

**Zu**

**- Kvlt is not a magazine in which we go after some sort of drama. But I would like to ask you what happened that in your last concert in Wrocław (29.06.2016) you performed as duo without Luca?**

Hello Kvlt. It's very simple and we said it from stage in the beginning of the set! Luca had a very high fever for some days and just couldn't play. He started again after a couple of days. Next time we'll play as a trio again.

**- You play concerts in Poland nearly every year. What do you like about our country?**

I don't really like to generalize about things like countries, it's just not really my favourite approach to things.

I know tho that I can relate to many things in Poland that makes it feel easy to tour, easier than other countries, including a deep and sincere interest in music. Plus a very strong cultural history and heritage, I would add.

**- Your last album Cortar Todo is completely different from Carboniferous. I would even say that not everyone can fully appreciate the direction that you head with your music, because it differs so much. While earlier material was in some aspects similar to Meshuggah, with new I would rather say darker version on Fire! with strong noise rock influence. What have led to this change in your sound?**

I don't think we ever remotely considered Meshuggah or Fire!

(or no one else for that matters) while writing an album. There's no way we'd purposely refer to other bands, this is not the way we approach Zu music at all.

Even if you mention 2 names we highly respect, we stopped having external references after our first album.

Zu has always been about the alchemy of its members. And as one member changes, it's like cooking a dish with 3 strong ingredients, you change one and the taste completely changes. It's the only way i can describe it to you.

**- I've heard that there is a strong concept being Cortat Todo– can you please share it with me and our readers?**

It's more or less a concept album about cutting ties and clearing the “memory cache” in one's history. It reflects in music. It was a strong moment for us, so the music that came to us had to be very cutting edge and sharp.

**- Your new drummer is Tomas Järmyr how did it happened that he is now a member of Zu?**

Tomas invited me to record an album with his duo Yodok and we immediately clicked and since the first time we played one note together it just made sense and felt natural that he could and would be involved with Zu .

**- Who comes to your concerts? Metalheads? Jazz fans? People who enjoy experimental music? Did your fanbase changed after your new record came out – which has a significant change in sound?**

I don't necessarily talk about music genres with people who

come to our concerts but i can surely tell you that Zu attracts maybe just a few people, but they seem to be the very interesting ones, and generally open to all kinds of music and arts and philosophies. In the last tour i spoke with some artists, a world-top mathematician and a former chess champion. Plus of course, there's the usual suspects who just come to check the pedalboards.

**- After a taking a break in Zu you travelled to Himalayas, and more recently to Amazonia. In that part of the interview I would like to ask you some questions about that experience. How did you came up with the idea of travelling there? That's not something that happen quite often.**

When we took a break i wanted to visit places that were just the opposite of the music circuit, and over all, live in places where my identity as musician wouldn't matter at all and I'd be considered solely as a human being and not as someone who has a special status simply because he plays an instrument. So I went to Himalayas for one year and then to the Amazons for another year and i keep going back there, it's just very healthy for my mind and soul.

**- How did those travels affected your life?**

Completely. To a degree that it'd take a very, very long conversation to discuss. I can just tell you that many things that seemed really important before that time, have been completely pulverized by this experience.

**- What did you learn during your stay in Himalayas and**

## **Amazonia?**

That life is much more than we normally think and we have been thought about. And to question everything.

**- Do you think that staying there for quite a long time did change you as a musician or made you redefine your view on music itself?**

Indeed. I can see the cages i locked myself in before, much more clearly. Which doesn't mean I'm out of them.

**- Do you think that if you didn't go here would you be right now in different place in your life? Would Zu be different?**

I have no idea but personally i wouldn't surely be where I am at, for good or for bad. As for Zu, i have no idea even if I'd be playing music at all, so i don't know if we'd be here now. I can only tell you when we went on a 2 years - long break, in the beginning i had seriously thought that I was quitting music completely and for good.

**- Do you think that there was any chance of Zu functioning as a band without taking a break or was it inevitable?**

It was inevitable, after 12 years of constant touring and our first drummer leaving, we tried to keep on going for a few months but soon realised that a period off was highly due, to recover and be able eventually to find the right motivation and enthusiasm and right spirit once more. Productivity is a protestant ethic thing that became so huge in anglo saxon

culture and now it's just accepted worldwide, but playing more gigs and releasing many albums is not necessarily a good thing, would be best to release one single great thing than 50 useless ones, no?

**- Let's take a step back – how did it happen that you started playing and writing music that by many is called as a jazz version of Meshuggah (I think that mainly because of sax and rhythm)?**

As much as i can appreciate Meshuggah, there is really nothing in common in the way we approach rhythm. Zu is just the music that has come naturally to us. We are not “trying” to be strange, that would just be pathetic.

