



Synthful

Ready For Carmageddon II? Here's Some Soothing Music For Your Drive

By Katie Bain Thu., Sep. 27 2012 at 3:30 AM

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Venice-based, classically-trained pianist Ken Elkinson has often become outraged on the road, such as while witnessing other drivers reading, changing clothes, or putting on makeup while behind the wheel. He even once saw a man smash the window of another man's sedan with a baseball bat.

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He realized his road rage had gotten out of control when his five-year-old twins started repeating, word for word, the angry rants he was shouting from the driver's seat of his Honda Accord. "I was getting so mad on the road," says Elkinson, who also has a newborn, "that I was worried I was going to get them killed."

Elkinson decided that what he listened to in the car profoundly affected his mood. He thus began composing tunes that came to be called *Music For Commuting*. Soon, the Beastie Boys and Howard Stern were out, and the relaxing, futuristic sounding layers of Elkinson's own nerve-soothing ambient synth became the soundtrack to his time in the car.

Sensing that he could do a public service for other drivers, Elkinson released the four hours of music as a six volume box set in conjunction with Carmageddon, the traffic event that shut down ten miles of the 405 Freeway for roughly two days in July 2011. (Ironically, Carmageddon fears led to some of the lightest L.A. traffic in memory.)

He made *Music for Commuting* available for free on his website, and eventually 130,560 songs were downloaded by the frazzled drivers of Los Angeles and beyond. You can hear some of the album below.

"People from all over the world sent me messages saying how helpful the music was," Elkinson says. "I even got feedback from people in New York who listened to it on the subway to drown out the noise."

There's now more potential gridlock on the horizon -- starting tomorrow, Carmageddon II will once again shut down the Sepulveda pass, a roadway traversed by roughly 500,000 vehicles on a typical weekend. In conjunction with the event, Elkinson is releasing round two of his own public works project. *Music for Telecommuting* is composed of outtakes from the original album and features four more hours of the serene compositions that might make you reconsider giving the finger to that d-bag in the Maserati who just cut you off.

Elkinson moved to L.A. eight years ago after stints in similarly traffic-clogged Atlanta and New York. He formerly commuted from Venice to Glendale, ("a real soul killer of a drive"), and now travels from Venice to Encino each day for work. "Atlanta was annoying, and in New York people are meaner on the roads, but Los Angeles is the worst because there's no rhyme or reason to the traffic; it can be three in the morning and there'll be massive jam."

"When I come home down the 405 and see the 10 backed up from Malibu to downtown, I feel so bad for the people that have to commute like that to earn a living," Elkinson says. "I feel like it's my job to help people. If this project helps even ten people feel better on the roads, it will be good for L.A."

Music for Telecommuting will be available as a free download on September 28 through October 31, 2012 at kenelkinson.com. Music for Commuting will also be available to download for \$4.05.

See also:

**[Why Carmageddon II Could Be For Real; 10 Freeway Stretches in L.A. to Avoid](#)*

**[It's Casual Hate Stop-and-Go Traffic, So They Made An Album About It](#)*

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