

“...*Rhizome* – a live recording from 2010 in Washington – warrants several degrees of rewarding auricular reaction. The interrelation between Pinhas’ magnetic cascades of distorted layers and Akita’s persistent throbs and unevenly digitized interferences is not without troubles, but that friction secures a level of physical/cerebral fitness...In ‘*Rhizome 2*’ the atmosphere is altered by a series of robust deep tones – similar to an overdriven bass bowing under superior forces – underlined by the guitarist with an impressive texture of fuzzy hues and concealed melodies irradiating feedback. A captivating moment of tension that fully justifies our concentration, followed by...synthetic miasmas and swelling electronic chaos in the subsequent movement. ...

In these episodes the couple shows the fine quality of the respective ears; the frequency ranges are selected with noticeable attention to the ensuing magma. The infernal catharsis achieved in the final minutes is also quite exciting, perhaps the set’s overall top...Beyond any personal philosophy, play loud and be prepared for a trip towards temporary corporeal dislocation...the work done by Pinhas in recent years is definitely more powerful than a lot of what I’ve heard in Fripp’s current *Soundscapes* projects.”

- Massimo Ricci, *The Squid’s Ear*, September 19, 2011

“Over his career with Heldon and subsequent solo output, French prog guitar pioneer Richard Pinhas has developed Robert Fripp’s own Frippertronics technique – ‘instant composition’ based on heavily orchestrated layered guitar loops – to heights never realized fully by Fripp himself. And Masami Akita has spent the past three decades creating often crushing, always challenging, noise compositions...On *Rhizome*, the honeymoon that started with a collaborations on Pinhas’ *Metal/Crystal* and 2008’s *Keio Line*, continues for the nebula-crossed pair. ...

Opening track ‘*Rhizome 1*’...eases in with gentle undulations of multi-tracked guitar harmonies, the ebb and flow accented by Masami-san’s whirring electronics and a thumping organic rhythm that recalls the ritualistic mood of early Popol Vuh. Pinhas’s clean-toned chording at times evokes a seashore sunset; before long Akita’s crescendoing barrage suggests it may actually be the setting from the novel *On The Beach*. ...

‘*Rhizome 2*’ launches with a stark, synthesized opening vamp – cue a slo-mo, panoramic shot of the underside of the *Nostromo* from *Alien*. Akita lets loose with a little of the old Merbow blast, interrupting Pinhas’s slow-burning guitar loop with a hyperspeed...drum machine sample...

Rhizome comes with a multi-camera shot DVD of this performance (recorded live on September 24, 2010, at Washington D.C.’s La Maison Francaise), which may be of interest for the completist or gear-geek...This improvised ambient music at its most strikingly visual, performed by two masters and best enjoyed without distraction.”

-Adam MacGregor, *Dusted*, July 28, 2011

“In this edition of *The Out Door*,...we offer our own version of 2011’s Overlooked Records. ...

10 albums released this year that deserve a first, second, or umpteenth look. ...

Richard Pinhas & Merzbow: *Rhizome* [Cuneiform] It may seem silly to highlight any release by the ultra-prolific Merzbow, since the next one has probably already come and gone. But *Rhizome* is worth pausing for, because the interplay between Masami Akita and French guitarist Richard Pinhas inspires some of Akita’s most interesting, varied work. ...the five tracks...are remarkably open and spacious, never sounding impenetrable even when both musicians are at their loudest and most active.”

-Marc Masters and Grayson Currin, *Pitchfork*, August 5, 2011

“...That opportunity came last September during the experimental music Sonic Circuits Festival about midway between Japan and France in Washington, D.C. at the French Embassy’s La Maison Française. ...Five pieces were composed (likely on the spot) by the two pioneers of fringe music, with the rapport of the two as the driving force behind this album: Pinhas’ mammoth sonic washes that are at once lymphatic and diabolical, and Merzbow’s electronic arsenal of chirps, sine waves, buzzes and bleeps provide the relief to Pinhas’ smooth terrain. It’s more than a meeting of the minds, it’s a *melding* of the minds. The live recording dispels an notion that this highly electronic kind of music can only be played after much contemplation in a sterile studio environment. Played before an audience...the two together move hulking glaciers of noise in an evolutionary manner, and freed up from any semblance of timekeeping, they pace these artificially created tones with an organic stride and cadence. ...

For this first pressing of *Rhizome* only, Cuneiform Records is tossing in two more performances: one is a DVD containing concert footage...of that Washington, D.C. show, and another is a digital release of a concert Pinhas and Merzbow performed in Paris in 2008.

...

