

CROSS - CANADA SOUNDS



A roadside wheatfield ambience near Alliance, Alberta.

SCAPE TOUR 1973

Editor's Note: The following is a dialogue between soundscape researchers Bruce Davis and Peter Huse about the cross-Canada field recording trip they undertook during October and November, 1973. They describe their recording method, the sound themes they developed, as well as some of their experiences along the way.

In addition to the sound recording itself, they required detailed information to support and document the sound or soundscape being taped. This included the time/place/date of recording, weather conditions, equipment used and microphone set up, historical and social observations, and the sound level, measured in dBA and dBC. Where applicable, photographs were taken as well.

A team of three would perhaps be ideal for this work, but it was possible with two – one taping, the other handling the sound level meter, data sheets and camera simultaneously.

The two cardioid mics attached to the handgrip were crossed at right angles, with the diaphragms as close together as possible, Blumlein-style. A uniform recording level was used for all but the loudest or quietest sounds, so that much of the material we have, if monitored at the same level is accurately comparable. The Nagra itself was equipped with a reference oscillator, giving a uniform playback indication for each tape.

MR. DAVIS: A day and a half out of Vancouver, our first stop was the Athabaska River just outside of Jasper, on our way to your uncle's farm in Alberta.

MR. HUSE: Ah, a lovely gurgle.

MR. DAVIS: A lucky gurgle, too; I almost missed the road to find that place, going on a memory of six years ago, when I used to work in Jasper in the summer.

MR. HUSE: Ah, that was an old trysting place of yours, wasn't it? A road that went off the main highway, down two tracks in the dirt, and ended up in a very lovely place.

MR. DAVIS: We spent about a half an hour there, and got some close-ups of the river, kneeling by the bank.

MR. HUSE: A happy recording site, because, of the other rivers in the country that we ended up recording, this does have the clearest, brightest gurgle. It's a very peaceful river, with a bubbling surface to it.

MR. DAVIS: Quite different from the ones later on, in Ontario, that were a rush, more of a full spectrum of white noise.

MR. HUSE: This one is smooth, with a sort of a . . .

MR. DAVIS: Sandbar! It's a sandbar river, whereas the . . .

MR. HUSE: Tinkling.

MR. DAVIS: . . .Northern Ontario rivers are rock and rapids. A day later, and we're at Arne and Etta's place, in the Battle River country. About a hundred miles southeast of Edmonton; and at least ten, fifteen miles from the nearest highway, and that was important, I think, because it was one of the quietest places we've recorded, and all the sounds we got there were clear. They didn't have that ever-present sound of traffic in the background.

MR. HUSE: For example, the windmill water pump that we drove out into the field to record, the signal-to-noise ratio — that is, the sound of the waterpump itself as the signal, to the background noise — was *high*. It was one of the most silent ambiances that we recorded on the whole tour.

MR. DAVIS: That began one theme that developed later on, throughout the tour: the sound of disappearing, obsolete machines. Because that windmill had a characteristic limping sound to it, that whenever the wind blew up, it would do double-time. Any sound in the background would have been that of wind. That also developed into a keynote of the Alberta soundscape that we recognized and recorded a good deal of; for instance, the wind in poplar trees, the wind blowing through the holes in an old tractor shed, or the wind blowing through the wheatfield. Alberta was a good place to get many of these old and disappearing sounds, because, for one thing, the . . .

MR. HUSE: NEW YORK SHARPIES HAVEN'T MOVED IN YET!

MR. DAVIS: Almost all of the sounds that we recorded there were very clear, and very good for, for instance, archive purposes. Anyway, such sounds as . . .

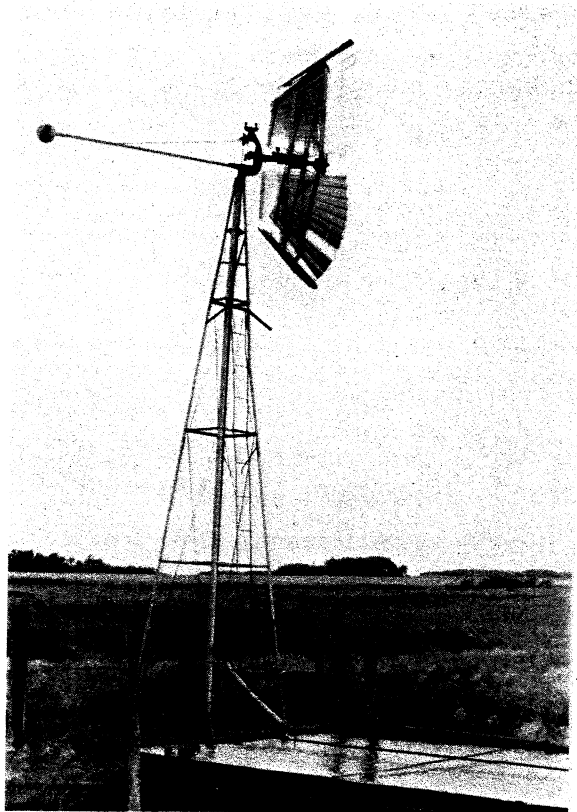
MR. HUSE: The old butter churn in the tractor shed.

