

From mxd.dk: An interview with Jonas Vebner, the project manager of Ja Ja Ja in Berlin

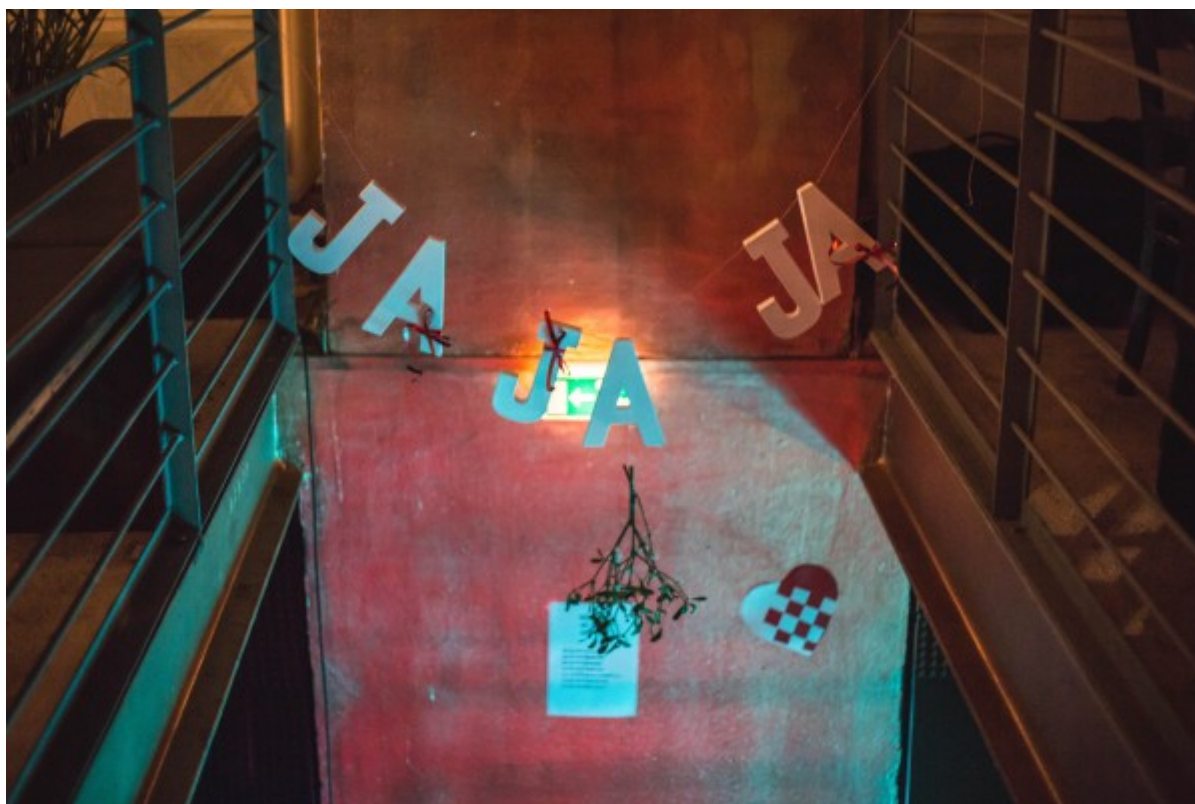


Photo: Susanne Erler

For people involved in international music industry and music export it shouldn't come as a surprise - the Nordic showcase platform **Ja Ja Ja** is a success-story. The club nights, which started in London in 2009, have proved to be the international launching platform for numerous artists, and for the past two years the concept has been celebrated with a full-scale Ja Ja Ja-festival in London, hosting names like **Emiliana Torrini, The Raveonettes** and **LCMDF**. Since the non-profit club night's launch in 2009, more than 120 artists have travelled to the UK to perform at more than 35 Ja Ja Ja shows, including **MØ, When Saints Go Machine, Truls, Niki and the Dove, Katzenjammer, Rangleklods, Reptile Youth, Ólöf Arnalds** and **Jaakko Eino Kalevi**. For many, this has been their first ever London show and played an important role in accelerating their international carrier. The Ja Ja Ja club night premiered in Berlin last September and leaves no doubts about what the Germans think of Nordic music.

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Jonas Vebner, Music Norway

Ja Ja Ja was one of the first joint projects between the Nordic music export offices, under the collaboration: [Nordic Music Export \(NOMEX\)](#). Some of the driving forces in the beginning of Ja Ja Ja Club Night were Music Norway, who stationed **Jonas Vebner** in London, and **Anna Hildur** who later became the director of NOMEX. About two years ago Jonas Vebner was stationed in Berlin by Music Norway, which presented an ideal opportunity for NOMEX to start up the project in Berlin. We met with Jonas in [Music Norway](#)'s Central European office on Pfulstraße in Berlin, five floors above [FluxBau](#), the Ja Ja Ja venue, and sat down to have a chat about the first four months of Ja Ja Ja Berlin.

