

Offset — reviews

David Vélez, [The Field Reporter](#) - december 2013

From the liner notes : *"This work is the result of a research about the mechanical sounds of printing machines. I was invited in two different printing workshops in Grenoble and Paris, where I've been listening and recording their rotary presses very closely. 'Offset' gathers a series of compositions created with this sound matter, electroacoustic variations exploring the rhythms, cycles, textures and musicality of the machines. A work that stands on the ambivalence between the alienating and the musical machine, and careful to lose any assumption..."*

'Offset' is composed by eight individual pieces.

On 'Cycle 1' the rhythmic patterns are random and complex drawing to a somber emotion. They sound like desynchronized machines that sometimes match and interact with harsh colorless grace.

On 'Cycle 2' the textures vary from more wood-like to metallic-like. Also the relations created by the different magnitudes of the occurring events maintain a tension between the more soothing moments and the more overwhelming moments.

'Cycle 3' is a piece of 'epic' narratives and emotional tensions that stretches and breaks up the moments. To me this piece is one of the highlights of the whole release, conscious and successfully built.

Sometimes 'Cycle 4' sounds like jungle or break-core music; a short fun to listen and an easy to get by piece.

'Cycle 5' is a recording-based evolution of something similar to what avant-garde electronic acts like Autechre and Phonem were trying to do in terms of rhythm thirteen years ago. Syncopated rhythmic mechanical repetitions that go on strongly with no pause. Through the end the pulse become harsher, louder and chaotic.

'Flux 1' is another piece of this release that I find special; here the rhythmic patterns become more 'harmonic' and the background and foreground forcefully merge in a very fortunate way; this is the more atmospheric and environmental piece of the release.

'#' is a strange piece very quiet and sine wave-like that sort of breaks the release structure.

'Offset' goes out on a high note with 'Flux 2'. Here the exploration of rhythm is open to the point we wonder how much manipulation of the recordings was done in terms of pitch and speed. The piece's narrative structure goes from joyful to somber creating a beautiful lasting tension.

To close this review I would like to say that 'Offset' presents a fortunate, risky and refreshing approach to the compositional work with field recordings. The relation that Meursault established with the subject and the formal approach he gave to it produced a very successful and rewarding work.

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Cyrille Lanoë, [Revue & Corrigée N°96](#) - juin 2013

Le sonore de la mécanique. Quand l'homme et l'artiste cherchent à savoir, comprendre, voire reproduire, la machine, elle, est implacable, réglée, exécutante, imperturbable. Et pourtant créée par l'homme pour l'homme. Cette machine est entre autres une presse Heidelberg de 1965, qui orne la pochette du disque. Quelle perception donner à "l'entendre", si subjectif et donc personnel.

L'industrie a toujours attiré les artistes du "sonore", qu'ils soient rock avec The Ex qui enregistre leur Dignity of Labour dans une imprimerie à Wormer (Pays-Bas) en 1982 (mais qui finalement ne se sert que très peu

de la rythmique des machines, l'usine étant déjà en ruine à l'époque, disque néanmoins enregistré in-situ), ou dans la musique techno et dérivés avec un souvenir assez récent d'un maxi de Jean Ferraille, et évidemment un pan entier de la musique industrielle notamment française (que je tarde encore à découvrir) avec l'artiste et philosophe Jean-Marc Vivenza et son groupe Glace. Pali MEURSAULT est un aventurier, adepte du field-recording parfois "extrême" à la Thomas Tilly (sur des glaciers en 2011), et son disque pourquoi pas tout aussi "extrême" à sa manière, Promenade (que je ne connais pas), enregistré dans une fonderie en Isère. Extrême quand on connaît les conditions difficiles de travail en sidérurgie par exemple. Le "pourquoi pas extrême" dans le sens où tout comme ici, il doit se positionner en tant qu'artiste dans un paysage sonore en activité, avec ses codes, ses règles, ses consignes de sécurité. Une immersion que l'on imagine délicate. Avec l'interaction de l'homme dans son travail sur cette machine. Sans oser déranger. Tout en se faisant respecter dans le même temps.

C'est ainsi que l'on se laisse guider dans des compositions électroacoustiques à base de rythmiques de rotatives dans les usines de "Cédigraphe" à Grenoble, et "Laville" à Paris, constituant la matrice (c'est le cas de le dire) de ce disque, Offset, sorti en vinyle (d'ailleurs en adéquation avec ce type d'industrie en opposition à l'imprimerie numérique) et en coproduction entre les labels Doubtfulsounds, label emmené par Thierry Monnier, vieille connaissance de Pali MEURSAULT, et Universinternational, label de Pali MEURSAULT.

