



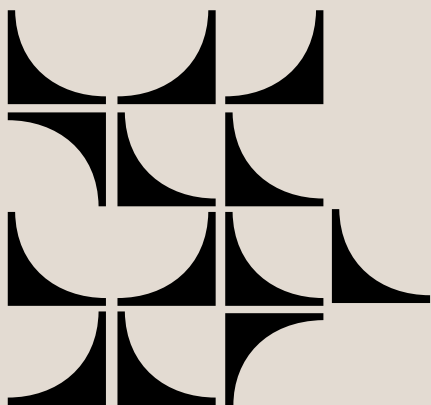
JUNIOR



JACK

2021 BEGINS AND, AT DJ MAG SPAIN, WE WANTED TO BRING AN ARTIST WHO REPRESENTS THE BEST OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. IT IS NONE OTHER THAN THE GREAT VITO LUCENTE, THE REAL NAME OF ONE OF THE MOST REVERED ARTISTS IN HOUSE MUSIC: JUNIOR JACK.

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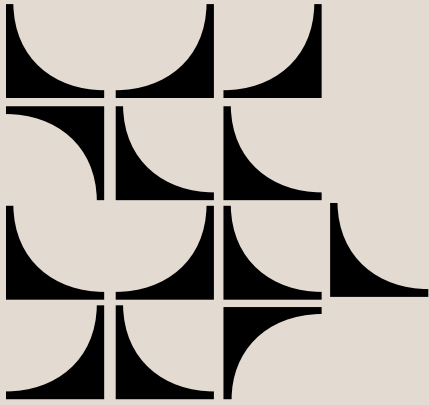


Always Looking To The Future

JUNIOR JACK IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH BIG HITS AS THE ICONIC 'STUPIDISCO' OR 'E-SAMBA', 'MY FEELING' OR MORE RECENTLY 'KLIMAX' OR 'TECKY DREAM' ON HIS LABEL, ADESSO MUSIC, WHICH HE CO-OWNS AND RUNS WITH HIS FRIEND AND BUSINESS PARTNER PAT BDS.

BUT WHAT IS TRULY FASCINATING IS HIS PERSPECTIVE INTO THE FUTURE. PASSIONATE ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, VIRTUAL REALITY AND AVATARS, JUNIOR DECIDED TO FOCUS PART OF HIS CAREER ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THESE NEW REALITIES A FEW YEARS AGO, GIVEN HIS FASCINATION WITH THESE TOPICS. THIS HAS LED HIM TO DEVELOP A VIRTUAL REALITY ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMISES TO TOTALLY REVOLUTIONIZE THE MUSIC SCENE AND HOW IT INTEGRATES WITH VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS, ACHIEVING REAL INTERACTION BETWEEN HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE AT THE SAME TIME. SOMETHING THAT, UNTIL NOW, WE HAVE ONLY SEEN IN VIDEO GAMES AND NEVER ON A SCALE LIKE THE ONE PROPOSED BY JUNIOR JACK.

SO WE SAT DOWN WITH VITO FOR THIS JANUARY COVER TO TELL US MORE ABOUT HIS PAST, HIS PRESENT AND OUR FUTURE. THUS, WE WILL EXPLORE WITH A PRIVILEGED PERSPECTIVE, THE PROLIFIC CAREER OF ONE OF THE MOST LOVED, LISTENED TO AND COVERED ARTISTS OF HOUSE. ALWAYS LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, WE LET THE TEACHER, JUNIOR JACK, PUT THE MUSIC...



Hi Vito! It's a real honor to have you on our first cover of 2021. How did 2020 end for you?

Thank you for having me on your cover! Well, 2020 was a disaster, as for everyone. I've been working a lot at home, not being able to play, so I hope that throughout 2021 we can go, little by little, returning to a certain normality. I think it is going to be a year full of news and very busy for me, and for now we are resisting and holding on. I know that in Spain things are not too good either with the cultural sector, as is the case in much of Europe ...

You are one of the most revered house music artists on the scene. You were born in Italy (Rutigliano, in Bari, in 1971), you grew up in Belgium... Tell us, how was it for you to grow up, musically, between both places?

Exactly. I would say that it affected me a lot, because I lived in a very small town in Italy, where there were no clubs or festivals. When I left Italy I was 15 years old, I didn't even have a driving license, so I couldn't experience anything from the scene either. All my education on what it's like to go to a concert, live music, festivals or clubs came from when I was already living in Belgium. When I arrived, like many immigrants, I didn't have many friends, I didn't speak French at first, and I was a bit lonely. At that time I started playing with computers and synthesizers,

and I started making music. I don't think I would have started making music if I continued living in Italy, because when you emigrate the future you could have totally changes. From my time in Italy I had no history with music, I was too young.

Who were your first influences? How was that first contact with electronic music?

