

Producer Analysis of Vaiping

This written work is an in depth analysis of the Norwegian industrial electronica band called Vaiping. The reflection/analysis part is focused on Vaiping vs Kraftwerk, and comparisons with Gregorian Monks and Vaiping later in the reflection part. Relevant pictures is located in the appendix at the end of the document.

Vaiping is an industrial-electronica-rock band from Stavanger, Norway formed in 1999, that has developed their own fascinating, overwhelming and atmospheric sound (Shinger, 2012). Their music incorporates influences of groups like Kraftwerk, Ulver, Tool, Tom Waits, Massive Attack, Depeche Mode and Leftfield, to give some examples (Roger T, 2012). Vaiping released their first debut album «The Great Polar Expedition» in March 2007 with the record label; Karisma Records (Rockpedia, 2012). They have managed to develop a cool Nordic sound that has done well both nationally and internationally. The young group of four later did a tour of Norway in the winter of 2009 with immense success. Their live performance reflect a visual side of the industrial workers in the early 20th century (Modrzejewski, 2009).

Vaiping has worked out an image that is original and certainly out of the ordinary. Upon starting their live shows, the group emerges on stage as firemen (in this context, those who tend the fire for the running of a steam engine) covered with coal and oil (Karisma Records, 2007, see Appendix 1). One can imagine that the hotels around Norway were not so thrilled to have them for an overnight stay after their concerts...

Vaiping started as a band on the 2. January 1999 (mic.no, 2007) and was dissolved in November 2009 when a few musicians from the band were tied up with family issues and children (Nilsen, 2016). The boys' aim was to create a band with instrumental music as their main focus. Music without a vocal was rare in the 80's/90's (Nilsen, 2016) and therefore they received a lot of skepticism and criticism from other people. Some criticized their music for being too monotonous, having lack of vocal, and others just didn't understand the musical concept (Nilsen, 2016). Various people found it difficult to place their music in a cubicle, and that made it much easier for individuals to say they didn't like Vaiping's music. Others found it quite interesting that it was hard to place Vaiping's genre in a box. Music tend to be more appealing when its difficult to find the words for what one likes, and where to place it.

Most individuals from the band were inspired by music with vocals on it, but Rune Horvei (producer and drummer, see appendix 2) did not particularly share the same interest (Nilsen, 2016). He was inspired by Norwegian instrumental composers/musicians such as Nils Petter Molvær, Terje Rypdal and Jan Garbarek (Nilsen, 2016). He was fascinated by the bewitching, rich sound and he cherished the bleak dispositions, which was frequently composed in minor with long, fascinating tones. Rune got hooked up by the utilization of instruments that were not very common to use in the genre of electronica. Vaiping started to experiment with this, and introduced instruments such as the Aeolian harp, accordion, glockenspiel, organ and brass instruments into their own music (Nilsen, 2016). As a drummer Rune Horvei was often caught up in the rhythmic side of music. He was enlivened by the harmonies and the gloomy tones Nils Petter Molvær and Jan Garbarek created. Vaiping experimented a lot with this as well and began to put harmonies and mysterious tones into more rhythm based music. Rune used to play hip hop beats on the drums as a teenager, and this is definitely something he has brought into some of the songs of Vaiping (Nilsen, 2016). He has developed a distinct beat for Vaiping that almost sounds like a machine running (Modrzejewski, 2009).

Espen Hagen (See Appendix 3) was the guitarist in Vaiping until the first album got released in 2007. His way of playing was improvisations with long notes with lots of feedback and effects applied. As the band became more electronic and darker, he later got replaced by the highly talented guitarist Håkon Landmark, who actually had recorded much of the album «The Great Polar Expedition» (Nilsen, 2016). Håkon Landmark (See Appendix 4) was inspired by groups such as Nirvana, Pixies and Sonic Youth, which was thought of as rebellious groups in the 80's/90's (Peterson, 2011). Håkon is a skilled technical guitarist, his guitar solos are spot on and it almost sounds like a machine running. Håkon's way of playing is experimental and the use of effect units and pedalboards clearly adds more texture to the sound. He utilizes effect units on his guitar riffs such as reverb, echo, delay, chorus, distortion, flanging and overdrive in the analyzed songs (Nilsen, 2016).

