

# the tracking angle

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OUT THERE WITH GLEN HAMMETT & STEVE TAYLOR

The Raging-Consciousness Desk's Baker's Dozen of 1996

By Glenn Hammett & Steve Taylor

Whether by sacred or secular means, 1996 was a watershed year for adventures in consciousness through music. It was a year which featured numerous heavyweights checking in with some of their best work ever, and which found less widely known artists setting up shop at the fringes of the available technology. All of the music listed below produced what we would like to call healthy mental excitement, or, more pointedly, ecstatic relief from an indifferent, speeding world.

Sorting through literally hundreds of sound-hours, subjecting ourselves to test-tones for days on end, suffering mind-numbing marathon listening sessions and relentless A/B comparisons, RagCon endured much to bring this list of rare gems of the year directly to you, dear reader. The following categories were used to determine a disc's place on our list:

**Endurance:** A recording's prospective ability to provide continued gratification as the years come and go; how well the music is likely to fare in the future.

**Innovation:** Points for fully formed yet previously unrealized possibilities; have we heard these sonic structures somewhere before or are original thoughts on display in the realms of both production and performance?

...and finally:

**Gut emotional reaction:** The vital connection to the person(s) on the other side of the speakers; did we respond with a cry, a smile, a dance around the room, or did we continue to twiddle the Shakti Stones?

**Disclaimer:** The reader should note that, despite submitting a baker's-dozen best-of consisting entirely of CD releases, RagCon's preference still lies with vinyl/analog products. However, regardless of the medium, the best music always came first, without exception, when writing this year-end recordings list.

Titles bearing an asterisk (\*) should be available through your local record retailer (Tower Records, Borders Books & Records, Planet Music, etc.). All others can be ordered directly from Soleilmoon Distribution and/or Playing By Ear, whose contact information is included below.

Here, then, in no particular order, are those 1996 releases that went above and beyond.

Also memorable this year:

Michael Habermann: *Plays Sorabji: The Legendary Works For Piano* (Elan CD 82264\* USA). Daunting, Persian carpet-like nocturnes for arabesque intoxication. For half a century, this remarkable music was thought to be unplayable!

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