

Shindo Laboratories Monbrisson Full-Function Tube Preamplifier

Reviewer: Jules Coleman

Source: Well Tempered Classic w. Roksan Shiraz; Audiomeca Obsession transport connected to Audio Logic 24 MXL tube DAC via Stealth Varidig cable; Combak Reimyo CDP 777

Preamp/Integrated: Counterpoint 5.0; JJ-Tesla 243

Amp: Mark Pearson EL-34 monos; Innersound 800 ESL monos; Shindo Sinhonia monos

Speakers: Duevel Bella Luna Diamante; Wilson Audio Sophia

Cables: Stealth; P.S.C.; Audience Au24

Powerline conditioning: BPT BP-3.5 Signature and Blue Circle Music Ring 1200

Sundry accessories: Harmonix feet, Black Diamond Racing cones, Vibrapods

Room size: 30' x18' x9'

Review component retail: \$7,800

This is the first part of a three-part review on the sound of the legendary Shindo Laboratories of Japan. I shall begin with the Shindo Monbrisson preamp, turn next to the Shindo Sinhonia monoblock amplifiers, and finally report on a rare opportunity to hear the only full Shindo system in the US, which, besides both the Monbrisson and Sinhonia components under review, includes the Latour field-coil loudspeakers below. These will be the first Shindo reviews in a U.S. based audio journal -- print or otherwise -- of which I'm aware.



With that in mind, let's get to the bottom line first. The Monbrisson is the best preamplifier I have ever had long-term in any system of mine. It is not the very best preamplifier you can purchase in absolute terms (indeed, it falls midway in the Shindo lineup) but it comes awfully close; and it is almost certainly the best full-function preamplifier you can purchase for anywhere near its retail price of \$7,800.00. There are doubtless good reasons to spend more than the price of a Monbrisson on preamplification, but this product from the famed house of Shindo makes it considerably harder to justify doing so.



Though relatively unknown among even the most avid American audiophiles, Shindo Laboratories has long enjoyed an exalted status among the European and Southeast Asian cognoscenti. Only recently imported into the United States by Jonathan Halpern, Shindo is one of the very few audio manufacturers whose products must be taken on their own, their value not to be determined entirely or even largely by a price/performance ratio nor by comparison with other products along a similar metric. This does not mean that considerations of cost should be banned when thinking about whether to purchase a Shindo product. Quite the contrary; given what they do, Shindo products are, in relative terms, bargains.

Evaluate a Shindo product as you would a work of art. Your evaluation of a Michelangelo or a Raphael painting or a Moore sculpture, your appreciation of works by Pollock or Motherwell do not depend on what these works will cost you at Sotheby's. Your approach to them is naturally very different than it would be were you out looking for a 3' x 4' watercolor or oil to place above your sofa - something that will add a splash of color to the décor yet fit in with your furniture choices. "Gee, honey, that one looks like it will work just fine above the couch; find out how much it costs" seems appropriate in the home décor context yet altogether inapt when approaching your average Kandinsky - and not because of the difference in cost.

Were you to approach Shindo components purely instrumentally, you would be in a sense simply missing their point. For these are no mere instruments built for the enjoyment of music as parts of a playback system; they represent for Ken Shindo artistic creations, expressions of value, attitude, ways of approaching music and its reproduction and in the end, ways of integrating music and its reproduction into a reflective and well-lived life. The same is true of Kondo-San, Kiuchi-San, Simon Yorke and no doubt others. Components from Kondo, Shindo, Kiuchi and Yorke are, whatever other instrumental role they may play in reproducing music in the home, *distinctive artistic visions* reflecting a time, place and culture in which their respective designers grew up; how their approaches to life and music have been nurtured. Their designs reflect these facts about them. They are *personal statements*, as much a vision about the importance of an integrated life in which music and its appreciation are central as the fact that they are instruments for the reproduction of it. If you don't see their "product" this way -- if you look at it, as of course you are entitled to, as an instrument for reproducing music -- you will miss something about the component that is intrinsic to it and part of its distinctive value. This feature of Shindo products is not unique to Shindo, but nevertheless distinctive of them. If Shindo or Kondo made a mousetrap, you'd want to own it not because Shindo or Kondo would make a "better mousetrap", but because any mousetrap they took the time to build would reflect their understanding of the human attitude toward mice. They would emphasize the fact that humans think of mice as a problem of a certain kind, one solved by luring them into being trapped by their own instincts and needs. For Shindo and Kondo, it just couldn't be a mere mechanical contraption called a mousetrap, any more than a preamplifier could just be a way of attenuating or increasing gain and selecting among different sources.