MR. DAVIS: In fact, a whole sequence of churning butter; not only the sound of the churn, but the sequence, the process, and the subtle changes of sound that are involved, from the first pouring in of the cream to the final

MR. HUSE: A microcomposition.

MR. DAVIS: And it sure hurts the arms, too.

MR. HUSE: People were spelling each other off. I was hanging from the rafters, taking pictures of it. This



An old windmill waterpump, Alliance, Alberta.

was one way to keep track of what went on, along with the various sound level readings that were taken, along with temperature, wind direction, time of day, and . . .

MR. DAVIS: Other documentary notes that the person who wasn't operating the tape recorder took care of.

MR. HUSE: We alternated days as to who ran the tape recorder, and who did all the other donkey work, who took care of the not-too-exciting, but necessary, written information for processing the tapes afterwards: sociological data, the microphone setup, how many feet from the sound, the direction of the wind, this sort of thing.

MR. DAVIS: In other words, putting the sound into the context from which you take it. Whenever you record a sound, you're ripping it out of its social, historical, and general acoustic context, so that the difference, for instance, between our recordings and a sound effects recording is that the sound effects recording is just the sound, and our recordings are not only the sound, but also the related background material to that sound. We're indebted to Harry Pottage of Sedgewick, Alberta, who has collected many old items, which we taped such as. . .

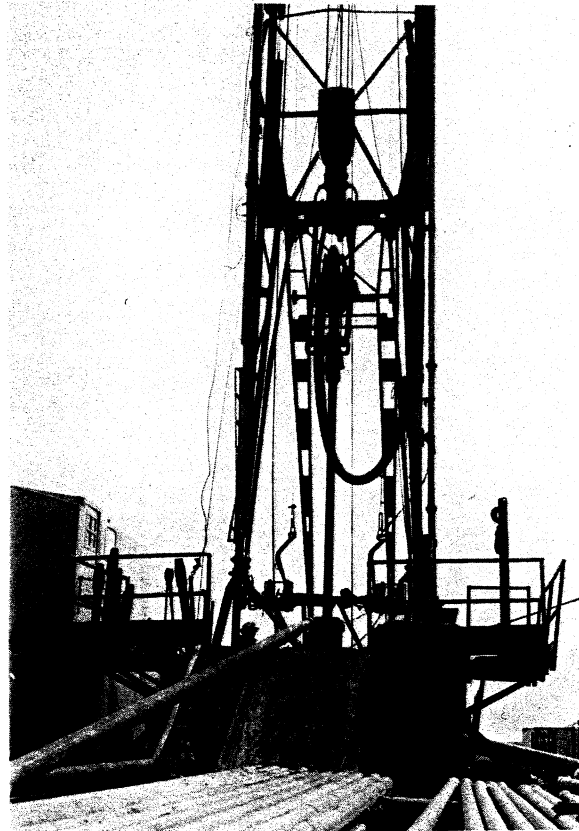
MR. HUSE: A couple of old phonograph players, and several clocks, of various chimes and ages. . .

MR. DAVIS: And an old schoolbell. . .

MR. HUSE: And an old school slate, with the actual slate sticks, which are used to write with, and we have Harry writing on the slate. It's rather a lovely sound from the past.

MR. DAVIS: When we turned the tape recorder off, and were saying good-bye, a sound happened that we really regretted missing, and that was the siren in Sedgewick.

Drilling for oil, Alberta.



MR. HUSE: Ah, the Sedgewick soundmark. We at least got the Alliance soundmark, after we'd recorded the blacksmith, with all the various instruments he had. We were very close to the soundmark, and when it went off, we had our machine going. It had a long decay. It was the first of several soundmarks which we

taped all across the country on this trip.

MR. DAVIS: And not unlike a lot of them. Even on the East Coast, they tended to be sirens.

MR. HUSE: The ones in Sedgewick and Alliance went off at noon, every day . . . In Viking, Alberta, my grandfather, Frank Murray, provided us with a lot of first-hand accounts of sounds of the environment of the time when he homesteaded, which was at the turn of the century: natural sounds, and then, of course, the gradual encroachment upon the environment by technology. While we were in Viking, which is on the CN main line . . .