Même s'il vient des Beaux-Arts, Pali s'est vite détaché de cet univers après avoir découvert la radio en compagnie de... Thierry Monnier. La manipulation de la bande l'a donc emmené sur de l'enregistrement in-situ, jusque dans les forêts amazoniennes. Ici, il est parti collecter en tant que chercheur (ce qu'il aime à être) tous ces sons cycliques inhérents à ce type d'atelier. Sons qu'il ne retransmet pas tels quels mais retravaille en une composition/ballet pour machine. Un travail assez fin sans traitement exubérant. Où chacun se fabrique son univers, comme une musique de films aux images d'un autre temps pas si lointain, faite de rouages et rondelles aux dents crantées de l'ère industrielle. En cela c'est plutôt réussi. Avec une préférence pour la face B un peu plus brute et moins composée que sa petite sœur. Mais chut, ça il faut en parler avec Pali car son postulat de départ était de s'échapper de la retranscription brute et de s'inspirer de ces captations pour "créer".

Je ne peux que vous encourager à visiter, et c'est le cas de le dire, son site personnel www.palimeursault.net où j'ai puisé nombre d'informations le concernant, dont l'article Réinventer le paysage sonore paru en 2008 dans notre numéro 77, ou encore les podcasts d'émission de radio chez Epsilonia et France Culture. Un artiste que je vous conseille de découvrir, et je vous souhaite que cet excellent disque vous serve tout comme à moi pour découvrir cet artiste, dont le nom d'emprunt est indirectement lié au Meursault de L'Étranger d'Albert Camus. Mais ça, ça reste entre lui et moi...

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Keith P., *Akward Movements* - june 2013

Out of people and things that need greater recognition, Pali Meursault's Offset LP is in my current top ten. The sound artist / theorist is a comparatively young authority in the modern world of musique concrete, known as much for his sonic offerings and collaborative video project as his installations, solo work and published written pieces.

Offset perfectly captures the sounds that 'industrial' producers set out to achieve, and rightly so. Recorded at two French printing factories, the rhythmic pounding of pistons and crunching sounds reflect the lightness of their work compared to say a car factory, but retain the rawness of metal machinery.

The work that goes in to field-recordings isn't just setting up a mic to record. Getting the sounds right, processing them and pulling them together in their various layers to create a single unified environment is a process attempted by many and done well by a few.

Pali is a master of creating these sound landscapes, self-described as "organising noise within a given space." On *Offset* he seems to have gone a step closer to modern composition, with the rhythmic sounds working as constant loops rather than as individual events. Next time someone gives me a funny look when I mention 'field-recordings' this is what I'll play them.

The record comes in a limited quantity of 300, and is mastered by Giuseppe Ielasi, another artist who's never lent his hand to anything sub-par. No embeddable samples up, you're going to have to trust us on this one, but get on it, even if it's the only home-listening wax you buy.

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Julien Héraud, *Improv Sphère* - juin 2013

Offset est une série de pièces composées par Pali Meursault à partir de field-recordings d'ateliers d'imprimerie. La première face de ce vinyle est consacrée aux matières musicales des presses, à leurs "cycles" rythmiques notamment, alors que la seconde face s'intéresse plutôt aux "flux" moins évidents des machines, aux sons continus plus implicites.

Tout commence donc avec des pièces très rythmiques, des rythmiques lourdes, grasses et métalliques, proches de l'industriel évidemment, mais aussi du rap ou de l'électro. On imaginerait sans peine Dàlek ou Blixa Bargeld poser leurs voix sur ces instrus. Avec ces compositions électroacoustiques à moitié techno, et à moitié musiques concrètes, Pali Meursault semble mettre en avant l'influence déterminante du monde industriel sur la musique. C'est lourd, puissant et violent comme j'aime.

C'est avec la deuxième face que tout se corse. Les phénomènes sonores continus des ateliers d'imprimerie sont des cycles répétitifs et interminables ainsi que des bruits ambiants qui s'oublient avec l'habitude. Des bruits blancs médians qui font partie des phénomènes les plus aliénants du monde industriel, un peu comme si nous percevions en permanence une neige télévisuelle sans nous en apercevoir consciemment (ce qui est le cas de la pollution sonore métropolitaine). Pali Meursault explore ici des phénomènes sonores riches et complexes qui mettent cette fois en avant les propriétés psychoacoustiques et aliénantes d'un certain monde sonore et machinique, un monde extrêmement répétitif et insidieux.

Très belle lecture en somme des ateliers d'imprimerie: une interprétation riche et singulière des aspects musicaux et psychologiques du monde industriel. Conseillé.

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Guillaume Belhomme, *Le Son du Grisli* - mai 2013

S'agit-il pour Pali Meursault de faire musique avec du concret – rotatives des imprimeries Cédigraphe (Bresson) et Laville (Paris) – datant ? Aux lecteurs pointilleux ou inquiets, le projet sera expliqué ici, et encore *là.*

Capturé, le rythme des machines est aussi contrarié sans cesse. Et la musique à naître de l'opération (bruits de rouages que l'on tord, cadences en décalage et sirènes essouffées) intéresse au-delà des couleurs qu'elle crache. C'est que les découpes que l'artiste a pratiquées dans ses enregistrements les compliquent et les rehaussent dans le même temps. Lourdes choses en perpétuel mouvement, les instruments de Pali Meursault l'obligeaient à faire du neuf à coups de vieux : chose faite et bien faite, au point qu'au terme de leurs efforts, elles suffoquent dans un dernier acte d'épatante dramatisation.

