

Excerpts from what the press has said about:

RICHARD PINHAS & MERZBOW

KEIO LINE

CD

CUNEIFORM

2008

““Tokyo Electric Guerilla,” the opening track...proves that **this is not remotely a punishing exercise in endurance, but a listening experience unlike anything either man has recorded before.** Waves of guitar lines and controlled feedback come from the ether, from a well of dissonance to become harmonic constructs that Akita simply builds up with waves of airplane roars; collapsing buildings of sonic freak-out held in check by the guitars. This doesn't mean all is melodic, however, just that all is listenable. Check the final track...“Fuck the Power (And Fuck Global Players),” where power chords, harmonically layered and stacked, push directly into Merzbow's power electronics. ... **This is the sound of rebellion, of chaos, and trashed beauty all rolled into one as a new genesis, forming a new aesthetic from the ruins. Keio Line is one of the most engaging electronic records issued in 2008, and one of the most satisfying albums released by either man.** One can only hope that Pinhas continues his resurgence to the public scene, and Akita uses collaborations like this...and musical textures and dynamics more in his own music in the future. [4.5 stars out of 5]”
– Thom Jurek, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

“...two highly respected and long severing denizens of the avant grade, noise & ambient scenes... The pair here conjures up six lengthy 20 plus minute pieces that sit somewhere between guitar & electronic scaping, ambience and noise matter. With Pinhas giving the tracks their harmonic & expansive grounding with his guitar and loop system, and Merzbow aptly building atmosphere, tension and dramatic power with his often subtle noise texturing. ...don't expect this to be too soothing or ambient bound- it certainly still has bite to it. ...**this is a highly compelling and rewarding set with both parties sonic voice melding equal to create something very distinctive and wonderfully in it's own right.**”
– Roger Batty, *Judas Kiss*

“Keio Line is the collaborative result of...one guitarist with a predilection for drone and ambience, and one electronicist who carves beauty out of raw, violent noise. **At nearly two hours...the length translates into an embarrassment of riches...this album is not a brief glimpse into a fractured and radiant cosmic light; it is the ocean itself, vast and churning and inscrutable.** ...everything's of a piece, composed of Pinhas's ringing, Fripp-esque guitar work smothered under layers of keyboards and waves of static...barely-human elements...humanize what, otherwise, is an impenetrably dense tower of sound and squall. Keio Line is... far more jagged and violent than Pinhas is known for, but...easily falls on the more-accessible side of Merzbow's work. **It's aggressively psychedelic, intensely abstract, and fundamentally exhausting; it's audaciously grand and monolithically self-regarding... It's all of these things because it works, at times brilliantly;** in hands of lesser artists, this would be a complete mess. **Fans of feedback and roar tempered with trembling beauty, check this out.**”
– Lucas Kane, *The Silent Ballet*, www.thesilentballet.com

“Merzbow's latest team-up is with Richard Pinhas...the astonishingly talented French pioneer whose Heldon records in the 1970s...and continue to inspire new listeners to this day; it's no exaggeration to state **he's managed to cross the philosophies of J G Ballard and Jean Giraud with the guitar sound of Robert Fripp, and thereby arrived at a cosmos-shattering glimpse into the infinite.** He's still making great records today. ...it's the French half of the act which dominates **Keio Line...a double-CD set of gloriously excessive, long and neo-psychedelic studio workouts which cannot help but mesmerise you with their complex fractal-esque structures...** This record also exists in vinyl form...although the sleeve art to the CD release is arguably more interesting...”
– Ed Pinent, *The Sound Projector*, December 29, 2008

“...Richard Pinhas has...begun to explore the parameters of noise as a conduit for recontextualising his epic guitar loops. Hot on the heels of a fine series of collaborations with Michigan's Wolf Eyes comes **this magnificent album** with Japan's Masami Akita, aka Merzbow. **Pinhas' playing sounds great here, full of lavishly expansive curlicues that spiral up into the sky before cascading back down in magnificent molten showers of glissandi.** ... The biggest surprise, however, is Akita's contribution. ... **It's difficult to recall Merzbow ever sounding less visceral and, arguably, more at ease with himself, positioning Keio Line as arguably one of the finest works in either artist's canon; hypnotic like Harmonia and monumental like Mountains.** ... 4 stars”
– Spencer Grady, *Record Collector*, www.recordcollectormag.com