Naturally, we're talking about audio, not mousetraps. And you, quite rightly, want things from an audio component that you do not expect from a mousetrap. You want the tone and timbre of instruments to be accurately rendered; you want micro-dynamic contrasts revealed, the impact of macro-dynamics felt. You expect musical details to be fully resolved, the leading edge of notes to be discernable and their harmonic structure unraveled before their decay is fully realized. But most of all, you don't want these things picked apart, even if you could as an exercise pick them out as such. You want them there only as an integrated whole. If it isn't integrated, it can be many things but not music. You want to be engaged by music, not by a mechanical exercise. You are not looking for technical mastery but the expression of musical value.

On the Outside

The Monbrison is a single box, full function preamplifier of modest size and weight. It measures 17.7" x 11.8" x 3.5" and weighs 11 lbs. The cabinetry is simple and functional but quite handsome. Like all Shindo electronics, inside as well as out, it is painted a dark hunter or forest green which Shindo refers to as Altec green. When turned on, the power light indicator located at the left of the front panel glows a slightly lighter but brighter green. Adjacent to the power button is the quite handsomely scripted Monbrison name above which is the engraved signature Shindo Laboratory Swan and below the Shindo Laboratory insignia inscription. This is it for the front panel but for two knobs located on the right, the first to control volume, the second to handle source selection.

The rear panel provides the ubiquitous IEC power inlet for after-market power cord rolling (Shindo provides a two prong power cord - more on this below), followed by one pair of RCA outputs, four RCA line level inputs for CD, FM, AUX and TV, and inputs for both MM and low output MC cartridges. Choice of moving magnet or moving coil is made by a toggle switch located between the two phono inputs. Elegant, simple and honest: cool rather than catchy; ear- rather than eye-candy - that is the Shindo preamplifier aesthetic. Still, the attention to detail obvious in how the chassis has been painted inside and out gives some indication that Ken Shindo has expended considerable effort to fashion what is unquestionably an extraordinary, yet nevertheless unassuming, preamplifier.

Looking In

Whoever said that beauty was only skin deep never looked inside a Shindo preamp. But until you purchase one of your own, you'll have to take my word for it. By agreement, I am not allowed to post a picture of the innards of the Monbrison - or of any other Shindo product for that matter. You see, in addition to its exalted status among the audiophile communities of Europe and the Far East, Shindo enjoys near cult status among the high end DIY crowd. Consortiums have bought various Shindo products in the hopes of copying circuitry through reverse engineering. The story goes that these efforts succeeded once with the Claret preamplifier which, at the time, constituted the entry-level preamplifier in the Shindo line-up. Once the schematics were published on the Internet, Shindo ceased production of the Claret. This anecdote only enhances the mythology surrounding Shindo products while pointing at highly inventive and unconventional circuit architectures to prompt such copycatting to begin with.

Even the power cord -- looking quite ordinary and likely to be bettered by any number of aftermarket alternatives -- has resisted my best efforts to do so. I simply gave up trying only to find out later that Halpern himself had pretty much come to the same conclusion. The IEC is no more than a tease. Keep the power cord Shindo provides free of charge, get higher performance, avoid unnecessary headaches and save a good bit of the green stuff. The Monbrison is put together from scratch with the goal of creating a product with a particular character and sound. Don't mess with it for the very simple reason that the sound you hear will be the sound of music, not gratuitous tweaks.

The Measurements

The line stage offers 16dB of gain. The MC section can handle cartridges from .2mV up, with internal cartridge impedances of 2-100 ohms. The phono section has 40db of gain in the MM section and another 26db through the MC input. The output impedance is a relatively high 5kohm, hence avoid cable runs longer than 10'. The Monbrison employs no cathode followers, no negative feedback and, in case you have forgotten, no remote. Shindo claims a S/N ratio of 119dB, completely unprecedented in tube designs and favorably competing with the very best reference-quality solid-state preamps.

