



Bio information: **RICHARD PINHAS & OREN AMBARCHI**
Title: **TIKKUN** (Cuneiform Rune 388/389) Format: CD+DVD / DIGITAL

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / ELECTRONIC / EXPERIMENTAL

First there was **Eric Clapton** and **Duane Allman** on **Derek & The Dominos'** 1970 classic *Layla*, then there was **Keith Richards** and **Ronnie Wood** with the **Rolling Stones**. Twin-lead guitar line-ups have long had a distinguished pedigree. But nothing we've heard to date matches the partnership of **Richard Pinhas** and **Oren Ambarchi** for sheer synapse-adjusting sonic adventurism. At the outer-ends of its timeline, the duo's first collaborative album, *Tikkun*, recalibrates the beat-driven synth-and-sequencer loops of Pinhas' pioneering 1970s' electronic-rock band **Heldon**, melding them with a newer aesthetic informed by his post-2008 collaborations with Japanese noise auteur **Masami Akita** a.k.a. **Merzbow**, one of a "second circle" of supporting musicians on the disc. *Tikkun's* roots lie in ambient music and minimalism – but ambient has never been this loud, nor minimalism this maximum.

Pinhas has flown an alternative flag since 1968, when as a philosophy student at the Sorbonne he manned the Paris barricades during the May "days of rage." His abundant and adventurous discography began with two singles as **Schizo** in 1972 and gained pace with **Heldon**, who debuted with the album *Electronique Guerilla* in 1974. Over the next five years, Pinhas recorded seven albums with the band along with another five under his own name or with other line-ups. Most musicians tend to move away from the margins as they get older, but Pinhas edges ever closer. Along with Merzbow, other post-industrial/noise artists he has worked with include **Keiji Haino**; the Detroit, Michigan trio **Wolf Eyes**; and the young French synthesist, **Etienne Jaumet**.

Tikkun is one of two duo albums Pinhas releases simultaneously in May 2014 on **Cuneiform Records**. The other is *Welcome In The Void*, with drummer **Yoshida Tatsuya**, which Pinhas calls the second chapter in his "**Devolution Trilogy**". For the past several years, Pinhas the musician/Ph.D. philosopher has given thought to, in his words, the "Devolution of mankind, civilization, Capitalism's devolution, and mainly the devolution of [human/biological] faculties related to the rise of machines". His **Devolution Trilogy** began with 2013's *Desolation Row*, a sonic protest against the rise of neoliberalism, the global economic crisis and rising social unrest.

For *Tikkun*, Pinhas switches gears away from *Welcome In The Void* and *Desolation Row* (the latter included Ambarchi's contributions) to take on new themes and sonic frontiers. Instead of focusing on the slow degradation of the socio-political and physical worlds, *Tikkun* may on one level be seen as a response to (but is not a part of) Pinhas' Devolution Trilogy, and deals with repairing the world, the mind, and our bodies and emotions after they've been devastated by modernity and technology[techno-fascism]. The album is named after a main concept in the ancient Jewish mystical writings **Ha Ari Kabbalah**, and "**Tikkun**" as both word and concept previously appeared on Pinhas' album *Metatron*, as the name of a single track. But dedicating an entire album to Tikkun holds special significance, resonating with Pinhas on many levels. To Pinhas, "the concept of TIKKUN is IMMENSE, Very very Big and Important, not only in the original Kabbalah but in all the paragnosis "Jewish" theoretical concepts. It is about the spiritual creation of our world... a kind of parable... TO REPAIR something deeply Broken is the POINT ...and TIKKUN is the concept that this operation or this PROCESS can be named."

Pinhas joined forces with **Ambarchi** to bring *Tikkun* to life. While other musicians contributed to the release – besides Merzbow, *Tikkun's* "second circle" of musicians includes **Eric Borelva** and Pinhas' son, **Duncan Pinhas** on drums, effects and noise, while drummer **Joe Talia** makes up the "first circle" – *Tikkun* was conceived and stands as a duo album. Ambarchi is Pinhas' centerstage partner throughout. While younger than Pinhas, Ambarchi has been round the block, too, performing and recording with a diverse array of international artists including **Merzbow**, **Fennesz**, **Otomo Yoshihide**, **Pimmon**, **Keiji Haino**, **John Zorn**, **Rizili**, **Voice Crack**, **Jim O'Rourke**, **Keith Rowe**, **Phill Niblock**, **Dave Grohl**, **Gunter Muller**, **Evan Parker**, z'ev, **Toshimaru Nakamura** and **Peter Rehberg**. For the past decade, he has worked with American avant metal/drone outfit **Sunn 0)))**. Pinhas and Ambarchi not only shared cutting-edge musical aesthetics and creds, but Jewish heritage and truly international worldviews; Ambarchi was born 1969 in an Iraqi Jewish family in Australia; and Pinhas was born 1951 to Turkish and German Jewish parents in France. When the two met in Paris to record several studio sessions and two live public performances, their collaboration was pure alchemy.