Erik Steffensen, the experimental skilled organist/synth player and later a vocalist of Vaiping was inspired by the same artists as Rune Horvei, but did also enjoy listening to songwriter artists such as the Norwegian artist Morten Abel and Tom Waits (Groove.no, 2007, see Appendix 5). His style of

playing can be interpreted as unconventional and mysterious, and he plays the synthesizer with enthusiasm and invention on stage. Erik utilized analog synths in Vaiping's productions such as the Moog Satellite, Korg MS 10 and Korg Lambda ES 50 (Nilsen, 2016). He also experimented with effect units on the electronic keyboard and organ both on stage and in the studio. The use of pedalboards created an ambient, gritty and warm sound to the music, thus its originality. Erik ventured to use overdrive and distortion units on his melodies, this produced a rich harmonic signal and made the synthesizer sound really stand out (Nilsen, 2016). These effect units were great for his soloing when he played single notes for his lead sound on stage. The use of pedalboards is definitely something that has given Erik Steffensen his own signature sound.

Per Magnus Johnsen (See Appendix 6) was widely regarded as a highly interactive bass player. He has cited Sonic Youth, Pixies, Nils Petter Molvær and Nirvana as his fundamental influences of his bass playing (Nilsen, 2016). Per Magnus kept a steady rhythm by locking in with the drummer, Rune Horvei. Together they established a distinctive sound with groovy memorable rhythms. His way of playing may be considered as monotonous at times, but this certainly has a charm. Per Magnus's presence on stage is energetic; he almost looks like some sort of machine when he performs live. Unfortunately Per Magnus withdrew more and more when Vaiping began to experiment with computer technology in 2008. He was replaced by the bassist Øyvind Rørtvedt, who contributed to the band's second album "The industrial Workers of The World" (Nilsen, 2016).

Vaiping experimented a lot with their sound, structures, beats and playing techniques from different sorts of genres to create music that changed style. As an after effect of such experimentation they managed to come up with something unique and timeless (Modrzejewski, 2009). Their songs are experimental, dark and innovative. A general clarification of their music is that it incorporates an assortment of impacts from different composers, they have formed music that is thought to be unexpected and hard to grasp. Their tracks is often composed without a particular chorus and is sometimes dissonant with atonal guitar riffs. Frequently the outcome is the appearance of chaos, dissatisfaction followed by a heavy groove.

During the first years together, they made a decision that they didn't want their music to sound digital, their oldest material is therefore recorded with analogue gear only (Nilsen, 2016). They used tape recorders and cassettes, which was popular back in the days. The boys came to their senses a few years later and realized that working with analogue gear not only was unnecessary, not to

mention a big limitation. Vaiping then started to experiment with both analogue gear and digital which lead to the sound of their first album «The Great Polar Expedition» (Nilsen, 2016, see Appendix 7).

Rune explained during an informal interview recorded by Frida Nilsen that the first album is a collection of old material that has been recorded in different studios, but most of the songs on the album were recorded at Mansion Recording Studio in Stavanger (Karisma Records, 2007). After doing solid research on their first album released in 2007, the author noticed that there was a lack of a common thread in this compared to their second album «Industrial Workers of the World» which got released in September 2009 (See Appendix 8). One reason for the lack of common tread in the first debut goes back to what Rune mentioned in the interview regarding the recording process which took place at different studios (Nilsen, 2016).

The story behind the first song on the album «The Great Polar Expedition» is quite fascinating. The song «Vaiping On the Rocks» starts with a massive introduction of war type of drums, that bleeds into a crescendo of sound where it gives the impression of thousands of people at a football stadium screaming out «Vaiping, Vaiping» (Kine J, 2007). Rune explains that he went to a youth club in Stavanger to record 11 foreigners that hardly spoke any Norwegian (Nilsen, 2016). He got them to scream «Vaiping» as loud as possible into a microphone, and then he processed the audio by chopping it up, quantized it and doubled the tracks while pitching it down to different octaves and semitones. The final step to create this sound effect was to layer the sound of a football stadium (Manchester United) on top of the vocal lines to make it sound massive and immersive. This explains very well how creative they were in terms of experimenting with sound and effects.