The Shindo preamplifier line begins with the *Auriegas* at \$3,800 and tops off with the *Petrus III* at \$44,800. Between the *Auriegas* and the \$7,800 *Monbrison* sit both the *Partager* and *Mazaeris Bellevus* at \$5,800. The *Mazaeris* is line level only, both *Auriegas* and *Partager* MM only. Between the *Monbrison* and the *Petrus III* reside the *Allegro* at \$11,800, the *Catherine* at \$17,800 and the *Giscours* at \$22,800. Halpern's apparent preference for prices ending in \$800 bears further psychological investigation.

All Shindo preamps above the *Monbrison* are fully dual mono with their own output transformers - and not just little Jensen-type isolation devices either. When you think Shindo preamps with output transformers, think output transformers suitable to tube amplifiers; output transformers that might embarrass those tucked under the pretty covers of certain 300B amps. I have listened a good bit to the *Allegro* which is fitted with one such output transformer. If you want low preamp output impedance, you have basically two choices - lots of tubes as in the Conrad Johnson ART; or an output transformer. Shindo chooses the latter route. Once you think about it for a minute, you'll know why. If you cannot figure out why, just listen to the differences. That, however, requires a discussion best left for another occasion.

The System

To be sure, all systems are about finding a balance. Finding that balance begins with a preamplifier that is completely true to both the music and your values of musical expression. Some may think that the best preamp is no preamp at all. At some point, every audiophile I know has entertained this possibility; I certainly have - more than once. Some have been persuaded of its truth. For what it's worth, I gave up on pursuing this approach when I realized that even though reproducing music requires amplifying a signal sufficiently to drive a loudspeaker, producing music is not equivalent to merely amplifying a signal sufficiently to drive a loudspeaker. At the end of the day, the preamplifier cannot be redundant because it is the central nerve plexus of the audio system. Every source runs through it. The character of the system is directly patterned by the character of the preamplifier. With that in mind, I placed the *Monbrison* into what I reluctantly (but in keeping with convention) call my 'reference' system.



Once ensconced in the main system, the *Monbrison* uprooted both the cult favorite Counterpoint 5.0 and the super high value JJ Tesla 243, both full function preamps capable of handling both MM and MC cartridges. Sources were the Well-Tempered Classic tracking a Roksan Shiraz (with a 1.0mV output) and an Audiomeca Obsession transport feeding Jerry Ozment's latest creation, the Audio Logic 24MXL via Stealth Varidig digital interconnect.

I began with two amplifiers, Mark Pearson-built EL-34 based monoblocks designed around NOS Mullard double getters and the Innersound 800 ESL solid state monoblocks that I had reviewed for UltraAudio. Speakers were the Duevel Bella Luna Diamante and the Wilson Sophia. Cabling and power cords were handled by a combination of Stealth, P.S.C. and Audience Au24. After about month of listening, a pair of Shindo Sinhonia monoblocks moved into the system to displace their tube and solid state competition. Most of my listening thereafter was done with the Shindo electronics in tandem to drive the Wilson Sophias.

Prior to beginning work on this review, the Reimyo CDP-777 from Combak took up residence as my primary digital source - review to follow. The Reimyo player upset all my previous thinking about digital. All digital sources are likely to end up serving as door stops in about five years. How can it possibly make sense to invest in one that retails for \$17K? I am not saying it makes sense to buy the Reimyo. I am saying, however, that it makes no sense not to. And I surely plan to if only my children would find a way to get off the payroll - what we here in Connecticut euphemistically refer to as the *Coleman Family Fellowship Fund for the Arts*, but which my children in New York City refer to as *allowance*.

Even as my writing began in earnest, my resident Well Tempered table was replaced by the new Well Tempered Reference which represents a significant upgrade - review to follow, too. Both of these higher resolution sources strengthened my confidence in judging the merits of the Monbrison.

The Sound of Music

How does one get a read on what a preamp is doing? In my case, I compared the system with other preamps I had on hand, changed sources whose sound I knew well, checked out its performance in other systems, loaned it to friends for their reports and basically listened to it for hours on end. I did all that and more, but the truth is that once I put the Monbrison into my system (and to be fair, the Sinhonia amplifiers as well), not a day has gone by here in Connecticut without my playing music - well, for hours on end as I already stated a second ago. As the sources have improved, it's become even harder to shut the system down. I wake up in the morning, fire up the system, make a pot of coffee, turn on my laptop, attend to other necessities. I set a CD or LP spinning and sit down, computer on my lap and immersed in music and e-mails. I switch from e-mails to essays, from ESPN.com to NY-Times.com, get up to shower and dress - but other than that, the only changes I make are from one LP to another, from one CD to another. It's this way until it is time to head into the Law School. And I am getting into my office later and later since the House of Shindo has taken up residence in the House of Coleman.



