

Bio information: **RICHARD PINHAS and MERZBOW**
Title: **RHIZOME** (Cuneiform Rune 328) Format: CD



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FILE UNDER: ROCK / ELECTRONIC / NOISE

"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."
– All Music Guide

"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." – Pitchfork

"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." – All About Jazz

When a French prog-rock guitar hero and a Japanese god of noise join together for a freewheeling, no-holds-barred bout of spontaneous sonic sorcery, the results of what might initially have seemed like an odd-couple pairing end up exploding any and all preconceptions about either party. Both active since the 1970s, **Richard Pinhas** and **Merzbow** are two of the most uncompromising artists on the planet, having remained innovators and iconoclasts throughout their careers. Merzbow is widely recognized as "...the most important artist in noise music" [*All Music Guide*]. Richard Pinhas, formerly the driving force behind '70s electronic rock renegades **Heldon**, is one of France's most influential experimental musicians.

The two electronic adventurers met for the first time in a Tokyo studio in 2007, working together to create **Keio Line** (released in 2008 on **Cuneiform**). The fiery creative frisson between the two insured further collaborations, despite the 6,000 miles separating their homes. Pinhas and **Masami "Merzbow" Akita** crossed sonic swords most recently on Pinhas's 2010 Cuneiform release **Metal/Crystal**, but the particular blend of sensual derangement and delight their two-man musical conspiracy creates simply demanded another full-fledged duo recording. The 2010 **Sonic Circuits Festival** in Washington, D.C. was the largest experimental music festival ever held in the nation's capital, and when the pair appeared as one of the festival's headliners, capturing their performance at the French Embassy's **La Maison Française** in all its senses-shattering glory seemed like an obvious choice. **Rhizome** is the product of that recording, a live album that swoops, shimmers, rattles, and roars, as Pinhas employs his guitar and loop system to dive over, under, and sometimes even through the post-industrial laptop machinations of Merzbow, whose lofty tower of sound transcends the conventional tonal vocabulary. Pinhas has been perfecting his **Robert Fripp**-influenced six-string sea of sustain and delay since his days helming Heldon, and when his aggressive-but-aqueous sound meshes with Merzbow's carefully crafted cacophony, the two have a transformative effect on each other. Merzbow brings out the most visceral elements of Pinhas's approach, and Pinhas bathes Merzbow's daring dissonance in a more melodic, (relatively) accessible stream of sound.

A unique aspect of **Rhizome** is that, in addition to a bonus DVD featuring footage from the concert, the CD's first pressing will contain a download code for Cuneiform's *third* Pinhas/Merzbow release, **Paris 2008**, which captures Pinhas and Merzbow in full flight at **Les Instants Chavires** in Montreuil, Paris on November 12, 2008. [*Note: promo copies of Rhizome don't include the Paris 2008 download code. Email Cuneiform to receive the code.*] If **Fripp & Eno**'s groundbreaking '70s recordings were somehow sonically weaponized into some form of ambient-cum-industrial "smart bomb," it might sound something like **Paris 2008**'s three lengthy tracks, or perhaps if an avant-garde composer had been on hand for the first splitting of the atom, his musical evocation of the event might bear some resemblance to these trenchant aural explorations. On its own, **Paris 2008** will also be Cuneiform's first vinyl-only release in over 20 years, and subsequent pressings of **Rhizome** will include only the 2010 concert recording, sans the aforementioned bonus DVD and download. Right around the time of **Rhizome**'s release, Pinhas and Merzbow -- who both continue to maintain active touring schedules on their own -- will be appearing together at the 27th **Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville** in Canada, as well as performing additional dates in the USA.

