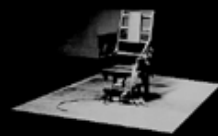


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Richard Pinhas and Merzbow, "Keio Line"

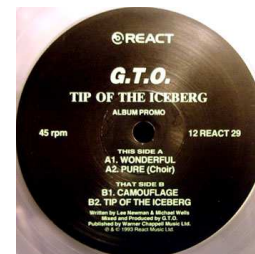
Written by Lucas Schleicher

Sunday, 14 December 2008

Masami Akita sounds his most creative, dynamic, and colorful when he works with other accomplished musicians. Merzbow's collaboration with French pioneer Richard Pinhas features some of his best music and gleefully amplifies the psychedelic tendencies of both composers.



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Hearing *Keio Line* for the first time engendered the same excitement in me that *Sleeper Awakes on the Edge of the Abyss* did. That album, co-authored with H.N.A.S. and Mirror veteran Christoph Heemann, witnessed Akita's onslaught of noise mayhem tempered by Heemann's less destructive tendencies. The result was a finely tuned album of abstract noise that revered moments of muted beauty as much as chaotic splendor. Pinhas and Akita have accomplished the same thing on this double-CD, albeit in a completely different manner.

Though not without its more damaged moments, *Keio Line* is a beautifully quiet and streamlined record boiling over with harmonic and melodic streams of noise. Pinhas' penchant for ambient composition and Fripp-esque guitar takes center stage throughout the record with heavily processed strings and analog synthesizers dominating a supporting cast of varied and mashed instruments. There is no doubt that Pinhas took the lead role on this album. 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 thus emerge from layers of confused drum machines and cascading feedback, providing a far more musical dimension than I am used to hearing on a Merzbow record. This added dimension is a boon and one that I hope Akita utilizes on more of his records. 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. All of Akita's more colorful tendencies emerge very clearly on *Keio Line* and sync up with Pinhas' aesthetic choices incredibly well. I don't mean to argue that the more typical Merzbow album doesn't require deep listening, but *Keio Line* is more welcoming and rewarding than the sometimes flat nature of Merzbow's pure noise assault.

There are moments of all-out war on *Keio Line*, too; this isn't anything like an ambient or less potent Merzbow. On the contrary, all 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, but it's tempered by a never ending ribbon of shuffling paper ruckus and undulating harmonic moans. The interaction of these elements is breathtaking at times. That interaction is also the reason this album has kept my attention for so long. 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. It is a clear example of Pinhas' compositional and technical ability and, simply put, one of my favorite Merzbow-related records.

samples:

- [Tokyo Electric Guerilla](#)
- [Shibuya AKS](#)
- [Chaos Line](#)

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New president time: Who should we appoint to head up the FCC?

- Keith Fullerton Whitman
- Dr. Drew Daniel
- Art Bell
- Scanner
- Masami Akita
- Justin Broadrick
- Lemmy
- Blixa Bargeld
- Phil Spector
- CM von Hausswolf

Vote

Results

Buzz Bin

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- [Luc Ferrari: Archives Génétiquement Modifiées / Société 2](#)
- [Larsen, La Fever Lit](#)
- [Stars of the Lid, "Music for Nitrous Oxide"](#)
- [Prurient: 'The Black Post Society' CD](#)

Events

- [Bomb The Bass European Dates](#)
- [LPD in Europe](#)
- [Antony and the Johnsons](#)
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- [Amolvacy](#)
- [No Fun Fest 2009](#)
- [All the Saints](#)
- [Diamanda In Spain in the Spring](#)

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