



CALI – L'ESPOIR

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Last time we saw Cali he had bruises on his knees and arms, his body marked by his fans' fervour. He was safe and sound, freed from the clutches of the adoring crowd, escaping intact from his magnificent chaos.

We weren't going to hear any more of him for a while, that was a promise. He even allowed himself to schedule a sabbatical year on his to-do list. Some time out to catch his breath, ground himself, charge his batteries and take a well-deserved break: what is generally known as the 'warrior's rest.' He was no longer to be spotted in television studios taking part in a special Cantona feature, tracing the route of the Tour de France with Didier Wampas, singing a duet with some artist or other (or Vincent Delerm), or waving his arms in the air at Charlety stadium.

But here he is again: the same turbulent kid that was slumbering inside him has woken up and thrown himself back into the fray.

To start off, he's been cast by Philippe Muyl (director of *Cuisine et Dépendances*) as a moony Pierrot in *Magique*, due for release in autumn of 2008. And as though to prove that work well done should be done with a sense of urgency, he took advantage of his free time to record his third album.

Caliciuri ignored his mandatory day off, dismissed the problems posed by cinematographic exile (filming took place in Canada) and created his new masterpiece two sessions at a time.

Part one began in July in domestic style, at Cali's home in his beloved Perpignan, surrounded by musician friends who'd been in on the whole mad Cali journey since the beginning, including Matthias Malzieu (Dionysos) in the production hot seat. Cali was able to rummage around in everyone else's imagination in search of ideas without ruffling any feathers, and thus put together demos infused with the essence of summer.

He crafted his compositions for L'AMOUR PARFAIT and MENTEUR with various British isles as a background, but this time out he was finally seeking the sun and warmth of his roots. Half the tracks reflect the influence of nearby Spain, and the flamenco rhythms of the opening song, the all-important *Espoir*, evoke the searing heat of a productive summer, the counterpoint to a wet, sorrowful political spring.

While staying solidly anchored, it's clear that he doesn't sing *Je ne Te Reconnaiss Plus* (I Don't Recognize You Anymore) for nothing; and when he gets into *Résistance*, it's not simply a question of inner totalitarian control – not at all. From beginning to end, this album is infused with a major change of direction, a healthy need that reflects well on him.

He's packed up his style and taken it on a journey toward new horizons, ending up in early October for a second session at the Véga studio in the suburbs of Carpentras. There he kicked off a second round in a winning game, where the aim was to produce rock like never before, forcing him to risk putting himself out there and wearing the mantle of the complete artist that he is.

The risk, if real, is a calculated one, however. With the help of a few seasoned professionals – masters who transcend themselves as they play, giants who never hold back – this insane challenge became possible and conceivable.

If you take one Philippe Entressangle and mix him up with a Geoffrey Burton, Robert Johnson, Daniel Roux, Julien Lebart, Blaise Margail, Nicolas Pulsais and a whole heap of other artists of similar calibre, if the chance to feature Richard Kolinka is offered on a plate, then you shake it all up and the resulting cocktail is as explosive as an armed grenade, inflaming the hearts of all who hear it. If you also leave a true genius like Scott Colburn (Arcade Fire and Animal Collective) in charge of the fireworks, you're going to end up with a perfect recording.

Cali's writing has never been so skilful: he has abandoned painting navel-gazing self-portraits for a character that lets him tackle powerful, sometimes-painful themes. As the conductor of the extraordinary ensemble that is L'ESPOIR, he has succeeded in marrying the fire that burns within (*1000 Cœurs Debout*) with the water that hides in the creases of his eyes (*Le Droit des Pères*). After all, don't they say that, "Whatever we conceive well, we express clearly?"

L'ESPOIR: TRACK BY TRACK

L'Espoir: Till now, Cali has been parsimonious in his use of the panoply of sounds produced by horns. He'd had only the briefest encounters with rock, in various duets, and had, at least partially, rejected the geography of his origins. This song reveals the three barriers that he has finally overcome to liberate a fully-formed artist, splitting open his armour in fine western style.