Masami Akita, aka **Merzbow**, is considered to be the originator of Japanese noise music, and is probably *the* single best-known noise artist worldwide. Active in music since 1979, using the name 'Merzbow' to align his projects with Dada movement aesthetics, he is described by *Musique Machine* as "always pushing the limits of noise and music, so the line between the two blurs". Extremely prolific, he has recorded and released over 250 CDs, including a 50 CD set, **Merzbox**; an infamous art-piece consisting of a continually-playing **Noisembryo** CD packaged inside a Mercedes 230 in a "limited edition of 1"; and the soundtrack to a bondage performance. Besides his music, Merzbow is active as a writer (books and articles) and visual artist, having received a degree in painting from Tamagawa University. In an interview for *Perfect Sound Forever*, he states that: "Everything combines for the works of Merzbow. I don't see them as being different and separate. ...Music and art is not separate. I mix rock sounds and art together." In addition to his artistic interests, Merzbow's music integrates his social/political concerns. In recent years, he has become involved in the Animal Rights movement, writing a book on the vegan lifestyle and releasing CDs that protest animal abuses (including Japanese whale fishing, fur industry, bear hunting). Ceaselessly innovative throughout his music career, Merzbow has said that: "Each work is a new direction for me".

A composer, world-class guitarist and electronics innovator, **Richard Pinhas** is a key figure in the international development of electronic rock music and remains today one of France's leading experimental musicians. He is recognized as the father of an entire musical movement

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in France (analogous to **Tangerine Dream's** role in Germany) for his pioneering work in the 1970s with his band **Heldon**, which fused electronics, "diabolical guitar work" and rock to create a pioneering, aggressive music that was a precursor to the industrial music and techno to come. Pinhas released seven groundbreaking, critically acclaimed albums with Heldon between 1974 and 1979, and five solo albums between 1976 and 1982. All of these early recordings have been reissued by Cuneiform in a major Heldon/Pinhas CD reissue project that began in 1991 and continues today. Released internationally, Cuneiform's reissues renewed critical interest in Pinhas' early work – *ie* noted that Heldon's "trailblazing electronic pathways have rarely been eclipsed even today" – and introduced it to a new generation. Resonating strongly with today's artists, Pinhas' early work has been sampled by **U.N.K.L.E.** (*Never, Never, Land*, Island 2003), **Pete Namlook/Bill Laswell**, and other artists, and included in a **Four Tet** DJ compilation (*DJ-Kicks*, !K7, 2006).

Pinhas' music is unique in rock's canon due to its multiple levels of meaning, cool abstraction, and intellectual depth; it intertwines philosophical, literary and musical theories at its core. This is reflected by his academic training ; he received a BA in guitar, and a PhD in philosophy from the Sorbonne, studying under renowned philosopher **Gilles Deleuze**, who became his friend and mentor. During the 1980s, he took a respite from music to work on a book about Deleuze, Nietzsche, and music (*Les Larmes de Nietzsche: Deleuze et La Musique*, Flammarion: 2001), and later co-edited a 2nd book, *Deleuze épars* (2005). Pinhas currently runs www.webdeleuze.com, a website dedicated to Deleuze, who died by suicide in 1995. In the 1990s, Pinhas returned to music with a vengeance, re-emerging with a strong series of projects that included solo albums as well as various collaborations with other musicians (**Scanner**, **Pascal Comelade**, **John Livengood**, **Peter Frohmader**). Besides reissuing his '70s music on Cuneiform, he began to create and release new solo music on the American label, beginning with 1992's *DWW*. Ceaselessly innovative, Pinhas began experimenting with tape loops and infinite delays to develop a system of electronic processing that he called "**Metatronics**" or "**Loop Metatronic System**", expanding on "Frippertronics". Simultaneously, he began an ongoing performance and recording collaboration with laptop artist, writer, and literary editor **Jérôme Schmidt**. In 1998, Pinhas formed **Schizotrope** (with Schmidt, cyber-punk author **Maurice Dantec**, and sci-fi writer **Norman Spinrad**), which toured internationally and released 3 CDs (*The Life and Death of Marie Zorn*, Cuneiform 2002).

