor of massively reverberating Emmanuel Vigeland's Mausoleum (which you have also done, Erik!), which was situated right between Marius and my house back then. The vocals and grass whistle sounds on *Udengang* were recorded in Berlin in a tunnel underneath the Siegessäule monument. On the opening track *Los* the sound came from a sound installation we made where we strung up metal wires between the walls of a room, playing them with a violin bow. Midway in *Verk* there is the sound of pressure air on guitar strings. In general we used a lot of abstracted guitar sounds.

The field recordings also give an idea of what kind of places we visited. There is the bomb signal from a construction site, the standing wave in a bus riding to Experimental Television Centre in upstate New York, the sound of passing cars from the interstate highway, the sound of the brakes on our friend's bicycle.

Are: I was told that you were Varg Vikernes' (Burzum) neighbor as a kid. Is this true? And in that case, what were your conceptions of his music and the early metal scene back then?

Yes, that's true, although I knew him as Kristian Vikernes back then, his birth name. He was one of the first people I knew who were doing music and I remember visiting him at his parents place and he played what I think was Metallica covers for me. I borrowed a tape from him with his early band, Old Funeral, and I liked it since I was into Iron Maiden, Kreator and such.

I was never that close to him but respected him because he was nice to my sister and he was an individualist. I heard that he rebelled against his teachers by purposely doing badly on tests, but in a way that made it clear he knew the answers. That made an impression, this sense of having your own standards and not falling into the prescribed paths of rebellion, such as being a slacker. That is how I perceived it anyway.

I moved to Oslo in junior high school and didn't see anything of him until I remember realizing that the anonymous interview with him in the Norwegian music magazine *Rock Furor*, was with him. The scar from a skiing accident and the mention of Old Funeral gave him away. Shortly after all hell broke loose, so to speak. However, I was not into black metal in the 90's.

And Marius is oblivious to it to this day (in spite of having the best black metal vocals I have ever heard!). I did not like the theatrics of it, it was hard to find and the people I borrowed records from were probably too politically correct to own it. Therefore I never heard much of it, even though I listened to hardcore, punk and death metal. My teenage revolt consisted of not dressing according to a code, not drinking, not doing drugs, not being part of a scene or community. Which eventually led to social isolation, of course, but that is another topic.

The music that was influential for us in the late 90s was the sampler-derived minimalism of Deathprod, the microtonal music of Giacinto Scelsi and Tony Conrad and the minimal works of groups such as Swans, Neurosis, Sonic Youth, Codeine and the Melvins. It was only when I got into experimental black metal and doom many years later, and especially the minimal and atmospheric work of bands such as Paysage D'Hiver, Brenoritzvrezorkre, Sunn O))), as well as Burzum, that I started seeing the musical connection to Juv.

What about the politics of black metal?

In the recent documentary *Until The Light Takes Us*, Varg is talking about his idyllic childhood and how black metal was a way to experience extreme emotion through music, a more real reality - to pierce through suburban numbness. I think this is true for a lot of young music. It comes from a need to claim your own body, which is transforming, and to call for personal change in oneself, through music. So I think it is largely an individual quest. It is trying to get access to spirituality when all spiritual institutions seem dead and diluted, and yet the only language in your vocabulary is of that origin. So it is turned upside down, noise is added to the music but the harmonics are largely the same, the images of churches, crosses and Jesus are abused, demons are angels and angels are demons. This poverty of language is very interesting to me, to fetishize the enemy rather than to replace it with something new altogether. To me black metal is contradiction mixed with extreme passion, so it is hard to see any factual politics coming out of that, except the act itself.

So what did it mean for you to do Juv?

Making music was a very real way to break out of the social isolation we were in, to access the outside world, make friends through music and eventually choose the life of an artist. This was some of the first music we made and in that age it was a radical thing to do. Only gradually did we meet others who were doing the same.



Juv, front cover (Vindstad, Lofoten (Norway))
Both photos taken by Ane Hjorth Guttu

What does the word Juv mean, and how do you feel about that the material is about to finally be released?

Juv is Norwegian and similar to the English word abyss, it means a sort of bottomless hole, that deep space between two mountain walls or a inside a deep underground cave. It also brings to mind the echoing and reverberation of sound.

Releasing it feels great. Like reuniting with a young version of yourself and being able to have a good conversation. Or retrieving lost memory. And finding back to my old friend, Marius.

The front cover is a picture of a mountain being buried by the shadow of another mountain, showing just a small strip of light left on the top. There is also a picture of you both in a cabin, exposing your identities as two young guys sitting quietly staring at the camera. There seems to be less of the typical theatrical approach found in the dark ambient/metal genre. How do you see the connection between your music and the photos?