Need to know more? Until I sat down to pen a review of the Monbrison (and, in tandem, the Sinhonia) it never occurred to me to think of what I was hearing in terms of sonic attributes. All I experienced was the sound of music largely unmediated by the sound of electronics. Moreover, I don't recall once having the urge to listen extensively or largely to audiophile-approved recordings. This is the first time in years that the *STIFF Records Box Set* [Rhino, R2 71062, A-D] has entered my sacred reference system. From the opening chords of Nick Lowe's "So It Goes" to the final notes on Dr. Feelgood's "Hunting, Shooting, Fishing", the box set is more than just a piece of world history captured on disc. It includes plenty of great music -- some laughably bad stuff as well, some experimental -- but all of it alive and energetic. I remember teaching at Berkeley in the late 1970s and having this big STIFF records poster on the office wall above my desk: "If it ain't STIFF, it ain't worth a fuck". How the world has changed. Displaying a poster like that would likely get you formally censured or otherwise sanctioned at any American University now. These days, I settle for a prominently hung Velvet Elvis - a gift from a student and her husband returning from their Mexican honeymoon.

With Shindo in place, my CD and record collection appeared to expand. Not just the STIFF box set. I listened with great joy and pleasure to Art Pepper's *Modern Art* [Blue Note CDP 7 46848 2], Liquid Soul's self titled album [ARK21 186 810 054], Karrin Allyson's *From Paris to Rio* [Concord CCD-4865-2] and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's Prokofiev, Britten, Bizet Symphonien [Deutsche Grammophone 423 624-2] with all stops in between. Nothing was off limits, no polycarbonate or vinyl disc. Speaking of LPs, I confess that there were times in my audio life when I found myself playing Donald Fagen's *Nightfly* so often that I stopped paying attention. It was a reflex. I have well over one-thousand LPs. I swear there were times when I played no more than ten of 'em. Now that can't possibly be right. With the Shindo in the system, I put Fagen to one side in favor of everything from Graham Parker's *Another Grey Area* [Arista AL9589] to Scott Hamilton's *Tenorshoes* [Concord Jazz CJ127], from the Elevators' *Frontline* [Arista AL4270] to Wikstrom/Lysell/Karlsson's Mozart (Proprius 9954). Heck, I would wake up occasionally with Maurice Chevalier's (justifiably) unappreciated *Maurice Chevalier at 80*.

If Ken Shindo works from a design goal, it is surely to create for the listener a nearly unmediated connection to the music. This cannot be done without the use of electronics, loudspeakers, cables and what have you. But it can only be created if these essential elements of the experience don't get in the way of the experience itself - if their presence remains completely unthought. At its best, this is what Shindo does. Its ability to do so in your system is limited only by your other components and accessories. Yeah, but how does the Monbrison sound? Give us the checklist. It's not a proper review without one, is it now? So here we go.



The Sound of Monbrison

The overall sound of the preamp is immediate. This level of immediacy can only be achieved if the Monbrison is transparent and capable of presenting the music from an extraordinarily dark background. In fact, with the exception of the glorious Kondo Ongaku preamp, the Monbrison is the most transparent preamp I've yet heard. Music is presented against an absolutely dark background. Together these two features not only contribute to its immediacy but to an extraordinary level of detail. This is not just my view but the view of everyone I know who has listened to it, including fellow moonie Ken Micallef who borrowed it from me for a couple of days. My friend Steve Marsh who will be reviewing vintage gear for us borrowed it for comparison with his beloved Hovland. Again, his first impression was one of the extraordinary detail. Not just detail as such; musical detail. If you are thinking in terms of speakers, it's the difference between the detail I hear in older Wilson Watt/Puppy systems and, say, Soundlab electrostatics.

By comparison to other familiar preamplifiers, the Monbrison has an uncanny ability to sort musically relevant from non-relevant details. None of the former are ignored; all of the latter are somehow left out. I don't use a specific LP or a CD to determine the ability of a component to resolve detail. You cannot listen to the Monbrison without the impression that there is more on the disc than you thought, that it was being resolved in a way completely of a piece with the rest of the music. Nothing is picked out. You don't find yourself saying things like, "hey, did you hear that whistle or that bird? I never heard that before". What the Monbrison does is display the space between the notes as well as the notes themselves as a coherent whole.