“I'm chuffed to say we've had a fantastic start so far! Thanks to a terrific team, booking group and some very strong line-ups we've managed to sell out every night so far firmly establishing the brand Ja Ja Ja in short amount of time” says Jonas. “Our local promoter [Konzertbüro Schöneberg](#) have done an excellent job in helping us set this up. We were also lucky to be able to introduce the nights with a big bang through our grand launch party at the Nordic embassies, an event which pulled over 800 people. It was apparently the one

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of biggest event the embassies had ever hosted at their space. A fantastic start to the season and a lovely night where we could give the audience, industry professionals and media a preview of our Nordic universe of sensational sounds, sights and tastes.”

According to Jonas, launching Ja Ja Ja in Berlin went quicker than in London. “The German market has always been very receptive to Nordic music. It’s a hot brand, no doubt about it. We benefit from a lot of people who’ve been laying down some great groundwork with various Nordic concepts. Its also fair to say we have a bit more experience under our belt since our very first virgin steps as a promoter back in London in 2009. We also have to remember that London is also a bigger city that boasts a very strong domestic music scene. There is a lot of competition every night. We’ve benefitted from some really great media coverage from the get-go s - from key broadsheets like [Die Zeit](#) and [Süd-Deutsche](#), to music magazines like Intro and [MusikExpress](#) and tastemaker blogs like [Mit Vergnügen](#) and [Kaltblut](#). Not to mentioned the strong support we have from our regular mediapartners [FluxFM](#) and [Nothing But Hope and Passion](#) With three very successful nights to look back on, the spring is already booked. Booking the autumn shows is up next, as well as planning for the next season launch, when Jonas hopes to repeat the success of the launch party with a similar styled event.”

The Ja Ja Ja concept and club nights are well known, as is the application process. But how do you benefit the most from it as an artist, and why should you apply?

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Finland's Noah Kin and his crowd at Ja Ja Ja Berlin Photo: Susanne Erler

“There are a lot of benefits, but different ones for every artist of course. It depends on where you are in your career and where you want to get. Ja Ja Ja can be a platform for getting you to the next level. It is a very effective arena to showcase to prospective partners. The night draws down a regular crowd of key industry professionals. If you already have your team in place it can be an excellent introduction to the German market and to play for your team and let them use the opportunity to invite their partners and media. We always send a post-event report right after the show with a scan of the ticket guestlist so you can see who actually showed up and make sure to follow up hot leads.

“But let's not forget the fans, Ja Ja Ja has in a short time managed to build up a strong base of loyal Nordic music lovers through our membership scheme. These are the fans that will make sure to spread the love about how amazing your last concert was.” Remember to also check out a this full list of reasons [why to play Ja Ja Ja](#).

A new thing for Berlin is the **Music & Media Afterwork**, which is held prior to each



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clubnight.

“It’s what the Germans call a Stammtisch, or a meet&greet for German music and media industry” says Jonas. “It’s been very popular and we’ve had 100 to 150 people come over every time. We felt that Berlin lacked a regular and casual get-together for industry professionals and media. We offer up some tasty soup , free beer and world-class coffee from Tim Wendelbloo. In addition to this, everyone will automatically be on the list for the club night and most people seem to want to stay for this. This obviously helps with the B2B-promotion of the night. Stammtisch is an invitation only event. If you happen to be in Berlin and want to partake, send an e-mail to **[berlin@musicnorway.com](mailto:berlin@musicnorway.com)**.



Norway’s Truls live at Ja Ja Ja Berlin @ FluxBau Photo: Susanne Erler

Playing for the right people and collecting possible leads is great, but there’s more to playing Ja Ja Ja than plain business.

“You’re guaranteed to get great media coverage. We’ve got our own [Ja Ja Ja blog](#) and some

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really great media partners. FluxFM lends us their nice venue situated on the river Spree and promotes each night through their various channels. From radio trailers to social media. They also often interviews with the artists live in studio and have been known to give airplay to several of the acts playing. Nothing but Hope and Passion is a fine online publication that pushes Ja Ja Ja nights and artist on the world wide web. In addition to this we have the fine people from [Nordic by Nature](#) doing PR for us reaching out to all the relevant media.”

Jonas also gives three tips to artists planning to take on Germany, especially through using the Ja Ja Ja platform.

“Ja Ja Ja is an arena for export ready acts which means you should have a proper team in place, domestically and ideally also a couple of people already working with you in Germany/international. Do your research and make sure to invite down the professionals that are lacking in your set-up long in advance.

“Secondly, put the showcase resources to good use! There’s a great PR team in Nordic by Nature that can work up some press, but in order to do that they need to be fed with relevant content on time. And last, and this is a bit more general about targeting the German market, be patient and reserve time and resources.

“We are all quite used to hearing how open Germany is to Nordic music, but don’t take too lightly on the task: it’s the biggest economy in Europe, with over 83 million people. The country is split up into 16 states which all have their own media structure. Print is still very important. Physical sales are still prominent and streaming services like Spotify are still almost a niche. This affects how you do your promo and the lead times you need to set up. Breaking in Germany takes time and effort but you also enjoy the benefit of having accessed a very loyal fanbase.”