We use a saxophone but there is no swing or jazz in our music. There is indeed, a very strange groove. I think music should be left alone and not necessarily confronted and pigeonholed in genres and comparisons.

**- That question (the same as next one) can be seen as a bit rude. I am curious if at the beginning of Zu you were interested in such sounds because you found them appealing or did you play difficult and complex songs just to show-off and made others see that you master your instruments?**

Let me set this very straight. Me and Luca never felt like virtuosos- nor wanna be for god's sake! I have many problems with the concept of virtuoso itself and the focus going on dexterity instead of focusing on the important things that is the ideas and visions one puts in the music. If you have

nothing to say you can be the most technical instrumentalist in the world and still your music will say absolutely nothing. In our Zu history we have always fished for ideas and never for technicality. It's not even remotely appealing to us. In fact the whole western music has gone so much in this idea of showing off what one can play or can write that it lost the most important thing, thus becoming a cult of personality which is purely a western world sickness, if you ask me.

I feel that if our music sounds complicated is just because we try to express the complexity of human soul.

We are beings made of many layers and we need many layers to express it in an art. Let me explain this because is something i care for. It's like, one day, you're in love, but you're also angry at the same time. Very simply, many things at the time, humans are deep and complex and our music is reflecting that, as much as we're able to.

**- Have you ever thought that due to the break after Carboniferous you kinda lost your chance for success and being widely recognised? Back then this album was something fresh and even still many people love it. However now you don't release something in style of "Carboniferous 2", but you head in different direction. Do you think that you have lost your opportunity or it just doesn't matter?**

God forbid that we even think about success in that sense. That is just not our ethics and it's something that its worldly accepted, but should be highly questioned by intelligent

individuals. We're not in this for commercial success. We feel already very lucky to be where we are. The whole concept of "making it big time" and of "career" in my mind is a poison that sooner or later will eat alive the person who carries it. Personally i highly prefer to be able to explore all the unknown territories and keep life and music interesting and adventurous. Success is a trap, unless it's your own definition of it , and my own definition of success is living doing what i love and being able to choose the people i want to work and spend my time with. If you think success is playing in arenas, you're just trusting the mainstream narrative and way of thinking. All of that, while thinking you're such an alternative guy.

Carboniferous was an album which had his reason of being in that moment in time, and it's still fun to play some of these songs live, but there's really no need to write a chapter 2. It's more interesting to take risks, and evolve.

**- How did you come up with the name of the band?**

**Besides in order to mislead journalists who want to read something about you and Google finds them stuff in German.**

It comes from a Swans bootleg called "Die Tür Ist Zu". Going to a Swans gig in 1997 and buying the cd.

**- Personally I am not a fan of questions about inspirations because many people understand it as "name a list of bands that you listen to a lot". So I prefer a question – what inspire you, as a band, beside things associated with**

**music?**

So many things. Personally ( Massimo ) i can say, tibetan Vajrayana teachings, and amazonian shamanism. Plus, Giordano Bruno, Gnostic scriptures, and Philip K. Dick. And always, the music of Coil and Arvo Pärt.

**- Time for a quite philosophical question – what do you think is the role or the purpose of music? Because I have a sense that in your case it won't be reduced to just an “entertainment”.**

Music has been around for hundreds of thousands of years, and only in the last 50 to 100 years, has become pure “entertainment”. If you look at history, the first traces of music are in ritual and ceremonial settings. Thus in our eyes music is sacred and it has the possibilities of reaching deep, changing human consciousness and perception.

**- You have already released a few collaborative albums in a past– what do you like in working with other artists?**

Well, you learn, you evolve, you pass on something and something is passed to you. I don't understand why the collaboration thing still looks so strange, it has been going on forever out of the rock world, which again is a highly identitarian and “cult of personality” environment. A rock band has to stay the same, but for me it's much more interesting to write in 2 people for one record and have 17 guests on the next one. If you feel that playing with someone can make you explore new rooms and find new things, why not do it, and what is so strange with it?

**- Are there any artists that you dream of collaborating with?**

We never have a “dream” collaboration, they just happen, we meet a musician, we become friends, we play together. The key word here is “play”. If you lose playfulness of this whole thing, might as well do the lawyer.

**- In one of the interviews you mentioned a session with David Tibet recorded as project Zu93. Can we expect a release of that material in a near future?**

Yes, it will hopefully come out on the label House Of Mythology by the end of 2016 .

**- Finally a standard question – what are your music plans for the future?**

We’re about to finish a new album made of 2 very long tracks and with a lot of orchestration and very unusual instruments, such as Hurdy-Gurdys , Japanese Koto, Tuba, Flugabone, guitars, cellos and Gregorian Chant.

Plus we’re also finishing 2 tracks for a split album with Author & Punisher to be released on Subsound rec.

Many more ideas appearing on the horizon, but these are the ones who are really at work on at the moment.