At the turn of the century, Pinhas began releasing a series of solo CDs (with Schmidt) based solely on guitar and electronic processing systems. The first of these was 1999's *De L'Un Et Du Multiple* (Spalax); it was followed by a series of solo CDs on Cuneiform that critics praised as some of the best work of Pinhas' career. Cuneiform's 2002 *Event and Repetition* was followed by 2004's *Tranzition*, which featured Pinhas adding drummer **Antoine Paganotti** of **Magma** to his core working unit. The hip webzine *Splendid* encouraged young artists to pay attention to Pinhas' new music:

"...on Tranzition, Pinhas proves that he is still active, and vital to the future of electronic music. ... I only hope that the current crop of electronic musicians are listening to this. As artists like Moby have shown, the movement benefits creatively and commercially when the electronics are secondary to the emotion. On this recording, Pinhas revels in yet another method of achieving this balance, and musicians and fans alike will do well to pay attention."

2006 was a landmark year in Pinhas' career. He released a monumental new solo work on Cuneiform, a concept album called *Metatron*, one of the most ambitious and significant projects of his entire career. Containing over two hours of music and a video of his 2004 USA tour shot by **Alain Bellaïche**, *Metatron* featured Pinhas augmenting his palette with Schmidt and Pagnotti's contributions and numerous other guest musicians (and spoken word tapes by deceased friends). Resoundingly acclaimed as "epic", "masterful", "majestic", "sublime" and "excellent" by critics worldwide, *Metatron* was called "the pinnacle of the former Heldon leader's career" [*Sea of Tranquility*]. Simultaneously with *Metatron's* worldwide release, the label **Captain Trip** released, in Japan, a limited edition boxed CD set of Pinhas' 1970s **Heldon** music (licensed by Cuneiform), which included a small plastic figurine: the robotic head depicted on the cover of Heldon's *Interface*. To promote the release of *Metatron* and the Heldon boxed set, Pinhas toured Japan for the first time in late November/early December 2006 with Schmidt and Paganotti, playing 6 shows in 4 Japanese cities, including Tokyo and Nagoya; videos and photos are on the web.

In 2007, after completing an extensive tour schedule with Schmidt and Paganotti in North America (including his first-ever US West Coast tour, followed by a performance at the **Montreal Jazz Fest** and other East Coast dates) and in Europe (Italy's **Crisalide** festival), Pinhas was invited back to Japan to play at "**Deleuze Analogique**," a festival sponsored by the **French Embassy** in Tokyo. Japanese interest in Pinhas was also heightened by a lengthy article on him in v. 32 of *Euro-Rock Press*, a major, glossy Japanese music magazine, and Captain Trips' decision to license Pinhas' 70's solo recordings from Cuneiform for another limited-edition Japanese release. For the "**Deleuze Analogique**" festival, held on October 20th, 2007 at the Tokyo (Roppongi) nightclub **Super Deluxe**, Pinhas performed with Jérôme Schmidt. On October 21st, the day after his festival performance, Pinhas played his first concert with Merzbow at **Mixrooffice**, a club in **Shibuya**. Mutually impressed with their "incredible first concert" and eager to work together on a release, Pinhas and Merzbow booked two days in a studio for the end of Pinhas' tour. On October 25th and 26th, the musicians traveled daily on the electric railway's **Keio Line**, from Tokyo's **Shinjuku** station to **Peace Music Studio**, located in the western suburbs. All material was recorded completely live by the two musicians, with extensive work done in the mix and re-mix stage by engineer **Laurent Peyron** and Pinhas' son, **Duncan Pinhas-Nilson**, when Pinhas returned to Paris. It was released on CD by Cuneiform as *Keio Line*, with cover art by French artist **K.I.M. (Florence Lucas)**. Cuneiform's 2010 release *Metal/Crystal*, though officially a Pinhas solo album, included collaborations with both Merzbow and U.S. noise-rockers **Wolf Eyes**. The 2-CD set also featured former members of Heldon and Magma, and showcased some of Pinhas's most melodic guitar work in recent years, alongside some of his 'noisiest' abstractions ever. 2010 also found Pinhas touring the world with **Wolf Eyes**, appearing everywhere from Paris to New York City.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RICHARD PINHAS & MERZBOW, SEE:

www.richard-pinhas.com - www.myspace.com/richardpinhas - www.facebook.com/richard.pinhas
www.merzbow.net - www.myspace.com/merzbox - www.facebook.com/pages/Merzbow/21782661410

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution / Color] images of the duo are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the "Press" section.