Jack-of-all-trades Ketil Vestrum Einarsen on his numerous projects



»Prog is actually unpretentious in its pretentiousness«

The name „Weserbergland“ and the album title “Sehr Kosmisch Ganz Progisch“ made curious. Communication with the man behind this project started very quickly and turned out to be substantial. And it became obvious how wide his influence is – see below.

Zur deutschen Übersetzung des Interviews
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Would you please provide some key information on WESERBERGLAND?
Is it a band or a short-time project?

The album “Sehr Kosmisch Ganz Progisch” took nine years to write and record (not full time, of course, but I did spend a lot of time, especially in the writing process). I would probably call it a long time project, as we do try to challenge the whole idea of what a band is, and not a band. And we are working on new material. …

Why this funny project name and these funny song titles?

The whole project was born out of my love of Krautrock. To be more precise, it´s more than just Krautrock. I am indeed a lover of all German things. From wine to literature and art to the beautiful landscapes and towns and cities. I love it.
The titles on the album were working titles. I intended to change them, as they are indeed rather silly (see e.g. Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde). But then I just thought, who cares? It is what it is. It is an album where I interpret some aspects of German culture from an outsider´s point of view. And also, I saw that there were some German metal bands with Norwegian names. I found that both very amusing and also very interesting. What is it about Norway that makes German metalheads want to be a part of what we have? Do they have a very exotic and/or slightly wrong view of what Norway is? Am I the reverse Norway loving German metal head? Do I have ideas of Germany that are exotic and somewhat slightly wrong? Maybe – but within that "maybe" lies the potential for interesting art, I think. Lost in translation can be a very good thing, so can looking in from the outside be.

The titles themselves reflect the process of each song. 'Tanzen und Springen' has nothing to do with Hans Leo Hasslers piece of music directly, but I was inspired by renaissance compositional techniques in the latter part of the piece. On the 'Trinklied', I was inspired by the huge emotional register late era romantic German composers used (like *Mahler* – and I stole the title from him). The Fugue is not a fugue, but it contains a canon, so it's in the ballpark of a fugue at least. 'Tristrant' is named because I wanted to make a song with a simpler form than the other forms, and 'Tristrant' was the working title because it´s a well- known medieval ballad. And those ballads have, of course, simpler form structures than what you´ll see in later music.
Yes, I know – this is probably very, very pretentious. But that´s what I love about prog. Prog is actually unpretentious

in its pretentiousness. It´s a liberating genre for me, I can do what I want, no matter how small or big the idea is.

The name Weserbergland is a homage to a small place with a significant role in the development of Krautrock (Harmonia lived in Weserbergland at one point, and their pastoral kraut is just some of the most beautiful art to ever come out of Germany). And when I was looking for a band name I just loved the idea of having a name like Chicago, Europe et cetera, but then using Weserbergland instead. Also – I just love Weserbergland. Such a beautiful place!

The title of the album has an even more bizarre story. I literally had no title for the album when I contacted *Henning* (cover art designer). I just told him: do not make a beautiful progrock album. Make it look like a German engineering company from the seventies. And he sent the cover back with its bizarre title. To be honest, I don´t even know if it´s correct German. It just fitted the "from the outside looking in"-idea, and it looked good on the cover.

Which bands or musicians had most influence on your music?

I have been a huge fan of classic progressive rock since my childhood. I consider Weserbergland a prog album that´s a homage to kraut. My favourite prog bands are more or less the great British classic bands, especially Genesis, King Crimson, Jethro Tull et cetera. But I also love Italian prog, Premiata Forneria Marconi, Banco del Mutuo Soccorso and so on. Other than that I have been a fan of Krautrock for a long time. I think the late sixties was in Germany a very interesting place artistically. German late sixties and seventies bands like Can, Neu!, Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Harmonia, Amon Düül 2 and a lot other too, really speak to me. It´s music that speaks to me on an emotional and intellectual level. Honourable mention also have to be made to the behind the iron curtain jazz meets rock scene in central Europe. SBB in Poland, Jazz Q Praha and Modry Efekt in Czechoslovakia – music

of international class that I have loved for many years.

When it comes to musicians that have influenced me, I have to bring in classical music. I was a part of a symphonic band movement in Norway all my childhood years, and I also studied classical music. But very early I discovered Jethro Tull, and *Ian Anderson* did of course steer me in the direction of wanting to play prog. Later, I discovered *Jiří Stivín*, as a 20 year old, and for the last 20 years I think he´s the player that influenced me the most?

How would you describe your music in just one sentence?

Instrumental progressive rock with krautrock tendencies made with and manipulated by modern technology.

Is Weserbergland a studio-only project or do you also play live? If yes, any chances to see you live in Germany/Netherlands/Belgium one day?