Its easy to understand why their music is well-liked among others in metal environments around Europe. Their music has a gravity and aggression that seems to be appealing to metal music (Nilsen, 2016). Some of Vaiping's music is portrayed similar to the genre of metal including extended guitar and drum solos, heavy beats and general loudness. The song «Victory» on their second album is a great example of an aggressive metal type of style playing, where they impress the listener with the expression of darkness and hard labour through distorted guitar riffs on top off domineering drum loops (Shinger, 2012). Rune mentioned that they utilized the analog synth Korg MS 10 quite frequently on this track (Nilsen, 2016).

Their music flows very well with the visuals on stage and the cover of their albums. It is all very well presented, and it seems like there is no coincident decisions what so ever, everything seems planned and structured. Their music gives the listener the visuals of machinery, hard labour and heavy metals banging together (Fossmo, 2009). Every instrument is an apparatus of the whole Vaiping programmed motor, the working cadence of which is relentless, enduring, repetitive and tribal (Trotta, 2012). Rune Horvei explains that every song on their album has its own story (Nilsen, 2016). The album «The Great Polar Expedition» highlights old firemen working in large steamships traveling across the line that went across the Atlantic Ocean in the 18th century (Shinger, 2012). Their music reflects a story of the hard work that was required to survive the crossing over the Atlantic Ocean (Nilsen, 2016). The album has a cold sound to it, with tinge of warmth, this could be seen as a metaphor where they are attempting to tell the listener the story on how freezing cold it was out on the sea, and how the coal kept the workers warm inside the steamships. The tracks «Vaiping On the Tracks» and «The Great Polar Expedition» are the most representative of the first record. However, the highlights are definitely the emotional, dark «Vaiping Vendetta» and the mystical tune «Battle of Bastille».

Listening to the song «Transatlantik» by Vaiping (0.47 sec) and Trans Europe Express (0.14 sec) by Kraftwerk, one can hear that both songs contain a mysterious voice that speaks only three words in German (Schiffmann, 2012). Vaiping has changed the middle word in the sentence «Trans Europe Express» of Kraftwerk to the word Atlantic, rather than Europe. This is a little detail that shows that Kraftwerk had impact on Vaiping's experimental music. In the song «Vaiping Export» at 18-20 seconds the listener can again find a typical Kraftwerk sound with the three keyboard strokes (du-du-du), which repeats many times after that (Roger T, 2012), see «Robots» by Kraftwerk at 01.05 minutes. There is also an obvious correlation between «The Great Polar Expedition» by Vaiping and «Elektro Kardiogramm» by Kraftwerk. Both of the songs cover a heavy human breathing that gives impression of the stress and exhaustion the stokers went through when they shoveled the coal in the furnaces to get the boat go forward.

The song «Battle of Bastille» has very large tempo changes. This reflects war where there is intensive attacks, where one might need to withdraw to consolidate the strengths and later attack again. The song is a kind of experience of combat, or if one want to keep on the track of the

steamship analogy, the intense periods are when the firemen shovel lots of coal in order to start the ship so it can catch speed. In quieter parts of the music it reflect the steamship approaching the harbor.

The song «Vaiping Vendetta» links to the priests who sings in the band, Gregorian Monks (See Appendix 9). Their songs are melancholy and powerful and highlights both vocal concordance and instrumental accompaniment (Kine, J. 2007) . One could say that this comparison may reflect what the Norwegian sailors experienced during WW2, where many died during the torpedo attacks to the German war navy. «Vaiping Vendetta» reflects to the listener like it is almost like the ship has sunk and the angels are coming to collect their souls, which actually is a nice ending of the album, because one wonder what will be the next theme.

Vaiping's second album «Industrial Workers of the World» begins with the sounds of the port in the «Land for Sale», which first intertwined with the music, and then the mood completely transform into a pulsating beat and ambient, passing then very short, to the vocal focused track «Street Talk» (Modrzejewski, 2009). Continuous syncopations and the seemingly monotonous sounds are some of the most recognizable features of Vaiping's music. However, there is something about the sound that makes the listener not become tired (Modrzejewski, 2009).

The visuals for the cover on this album are a collection of old images from archives in Stavanger, various museums and old workplaces (Nilsen, 2016). They have also taken a portion of the pictures themselves. There are significant similarities in the photo shoot for the cover of «IWW» and the cover of Kraftwerk's album «The Man Machine». It seems like Kraftwerk have been an inspiration, not only musically, but also visually. From the photographer's perspective one can see the boys lined up in a diagonal line, just like the cover from Kraftwerk mentioned above. It is only the standing position that is equal to Kraftwerk's cover, the clothes and the visual environment is completely different (See Appendix 10).

