

Roadnoise

By 1975 our musical palette had expanded to include invented instruments, field recordings and readymades*. However, it wasn't until the 1980's that readymades became an unintended influence on our traditional instrument playing. During the '80's we were living in McHenry County and we each had young children. By day we labored to pay the family bills and much of our evenings and weekends were consumed with parenting and house maintenance. However, our need for making music, and to a lesser degree, making collaborative images with film and photography, never abated. Our best opportunity to get together was the time between our kids bedtime and our own. We each had pianos at our houses and I had my drums in the basement, but the volume of these acoustic instruments was too much for nighttime play. Our alternative was to play readymades in the car.

We were located in the far suburbs of Chicago and quiet country roads surrounded by corn and soybean fields were easy to come by. We took lots of 35mm black and white photographs, playing with shadows and fire and flashlights in the night. But what we mostly did was drag our stock of household readymades and industrial scrap, along with the recording device de jour – high end cassette tapes at first, then video cameras, and then a Tascam D.A.T. recorder - into the front seat of my car. In addition to what we dragged along – scrap metal, children's toys, vacuum cleaner hoses, balloons and what not - we had the friction possibilities of the car interior itself – wetted windows, fabric ceiling, textured plastic, etc. From 1980 through 1998 this was our primary musical outlet. Now, in 2006, we still enjoy car Roadnoise, despite having a studio at our disposal and despite being driven miles away from our old haunts by suburban sprawl.

During the '80's and '90's we occasionally played our traditional instruments together but as often as not our non-Roadnoise play consisted of four hand piano. In 1998 we began playing drums and keyboards together more regularly and it became clear that a change had occurred. Our approach and the sensibility we brought to our instruments had changed. We no longer had a benchmark to compare ourselves to, or rather, our benchmark had become the pure sound of Roadnoise, so that the influence of the drummers and keyboardist who had come before us no longer impacted us as it had in our youth. The pure musicality and the symphonic musicality that Roadnoise had aspired to became something achievable within the boundaries of our instruments. We had become unlearners, unfettered by much of the traditional that had seemingly bound our traditional instruments. On reflection we felt we had gone full circle, from beginner to master of our instrument and back to beginner again, achieving the freedom and transcendence promised by the LSD experiments of our youth. It took over two and a half decades, but we subconsciously found our way back to the vibrations of that larger, multi-dimensional universe that had opened up for us in the early 1970's.

In 2000 Angel Fetus Studios was built. And in 2004 we began recording Roadnoise with Scott Hamill at his Wayside Studio Barn. Although we continued recording in the car, it clearly took a back seat (hah!) to indoor recording. At present, if we include with our car Roadnoise what we do with readymades at Scott's Wayside Studio Barn and at Studio Roadnoise, we are indulging in Roadnoise for nearly half of our musical play. We call it R & D because the benefits to our traditional instrument play are enormous, but we clearly love it as an end in itself. At its best, at the deepest level, we seem to touch again that LSD experience, and like vibrational astronauts we slip through to dimensions only marginally connected to this time and place.

* Readymades as a title was borrowed from Marcel Duchamp who we fell in love with in the early 1970's. We use our readymades in unintended manners but generally make no modifications. The kitchen, closets, Scott's barn and the trash bins of small manufacturers are our primary sources.