MR. DAVIS: We picked up two themes which were to develop later on: train whistles and church bells. This particular churchbell was a recording over a speaker, as opposed to real bells.

MR. HUSE: Many of them are, these days.

MR. DAVIS: Another sound that's all over the place in Alberta are these gooney-birds, which are pumps in the middle of fields, pumping out the oil into pipelines. They all have unique rhythms and sounds, and we recorded ten or eleven of them.

MR. HUSE: And a couple of gas plants. . .

MR. DAVIS: Extracting sulphur from the natural gas, and putting the salt water back into the ground; a good rattle of diesel motors.

MR. HUSE: Of primal sounds, gas was one of our good fire recordings, the burnoff from one of the gas plants which could be seen from the farmhouse where we were staying. . .

MR. DAVIS: At night, when it illuminated the skyline.

MR. HUSE: Too bad we couldn't record the Northern Lights; we heard that one could hear them crackling, but, strain our ears as we might, they remained for us purely a visual, magnificent . . .

MR. DAVIS: Treat. We rounded off the Alberta part of our tour with the sounds of the harvest, recorded one or two combines. . .

MR. HUSE: And put our car on the train and sent it to Halifax.

MR. DAVIS: Five days later, we ended up in Newfoundland, and this was a completely different situation for us. We met an old Newfie on the train who told us to find some "Fish and Brews." We never did, but we did manage to find a few good foghorns, and this was our main theme in Newfoundland; some of these foghorns have been around since the beginning of the century, but are beginning to be phased out by the government, which operates them.

MR. HUSE: BARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR-OHHHHHHHHHHHHMMMMMMMM.

MR. DAVIS: They're great old sounds; the fishermen liked them because they were very effective, they can travel for miles . . .

MR. HUSE: (imitation of new-type horn) PEAW!



Measuring the sound level of a combine, near Alliance, Alberta.

MR. DAVIS: Over the ocean. But they're being replaced by electronic gadgets which aren't really as good, but they're more convenient for the bureaucrats. We recorded the last remaining ones. One old lightkeeper spent half an hour trying to fire up an old diaphone, eventually succeeded, and probably for the last time, because it is to be phased out within a very short time.

MR. HUSE: The theme of local dialects had started to emerge in Alberta, when we had been recording people reminiscing about sounds in the old days, along with the theme of "what's on the AM radio." We had a radio in the car, and we had done a sampling in Alberta. This we started to do again in Newfoundland. And to record the sounds of people talking; we were asking people directions anyway, so we decided we might as well record them, and it would be a good way of sampling the local dialects.

MR. DAVIS: The radio stations we found on the rest of the tour to be fairly uniform in the way that the announcers spoke; Newfoundland was one of the few places that did reflect the local dialect, and it was on the CBC station that we found this.

MR. HUSE: Most of the stations had that midwest, American dialect and the expected razamataz commercial rap.

MR. DAVIS: Probably the most exciting event in Newfoundland was the . . .

MR. HUSE: Whoooooooo-HOOOOOOOO!

MR. DAVIS: Night of the storm, when we were in one of the more remote areas, looking for a particular foghorn. . .

MR. HUSE: Away up there in Herring Neck. And while we were recording the wind whipping through the bushes, and tearing them off the cliffs, some of that moisture got into our microphones, and the next morning we realized the effect this moisture had had and we had to dry out our microphones before they were operative again. BUT we did record one bona fide, authentic Newfoundland storm.

MR. DAVIS: Also one bona fide, authentic Newfoundland Sunday morning, and the bells from the churches around.

MR. HUSE: One of which was an extended recording of carillon bells, a syrupy recording. . .

MR. DAVIS: With cracks on the record.

MR. HUSE: The record's scratched, so that as the bells ended you'd hear the "chwick chwick scratch scratch clunk" of the needle on the record, which is really becoming a feature of the sounds that churches are emitting into the soundscape. Then, after taping a phenomenal blood 'n' fire Salvation Army church service in Lewiston, we caught a plane to Halifax; ZOOM, arrived in Halifax, picked up our automobile with all our gear, tapes and quick like a bunny went to our friend Sandy Tilley's place just outside of Halifax.

MR. DAVIS: We found ourselves with a fresh problem, namely, what to do in Halifax? It was all new to us.



Barrel-making on the Ross farm, northwest of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

MR. HUSE: There were two leads. The Bluenose, making tours out of Halifax, and the oldest church in Canada, the second oldest in North America, which we did record, against a continuous white noise roar from the Moir Chocolate Factory across the street, a good example of bad acoustic design in the urban soundscape.

