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Wheels

The Nuts and Bolts of Whatever Moves You



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To Ease Carmageddon Woes, a Soothing Soundtrack From a California Composer

By *NICK KURCZEWSKI*

Ken Elkinson's suite consists of six volumes. Above, cover art for the discs corresponding to this weekend's closure of the 405 freeway.

This weekend, Los Angeles residents [face a 53-hour closing of the 405 freeway](#), the primary North-South thoroughfare through the city's West Side. The planned work threatens to clog surface streets in the vicinity of the interstate. Yet for one local commuter, who also is a musician, the impending traffic jams represent a green light to practice his craft.

Ken Elkinson recently composed a collection of songs to minimize the stress of urban driving. And to give back to the city he loves as it teeters on the brink of Carmageddon, as Angelenos are calling the planned closure, the six-disc box set is [available online for free download](#) from now until midnight, July 18, after road work concludes.

As an admitted sufferer of road rage, Mr. Elkinson originally conceived of the project to calm his own nerves. "I am a very angry driver," he said in a telephone interview. "But I keep my anger inside the car, especially in L.A. I am not the kind of person who is out the window yelling at people, as I don't want to get shot, but still, I admit it is not good or healthy."

Being a father of two young children encouraged him to change his habits. "I think what pushed me over the edge is when my 4-year-old twins started

repeating my road rage rants like, 'Would it kill you to use a signal?' and, 'Come on, grandma.'"

Residents surely are using stronger language. The weekend's traffic forecasts sound more like predictions of the end of days. The Los Angeles Police Department has enlisted celebrities, including Ashton Kutcher and Lady Gaga, to dispatch traffic advisories to their millions of followers on Twitter.

As frightful — or bizarrely normal for Los Angeles — as this all sounds, the prospect of listening to more than four hours of commuting-themed music could frighten off would-be downloaders of Mr. Elkins's opus. To make the collection more approachable, each disc covers just two days (Friday's disc also includes the weekend) and sounds distinct from others in the set.

"I arranged the tracks to follow the mood of the commuter as they trudge their way through the work week," he said. "So each day of the week has a different theme. You can take one CD along and keep the others at home."

To a casual listener, the tracks are relaxing, but seem better suited to lulling a driver to sleep than inching down Sepulveda Boulevard. Mr. Elkinson conceded that one recent review described his music as "sedating." He laughed, however, when noting that he has yet to be sued by anyone claiming to have fallen asleep at the wheel and causing an accident.

"I am not sure how I would classify the sound," he said. "It seems to be picked up by a lot of radio stations that do relaxation and meditation music, as well as by a lot of spas.

"I am O.K. with that, as I need a spa after my commute out here," he said.