When releasing something that was made that long ago I wanted to keep it as close to the source as possible, so to speak. The easy thing would be to dress it up as some obscure underground artifact, to drape it in anonymity and mysticism. As much as I can enjoy myth in music it is obvious that a lot of privileged youth are dumbing down and acting up, posing as sub-cultural cavemen so to speak. Myth is a collective product, it is the sum of many tongues - not the press release. So I wanted it to be a straightforward affair and let the music speak for itself.

The two pictures were taken in the same place and at the same time, in Vindstad in the Lofoten islands in the north of Norway. The photographer was the artist Ane Hjorth Guttu, who we were visiting. We did some recording in the abandoned school where the picture was taken. A few months later the collaboration collapsed. The cover is showing how one mountain is slowly being covered by the shadow of another - behind the photographer. I think it is a perfect image for the whole project, of growing up - especially since I remembered it for that long. Fortunately we found the negative in her archive.



Are & Marius in an abandoned school (Vindstad, Lofoten (Norway))

When we were in Lofoten that landscape became such a representation of the music we had been making in the city. It was a surreal experience, like the time when we walked around on the large, white Bunes beach between these two mountains, and found a beached whale, rotting away. The place was always rainy and foggy, and on rare occasions: short bursts of sunlight.

You told me that the only track you made using a computer, was the last track you ever made together and it is also the last track on the album, Verk. How did you mix before that?

All the mixing was done straight from sampler or multitrack down to DAT tape. As with a lot of tape music the composition happened in the moving of the faders, there and then. This limitation demanded a lot of concentration and made the whole process of mixing feel in time with the sound.

With the non-linear digital editing of the computer this huge realm of new possibilities opened up, but at the same time closed off another. The focal point provided by our limited means was lost and in many ways ended our Juv paradigm. *Verk* was not considered as a finished piece and is included on the record as we left it. The last sound, the feedback, was actually the last addition we made to it and well illustrate the sudden death of the project.

How is the approach to music making in Juv compared to your current projects like KILLL, Single Unit and Arm?

Those projects are based on the possibilities of the computer and electronics, and have other conceptual and methodological limitations. KILLL is a live-only band with collaboration over short time periods, ARM is improvised electronic music and Single Unit is composed collage music.

Already knowing about your background in visual art, experimental electronic music and noise, it's fascinating to hear this album in context with your other work. How do you yourself see your artistic and musical progression over the years since the Juv album was made?

As I mentioned earlier there is a link between Juv and my work of today in that both are using self-imposed limitations. It is a methodology that is less about strictness and discipline, although it is required, and more about accessing something beyond the scope of preference and habit.

With Juv these rules were not stated as a dogma, but indirectly agreed on as we were working. The sound sources, the minimalism of the sampler and the real time mixing. Basically what did not fit in with Juv became ARM, or the other way round. Today I am working more consciously with limitations that direct source materials, visual tools, formats and modes of abstraction. The collage series ION is perhaps the closest to Juv, especially as I have come to see it as a teenage aesthetic. Like Juv, ION is transforming a readily available aesthetic into something of a more archetypal nature, inverted and intensified.

I've gradually come to enjoy reading work, my own and others', in a less linear way. Likewise I am less interested in the linear reading of art history and more attuned to the individual and methodological. So, going back to Juv, while making new work, I found really rewarding. That one project does not have to succeed the other, and that one can be into multiple sensibilities at a time.

Marius, while still working with sound as part of his works, moved into theatre, politics and writing. Now, he refers to his work as contemporary manifestos. So for him there is a connection to our old work, as he always experienced the music more attuned



Juv studio, Oslo Art Academy 1998

to the political somehow. He has done some very controversial work that got him into serious trouble with the theatre, actors and audience. It was confrontational to say the least. He has also done less rancid work such as when he placed a living forest with a stream inside a gallery, or when he made an underwater listening installation in a pool. Whereas his productions used to push towards an almost self-destructive direction, where the level of ambition towered way above the level of performance, he has spent the last years doing smaller productions and writing. He might not agree with me but I have always seen that trait of him as similar to Werner Herzog's drive towards the clash between man and nature, between ambition and reality, culture and chaos.

I heard a live recording of your project recorded a long time ago. Will you do more live sessions now that the album is finally finished? In that case, how would you approach it?

Probably not, unless some great occasion comes up, some special place that would make sense to perform in. It is hard to know whether to tamper with the past or just let it be what it was. As far as I remember we only played live twice with Juv.

Will you collaborate in the future?

Apart from Juv, probably not, as we are doing very different work in different fields. But who knows? I like keeping things open ended. Anyways, there is probably at least one more album of Juv to come, given all the music that did not make it on to this record. So we will collaborate on that for sure, when the time is right.



First concert flyer



Are & Marius portrait in Lofoten, Norway 1998