You're probably going to laugh, but it was this 80s-90s synth-pop band called A-Ha. It was the first live concert I went to when I was already in Belgium, maybe I was 15 or 16 years old. It was the first time I saw myself in a room, surrounded by a lot of people... and A-Ha were very big at that time. I think it was that night that my head clicked, because for me it had a great impact, and I told myself this is what I want to do, I want to be one of those guys on stage. After that, I developed my connection to house further.

After that, how did you get into producing?

Things came naturally. Especially thanks to my older brother, who sadly passed away. At that time he was my only friend, because I still didn't speak French. After going to the concert, I told him about my desire to start making music, to get into that world. We do not come from a family with money, so my parents could not afford to buy me gear, but my brother was already working (he was 7 years older than me) and he was so annoyed with me bringing up the subject that he ended up buying me my first synthesizer and a drum machine (laughs). From then on, every night I used my headphones to produce. My brother told me: "Go to sleep, you have school tomorrow" (Laughter). And I remember telling him: "Someday I'm going to be a producer and I'm going to make great records." And he would tell me: "Okay, go to sleep" (Laughter). He died before I made my first album. That affected me a lot, I closed myself off and because of the promise I made to him, I took everything very seriously. That was the force that pushed me to do what I do.

In the late 90s-early 2000s, you dominated the house scene with several releases that are now legendary tracks. How was that time for you, of the first hits?

It was a very different time than today, but the truth is the only great change that success brought for me was on a financial level. This happened long before I started using my aliases and touring the world. It was the time when I had great success with a Belgian rap band, who sang in French, called Benny B. This was when I was 16 years old, I even had to stop studying (which was not legal [laughs]). That put me in a very good economic situation, in which I could even buy a house, move, buy more devices, build my studio ... Then I fell in love with house and that made me go on my own, at the age of 17, to visit New York, just to buy some records. I loved the music, but at that time there was no internet and doing my research, reading magazines, they all talked about New York. Also records were difficult to find in Europe. I didn't even speak English! (Laughs) From there I started working non-stop to be able to emulate that sound that I liked so much and I think I was so focused that



I didn't even see success coming. On a financial level yes, because to a certain extent it changed my life, even being able to buy a house for my parents. Time has passed, now I'm 49 and I assure you that I didn't see that coming either (laughs).

And as a DJ? When did it start?

This came much later. Thanks to that I started travelling. I refused to DJ for a long time and turned down great offers, because I didn't consider myself a DJ. I was a producer! I had so many requests that I finally said, "Well, I will have to learn how to DJ" (laughs). At first I did a kind of duo with a Belgian DJ, from an Italian family, called Kid Crème. He is a great friend and collector of 12". I had a great collection and whenever he came to my house he freaked out with my records, he wondered how I didn't play them or anything. At the end we talked and agreed that he was going to do the technical part and I was going to make the selection for him, to pass him the records that he had to put on. And we teamed up that way. Then, quickly, he taught me the technical part of DJing, and little by little I learned how to do it.

Then there was a short hiatus in your career releasing music, between 2008 and 2017. Almost 10 years with-

out releasing music (even though you were continuing your career as a DJ)! Why was this? What were you doing?

Yes, I kept DJing and travelling a lot. However, that was the time when this electro / EDM sound blew up so hard. Honestly, it's a style that never appealed to me, I never had feeling with that stuff and I felt that it wasn't my music. I felt like I was getting lost and that I had nothing to say. That's why I said to myself: "Vito, if you don't have anything to say with your music, it's better to keep quiet". I will say something when I feel I need to say it, but with the music that is going on now, it is better not to say anything. Don't get me wrong, I never stopped producing, I just stopped releasing music. I never stopped going to the studio. Also, the music I was making was not the music the labels were looking for. During that time I did a lot of stuff, different projects, but I didn't publish anything.

In 2017 you came back, with 'Wonder ft. Milla Brune' at PIAS and in 2019 you launched your own label, Adesso Music. How did this come about?

Around that time, when I started releasing records again, I created a new company, for other projects, and I met my current partner. Those projects are very interesting virtual reality projects... but back to the topic, this partner is ac-



tually my production partner on my latest Adesso releases, his name is Pat BDS. He is a music passionate, he even has several studios, but he had never published. It was a hobby for him and he knew me from my releases. We became friends and started making tracks together and when we had several, I decided not to go looking for labels to publish us, but to start our own label to release our music.

Precisely, until now we have seen you publish them with Pat BDS, in addition to remixes from Audiojack, Alex 47, Patrice Bäumel and Darius Syrossian; plus remixes of 'E-Samba' by The Cube Guys and Kevin McKay, released on Glasgow Underground. There is a lot of upcoming talent. What is the line and philosophy of the label?