The resulting Pinhas/Ambarchi duo recording, *Tikkun*, is a staggeringly powerful work, perhaps musically closest to Pinhas' early recordings with his band **Heldon**. Cuneiform released it as double-disc set featuring a CD of studio recordings and a live performance DVD. The studio album contains three lengthy musical tracks that meld the heavy, synth-driven, sequencer beats of classic Heldon with the noisier aspects of Pinhas' work over the last decade. The DVD features a live performance of the duo filmed at **Les Instants Chavires**, Paris' main venue for experimental music, on October 29, 2013. *Tikkun's* striking cover art, reminiscent of Pinhas' Heldon days, was designed by French illustrator **Yann Legendre**, who has designed all of Pinhas' albums beginning with *Metatron*. Pinhas notes that he and Legendre "will work together again...of course! He is very brilliant." Pinhas' collaboration with Ambarchi is also ongoing, and the two look forward to releasing other recordings and performing live worldwide.

For more information on Richard Pinhas & Oren Ambarchi:

www.richard-pinhas.com - www.orenambarchi.com - www.cuneiformrecords.com

Richard Pinhas: Biographical Information

Born in May 1951, making him just old enough to become a teenage music fanatic during rock's mid to late 1960s counterculture heyday, French guitarist and electronic musician **Richard Pinhas**' aesthetic is typically associated with the early British and German electronic scenes. But that is only part of his story. There is a wild and anarchic quality to Pinhas' music, even at its most tightly arranged, which has nothing to do **King Crimson**, **Tangerine Dream** or **Kraftwerk**, and which comes from somewhere else.

Certainly, Pinhas' first band of note, **Heldon**, formed in 1974, sat comfortably in a lineage already established by the British and German pioneers. However, Pinhas' formative influences precede them. From the age of 13, when Pinhas was already a hardwired into music, and continuing through his teenage years, his family sent him to London for a month each summer to improve his English. Beginning in 1964, Pinhas became familiar with a tumultuous London music scene populated by guitar-centric bands such as **John Mayall's Bluesbreakers**, the launch pad for **Eric Clapton** and **Peter Green** in 1966 and 1967, and **Cream**, where Clapton later landed. Above all, London was illuminated most powerfully by **Jimi Hendrix**, during his lifetime the city's chief sonic innovator and counterculture beacon.

"I loved Clapton," says Pinhas, "but Hendrix was the one who made me want to play music. He was always the main event. I saw him live maybe eight times. In fact, in 1966, when I was still only 14 and already a massive fan, I actually spent ten minutes with him backstage at the Olympia in Paris. During the soundcheck in the afternoon he broke some strings. He didn't have any spares and you couldn't buy his brand in Paris, only in London. The MC of the show was a friend of mine and he knew that I used the same strings – **Picato Green 009 gauge** – so he asked me to come over with some. Hendrix shook my hand and chatted with me. I was totally stupefied. I almost didn't wash my hand again.

"The second big event for me was **Miles Davis** and his work with **Herbie Hancock**. That took me to the synthesizer in 1970.

"It was then, after Hendrix, from 1970 – 73, that I listened to King Crimson a lot. **Robert Fripp** and **Brian Eno** influenced me greatly. I knew of course the work of **Steve Reich** and **Philip Glass**, but the way Fripp and Eno did it with a guitar and a very simple synthesizer was powerful for me. I didn't actually discover the German scene, with **Tangerine Dream** and so on, until late in the day. It was Robert Fripp who opened this door for me."

Pinhas cites, in particular, the tape looping innovations developed by Fripp and Eno for their 1973 album *No Pussyfooting*; towards the end of the decade, Fripp's girlfriend of the time coined the word **Frippertronics** to describe the technology. In the 1990s, Pinhas built on the Frippertronics template to make his own **Metatronics** system, which he describes as "an evolving looping technique, where older material within the loop fades out and is replaced with the newer material – rather than static loops that simply repeat indefinitely."

When the Metatronics kick in, listening to Pinhas is like listening to the universe. Yes, Fripp's influence can be heard, but the raw, free wheeling, in-the-moment viscerality resonates with Hendrix.

