

**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



ALAN SUICIDE

Collision Drive

January 12 - February 23, 2002

I still feel the impact of an amazing exhibition that I saw at O.K. Harris Works of Art in 1974, the year I moved to New York. It was the toughest and most radical art I had ever seen. Lights, TV sets, coils of wire, and other discarded electrical equipment were dumped in piles on the floor. Some of the power cords were spliced together and plugged in. At the entrance to the gallery the presstype sign read "Alan Suicide". Someone had taken a sharp object to the "Suicide" part of the sign and had furiously sliced into it.

Alan Suicide was an inspiration and already a legend for many of the young artists, writers and musicians who arrived in New York in the mid- 1970s. The two-man band Suicide, featuring Alan and his partner Marty Rev, was the radical extension into music of the tough electronic esthetic of Alan's sculpture. It was probably the most extreme of all the bands pushing the fusion of art and music into what emerged as Punk Rock. Suicide was in fact the first band to use the word "punk" to describe their music.

Given the almost non-existent art market of the mid-1970s, Alan Suicide chose to pursue music more actively than art. There was a strong show of assembled crosses for the opening of Barbara Gladstone's first downtown space in 1983,

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but by then music was absorbing almost all his energy. In addition to performing with Suicide, he began a solo career under the name Alan Vega in 1981. His song Juke Box Baby soared to the top of the European charts in 1981-82 and Alan was no longer just a punk legend but a rock star. Music became his creative focus and there has been no exhibition of Alan Suicide's art for nearly twenty years.

I had not seen Alan since the mid-1970s, but I had never stopped thinking about the impact of his radical art and the intensity of his music. Last year, I noticed that Suicide had been booked to play the New Year's Eve show at the Knitting Factory. It seemed that there was a big Suicide revival going on. I asked some of the younger people who worked at our gallery if they knew about the band Suicide. "Suicide! Of course. They're great!" was the response. I was determined to find Alan to see if he was still making art. It seemed that his time had come again.

I tracked Alan down through his agent and visited him at his home near Wall Street. Alan was still making art, and had never stopped, even though he was so absorbed in his music that he hadn't walked into an art gallery in years. Alan in fact remembered vividly my visiting him at Max's Kansas City in 1974 as a worshipful fan. He had been wondering why, during all those years, I had never called him about an art project. Alan joked that he always had the problem of being ahead of his time, but he didn't imagine that he would actually be thirty years ahead of his time.

Suicide is actually one of the longest lasting rock bands ever. Only a few bands like the Rolling Stones have been around longer and are still performing. Since their first performance in 1971, they have released four studio records and four live albums. Alan Vega has released nine studio albums as a solo artist in addition to numerous collaborative projects. The music of Suicide and Alan Vega has been covered by numerous bands including R.E.M., Henry Rollins, and Sisters of Mercy. During the height of the Punk period, their music seemed the most extreme and least commercial of all the leading bands. Their rhythmic electronic sound was not as head banging as that of some of the more successful punk bands, but it opened up a whole new direction in music. Suicide was one of the inventors of the synthesized electronic sound. They have been an acknowledged inspiration for the '80s synth pop of Depeche Mode and Soft Cell, for the '90s generation of rave and techno scenes and their pop cousins such as Chemical Brothers and Aphex Twin, and again for a new wave of downtown musicians such as A.R.E. Weapons. Henry Rollins, who published *Cripple Nation*, a book of Alan's poetry and lyrics, called him "...one of the most powerful artists going. He has been for years. His unrelenting passion and intensity have been a source of inspiration."

Alan Suicide's Deitch Projects exhibition will feature reconstructions of some of the radical work from the 1970s as well as a selection of recent work. It is rare that an exhibition can be simultaneously historic and forward looking.

Jeffrey Deitch

In conjunction with the exhibition Suicide will perform at CBGB on Friday January 25th.

**GALLERY HOURS 12 – 6, TUESDAY – SATURDAY
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT
ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ AT 343-7300**