As always, I don't like to label the music. I like electronic music, and like everyone there are things within electronic music that I don't like, but I try to be as eclectic as possible. Also in my sets, where I don't like to distinguish between genres: I can play techno, electro, house with more or less vocals... I want the same for the label. With the initial releases, many people thought it was a dark, techy or progressive label, but that's not the case. One cannot judge a label by its first two releases. When you have 20 or 50, then you can talk about the sound of the label. Right now we're

just putting out artists that we like, the sound that we like, and we don't have just one direction we want to go.

What do you do to find new talents?

We have an office in London with Geoff Muncey, who works for the label. After putting out a couple of releases, where young artists see that unknown people are given the opportunity, the demos started to arrive. In fact, we've already signed a very interesting French DJ living in Thailand, Virak, and also a Chicago duo called DOWNLow (US). Things that we receive, we like and we release. Sometimes you receive things that have potential but the sound is not correct, basically due to lack of experience. So we try to give feedback or help them so that they can continue to grow, and help the project. When I get involved that makes these young kids very happy, because they feel that support. I try to share my knowledge. It's something that I would have loved to have when I started, to have a more experienced producer help me polish my tracks (laughs). They dream about releasing a great hit, travelling the world ... they look at me with admiration and I try to make it clear that I am a normal guy, that is there to help them.

You are about to re-release 'Hold Me Up ft. Jocelyn Brown 'on Defected, with new remixes from Riva Starr,



Ferreck Dawn and Michael Gray. You have a very long and beautiful history with the label, how did it all start?

It all started on a trip to London, a long time ago. I wanted to give them some demos and nobody answered me. It was the time when you had to send them by post (laughs). Then they contacted me because they wanted to release 'My Feeling', the first album I put out as Junior Jack, which came out on PIAS UK. We had great success with him and we were on every dance chart, but that didn't translate to sales. A year later, Defected wanted to re-release the album, after the release of PIAS, and we did it and it was a success. Then we did 'E-Samba' and then I was at the beginning when they started their residency in Ibiza. I watched Defected grow into the monster that it is today. It is something that I appreciate a lot, they are like a family to me, as for example with Simon (Dunmore), whom I have known for more than 20 years now... I have seen the birth of all his children (laughs). They are as family to me.

One of your biggest and most iconic hits is undoubtedly 'Stupidisco', which we have all danced, heard and seen covered over and over again. It is now about to be re-released with new remixes on Tinted / Central Station...

True. A curious thing is that all the tracks on my 2004 album have been re-released with remixes. The only one missing was 'Stupidisco', because I have to be honest with you: it's my least favorite track (laughs). It has been played so much and it had such a commercial success that I was sick of hearing it (laughs). It was my most popular track. It's interesting, because the new generations that didn't hear 'Stupidisco' on the dance floor are going to be able to hear it now with the re-release and remixes that are coming. That is sure to give it a second life. And I just thought of David Penn, one of your house heroes in Spain, to do one of the versions. He did a great job, with his classic sound, and I think it has a lot of potential. And beside David Penn's, there are also remixes by Jolyon Petch and Storken.

You have also made the leap to Armada Music with the track 'Another Thrill (Like This)'. How is your creative process and how has it changed over the years?

It has changed with technology. The production and creation process in the past was hell (laughs), you couldn't play anything, you had to do it all at once and not stop until the track was finished. Now you can work with 100 elements at the same time and nothing happens, hit save, open another project and everything without any hassle. Nowadays it is easier, but at the same time we lose more in the process, because so much can be done! And that ends up giving you too many options and that kills creativity a bit. Since we do everything with computers, I have maybe 800 projects on my computer. I don't know which one to choose anymore! At the time, you started with a track and didn't stop until it was finished. The process has technically changed but my musical perspective has not. I let everything flow.

We recently saw the video of your track 'Klimax' with Pat BDS. It's hard to describe as it mixes futurism and spaceships with organic concepts like the bloodstream, strands of DNA breaking, white and red blood cells. We know that the video you made for 'Tecky Dream', which comes out on January 22, is also going in that direction... Where did this idea come from?

The idea came from the director. We sent the music to various directors and each one came with their own storyboard. We did this in the middle of lockdown, many of the ideas revolved around COVID-19 and I found them a bit depressing. In the end this idea came up, with me and Pat BDS as pilots of that ship. The idea that also fits very well was to do it in 3D, because not being able to travel made everything easier.

Speaking about that futuristic and technological concept... you have been developing a concept of virtual reality with your label, Adesso VR for a few years. I understand that you seek to integrate music / night / party in a virtual environment. What can you tell us?