MR. DAVIS: And another lead, a follow-over from Newfoundland, the Chebucto Head diaphone foghorn, type F, similar to Vancouver's and, again, phased out and only used as a standby unit. A few more things in Halifax: the gun, blasting away at noon every day . . .

MR. HUSE: From Citadel hill. . .

MR. DAVIS: . . . and, according to a taxi-driver, just something for the tourists.

MR. HUSE: BOOM!

MR. DAVIS: The St. George's Island foghorn was going continuously one afternoon. We drove down to the waterfront, got our bearings, recorded a little ferry that goes across to Dartmouth, and heard that foghorn going, somewhere in the middle of Halifax harbour. A lot of airplanes in Halifax. They kept buzzing all the time. It's a naval base. A keynote there.

MR. HUSE: Military town. There was the Atlantic Winter Fair, which happened to be running, you know, early winter . . .

MR. DAVIS: Cows. . .

MR. HUSE: Early October. . .

MR. DAVIS: Horses, midway. . .

MR. HUSE: People brushing horse's. . .

MR. DAVIS: Tails. . .

MR. HUSE: Coats. . .

MR. DAVIS: That was the best sound we got. Most of it was fairly boring, because midways these days are filled with schizophrenic . . .

MR. HUSE: Continuous hums and buzzes and all that technological sound.

MR. DAVIS: Loudspeakers.

MR. HUSE: And even the midway, which is making an awful lot of noise, trying to catch the attention of someone on the other side of town but deafening to the person standing outside the particular sideshow and gawking at the paintings of nude girls.

MR. DAVIS: I measured 108 dB about eight feet from one of the hawkers' loudspeakers.

MR. HUSE: After we had recorded the girl in the A & W in Halifax, taking our order over a dying

loudspeaker, we wended our way southward along the (whistles: whoo-HEW, whoo-HEW) seagull-strewn coast of Nova Scotia, down to the ship-building community of Lunenburg.

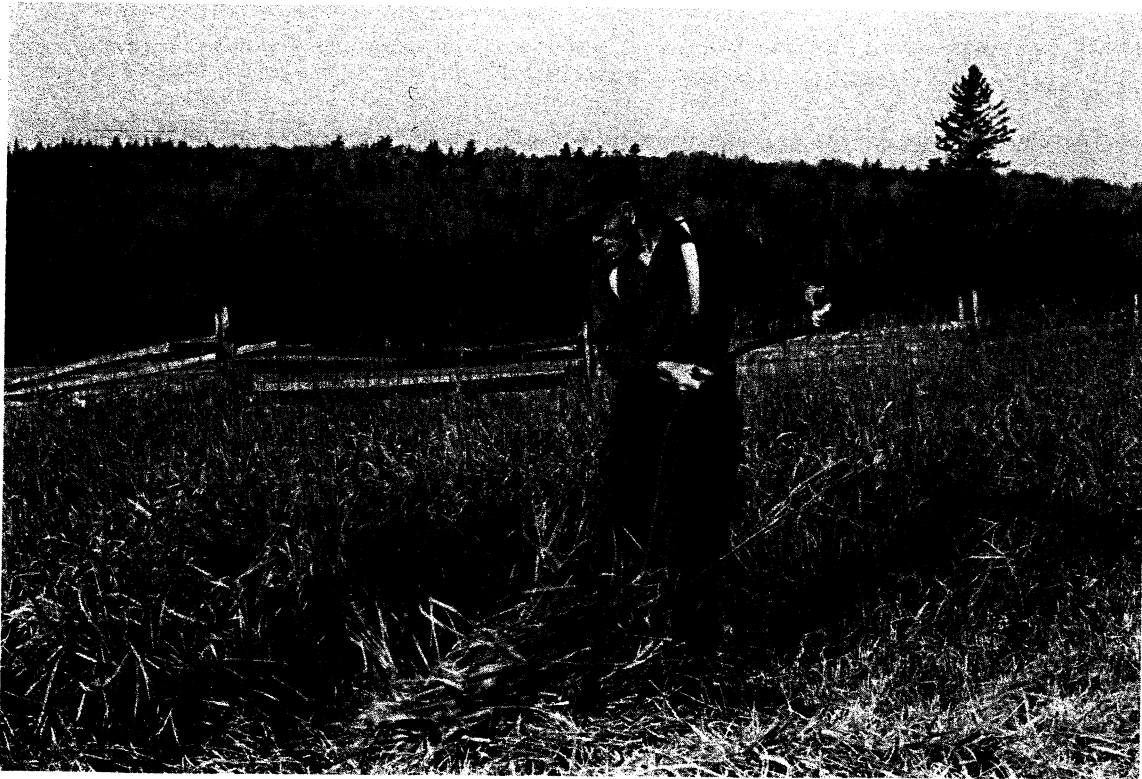
MR. DAVIS: Where all the pirates were, back in the eighteenth century, and we found one of the last men who still knows how to make boats by hand with *wood*. We got him hammering those wooden plugs into the bottom of that boat: poc, poc, poc.