Notes have three elements: Leading edge, body, decay. Too much sound reproduction is all about leading edge; notes begin and disappear almost all at once. This leads to an etched, non-musical sound that is detailed albeit not in a musical way. On the other hand, some individuals prefer a sound that is largely about the body of the notes. This tends to be satisfying and relaxing but ultimately uninvolved. The sound is big, robust, occasionally fat, rounded, perhaps a bit sluggish and inadequately dynamic. Everything sounds coherent and of a piece but at the cost of being undifferentiated.

Not so the Monbrison. I was constantly taken aback by its ability to present the leading edge, body and decay of notes on Marc Ribot's, Bill Frisell's and Tim Sparks' stunningly beautiful guitar work of John Zorn's brilliant composition *Masada Guitars* [TZADIK TZ7171]. There are a number of versions of Zorn's masterwork, *Masada*, but perhaps none is more unique or distinctive than this arrangement for three guitars. The performance is closely miked, the acoustic fretwork by all three guitarists compelling. Through the Monbrison, you hear the leading edge distinctly - but without edge. At the same time, you hear the body of the notes follow them as they decay into air. Simply breathtaking.

The Monbrison nails the notes in the sense that the leading edges are well defined, the body of the notes fully unraveled before the decay into a black background provides the connective tissue among the notes. As I hear it, not all black backgrounds have the same color. This may seem paradoxical but in my experience, some black backgrounds are more whitish than others; some sound darker than others; some seem light, some seem heavy by comparison. In my experience, there are no darker backgrounds than those in the very best Kondo and Shindo gear - yet they are not dark in the same way. The sound of Kondo is like no other and in part because notes appear as if from nothingness: The dark background of Kondo is an emptiness, an absence. Thus the sounds float in space if not in air. The result is a level of transparency and immediacy unequalled in its clarity and crystalline character. While equally transparent, Shindo portrays notes against a dark but more substantive background of presence. The notes are denser and warmer and the sound has a bit less see-through quality as a result. We are talking here about two different ways of realizing a transparent, immediate and altogether addictive presentation of music which are equally true to the music and heads and shoulders above the conventional. You pay your money (and not just a little bit either) and you take your choice. I hope someday to have a full Kondo system in house for a similar extensive review.

Because the Monbrison so nails the notes in this sense, the overall sound is dense without being fat or flabby. If you are looking for a contrast, think so-called classic tube sound. In favor of body/sustain, leading edges are a bit blunted. The body in turn comes across as a bit fat rather than richly textured. In contrast, music through the Monbrison is richly textured. It is anything but fat-sounding though it is very rich and full bodied. The sound is involving in part because there is so much to hear.



Next, the Monbrison presents all this in a completely confident and self-assured manner, with nothing brazen or showy, only complete refinement. Other preamps that I have much admired for their subtlety, nuance and suave nature -- including the upgraded Hovland -- can come across as a bit rough around the edges by comparison. Consequently, the Monbrison preamp can appear a bit less dynamic than others though this wouldn't be accurate. Like the Sinhonia, the Monbrison is very dynamic. Alas, its dynamics are completely consistent through the entire frequency range, a tremendous advantage since in my experience many so-called dynamic components emphasize visceral impact in the midbass and thus at the expense of where it really matters to a lifelike representation of music - in the midrange and higher frequencies. The dynamics on Gerry Mulligan's *The Concert Jazz Band LP* [Verve, MG VS 68388] display the Monbrison in full maturity. This recording from 1960' gigs is full of energy and life and presented as such by the Monbrison. The horns have as much energy and power as do the piano, bass and drums. The entire album cooks with lifelike dynamics from top to bottom. Cymbal shimmers are as present and punchy as the kick drum. The sound is anything but relaxed yet at the same time completely refined in its presentation. When you think Shindo, think zero artifacts. There is a top-to-bottom coherence in tone, dynamics and relative detail to the Monbrison that has been rarely rivaled in my experience. It contributes to the sense of immediacy and accurate instrumental timbres. While tonally neutral and extremely transparent to the source, the Monbrison does have a distinctive character. It is rich, full-bodied and perhaps ever so slightly warm.