I have been getting into the world of virtual reality for about 15 years. It is something that fascinates me and that



I have become quite geek about. Not that I'm a gamer or anything, but I'm fascinated by the way these things are done. I like the technical aspect of this evolution in the image and its processing. So I started this VR project about five years ago, when I realized that the new generations were going to be connected through these technologies. And it was immediately clear in my head that there had to be a club in these new environments. A real, virtual club, where all those gamers who could not physically travel could meet other people in those places. That's how it all started, I even got to do the 3D modeling myself ...

So you learned how to do everything?

Yes! I had to learn to code and made the avatars myself. In the end I was able to do something that worked, you felt like you entered the club with your avatar... it is an innovative concept. After that, I started talking to my partner at Adesso, Pat BDS, to incorporate that concept into the label and develop it. And when we were close to finishing the development, COVID came! And then everyone started talking about virtual this, virtual that ... That made us want to work much more on the project, because all those who call their products "virtual reality" are selling smoke. It is not virtual reality. It's just someone DJing or doing a live set, in front of a camera, with a green screen background. For me, that is not virtual reality, there is no connection, because the artist is alone, performing in front of a screen for people who are alone in their house. For me, virtual reality integrates everyone, it is something completely different.

And how is your project going? What is the status?

A few days ago we did one of the pilot tests and we broke the world record! We are very happy. We managed to bring together 500 people at the same time, in the same real virtual environment, in 3D, simultaneously interacting. They could talk to each other, walk around the place, in a real environment. And it was the first time that so many people were brought together at the same time. Many have tried, especially since COVID, but no one has managed to match the technical aspect or the number of people: maximum 60 or 70 people have been seen. The servers are not prepared to hold more than 100 people connected.

But what about the great games that have offered in-game concerts?

In the case of games like Fortnite or Call Of Duty: Warzone, each battle only brings together 100 or 150 people, maximum. And even if they have 300 thousand people playing at the same time, it is on hundreds of thousands of servers, like mirrors, spread around the world. This happens because, on a technical level, it is very complicated. We have worked very hard and managed to gather 500 people in a stable way. Soon we will do a new test, to solve some glitches and problems we had, to adjust them. I hope that

by mid-2021 we can offer this platform for our own events and for others.

Will it be only for computers? Or also for consoles?

Initially, we are doing it only for computers, with the aim of being able to offer it also for iPads, tablets and smartphones. The part of other platforms different from the computer will have to be, initially, as a streaming service or through a server in the cloud, which makes the rendering on the device that you have, because the graphic cards of mobile devices are of lower quality than those that a computer has. At least with the phones and tablets that currently exist on the market.

I imagine that in a few years things will change...

So do we! For virtual experiences it is very important that the graphic quality of the devices improves to reach the new generations. We are forced to work on tablets and smartphones because it is what young people use to consume their content. Perhaps in 20 years, the current technology will be a joke and Call Of Duty would be played from a mobile phone with the same graphic quality as an 8K television from 2021 (laughs). But for the moment, it is what it is ...

Avatars are the future ...

Totally. The new generations have a very close connection with their online avatars. Their avatar is almost a part of themselves, to the point of being pissed off if you mess with them. I truly believe that the next generation will be able to interact in an almost totally virtual world. Because now a device like the Oculus Rift is big, heavy, it has too many cables, it costs a lot, you need to have a super powerful graphic card and after a while it makes you dizzy. But all companies like Sony or Samsung are investing billions and working on developing more portable and usable formats. That's because they know this is the future. I really believe that in the near future Virtual Reality will be everywhere.

Your connection with the world of technology does not stop here. You are also developing a new plugin for production, right?

It's a magic tool (laughs)! In 25 or 30 years producing, I have had many things that have frustrated me in the studio. Many times, when you need to do something, you have to use three different software to get something done, going from one to the other all the time, wasting valuable time. My question is always: why can't I do this directly? So I put all my frustrations in coding and during the period that I stopped releasing music, which we talked about earlier, I started studying and preparing to create my own music plugin, to create the software that would solve all my problems in the studio. And it works! After three years of hard work, a lot of money and human resources, I have managed to work with it. It works, but it looks awful. Now



we are working on making the user interface more intuitive and beautiful, but the code is perfect. It is a totally new plugin for the production process, which will help people who do not have years of experience in the world of music creation, to have a professional sound. It's kind of a sampler, but super sonic (laughs). It has functionalities that have not been seen until now and dedicated to electronic music. It can also be integrated with all existing production software.

Coming to the end of this amazing conversation, we have heard that you are working on remixes for Low Steppa and a couple of other great artists. What other projects do you have for 2021?

We will continue to sign new artists on the label, we will have the re-releases on Defected, we will do playlists, charts, more interviews... We must support the releases! Also the release on Armada; in addition to the contract I just signed with Spinnin ' ; the plugin will also eventually come out; the VR platform ... I'm not going to stop! (Laughs)

Thank you very much for your time, Vito! We wish you the best this 2021!

Thank you very much! It has been a pleasure!

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