

Norient

Network for Local and Global Sounds and Media Culture

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NORIENT

NETWORK FOR LOCAL AND GLOBAL SOUNDS AND MEDIA CULTURE

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EVENTS

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ABOUT

Browse: [Home](#) / [BLOG](#) / Sampling Stories Vol. 1: Ptyl

Sampling Stories Vol. 1: Ptyl

By [Hannes Liechti](#) from [Norient](#) on [December 6, 2016](#)

By [Hannes Liechti](#) from [Norient](#) on 6 December 2016 in [BLOG](#)

In this new series, Norient talks about sampling and remixing with different artists from all around the world: Why, how and what do they sample? What kind of musical understanding is lying behind their sampling strategies and what kinds of ethical boundaries are coming into play? Meet Israeli electronic industrial artist [Ptyl](#) in this first sequel.



Ptyl (Danse Macabre) (© Press Photo)

In the German interview collection on Remix culture *Generation Remix. Zwischen Popkultur und Kunst* («between popular culture and art»), published as a [small book](#) by the German information platform and online magazine [iRights](#), musician, producer, and label head Bruno Kramm ([Danse Macabre](#)) was asked about his most favorite remix. His answer is a good and very brief introduction into the «massive sound worlds» of Ptyl:

«Here I can mention a song of one of my label artists, that was built out of over fifty fragments of other songs. The musician with the name Ptyl (Hebrew for fuse) hails from Israel and is an absolute mastermind. Without exception he is using samples of other bands and then he is conjuring massive sound worlds, without using a studio but an old MS-DOS tracker. It is for sure, that he has never cleared any sample. He gave me a copy of his soundbank that is painstakingly classified under aesthetical criteria and that is constantly growing. The bank consists out of tens of thousands of samples and I am proud to be part of that library by myself. By the way, Ptyl has a new band called Demonwire ([Demoncast](#)), in which he has been perfecting his sampling technique while always remaining true to the fasttracker. If you wanted to clear all the samples here, you'd have to count bills.» [Translation from German by the author]

Let's first listen to the mentioned song. It's called «Drag Dorks in Vampire Suits» and is from his 2008 album *Loki*. In the song Ptyl is addressing fascist and exploiting tendencies in the dark scene and more generally in underground music scenes. To learn more about the background of the song, take a look at his video commentary on the song [below](#). In his short interview with Norient, Ptyl also talks about this song and his sampling techniques used. Read below.

PTYL : LOKI : REVOLT : DRAG DORKS IN VAMPIRE SUITS lyric vid



[Hannes Liechti]: Bruno Kramm mentioned, that you don't clear your samples. So I guess you wouldn't provide me with a detailed list of all samples used in this track?

[Ptyp]: No, I wouldn't, because you never know what will happen with such a list and you never know how the sampled artists would react. But as long as no one actually knows that they have been sampled, everything is ok.

[HL]: What is your understanding of sampling? How do you sample?

[PT]: When working on my songs if I hear a specific sound that I like from an external source – that could be a specific drum, or synths, or something else – and if I think that this sound is exactly the thing I want to put in my song, then I sample it. Technically I could reproduce that distinct sound with a synthesizer and some effects in a studio as well. But for me it seems like a waste of time doing that. If I would theoretically succeed in producing the exact sound in the studio, what would be the difference in the final product comparing with simply taking a sample? There is no difference. For me, there is no artistic reason not to sample. You already have that distinct sound in your head, because you've heard it before. Sampling is just another way of getting to that sound instead of creating it from scratch. In both cases you'll end up with the same sound. It's not about having any message to be said through sampling. That's just a technique. It's just about creating music, using sampling as a musical instrument.

[HL]: So the listener doesn't need to know the origin of the samples?

[PT]: No, I don't really want him or her to know that.

[HL]: Why do you sample sounds when the source seems not to be important?

[PT]: I need certain sounds in their entirety, overlaying with other sounds and/or effects. I don't want a specific song. What I want to have is a specific guitar or a specific drum in my own song. And this specific sound is always shaped by a specific production process. So you can say that I'm not really sampling the musicians, I'm sampling the production.

[HL]: That means that you never use sampling as an instrument for referencing to something?

[PT]: Yes I do. But that's another layer of sampling in my work than what I just explained. On this second layer the sounds I'm using are actually reminding people of something specific such as other songs, a time, persons or anything else. In that case the sample will actually serve as part of the message of the song and sometimes even replace lyrics. Instead of saying something, I can put the sound there. And when I put the sound there, because the listener knows what this sound is about, they will also understand what I want to talk about.

[HL]: Do you sample on both layers in all of your songs?