“**Merzbow's collaboration with French pioneer Richard Pinhas features some of his best music and gleefully amplifies the psychedelic tendencies of both composers.** ... Keio Line is a beautifully quiet and streamlined record boiling over with harmonic and melodic streams of noise. ...Pinhas took the lead role... At times the instrumentation is surprisingly naked; the typically wrecked sounds found in Merzbow's vocabulary are laid wide open and exposed for the listener to enjoy. Clear solos...emerge from layers of confused drum machines and cascading feedback, providing a...more musical dimension... With melody and psychedelic bits of ruined machine music complimenting the junk-box destruction most associated with Merzbow, **26-minute songs become approachable entities that command repeated listening.** ... **Keio Line is more welcoming and rewarding than...Merzbow's pure noise assault.** ... the added dynamism provided by Richard Pinhas makes Merzbow seem more potent and exhilarating. “Fuck the Power (and Fuck Global Players)” is filled with hissing vitriol and rumbling low end...tempered by a never ending ribbon of shuffling paper ruckus and undulating harmonic moans. The **interaction of these elements is breathtaking.** ... **By providing an extra layer of intrigue to the familiar and freeform aesthetic of noise, Pinhas and Merzbow have crafted a shining highlight in Merzbow's ever-growing catalog. ...simply put, one of my favorite Merzbow-related records.**”
– Luke Schleicher, *Laughter*, laughtrack.wordpress.com

“An intriguing collaboration between French guitarist Pinhas and the legendary Japanese noise artist Masami Akita... has **brought out something in the best of both...** Those who are familiar with Merzbow's more lacerating music will be aware of its sheer intensity at times, but **this partnership... showcases a different side to Akita... something ultimately a bit more musical.** ... producing all sorts of sonic delight... ... **there's a tender beauty across both discs that reaps rewards with repeated listening.** All 6 compositions have some wonderful melodic moments that shimmer in and out of the music, and it never reaches the hypnotic intensity of other drone music, preferring to stay musical until the last track “Fuck the Power (and Fuck Global Players)”, where Merzbow is let off the leash gets his chance to “wig out” in his own inimitable style.”
– Toby Frith, *BLEEP43*, November 11, 2008, www.bleep43.com

“...experimental guitarist Richard Pinhas shifts direction slightly with Keio Line... **an album of ambient soundscapes that prove noise can indeed be beautiful, and that it's possible to dispense with conventional constructs of rhythm, melody and harmony yet still create something both musical and profound.**

...it's...quite extraordinary just how appealing it is. ...As these extended and completely improvised pieces...evolve, the two sometimes alternate positions of dominance, but more often than not, share the landscape with a mix of looped guitars, sustained melodies and washes of sound that are...industrial in origin, but...softened into textures that pulse...like a visceral heartbeat.

On an album where texture is an equal partner to the sparse use of conventional musical markers, the mix is a third critical aspect, and the way that Pinhas and engineers Laurent Peyron and Duncan Pinhas have shaped the music is nothing short of cinematic. **Hypnotic, lush, and at times dark and menacing but elsewhere soothing and tranquil... an album that signals the beginning of a new musical relationship, it's a powerful harbinger of even greater things to come.**”
– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, October 13, 2008, www.allaboutjazz.com

“...**two titans of renegade electronic imperialism battling it out for world domination.** ...

