

My **33 1/3** book, on **Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Volume II***, was the 5th bestselling book in the series in 2014. It's available at [Amazon](#) (including [Kindle](#)) and via your local bookstore. • **F.A.Q.** • **Key Tags:** [#saw2for33third](#), [#sound-art](#), [#classical](#), [#junto](#) • **Elsewhere:** [Twitter](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Instagram](#)



*disquiet*  
ambient/electronica

Listening to art. Playing with audio. Sounding out technology. Composing in code.

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5 most recent comments

Debashis Sinha: "Thanks so much for this Marc – spot on analysis. You nailed it exactly. "

Brian Biggs: "Fantastic. There's a Rube Goldberg analogy hidden there in the electronics. "

djbaroki: "Thanks for ur post ,what is your opinion about this techno pack is it a good choice for minimal techno..."

Jose: "Marc, holy smokes. I just realized you did a write up on this. My deepest and most sincere gratitude and..."

jimmy kipple sound: "but but but what was the song? "

5 most recent posts

[Disquiet Junto Project 0321: Let's Active](#)

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## Best of 2006

[ [January 3, 2007](#) / Department: [reports/essays](#) ]

By [Marc Weidenbaum](#)

The year 2006 marked the 10th anniversary of Disquiet.com. It was a year when rural electronica was more than a notion. When a modest battery-operated device could inspire a dozen-plus tributes. When a visit to Africa could result in an inspired work that blurred the line between documentary and sound art. When recordings from geographically remote festivals were uploaded quickly to the Internet for a global audience. When video games doubled as musical instruments. When musicians more often than ever before made their work available for remixing by friends and strangers alike.

Yes, 2006 was a very good year for music, especially for music that falls into the vaguely defined territory of ambient/electronic. What follows is my favorite music of 2006, divided into two categories: commercial recordings and free, legal MP3 downloads.

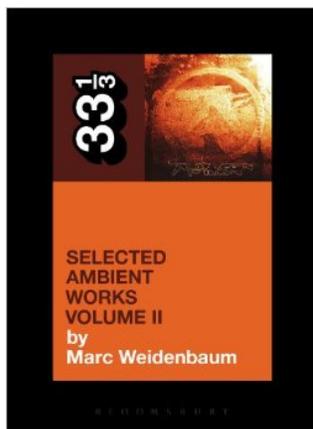
This is the first year in a while that neither list has much in the way of instrumental hip-hop or contemporary classical, which along with film scores are the primary realms of electronically mediated music beyond what is more commonly thought of as "electronic music." I listened to a lot of both, but nothing (no Krush, Koala, K Def, Dilla or Daedelus; no Part, Glass, Reich, Ashley or Adams) stuck with me the way these 20 recordings did.

Much more surprising to me is the prevalence of something that's often entirely absent in my favorite listening: the human voice. At least half of the commercial recordings listed here have a vocal element, including Karl Hyde's moans on a movie soundtrack, a country singer's surprise guest appearance on an album of sludge metal, and spoken text on albums by Matmos and Max Richter. Likewise the list of free downloads, which includes, among other things, a lengthy mix of choral music.

Nothing marks the sea change in music during the past 10 years so much as the conception of obscurity. A decade ago, when albums on labels such as Basta, Hearts of Space and Vague Terrain were among my favorites, that music was often difficult to locate for purchase. This year, all the commercial CDs listed here are available via one (sometimes more than one) online retailer and many are sold as digital downloads.

## current activities

- January 2, 2018: This day marks the 6th anniversary of the Disquiet Junto.
- February 7, 2018: Start of the semester for the course I teach on the role of sound in the media landscape at the Academy of Art in San Francisco.
- December 13, 2018: This day marked the 22nd anniversary of Disquiet.com.
- Ongoing: The Disquiet Junto series of weekly communal music projects explore constraints as a springboard for creativity and productivity. There is a new project each Thursday afternoon (California time), and it is due the following Monday at 11:59pm: [disquiet.com/junto](http://disquiet.com/junto).
- My book on [Aphex Twin's landmark 1994 album, \*Selected Ambient Works Vol. II\*](#), published as part of the [33 1/3](#) series, an imprint of [Bloomsbury](#), is now in its second printing. It can be purchased at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), among other places.