[PT]: In all songs I have at least the first layer, the technical one. That's the foundation of the music in terms of how it's been made. But in many other songs, there is also the second layer.

[HL]: What was your approach to sampling in «Drag Dorks in Vampire Suits»?

[PT]: Here I used sampling on both levels. When I made this song I used a lot of samples from the most well known underground bands. By using them as samples I tried to criticize musical underground scenes of producing repetitions of the same thing when mimicking a certain style. I think you shouldn't mimic music so much. So instead of mimicking a single artist by using only samples of his or her music, I was trying to put all these songs together. By the way, I don't claim these samples are mine. There's something in art called «allusion». Which is where you take small pieces of another piece of work so you can link to another artwork within your work. I use these sounds as allusions so it forms a reminder, what this whole thing – the underground music scene – was once all about.

[HL]: Do you also use non musical samples? Such as noises, people talking, and so on.

[PT]: Yes I do that as well. I can see two effects here. The first one is that the samples are generating a certain atmosphere. Due to the sample you can feel that the music is coming from a specific movie scene for example. These are kind of «ambient-ish» sounds – the music obviously doesn't need them, it just gives a different atmosphere for the whole song. The second effect is making a reference to some people, whom I expect the listener to either know or be interested in knowing more about him or her after listening to my song. Like a bookmark, sampling here allows the listener to go to the origin and to learn some stuff. After learning what this person has been saying, the listener can come back to my song and hear it completely differently.

[HL]: Where do you take these kind of samples from?

[PT]: I usually take them from YouTube. That's where you can find people talking. You can search for the exact subject and choose from a large collection of conversations.

[HL]: What's the weirdest sample you've ever used?

[PT]: I don't think that any sound is really weird. Ok, maybe for me they are not weird. I consider any sound to be interesting if it has a certain quality that responds to me. But, for example, I don't sample people killing each other or something violent in general. I've never done that, I don't see the point in using such kinds of material. You will always need the video to get the meaning of what's happening there. The sound as such doesn't carry any meaning.

[HL]: You'd say then that there are ethical boundaries when sampling?

[PT]: There is a lot of ethical thinking here. When I'm selecting someone saying something, I'm trying to the best of my knowledge to be completely aware what it means and what it implies. A lot of times, I seek something specific and something else because I reject something that I don't agree with ethically.

[HL]: When sampling you want to agree with the message of the sample?

[PT]: I want to agree with what it implies. I don't want something that makes me somehow uneasy with the message that I'm saying just because its sounds nice. But it's definitely possible that I say something that might be ethically offensive to some other people. But then it's because that is the message of my song and not because I like this sample and I say: «Fuck it, I don't care about its message.»

Video Commentary on «Drag Dorks in Vampire Suits»



References

Dobusch, Leonhard: «Bruno Kramm – «Code is Poetry»» in: Djordjević, Valie; Dobusch, Leonhard (Ed.) (2014): *Generation Remix. Zwischen Popkultur und Kunst*, Berlin: iRights.Media, p. 189-195.

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Author:

Hannes Liechti from Norient

Hannes Liechti studied musicology and history in Bern and Munich. Currently he's working on a Ph. D. on sampling in electronic pop music at the University of Bern and the Bern University of the Arts. He belongs to the Graduate School of the Arts (GSA) in Bern and is a member of the editorial board of Norient. In 2015 he co-published the second Norient book: *Seismographic Sounds. Visions of a New World*, and co-curated the corresponding exhibition on global pop. Since 2016 he's national representative for Switzerland for the German branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-D-A-CH). See [here](#) for a detailed vita.



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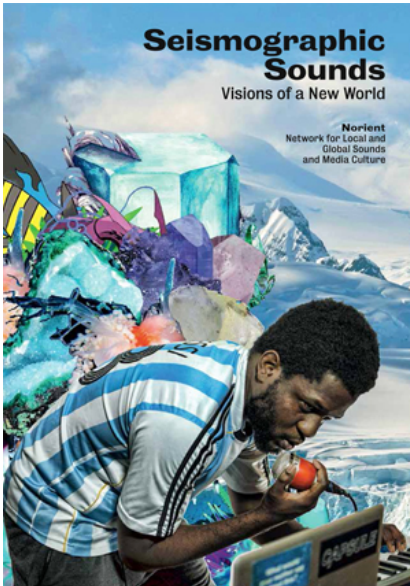


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Spotify Playlist

Tracks from *Seismographic Sounds*

	IMF Seun Kuti & Egypt 80 Norient 015: Seismogra...	
1	IMF Seun Kuti & Egypt 80	5:00
2	Amen Yaa Pono	3:56
3	Play我还 蔡依林	3:13
4	Shopping Trance Siinai	8:15
5	Belly of the Beast Gazelle Twin	2:56
6	Ham Mr. Oizo	3:09
7	Salma	9:25