Je ne Te Reconnaiss Plus: A statement we could apply to Cali himself. Have we heard him sounding like this before? With this groove and rap sound, verging on hip-hop? Why the hell is he going there? Quite simply, he is highlighting the weight of the words so we can fully take in the wickedness of the lyrics. The little sister to Aznavour's *Tu Te Laisses Aller*, in an entirely different style.

1000 Cœurs Debout: How will this song come across onstage? What an idea, seeing all those smiles, thousands of arms waving in the air and, meeting our exultant gasps, a singer burning with wild resistance against the prevailing resignation.

Comme J'Etais en Vie: Kolinka guests on drums, dubbing himself 'the machine.' Three live takes in the middle of the afternoon; Cali asks Scott Colburn, "Don't we need to make sure it's okay with another try?" "No, it's good," replies the American director confidently. So what happens? A jam session with Cali's knockout musicians till 4 a.m.

Je Suis Laid: Who else could manage to talk about the opportunist owner of a fascist kingdom, an old punkette and a whore crying in the arms of a blond nazi-type, and put it all together so that Quasimodo is elected Prince Charming – all in three minutes and eleven seconds?

Sophie Calle N°108: This song was never meant to see the light of day. It was a gift for Sophie Calle, and for her only, during a 'happening' – an ephemeral song, as lost as a butterfly in a flower, with a happy circadian rhythm. Thanks to Sophie Calle for having insisted that it appear on this album.

Résistance: "So you little whore, you're buying up musicians for your rock album?" – not my words, but those of de Miossec, who took an interest in how Cali's most recent album would develop. And yes, the album was born of an observation regarding the need for resistance. If you have to sing louder to make yourself heard, if you need to put a spoke in the wheels of the plans of the powerful, if you have to kick over the ant heap out there, you might as well do it with class and revolutionary fervour. And there's nothing like rock to get you there.

Amoureuse: It's always more satisfying to see someone climbing up the mountain than standing at the summit. And yet, it is undeniably a treat to listen to this, *the* positive song on the album and, strangely enough, to listen to tragic music with such awe-inspiring lyrics – to fall into the trap when you've come to understand that the lover of the title takes her pleasure with more than one. Pure genius.

Pas la Guerre: Sadly, I feel that this song will be forever relevant, just as long as foolish humans want to die in the name of interests that are totally beyond their ken, with rational thought obscured by the sound of bombs. Some choose to play with their Famas, others with their Protocols...while others glorify war memorials, and still others plant trees so they can grow in nature rather than on cold marble.

Giuseppe et Maria: First came *L'Exil*; now there's *Giuseppe et Maria*. Julien Lebart's alert piano-playing makes it clear that Cali is no longer wearing a mask, and the family photo is taking on clearer outlines. Giuseppe and Maria are his grandparents, representing a whole hidden history of France, his history...and a truly beautiful homage to women.

Les Beaux Jours Approchent: If Ferré and Brel were in a boat and both fell overboard, what would remain? A grandson, fraternal rather than spiritual, who spends an entire night with Matthias Malzieu to make sure that, right at the end of the track, you get the hint of a ghostly sailor.

Je me Sens Belle: Every love story of Cali's has a trap. Things are never black and white; they tend to be grey, without engaging in the heartfelt subject. On this track, you have to ask yourself where the beauty comes from and why this girl finds herself so lovely.

Paola: Paola is Roberta's granddaughter. Different times, different customs, a pause between two difficult songs, a time-out, a naughty teatime – the windows of Perpignan offer a grandstand view of cleavage on a Caribbean beach, with Malzieu's ukulele taking us far, far away...to the world of swinging, and all its consequences.

Le Droit des Pères: MENTEUR ends with *Le Vrai Père*, while L'ESPOIR ends with *Le Droit des Pères*. It's what you call a follow-up, the pit-bull that keeps fighting for an equal chance, the man defending his rights and leaving the artist to act as his mouthpiece.