It would be fanciful also to ascribe Pinhas' countercultural politics, never more evident than on *Desolation Row, Welcome...In The Void* and *Tikkun*, to Hendrix's influence. But there are convergences. In the late 1960s, Pinhas studied philosophy under **Gilles Deleuze** at Paris' radical-intellectual hub, Sorbonne University, and joined other students on the barricades during the "days of rage" in Paris in May 1968. Hendrix figured large on the soundtrack for May 1968 and Pinhas' growing political awareness was bookended by some of the older guitarist's front-page activities. At the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, in an intuitively situationist moment, Hendrix set fire to his guitar on stage. At Woodstock in 1969, his subversive take on "The Star Spangled Banner" respun a tradition. Tellingly, Pinhas' first album, with Heldon in 1974, was titled *Electronique Guerilla*.

From 1974 – 1979, Pinhas recorded seven albums with Heldon and five more under his own name or with other line-ups. All have since been re-released by Cuneiform, with whom Pinhas has also recorded new music extensively over the last 25 years. In the mid 1980s, before hooking up with Washington D.C.-based **Cuneiform Records**, he took a break 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 second book, *Deleuze épars* (2005). Pinhas currently runs www.webdeleuze.com, a website dedicated to Deleuze, who died by suicide in 1995.

Pinhas returned to the studio to record 1992's *DWW*. Between then and 2013's *Desolation Row*, he released an average of almost one album a year, under his own name, with **Schizotrope** (his group with cyber-punk novelist **Maurice Dantec**) or in collaboration with other artists, often including laptop artist **Jerome Schmidt**. Nearly all of these new recordings were released world-wide by Cuneiform.

In a departure from his preference for instrumental rather than vocal music, in the 1990s Pinhas experimented with multimedia presentations using spoken word and film, with texts by notable 20th century visionaries and futurists, among them **Deleuze**, science fiction writers **Philip K. Dick** and **Norman Spinrad**, and French novelists **Maurice Dantec** and **Chloe Delaume**.

"Generally, I think the non-verbal is the most powerful form of communication," says Pinhas. "You get to the core of things that way. In 1968 everybody was involved in politics. So music, philosophy and politics were connected for me from an early age. Philosophy also is concerned with repetition, time, looping. The same concepts. I don't think there is such a difference in the message except that music perhaps goes further, deeper – it is more powerful. As **Nietzsche** said, because it does not rely on words and meanings."

Or as **Fela Kuti** famously said "Music is a weapon."

"I came to Fela Kuti late and I never saw him live," says Pinhas. "But he was right. 'Music is a weapon' is a great aphorism. Deleuze also said you can change the consciousness of people with music, that music can be a political instrument. It is certainly more effective to change thinking through music than to carry a gun and kill people."

2006 found Pinhas reuniting with some of his Heldon bandmates for *Metatron*. In 2008, Cuneiform released *Keio Line*, a collaboration between Pinhas and Japanese noise provocateur **Masami Akita** a.k.a. **Merzbow**. It was a beautiful if unruly marriage. Pinhas is not a noise artist, but he has found stimulation in the form. Merzbow is one of a "second circle" of supporting musicians on *Tikkun*, surrounding Pinhas and Ambarchi at the core.

The spirit of collaboration continued on 2010's *Metal/Crystal*, featuring Pinhas with some regular compatriots including Heldon and **Magma** alumni, and with substantial contributions from Merzbow and the Detroit, Michigan avant-noise power trio, **Wolf Eyes**. In 2011, Pinhas released two new duo albums with Merzbow on Cuneiform: *Rhizome* and the vinyl-only *Paris 2008*, which captured a live encounter between the duo.

2013's *Desolation Row* found Pinhas returning to the barricades, fired up by the corporate greed that caused Europe's and north America's early 21st century economic collapse. Pinhas was joined on the album by leading jazz, progressive rock, free improvisation and noise performers — **Oren Ambarchi**, **Lasse Marhaug**, **Etienne Jaumet**, **Noel Akchote**, **Eric Borelva**, and **Duncan Pinhas**, one of Pinhas' two sons.

For the past several years, Pinhas the musician/philosopher has given thought to, in his words, the "Devolution of mankind, civilization, Capitalism's devolution, and mainly the devolution of [human/biological] faculties related to the rise of machines". *Desolation Row*, a sonic protest against the rise of neoliberalism, the global economic crisis and rising social unrest, was the first chapter in what he calls his "**Devolution Trilogy**". In May 2014, Pinhas released the second chapter for this Trilogy: *Welcome In The Void*, a duo recording with Tatsuya Yoshida.

Simultaneously with *Welcome in the Void*, Pinhas released another duo recording, called *Tikkun*, this time with multi-instrumentalist Ambarchi on guitar and loops. Borelva and Duncan Pinhas would also return. But with *Tikkun*, Pinhas switches gears from *Welcome In The Void*, using his collaboration **Ambarchi** to take on new themes and sonic frontiers. Instead of focusing on the slow degradation of our society, *Tikkun* is almost a response to the Devolution Trilogy, and deals with repairing the world, the mind, and emotions brutally devastated by technology.