I was not going to play live. And it´s close to impossible to actually play the album live. The amount of multitracking and manipulation with computers is almost insane. I wanted to really use modern technology to the extreme. But – the guitar player, *Gaute Storsve* (eg. Gaute Storsve Trio), did manage to recruit some musicians that make up the live version of Weserbergland. Live we are much more close to the early days of Kraftwerk (when they still used flute) than our album.
We would love to play in Germany/Netherlands/Belgium. I will go so far as saying it´s on top of our list. To my big surprise we sell more albums in Germany than in Norway, so we hope to make this happen one day.

In which bands have you already played before and in which projects have you been involved?

I have been more or less in White Willow since I met *Jacob (Holm-Lupo)* in 1996. I used to play in a band called Jaga Jazzist as well. Earlier I played in *Geir Lysne*s Listening

Ensemble . Other than that, I am playing in Kaukasus with *Mattias Olsson* (also in White Willow and Weserbergland) and *Rhys Marsh*. I have played on most Wobbler albums, *Lars Fredrik Frøislie* in Wobbler is a close friend and colleague. As a session musician I have played on about 60 albums. I guess Motorpsycho is the best known band in the lot. But many of the albums is of course progrock. Panzerpappa, Anima Morte, Suburban Savages, Pixie Ninja. With *Lars* in Wobbler I have made the soundtrack for about 10 documentaries, several with theatrical releases et cetera. I have a new band coming up now as well – Galasphere 347. I wrote the music with *Stephen Bennett* (from Henry Fool and *Tim Bowness´* band), a pure symphonic rock album. So I am very excited about that one. *Mattias* on drums and *Jacob* on bass/guitar.

Is there a well-interconnected Norwegian scene or is it more of a status of lone fighters?
Is there a fruitful connection with the Swedish or Finnish prog scene?

Sadly we don´t see much to the Finnish scene here. But it´s something I hope will change, as some of the truly greatest prog came from Finland. *Pekka Pohjola*, for instance. Nowadays, I don´t know too much about the Finnish prog scene, but *Jacob* recently introduced me to jazz musician *Verneri Pohjola*. He happened to be the son of *Pekka*, but his art stands firmly on its own feet and is in fact very good. The jazz scene in Finland seems to be very interesting and progressive, so maybe we one day we will see a cooperation?

When it comes to Sweden, it´s a tight knit family. But the centre of it all is *Mattias Olsson*, through him I have got to know people in Gøsta Berlings Saga, Anima Morte, and his own countless projects. And he is of course the "house drummer" here in the prog scene in Norway (White Willow, Kaukasus, The Opium Cartel, Pixie Ninja…).

The scene here is very well connected, I am in touch with

people in other bands on a daily basis, both professionally and socially. There are in fact several small prog scenes here, but they are connected and have a lot of overlapping people. But the scene seems to be slightly divided along the lines of what prog you play. Neoprog, Old School Prog, Prog Metal et cetera. I wish we´d all shake it up a bit!

There are so many excellent bands in the current Norwegian prog scene – what do you think are the reasons for this? Any Norwegian-specific aspects that might lead to this?

That´s a very good question. First of all I think many young musicians here like prog that will always help, of course. But I suspect there are many other factors weighing in here.
It´s a small country, and that´s sometimes a very good thing. The different circuits don´t really grow big enough to support themselves, so a lot of musicians really have to do several things to survive. I have played on albums for children, Black Metal albums, on contemporary dance recitals and in marching bands. It´s all just the same thing for me. And for some reason I think that a scene like this will be good for genre crossing music like progrock.
Also – Norwegian society has a very egalitarian structure that further propagates cooperation. This might not be uniquely Norwegian, but I do think it is an important trait here, and I do think there are many bands here that happen to be very good at working together.
But, one important factor here and now is *Robin*. The man behind Apollon. We get our music out because of him. We get to make more music because we get it out….

How did you get into contact with Apollon Records?

I sent Karisma (another Bergen Prog Label) the finished album. I don´t think it was their cup of tea, they have a specific profile that I do see that Weserbergland does not fit. But – Robin is involved both places. And out of the blue an email from a friend of him in Oslo came. We met. The rest, well – we

released it on Apollon. *Robin* is a great guy. He loves the music and is a true music lover. But he´s also good at business. The last part is important, as I know that he´s not going bankrupt within a year – he will be here for a longer time, and that gives us stability.

»We can´t really survive in a Spotify only world«

Where do you see the band in let's say five years? Do you think you will still release music on CD or will CD disappear and all your music will only be available through downloads or platforms like Spotify/iTunes? Where do you position vinyl?

I hope CD will not disappear. That would be sad, but it might happen. Still, when vinyl has made a comeback, so can CD. CD has a lot of advantages over Vinyl (well, and vice versa) – but, I do think CD is very underrated. I know that the income from Spotify would not make it possible for me to release another Weserbergland album. We are basically at break even now, thanks to sales of CD and Vinyl (especially CD, vinyl is a lot more expensive to press) – and it seems like we will get to the point where we will release a second album. But we can´t really survive in a Spotify only world.

But I would want to keep on making music that´s increasingly interesting and adventurous. So I hope that within five years we have at least one more album out, maybe two. And I hope to play in Germany…

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