MR. HUSE: We also got some good dialogue about how things were, how they used to make boats and so on. We also took our radio sample in Nova Scotia down in the vicinity of Lunenburg. Next we went to the Annapolis Valley to get the sound of *apples* pumping clumping plopping into the boxes in their various sizes.

MR. DAVIS: It took us two days because it wasn't quite the right season. We eventually found a woman who co-operatively appled for us.

MR. HUSE: But not before the Nagra tape recorder started making funny clicks and so we zoomed back a hundred miles an hour to Halifax and got hold of a very congenial bunch of technicians at CBC Halifax who checked out our machine and said, "Naw, don't worry, that noise won't be recorded," and then we zoomed back into the hinterland and recorded the sound we had to in the Annapolis Valley.

MR. DAVIS: We met some people at a place called the Ross Farm and this place is probably unique in Canada because all the work done on that farm is done in the good ol' ways. There are oxen, and they plow the fields.



Scything, Ross farm, Nova Scotia.

MR. HUSE: There's a barrelmaker! Old guy with a scythe, scythin' the grass, waitin' for cars to go by because we don't want any of the new-fangled twentieth-century automo-bile sound behind *our* old scythe.

MR. DAVIS: And then we headed up, back to Halifax to get the Chebucto Head Type F diaphone.

MR. HUSE: RRRRRRRRRR-EH!

MR. DAVIS: 140 dB.

MR. HUSE: We went to Cape Breton Island because some people in a cafe in Lunenburg had told us about Johnny and Hilda Murphy, living in the. . .

MR. DAVIS: Margaree Valley. . .

MR. HUSE: Of Cape Breton.

MR. DAVIS: We started off towards Cape Breton and took our way to Louisburg, where they're making the replica of the Fortress of Louisburg. We got the sounds of bricklaying.

MR. HUSE: Ding dong.

MR. DAVIS: Making the fortress, the clock tower . . .

MR. HUSE: The bell rang eleven times at eleven o'clock. . .

MR. DAVIS: Right on schedule. We had been to a fish plant, where we had recorded the sounds of fish being loaded from the draggers into the fish factory.

MR. HUSE: Slurp slurp slop slop and whoosh. A boring sound because being a modern invention, something that sucks the fish out of the fish hold, it had all that modern hum and roar and buzz to it. And we recorded Mrs. Pope's kitchen, her reminiscing about the old days, and how many years she had spent in her house. Being good soundscapers, we were on our toes, and had our tape recorder going. . .

MR. DAVIS: When she gave us breakfast.

MR. HUSE: Bing! You could hear the springs of the toaster going, and you could hear the springs of Mrs. Pope's memory as she was recalling the last time . . .

MR. DAVIS: How many generations of Popes had lived in her house? Six?

MR. HUSE: Oh, at least.

MR. DAVIS: Something incredible like that. Six or sixty.

MR. HUSE: That's where you left your continuous hum razor.

MR. DAVIS: The next stop was at the reconstructed railway station at Glace Bay where there's an old steam engine. Before we knew it, we were on the engine and it was steaming out of Glace Bay.

MR. HUSE: All aboard!

MR. DAVIS: We recorded that, the whistle, the old engineer shoveling coal.

MR. HUSE: Soooo loud, soooo loud. We were huddled and crouched into the cab right where they shovel coal into the engine.

MR. DAVIS: This *old* sound was the loudest that we recorded on the two-month recording tour: it measured 121 dBA at ten feet. From there we went to the economic heart of Cape Breton Island, the foundry.

MR. HUSE: The Open Hearth Furnaces! in the . . .

MR. DAVIS: Sydney Steel Corporation and we went right to the heart of the operation where they were blasting and melting down iron.

MR. HUSE: You got quite a charge there, didn't you, Bruce. You were riding in the charge car and green sparks were shooting from your eyeballs.

MR. DAVIS: It was the most *fragile* operation I ever did because I was on this car which was moving and shunting and jerking back and forth, stoking these furnaces at 1600 degrees Fahrenheit, full of scrap iron, and I was bouncing back and forth like a ping-pong ball in a high wind, but managed to get a fairly convincing sound. What probably is missing on the tape is the aura of . . .