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KFJC 89.7FM - may 2013

There's something oddly comforting about the sounds emanating from what I believe are printing presses (thus the album title "Offset" that compose these field recordings from Meursault. Granted, I love the printed page, but I'll bet you a baby would nod off to this in no time flat. It made me appreciate the artistry of knowing what sounds would make for interesting listening. It also made me respect even more those artists (like Cactus) who create the sounds/noise they play from scratch. A whole new dimension opens!!!

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Antono D'Amico, *Brainwashed* - may 2013

I definitely have a soft spot for industrial music that is so goddamn industrial that it is literally just the sound of machines, so I am the target demographic for this suite of compositions built upon recordings from two French printing facilities. It is very hard to say how much conventional "composition" was involved though, as Offset often feels like pure audio vérité that has just been cleaned up and EQed for maximum impact. That is fine by me: regardless of how much or how little studio tweaking, manipulation, and multi-tracking actually took place, Meursault's inspired selection and sequencing yields a very coherent, weirdly hypnotic, and intermittently dazzling whole.

Offset may seem like an album that draws from very narrow source material, but Pali Meursault's previous album (2011's *Without the Wolves*) featured a 20-minute piece built from recordings of a melting glacier, which must make recordings of printing presses seem positively liberating and limitless by comparison. In fact, Meursault actually found these field recordings to be fertile enough material to sustain two fairly different creative directions, one of which is covered on each side of the record.

The first side is devoted to rhythmic patterns or cycles, which is the most obvious theme to explore when faced with a room full of vibrantly whooshing, buzzing, clattering, and clunking machines. The recordings are predictably and appealingly relentless and mechanized-sounding, but Meursault occasionally surprises me with a striking passage that transcends my limited field recording/collage expectations. For example, "Cycle 1" sometimes sounds like the labored inhalation and exhalation of some kind of massive metallic monster, while "Cycle 2" sounds absolutely nightmarish when a grindingly dissonant buzz cuts through the crunching and echoing clanks. Parts of "Cycle 4" even manage to sound like some kind of cutting-edge experimental dance music, as its locked-groove-sounding rhythm starts to resemble a minimalist bass line with dynamically satisfying stops-and-starts.

The second side of album is dedicated to the idea of "flux" and focuses upon the gradual morphing of the machine rhythms, which turns out to be where Meursault's skill and vision truly manifest themselves. The first of the two lengthy pieces, "Flux 1," is the album's clear highlight, but its brilliance does not become fully evident until the very end. Instead, it just sounds like constantly clicking, whooshing juggernaut of thrum, which is still quite impressive. In fact, its sheer relentlessness is utterly mesmerizing, as are its constant minor shifts in texture and density. Its sole flaw is that the momentum occasionally flags, but that setback is easily eclipsed by the surprise ending where everything coheres into a full minute of shuddering, sinister-sounding machine drone. The longer "Flux 2" does not quite achieve a similar feat of last-minute alchemy, but is otherwise equally hypnotically propulsive.

Naturally, a vinyl-only album of printing press-based electroacoustic compositions is about as "niche" as it gets, but Meursault unquestionably excelled at what he set out to accomplish: there are definitely some people out there who will want to hear this and they will be very happy when they do. A small part of me secretly wishes Pali had been more aggressive in his treatment of the material or perhaps collaborated with

someone who might have taken the recordings in a more conventionally musical direction (Offset seems like it would be prime grist for a killer Esplendor Geométrico album), but most of me just appreciates Meursault's commitment to purity and is largely awestruck by what he was able to accomplish with such a willfully limited palette.

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Frans De Waard, [Vital Weekly](#) - april 2013

[...] The other new release on Doubtful Sounds is something entirely different. Pali Meursault is always hunting for sound in fine field recorder fashion, and as such he recorded two different printing facilities, in Grenoble and Paris, to create music with these recordings. Music with the sounds of machinery is nothing new, but hey, we are celebrating 100 years of the 'Art Of Noise' manifesto, so why not another one. Maybe it's good to note on this occasion that Vivenza, one of the best known composers of machine sounds, actually never did record machines, but rather played his EMS synths. I always enjoy the sounds of real machinery, I must admit. Perhaps because all things mechanical and all things minimal are special to me, the element of repetition, in which, the better you listen, the more you will hear. On one side, Meursault uses shorter, cleaner cuts of his recordings, while in the two pieces on the b-side they are combined together, and Meursault seems to be adding sound effects to the pieces. The whole idea is to see when machine sounds become music, and I think that is fairly quick – I am biased, since I love machine sounds. Compelling, hypnotic, both in the naked state as well as in their more dressed versions. Two different sides, but both sound great, with a clear defined character of their own. Now this is very much like something I like very much!