... What is most telling about this collaboration is that **neither musician's brave noise cancels each other out.** On the contrary, Pinhas' scintillating guitar scree, a broadband conflagration of Frippizoid menace and white-hot transformer-tronix, is readily discernible even when Merzbow coats his partner's sounds in a heavy latex of fuzz, fug, and digital detritus. ... Bottom line is that **two of the most innovative electronic composers on the planet are a lot more simpatico than one might think; theirs is a merge of sensibilities that blazes new frontiers built from a common m.o. spending decades orchestrating chaos, mayhem, and power.**

Disc one's "Tokyo Electric Guerilla" sets the tone and never lets up. ... It's **an electrifying experience that never degenerates into a formless mass or distorted showboating.** ... Disc Two continues the Heldon/Merzbow mindmeld: "Chaos Line" knocks holes in the very space-time continuum... **The result is nothing less than jaw-dropping tour de force made real by two of electronica's finest metal machine mavericks.**”

– Darren Bergstein, *The Squid's Ear*, January 21 2009, www.squidsear.com

“On these discs you'll find a slightly more mellow approach by the Japanese noise guru, while Pinhas...thoughtfully weaves his textures. Akita taps into the more ambient aspects of his own work, adding cycles of rattles, pulses, thumps and rumblings upon the guitar sounds but never crushing them under a load of really scorching white noise. Occasionally...it even gets slightly dreamy romantic. ...

... titles like Tokyo Electric Guerilla and Merzdon/Heldow Kills Animal Killers suggest an uneasy listen, a sandblast for the ears but luckily it's more listenable... **the joint effort of these two giants is a great success...**”
– Martijn Busink, *Musique Machine*, www.musiquemachine.com

“**In 1973, a rock guitarist and an electronic knob-twiddler released a revered and trail-blazing document in contemporary ambient music: Robert Fripp and Brian Eno's No Pussyfooting. Thirty-five years later, guitarist Richard Pinhas and noise artist Masami Akita (aka Merzbow) have formed the 21st-century version of the concept.** Keio Line... Merzbow's grating noisescapes are... submerged, like an insistent undertow lurking beneath the relative calm of Pinhas' looping guitar. The album's six long tracks...are sprawling ambient epics that function well as background music but also reveal layers of detail upon closer listening. ...Through their collaboration, Merzbow pushes his music into the background in much the same way Pinhas draws in listeners. **Keio Line comes impressively close to Eno's ideal of ambient music...**”

– Brandon Wu, *Washington City Paper*, September 26, 2008

“...**Godfather of Japanese noise Merzbow** knows better than most how to keep the non-structured sound train on track for extended improvs, and on Keio Line, **he mines his three decades of experience to create constellations of sonic particles, modulated by undercurrents of pulsing thumps, strangulated shifts of texture and bliss-inducing drones.** Guitarist Pinhas' contributions are...at home within the ebb-and-flow of sound clouds. Organ-ish chords menace with monster movie sombreness and build to impenetrable viscous consistency... Need to trance out? Transfer to the Keio Line.”
– Glen Hall, *Exclaim!*, March 2009

“... A disciple of the loop, Pinhas has never made a secret of his admiration for Robert Fripp's work, and much of his contribution here references the King Crimson guitarist's early 80s solo output...but with an astringent edge that Fripp himself has mostly lost in his own soundscape material. Merzbow is at his most restrained... **When this music...gathers density and volume, the effect is more ecstatic than harrowing, possessing an epic majesty that one might not immediately associate with Merzbow, but highlights how thoughtful a musician Akita really is beneath all the sound and fury.**”
– Keith Moliné, *The Wire*, #299, January 2009

“**Top Ten of 2008...** Richard Pinhas/Merzbow, Keio Line” –Mark Keresman, *Jazzreview.com*, January 2009

“... Its spiritual proximity to travel somewhat exonerates it from requiring a narrative structure... The musicians...played their material live...perhaps **improvising in accordance with the electricity that shot through them...** There's certainly an audible give-and-take here, as the music oscillates between Pinhas's howling electric guitar and Merzbow's suctioning, crumbling sounds over extended stretches of time. It's like staring out of a train window, watching the scenery transform...”
– Mike Newmark, *PopMatters*, March 17, 2009, www.popmatters.com