

Los Angeles duo Junior Varsity just wants to feel something. The world can seem cold and unfeeling—now more than ever—which makes real emotion stand out amid the gray. That’s why Los Angeles duo Junior Varsity, just want to feel something. They make that clear on their debut single, “Cold Blood”—a turbulent song that draws on the last several decades of intensely emotional rock music—when singer Greg Varteresian croons about getting choked out by his best friend and tased by an overzealous cop. *“It’s the most I’ve felt in a long time,”* he sing-raps. *“And I kind of liked it.”* Grim as the violence may be, his point stands. Now more than ever, the world can seem cold and unfeeling, which makes real emotion stand out amid the gray. It’s why Aram and Zach Michel started Junior Varsity in 2019, and it’s a mission that they’ve held onto ever since, as they’ve started to finally release their thorny genre-blending, punk-pop anthems.

“There was a lack of energy in music that was really disappointing to me,” Aram says. “People weren’t feeling things for a long time.”

The desire to counteract that inspired the strange path Junior Varsity have taken to get here. This may be their first single to hit DSPs, but they’ve already built a devoted group of followers through their sweaty, sometimes bloody live shows and the series of evocative videos they’ve uploaded to Instagram, where their shattered refractions of bedroom R&B, DIY indie pop, and mid-’00s radio rock are paired with dreamlike visuals. Those snippets hinted at a rich emotional world, which fans quickly gravitated to. Some interpreted Junior Varsity as a mystery to solve, but Aram says these clips were a window into their heads: “I wanted to give people everything.”

Both together and independently, that’s been the goal for Junior Varsity’s founders since the beginning. Aram grew up in New Jersey, a busy urban environment he says filled him with the tension that drives his music today. “I always had this energy I didn’t know how to express,” he says. “I was partying and fighting a lot as a kid, and music became my way of doing something more sustainable.” Michel, a lifelong musician/producer, met Aram in college and saw potential in the raw honesty of his music. Teaming up gave Michel the freedom to follow his impulses. “We could totally make pop bangers,” Michel says. “But the partnership with Greg cemented that I can make music that is really powerful to me, as weird as that music may be.”

They started recording obsessively in early 2019, then began releasing the snippets and playing shows before the year’s end. They never expected to garner much attention. That was part of the point of not releasing music through traditional sources—they didn’t have to be accountable to traditional metrics of success. “The thought was, ‘Fuck what other people think of our music,’” Aram says. “Why would we let the gatekeepers determine whether our shit was cool?”

People caught on anyway. Without a single song out, Junior Varsity got press from tastemaking outlets like *Pigeons and Planes* and sold out shows on both coasts, creating a cultish following that culminated in “Cold Blood” receiving a Zane Lowe premiere, all while they remained true to the ethic that got them there in the first place—not caring at all what other people thought.

Now, they’re on the eve of releasing a whole project, with even more music in various stages of completion—as trying as 2020 was, it also gave them a lot of time to experiment with even more new sounds. Like a lot of people, they’re ready to be back in the world again, to play shows, to sweat, to scream, to see the reactions on people’s faces as they share their passion. “When you spend most of your day behind a cell phone screen it’s really nice to just show up in a space and feel something,” Aram says. Listening to Junior Varsity’s music, it’s hard not to. Michel started Junior Varsity in 2019, and it’s a mission that they’ve held to as they’ve begun to finally release their thorny genre-blending, punk-pop anthems. Their new single “Cold Blood” is their first, but they’ve already built a devoted group of followers through their sweaty, sometimes bloody live shows and the videos they’ve uploaded to Instagram, where their cracked refractions of bedroom R&B, DIY indie pop, and mid-’00s radio rock are paired with dreamlike visuals. Those snippets hinted at a rich emotional world, and fans quickly gravitated. Without a single song out, Junior Varsity got press from tastemaking outlets like *Pigeons and Planes* and sold out shows on both coasts, creating a cultish following that culminated in “Cold Blood” receiving a Zane Lowe premiere, all while they remained true to the ethic that got them there in the first place—not caring at all what other people thought. As trying as 2020 was, it gave them a lot of time to experiment with new sounds and now they’re on the eve of releasing a whole project. Junior Varsity are ready to be back in the world again, to play shows, to sweat, to scream, and to feel it all reflected back at them as they share their passion.