Rune Horvei and Håkon Landmark explains in an online video interview that the album released in 2009 is about an old labour organization called «Industrial Workers of the World» (Karl S. 2010). This record expresses the same feelings as in «The Great Polar Expedition». Both collections replicate the sound of hard work, loss and victory. The difference that separate the two records is that the latest release contains clear vocal lines, it has a different soundscape with a new concept and its also more dynamic (Nilsen, 2016). The 2007 release can be interpreted as a bit more

monotonous, the reason for this is likely to be the absence of vocal, substantial repetitive beats and lack of a common thread (Shinger, 2016).

Listening to the song «High Hopes» by Vaiping and «Techno Pop» by Kraftwerk, one can clearly hear that both songs present metallic sounds as a part of the rhythmic. Both tracks contain vocals, but Vaiping's song can lead more into the direction of Gregorian Monks than Kraftwerk, because the vocal sounds elvish and cold. There are also panning parts in the rhythmic side of these two songs. Elements are panned in different directions (left/right), sonically this adds texture and more space for other elements to shine through in the mix. «High Hopes» can also draw attention to the female vocal in Jónsi's song «We Bought a Zoo» (Modrzejewski, 2009). There is not much changing in wording, and it sounds like if they have processed the vocal by playing it backwards with lots of reverb on it. This makes the voice sound enchanting and beautiful. There are less computerized elements and more utilization of real instruments in the album «Industrial Workers of The World» (Fossmo, 2009). This has given the music a more prominent dynamism to the sound.

Vaiping's music is a bit of a dynamic rollercoaster. Sometimes one can get the feeling of hope and that things go well, and other times it's as if the industrial factory has burned to the ground (Fossmo, 2009). The music is overwhelming and fascinating and also experimental when it comes to guitar riffs, melodies and rhythms. The 2009 release complete everything off with the 3/4 beat (most of the time) song «Pie in The Sky» which is a great way to finish off the record (Davis, 2013). The music becomes cheerful, and one gets the feeling of a happy ending, which can likewise be interpreted as the IWW's growth and success. The album doesn't last even forty minutes, But the author Łukasz Modrzejewski of the website "artrock.pl", explains that it is the most interesting concept album he has been given over the last years (Modrzejewski, 2009). It all comes together with catchy melodies and driving rhythms. Calming parts of some songs give a sense of relief from the heavy, pounding mood that dominates much of the music (Davis, 2013).

One can tell in the wake of investigating their physical performance on stage that hard work and effort have been put down, everything looks tight and very well planned. They perform so well, and it almost looks like as they haven't done anything else in life other than performing on a stage. Vaiping's music reflects a dirty sound image that sounds very mechanically, this is likewise

replicated on stage visually when they appear as stokers all covered in coal and oil (See Appendix 12).

The overall goal was to do an in depth analysis of Vaiping and compare their music with influencing artists. They have managed to create their own unique sound, and it is clear that the German electronica band «Kraftwerk» has had a big impact on the group (Shinger, 2012). There are many elements in Kraftwerk's music that is similar to some of Vaiping's songs, but there is also a very big difference despite these similarities. They have managed to create their very own unique sound that sounds like machinery, and its fascinating that they are actually telling a story through their music. Everything seems to be well planned and organized. Together as a group they have managed to nail each and every piece, the artwork, sound image and last but not least, the concept. There is rumors saying that the band are considering a comeback in the future, but only time will tell...

(See Appendix and bibliography below)