MR. HUSE: The green sparks. . .

MR. DAVIS: And the enormity of the foundry itself, which is almost like a trip to the Underworld.

MR. HUSE: Ha! This really was a working-class hit. It took me back to times of working in a smelter in British Columbia. Another good sound in the Sydney plant was just the unadulterated roar of the open-hearth furnace, where they're melting down the iron ore.

MR. DAVIS: This rather amazing day came to an end some hours later in the Margaree Valley in the home of Johnny and Hilda Murphy, two old-timers who had farmed the valley and were born two miles away from where we made the recording. . .

MR. HUSE: And talk in counterpoint. . .

MR. DAVIS: About the old days, and the good sounds they used to hear which, for some reason, Hilda says, you don't hear anymore.

MR. HUSE: They also play a lot of mean duets on various instruments. Johnny and Hilda Murphy run a strange little museum of antique instruments, all of which hang on the walls of their living-room. We spent a couple of enjoyable hours there recording their reminiscences and their music. . .

MR. DAVIS: Which was, for us, almost a novel exercise.

MR. HUSE: It's difficult working as a soundscaper in the field, *vis-a-vis* music, because music of course is something we're supposed to listen to. And as World Soundscapers, we're orienting our field of study



Spinning, Ross farm, Nova Scotia.

towards those sounds we have forgotten to listen to or have stopped listening to for our self-preservation.

MR. DAVIS: The next morning, after a lovely meal typical of the seaboard cuisine: lobster at the ferry terminal, we took the ferry and headed towards Souris . . .

MR. HUSE: In P.E.I.: the smallest province in Canada and. . .

MR. DAVIS: Found our way to the not-too-distant coastline again, had a little conversation with Billy MacMillan, lightkeeper at North River.

MR. HUSE: Got onto our lighthouse and foghorn theme, recorded his electronic installation of a few months past, then . . .

MR. DAVIS: Taped the sound that goes off every noon in Charlottetown on the top of the fire station: a great big five second blast.

MR. HUSE: Got a recording of a *recorded* bell sequence from one of the main churches, did our laundry, went to a movie, had a good sleep, and split for the west end of the island, but . . .

MR. DAVIS: Not without a few doubts as to whether we'd recorded anything of consequence in P.E.I. because it is rather an inscrutable place: small, quiet. We spend an evening recording nothing but: quiet:

part of P.E.I.

MR. HUSE: We took great care to indicate on the tape box: this tape actually had been used and the static you heard was reality. Such a silent ambience *did* exist and in Canada on Prince Edward Island.

MR. DAVIS: We continued other themes: factory whistles, the sound of Schurman Mills in Summerside, the sound of old Brophy's Bull which is the name they give to the horn . . .

MR. HUSE: BREEEEEEEEE-ONNNNH!

MR. DAVIS: That sounds at noon in Summerside, and was one of the gifts bestowed upon the town by an old mayor sometime gone. Add to that a few church bells, a kid whistling in the street, some autumn leaves falling and rustling along the lawn, and . . .

MR. HUSE: The creak of a bicycle. After a few swings into the foxfarm countryside a few more listens to the sea and the wind in the trees, we headed for the ferry terminal that would take us again to the mainland.

MR. DAVIS: We rode on the moon's hoary little toes. Here we are back on the mainland . . .

MR. HUSE: Toot toot!

MR. DAVIS: At Cape Tormentine, New Brunswick, probably the last place where they still have a steam foghorn which dates from the last century.

MR. HUSE: Chunka chunka chunka chunka.

MR. DAVIS: We spent about two hours there because the operator was somebody whom we could talk with and he understood what we were trying to record, because his job was basically obsolete, like the machinery that we recorded and the foghorn at the end of the jetty, and the steam horn.

MR. HUSE: The following day we recorded the curfew siren or honker in Sackville, some Sackville dialect, and went on to Moncton . . .

MR. DAVIS: To continue the water theme. This time it was in the form of a tidal bore. . .

MR. HUSE: Which was a disappointment. However, we recorded the sound of that wave. . .

MR. DAVIS: Eight inches. . .

MR. HUSE: That kind of sneaks up the Bay of Fundy creating a vivid ripple. . .