VISIONS OF A NEW WORLD MILANO PLAYLIST 2016

	Norient Visions of a New World - Milano Playlist 2016	
24	TRACKS	
	HDADD - Quetzal Splendente	977
	MADAM - #444 - 1	358
	Lorenzo Senni - A2. elegant, and never tiring Cookie-Richtlinie	23.7K

MIX NORIENTho – KLINGENTAL, BASEL

 [Norient](#) SOUNDCLOUD

Mix NORIENTho - Klingental, Basel (26.11.2016)



1:50:23

Cookie-Richtlinie

8. NORIENT MUSIKFILM FESTIVAL 2017




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NORIENT CLUB/URBAN PLAYLIST MAI 2016

 [Norient](#)
NORIENT_URBAN_PLAYLIST_MAI_2016

33
TRACKS

Príncipe - BLACKSEA NÃO MAYA - Batidongoo	15.2K
PAN - Kamixlo - Paleta (Codes 02)	
STAYCORE 117 - Dinamarca - Zorna (KABLAM Remix) Cookie-Richtlinie	16.6K

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Worldwide Recording Project
by Norient and Sound Development
1+1

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SALOME MC	SHING 02
ISLAM CHIPSY	AISHA DEVI
YAO BOBBY	EDGAR SEKLOKA

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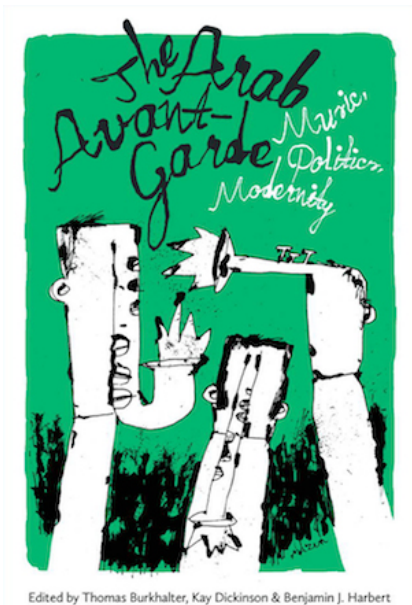


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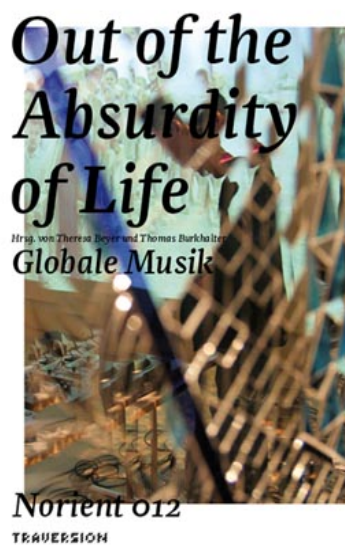
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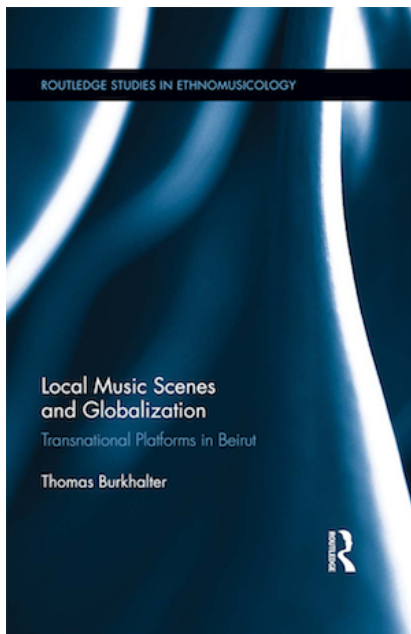
Book on the Arab Avant-Garde



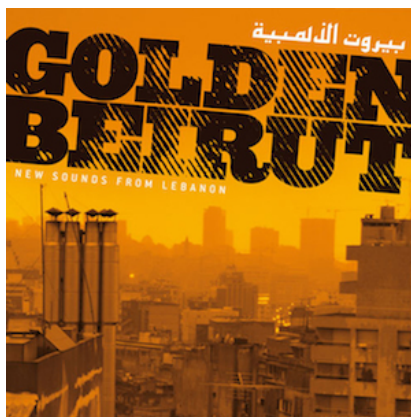
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Book on Local Music Scenes and Globalization in Beirut



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«Norient ist zu dem geworden, was die Musikzeitschrift Spex in Deutschland

zeitweise einmal war: ein Thinktank,
der über den globalen Mainstream
der Minderheiten reflektiert.»

Daniel Bax, taz, 25. Mai 2013

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