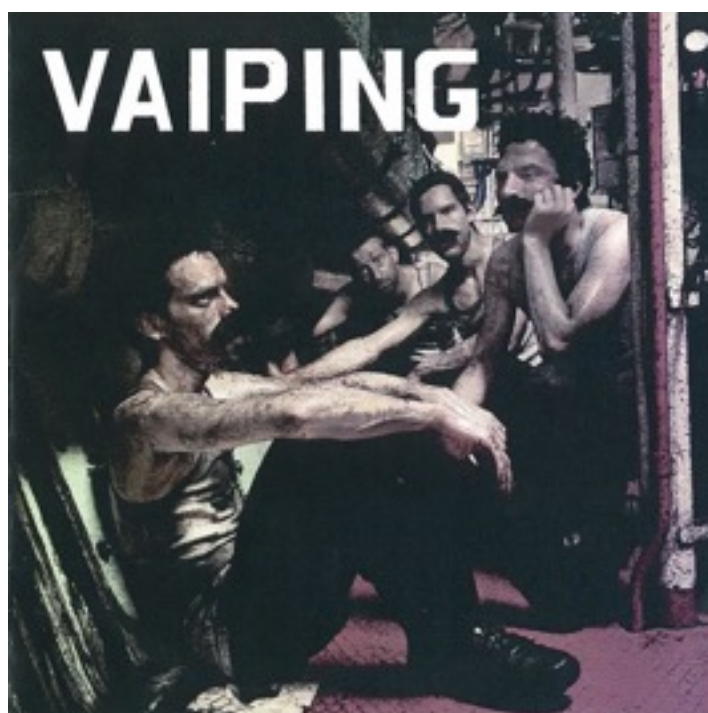
Written by

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Word Count: 3095

Appendix

A1. Vaiping emerging as miserable firemen



A2. Rune Horvei



A3. Espen Hagen



A4. Håkon Landmerk



A5. Eirik Steffensen



A6. Per Magnus Johnsen



A7. Cover of “The Great Polar Expedition” Album



A 8. Cover and photo shoot of the “Industrial Workers of The World” album

A9. Gregorian - Engel (Rammstein) - Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7dWKOdVJJ0>

A10.



A11. SmiS-TV Interview: Vaiping - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9v3qDNepiQ>



IWW - picture link can be found in the bibliography

A 12. Pictures of the band members and their live performances



Vaiping had a concert for the Norwegian Queen's 70 birthday in Stavanger. The Queen (Sonja) got to listen to the concert when she arrived the harbor with her own ship.







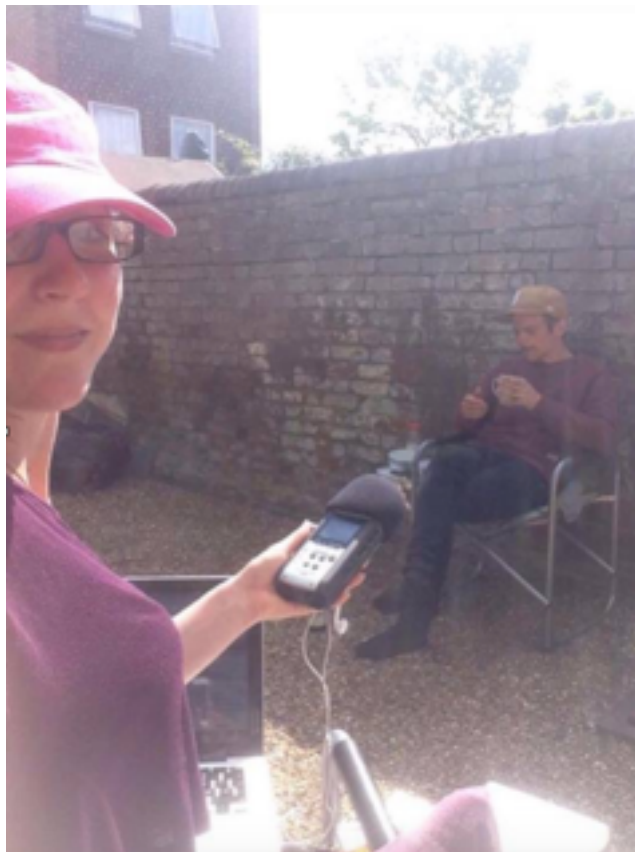


Vaiping's music can be found on Spotify (Link Below)

Link to “The Great Polar Expedition” album —> <https://open.spotify.com/album/0rcIHGoD0StMebM0lZCUSw>

Link to “Industrial Workers of The World” album —> <https://open.spotify.com/album/72QRIP1NPcdl4FeSKrMqi6>

Here is a picture of the interview I did with the drummer and producer of Vaiping, Rune Horvei. I will include the recording in the submission folder “Handitin” at My ACM. (Be aware that the recording is in Norwegian).



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- Pictures in this text are taken from the link below:
https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=industrial+workers+of+the+world&espv=2&biw=1267&bih=594&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj31bqOg8nNAhUJJ8AKHWsxAX8Q_AUIBigB#tbm=isch&q=Vaiping