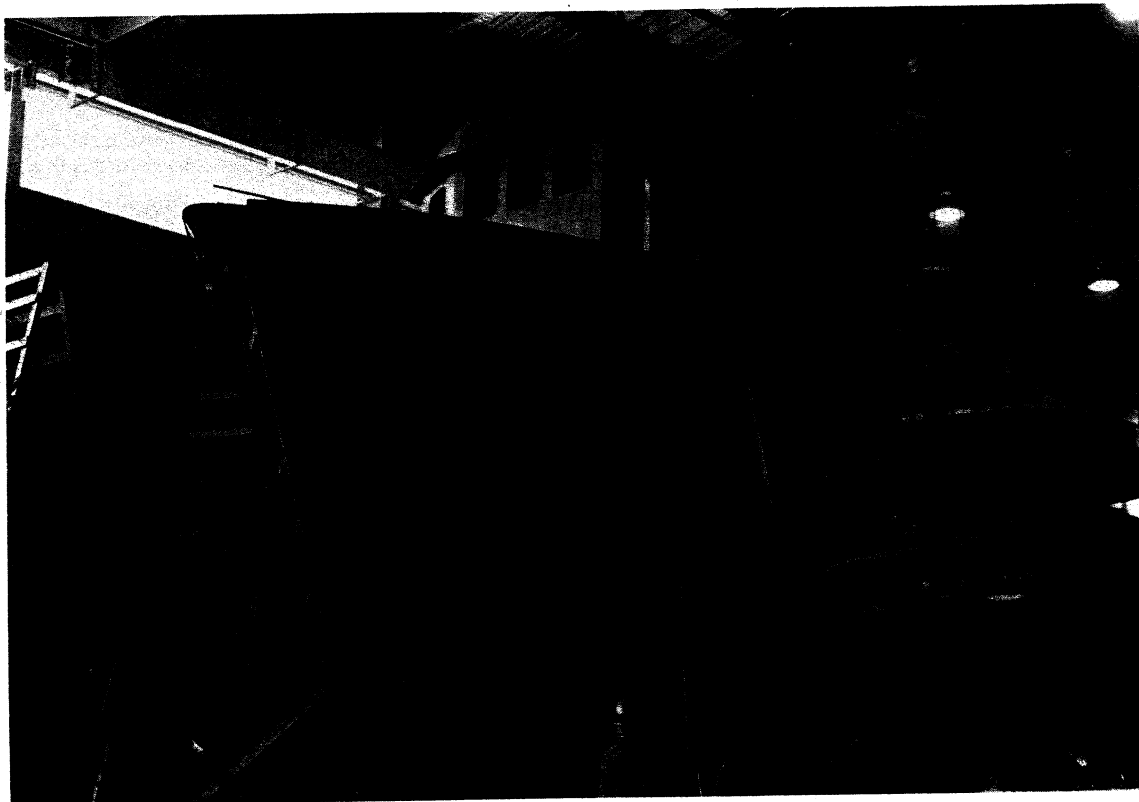
MR. DAVIS: Then tood off to Saint John. . .

MR. HUSE: A good example of Harold Everyman Urban Canada. We recorded churchbells, the hum of neon lights in restaurants — too bad this isn't the World Smellscape, because Saint John stinks. We got the shift whistle in the biggest shipyard in Saint John, and promptly took off for southern New Brunswick.

MR. DAVIS: St. Stephen's where the oldest candy factory in Canada exists, but that was one of the few times we were refused a tour. Everyone had gone hunting, there was a shortage of labour and no one to take us around, so we had to satisfy ourselves with a carillon in the town, the sound of an old clock in the

roominghouse where we stayed that night, and beat it again back north, heading for Quebec, to Fredericton. . .

MR. HUSE: In the middle of New Brunswick, where, inland, we found ourselves recording the chimes of the cathedral.



Boat-building on the Baie des Chaleurs, New Brunswick.

MR. DAVIS: Our next stop was a shipbuilding community on the Baie des Chaleurs where we recorded a large metal fishing boat being built, huge . . .

MR. HUSE: BONG!

MR. DAVIS: Hammering sounds. Compare that with Lunenburg. We moved on, hurrying now towards Quebec and towards Percé.

MR. HUSE: Situated on the most easterly tip of the famed Gaspé Peninsula: seagulls, seawash, the bells of Percé. We spoke with Father Racine about the sailors who sailed with Jacques Cartier, who are buried in the churchyard there. We recorded those churchbells. After a sample of the seawash by the fishing pier and a discourse on the history, we headed west again, in the general direction of Quebec City.

MR. DAVIS: This was the start of our solid driving back home. Up until then we'd meandered almost leisurely around the Maritimes. But now we started back from Percé. We managed to pick up some good and interesting sounds of the wind around midnight blowing through the pine trees and the . . .

MR. HUSE: Deciduous trees. . .