## disquiet junto

The Disquiet Junto is an ongoing weekly collaborative music-making space in which restraints are used as a springboard for creativity. Subscribe to the announcement list at [tinyletter.com/disquiet-junto](http://tinyletter.com/disquiet-junto). There is an [FAQ](#). ... These are the 5 most recent weekly projects:

- [0321 / Let's Active / Make a short piece of music that decreases the mind's tendency to wander, based on research by Dr. Liila Taruffi, PhD, and her colleagues.](#)
- [0320 / Table of Contents / Make a composition containing loopable background-music segments for each chapter of one of your favorite books.](#)
- [0319 / Duly Noted / Make a composition with the same melody repeated but with notes appearing and disappearing.](#)
- [0318 / Linear Training / Record a piece of music composed of variations on the same held tone.](#)
- [0317 / Triadic Awareness / The Assignment: Record the third part of a trio, adding to a pre-existing track of two parts.](#)

... And there is a complete list of projects at [disquiet.com/junto](http://disquiet.com/junto).

**Best CDs of 2006:** To begin with, my favorite 10 commercially released albums of 2006, in alphabetical order by recording artist. Links are provided, where available, to the websites of the musicians and record labels.

**1. Boxhead Ensemble *Nocturnes*** (Atavistic) The Boxhead Ensemble plays a kind of rural ambient chamber music, what Morton Feldman might have written had he been raised a Quaker. This set of eight supremely attenuated pieces milks the textural capacities of leader Michael Krassner's cello, Fred Lonberg-Holm's harmonica, Frank Rosaly's drums, Jacob Kolar's prepared piano and other instruments. [Label: atavistic.com](http://atavistic.com)

**2. Drumcorps *Grist*** (Ad Noiseam/Cock Rock Disco) Drumcorps, aka Aaron Spectre, fills his sampler with metal riffs and computerized drum'n'bass percussion and lets 'em battle it out like a genre Celebrity Death Match. Spectre thoroughly comprehends the tribal nature of great metal, not to mention what gives a thrash guitar swipe a Zen-like intensity when set on repeat, and how the rhythms of dance music can rock as hard as any live drummer. He's the true heir to the grindcore of Godflesh. [Label: adnoiseam.net](http://adnoiseam.net) [Label: cockrockdisco.com](http://cockrockdisco.com) [Artist: drumcorps.cc](http://drumcorps.cc)

**3. Tim Hecker *Harmony in Ultraviolet*** (Kranky) The found sounds that serve as the primary instrumentation of Tim Hecker's *Harmony in Ultraviolet* are both self-evident and sublimated throughout. Hecker has a rare ability to mine the real world and leave it both untouched and utterly altered. Thus the déjà vu sense of recognition that occurs repeatedly amid compositions that are variously water-logged with sonic density and ethereal in their fragility. [Label: kranky.net](http://kranky.net) [Artist: sunblind.net](http://sunblind.net)

**4. Jan Jelinek *Tierbeobachtunger*** (~scape) A cursory misreading of the title of Jan Jelinek's latest might suggest the word "turbocharger," but "Tierbeobachtunger" actually means "animal observations" in German, and the set of six loop-based meanderings is anything but fast-paced. The pieces investigate the meditative quality of circular sounds, from the slow seesaw of "Happening Tone" to the tamped down vocals of "Palmen Aus Leder," all nestled on aural foundations that share a rich, hazy abundance. [Label: scape-records.de](http://scape-records.de) [Artist: janjelinek.com](http://janjelinek.com)

**5. Matmos *The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of a Beast*** (Matador) The ever-conceptual duo Matmos (M.C. Schmidt and Drew Daniel) works with a small set of associates (Kronos, Laetitia Sonami, Maja Ratkje, Bjork) to pay sonic tribute to 10 prominent, and not so prominent, gay figures, from disco legend Larry Levan, to writer William S. Burroughs, to producer Joe Meek, to Germs singer Darby Crash. The tracks share a rhythmic intent that often verges on the pointillist, but are otherwise as distinct as the individuals to whom they pay tribute, and so too are the sound sources, which include burnt flesh, adding machines, lasers and snails, just to name a few. [Label: matadorrecords.com](http://matadorrecords.com) [Artist: brainwashed.com/matmos](http://brainwashed.com/matmos)

**6. Mountains *Sewn*** (Apestaartje) Mountains is the name of Brendon Anderegg and Koen Holtkamp when working in tandem, and their dual affinities for string instruments and sound design bring to mind the film scores of Gustavo Santaolalla and the studio experiments of John Fahey. The use of guitar ranges between being closely recorded and being almost unrecognizable. Just compare "Sewn Two" and "Bay," in which the plucked strings are front and center, to "Simmer," in which they are but one among many scintillates. [Label: staartje.com](http://staartje.com) [Artist: myspace.com/apestaartjemountains](http://myspace.com/apestaartjemountains)