I don't ever recall a piano being more warmly rendered through a preamp than Brad Mehldau's was on the lush and seductive *Elegiac Cycle* [Warner Brothers 9 47357-2]. This is not true of the Sinhonia amplifier which is neither warm nor cool. Like Kondo-San, Ken Shindo designs his preamps around analogue playback. I have therefore been just a bit surprised by just how good the line stage is. If anything, the line stage is indeed ever so slightly more transparent to the source than the phono section. This may in fact be an artifact of my current phono setup; I will report more when I know more.

I only briefly listened to the Monbrison with a moving magnet cartridge. Most of my time was spent with the wonderful Roksan Shiraz, one of many modern cartridges that traces its lineage back to the glorious EMT. The output of the Shiraz is 1.0mV so I was unable to test Shindo's claim that the Monbrison works well with moving coils whose output is as low as .2mV. I did, however, turn the phono input on and turned the volume control all the way up -not a hiss was to be heard. I'm betting that .2mV will be no problem. The unit is dead quiet, with its signal-to-noise ratio of 119dB unheard of in both solid state and tube preamps. The step up transformers are wonderful musical devices that have the same sonic character as the preamp as a whole. If I have a really low output moving coil cartridge down the road, I'll report back to you.

The Reimyo CD player is so extraordinary that I now use it in part to evaluate the quality of my phono playback. The claim here is not that the Reimyo is analogue-sounding or better than any turntable. Not at all. It's just that the Reimyo appears to add almost nothing to what in my experience is on the disc, the net effect being that the Reimyo makes CDs sound more like music than any other player that I am familiar with. In fact, the sound is so much like music that it becomes fair to question whether one's phono rig is doing as good a job in certain respects as is the Reimyo. One way in which the Reimyo is unequalled among CD players is its ability to convey high frequency information entirely free from grain, etch or any other form of digital artifact. The Monbrison takes this extraordinary amount of information -- believe me, much more information than we are accustomed to hearing from CD -- and passes it on as an integrated whole with the rest of the music. This is what the Monbrison does. It does not simply get out of the way; it is not just something that is transparent to the source. It takes the source and shows you what is musically significant about it. It interprets the text it receives as music and passes that along. It does not take an Agatha Christie novel and interpret it as Hamlet or warm and fuzzy bed time story. It interprets the story it is fed, but does so by presenting it in its best light.

Once the Monbrison was safely mine, I listened on several occasions to the Allegro. The Allegro comes in at a not insignificant surcharge of \$4,000 over the Monbrison. With the Allegro, you get full dual mono including the power supply plus an output transformer. What you also get is an ability to drive longer interconnects and a little bit more of nearly everything. You get more dynamics and an even darker background which I would have thought impossible until hearing it for myself. Mostly, you get a bit more dynamics. You get two boxes instead of one and two attenuators which has its advantages. Unlike the Monbrison, the Allegro can be configured to run fully balanced. You get all this but still no remote. I haven't listened long enough to determine if you get a bit more refinement.



I listened to the Allegro long enough however to realize that it is a spectacularly good preamp. This only confirmed how extraordinary the Monbrison is; so good in fact that I purchased it. The truth is that I decided to buy the Monbrison about two weeks after I first heard it in my system - and that was about two weeks before I received the Sinhonia for review. You can guess how long it took me to decide to buy the Sinhonia monoblock - and to sell the family car in order to fund the purchase.

You know, once you get the hang of walking 5 miles back and forth to work, it's not all that bad - though it does go some of the way to explaining why I don't show up in the office as much as I used to. But then again, I have some pretty good reasons for staying home. It's fun listening to music through Shindo; but it is so much more than that. It is not so much that it is lifelike; rather, it is like life. Every captured emotion on a recording; every insight into the human condition -- personal and artistic, emotional and cognitive -- is experienced as such. Nothing is glossed over. The raw is raw; the powerful is powerful; the sweet is sweet; the sour is sour - just like life itself. The Shindo does not so much recreate the original event or bring you back to a venue. It does not take you to a physical space. I was never drawn to such an image. After all, without anything else, what an empty destination that would be. Shindo communicates the meaning of the event and more importantly, it communicates the meaning of the music created there. Shindo is art, but not art imitating life. Shindo is art as life.