...I...wonder how Merzbow paints such a remarkable piece of sonic abstract art using Pinhas’ washes as a canvas, or how live looping techniques have only very recently been adopted widespread by other musicians, but Pinhas himself remains light years ahead of them in the depth, breadth and creativity he puts into it, as he has long mastered sustain and delay techniques in tandem with the looping. He remains a man among sperm in that department. ...

As two of the more celebrated figures in electronic experimental music since the 70s, Richard Pinhas and Merzbow always seek new avenues to probe in order to keep their craft fresh and relevant. By combining their art into something new that draws from the strength of each, the duo succeed in making recordings that give fans and curious neophytes alike a reason to keep them interested and engaged.”

-S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else!*, June 25, 2011

“This odd coupling of France’s respected, maverick progressive rocker and the grand shogun of Japanese noise proves once again that strange bedfellows can sire beautiful offspring. ...

The inevitable comparisons with Fripp and Eno come fast and furious, and they’re not misguided. ...

Pinhas’ loping, looped guitar lassoes Merzbow each time he teeters at the very precipice of noise, pulls him back in and the two truly intergrate. While Merzbow is certainly not making sweet music, it is a surprisingly good fit...

...charming, Maurice Sendak-like cover illustration.”

-Stephen Fruitman, *sonomu.net*, October 27, 2011

“...Cuneiform Records have released 4 of Pinhas and Akita collab records, starting with 2008’s *Keio Line* which started this whole collaborated effort between both sound artists. Their collaboration has been compared to Fripp & Eno’s work but in my opinion the work that Robert Fripp and Brian Eno created is a lot different...

...their newest release, *Rhizome*... could possibly be one of the best collaborated soundscapes I’ve heard in a while. It brings together the lush guitar tones of Pinhas into Merzbow’s signature elusive feedback sound. It starts off with subtle static accompanied with a rhythmic guitar loop that makes for a perfect foundation for Pinhas guitar solo which brings in that comparison to Robert Fripp’s reverbed and distorted guitar tone. You can hear the rate of oscillators pulsing into Pinhas looped guitar tones prominently throughout the whole track which grows into a blissed out soundscape that any psychedelic lover would enjoy. ...The songs are lengthy sound experiences all numbered with the title of the album and flowing into each other...

There are sounds coming in and out, ...from Merzbow. The end of the first track flows into this short distorted guitar loop that pans from left to right, something that I adore so much, and accented with subtle guitar tones treated with delay and reverb. ...

...I really enjoyed the use of dynamics in the 4th movement. Merzbow’s signature distorted cuts, that sound like screeching voices, make a presence around the middle... The encore track pretty much summarizes the whole record in 11 minutes, you hear everything from hi-frequencies to dramatic noise assaults and droned out guitar notes possibly produced by an ebow or delay pedal... I highly recommend this record”

-Jerry Salazar II, *Sound Colour Vibration*, July 5, 2011

“Both musicians use their trademarks, RP on guitar and loop system, M with his laptop. The sound is as distinct as the music, Merzbow a little bit laid back, compared to his solo outfits, the noise is kept low, but this is what works best with Pinhas playing and layers of soundscapes. The fat waving sounds undulates back and forth, it’s like bringing your senses to the waterfront, dipping your toes, letting them be washed by the waving water.”

-Stefan Ek, *Terrascope*, December 2011

“...French avant Prog guitarist Richard Pinhas and Japanese Noise king Merzbow...discovered an easy affinity for each other’s approaches and they’ve now collaborated several times, with fantastic results. ...

Paris 2008 is the documentation of their first duo concert after they recorded the massive *Keio Line* session in Tokyo. Both artists retain most aspects of their basic aural identities while mixing things up in glorious fashion. Pinhas’s guitar work displays all its patented loop mass, moving forward incrementally, then pausing to inflate certain passages into large crystalline bubbles of layered space harmonics. Merzbow, meanwhile, creates patterns of light machine racket and shifting mounds of synth trailings, which complement the guitar beautifully and make the whole set shimmer with a very psychedelic aura. ...

...the pair’s syncretic fusion has a holistic quality that provides true cosmic pleasure. ...

Rhizome was recorded last September at the Sonic Circuits Festival in Washington DC. ...Merzbow creates some climatic cascades of scorch-sampling that hit Pinhas’s guitar like a meteor shower. ...aggression of their interplay here is really powerful...both musicians rise to meet each other, and the grapple is titanic. ...

...these albums...they’ll...cause many heads to expand like crazy. True highpoints for both artists. ...definitely worth hearing.”

-Byron Coley, *The Wire*, October 2011