



The musician opens the main stage on Amphi Sunday, seemingly modest. He expresses his gratitude to the audience who have already made their way to the Tanzbrunnen for this first show of the morning: Jay Taylor is the charismatic mastermind behind j:dead. The musician, who has previously played in bands such as Tyske Ludder and Tactical Sekt, is now performing as a solo artist with j:dead. The current series of singles is structured around an annual cycle – eight of the twelve are still to come. Anyone who has already experienced j:dead live knows that it will be a journey that will resonate long after.

The musical development of j:dead

Jay's fascination with music began when he was given a guitar as a teenager. He was already playing in bands at college; he always saw himself as a 'goth metalhead', but was equally enthusiastic about dance music such as trance. When he was approached by a band for his first collaboration, this sealed his path as a musician – his first paid gig soon followed with Tactical Sekt, whilst at the same time Jay was the vocalist for a British metal band.

The journey continued with various bands and numerous live gigs, including with Tyske Ludder. The enjoyment of supporting other bands has remained to this day. At the same time, the desire to start his own project grew. This led to the idea for j:dead in 2017, and the first single, 'Haunt', was released in December 2019. Subsequent releases appeared on the Infacted Records label.

Twelve months – twelve songs

With their first single, 'Pressure', j:dead kicked off a series of singles planned to run for a year. So far, the following tracks have been released:

'Disgusting', 'Who Knows' and 'Feeling Alone'. At first glance, the artwork – deliberately rendered in shades of grey and designed by Dokodema (Nils van Hoeckel) – is captivating. It follows a clear aesthetic narrative and brings the songs' thematic focus to the fore.

The song 'Disgusting', for instance, explores perspectives and the question of how one recognises oneself in the mirror of one's thoughts. The artwork depicts a bare eye, over which bars in various shades of grey are superimposed. One's own self may be reflected in all these bars, along with the idea that this self is also lying to itself: "There's a mirror in my way, I'm pretending I'm ok." This core line alone encapsulates the essence of j:dead's tracks: emotions.

The current project explores powerful emotions: it's about seizing the moment and, with it, the emotions. The creative process took place in isolation. The songs came about as Jay focused on capturing moments of emotional intensity and translating them into sound and lyrics. The melodies and inspiration draw on his own musical journey. A key aspect is that heavy basslines and the softness of the melodies create contrasts, thereby forming a whole.

The fact that there will be exactly twelve songs is also due to the current music landscape: regularity is in demand, and so twelve emotions and ideas form an odyssey that unfolds month by month. Listeners can look forward to seeing where it will lead them.

"It's always a significant moment when songs are released. Putting the tracks out on the platforms means that the moment of relief and completion is also preceded by the fear of the reactions."

An intense stage presence

You simply have to experience j:dead live – that much is clear. "I just love being on stage, entertaining people and stepping into the role that the music gives me." Jay shares his love of live performance with his friends; his line-up consists of Hiler Tintel (bass/guitar), Andreas Schmitz (drums), and Matt Dunne (guitar). This bond is evident in their performance; the frontman's energy is transmitted to the band members as well as the audience.

They've already played at festivals such as the Amphi in Cologne and the Wave-Gotik-Treffen. Shows in the UK are usually smaller, so it's harder to put on a concert without losing out. Jay regrets that the music industry is, in some respects, heavily geared towards a competitive society. New festivals are struggling to survive.

Jay notes: "It's important that the people who come to a concert get the entertainment they're looking for. Live shows feel just as energetic as they did in the old days." Even a serious injury hasn't stopped the musician from returning to the stage today, full of enthusiasm after a break.

A vision in music

When asked about his creative process, Jay says: "The music comes from within me, but I often only realise much later what lies beneath it. But what the listeners make of it is far more important than my intention." When listening, it quickly becomes clear just how haunting the tracks are. One of Jay's influences is Nine Inch Nails, whom he admires not only for their ability to combine different moods, but also for their intensity.

j:dead blends influences from the 90s such as The Prodigy, 80s synth-pop like Depeche Mode, and elements of shoegaze. An aggressive bassline meets a melancholic undertone – the result is a work full of power. For Jay, music is an expression of what emotions mean, and the most direct access to his inner self. It can do something for the listener, cheering them up or reflecting their own melancholy. “What’s fascinating is that this influence is often unexpected. Ultimately, music can achieve many things that words alone cannot.”

Far from tired

The band’s name is a play on the English word ‘jaded’: being deep in thought, but also exhausted. Yet there is no sign of tiredness in his performance or his songs; not all artists are able to maintain such high energy levels throughout an entire concert as Jay does. He explains: “I’ve reached a point in my life where I’ve realised that I’m not tired, but I’ve lost my patience for things that shouldn’t be so difficult in our society.”

Kindness and the ability to connect with the audience are far more important to Jay than technical skills. The latter can be learnt, whilst connection and humanity are something you either have within you – or you don’t. Entering the music business and making a name for yourself is a soulless journey undertaken alone: no matter how good or bad you are, a wide-reaching network is also helpful.

There is no doubt that j:dead has created a body of work that is compelling and conveys a high intensity. Live, the band is a firework display of emotions, approachable yet untameable – a band, in any case, whose spell one cannot escape, nor should one.