MR. DAVIS: And fields, south of a little town called Trois Pistoles. We took the ferry the next day to the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and not long after that were in Quebec City concentrating mainly on the sounds of churchbells, and weren't disappointed.

MR. HUSE: Quebec City was also the site of another of our traffic samples. We had by this time fallen into the groove of developing an array of scenes among which traffic was one. Wind was another, water was another . . .

MR. DAVIS: Dialect.

MR. HUSE: Radio samples, and. . .

MR. DAVIS: Signals such as horns and whistles were another, and ambience recordings: the sound of wilderness away from urban centres, samples taken in the national and provincial parks away from the centres of activity.

MR. HUSE: And trains, that singular linking device which has connected the west with the east of Canada.

MR. DAVIS: We continued our water theme with a recording of Montmorency Falls, near Quebec City, and a soundmark in its own right. The cataract and the bells: predominant signals of Quebec City. We spent our weekend recording noon sounds, the various churches chiming the time, the gun blasting out noon, and nine at night, the horses clip-clopping along the streets at any hour. The best bell recording we got was an accident, recorded during one of our traffic samples when we happened to be under the steeple of the basilica in Quebec City. In Montreal we took only one recording, and that was of the traffic at St. Lawrence and Sherbrooke streets at rush hour. We moved on to Ottawa. . .

MR. HUSE: Where we recorded the noon bells from the Peace tower of the Parliament buildings, as well as the noon gun.

MR. DAVIS: The Peace tower we did in two takes: one from the outside and one from the interior of the tower.

MR. HUSE: We recorded a shopping mall. . .

MR. DAVIS: The first street in Canada to be turned into a mall, and, of course, they have Moozak playing sweet saccharine melodies . . .

MR. HUSE: A soundslick that coats the shoppers as they hustle from store to store with a glistening. . .

MR. DAVIS: Glint in their eyes. . .

MR. HUSE: As it lacquers their ears and prevents them from hearing anything real.



Ringing the town bell, Saint
Andrew's, New Brunswick.

MR. DAVIS: From Ottawa to Trenton and the celebration of Ontario Hallowe'en. From freaky house to freaky house.

MR. HUSE: "Let's go to that freaky house over there." "Oh, let's go to this freaky house over here."

MR. DAVIS: Then Toronto, the armpit of Canada: construction noise, subways . . .

MR. HUSE: Hockey night in Canada, streetcars. . .

MR. DAVIS: Out of the city. We stopped off at the southwestern Ontario community of Ayr, where we recorded the sound of corn being harvested in the snow . . .

MR. HUSE: An old printing press. . .

MR. DAVIS: A pool game. . .

MR. HUSE: Squeaky floors in a southern Ontario mansion. . .

MR. DAVIS: The pub in the hotel, a shuffleboard game there, the Mennonite market. . .

MR. HUSE: In Kitchener.

MR. DAVIS: We began the long swing back over the Great Lakes, back to the West Coast. Time was running out and we decided to pick up whatever material we could along the lines of the themes we'd developed so far.

MR. HUSE: On a westerly course we decided to make one large swing north in search of wilderness which we hoped to find in the northern central part of Algonquin Park. Wilderness ambience is not easy to find in the modern world. Everywhere, the sound of the automobile pervades and even in large provincial parks such as Algonquin Park we still had to take pains to pick a recording site that was away from such things as logging roads or sawmills.

MR. DAVIS: We concentrated on the water in the park, and the elemental sound of wind. Our technique was to sit in the car with the microphones pointing out the window for upwards of twenty minutes at a time remaining motionless enough that the low, subtle ambience noises we were recording weren't interrupted by such things as breathing . . .

MR. HUSE: Stomach gurgles, clicks and squeaks of gloved hands on the stereo handset which held the two mikes . . .

MR. DAVIS: The cooling-down sounds of the automobile itself: the engine clicks and contractions.

MR. HUSE: Whenever possible we tried to record outside the car to avoid the presence of the ambience and resonance of the interior of the car itself. But the sensitivity of our AKG condenser microphones to wind and moisture was a constant problem, and often we were forced to record from the car. As we moved west off the Canadian Shield and onto the prairies our orientation became more and more the Trans-Canada Highway, whereas earlier we had been travelling mostly on secondary roads. Often when the highway passed by industrial plants we would stop and take short samplings of the continuous rumbling and screech and whine of heavy industry.

MR. DAVIS: With the material gathered before in Alberta we felt we had a good sampling of the detail of the prairie soundscape, so what we were after this time were the more general kinds of punctuation marks such as church bells . . .

MR. HUSE: And the train whistles which we had been told by people before on the prairies were one of the main sounds that they could recall and still listen to in small prairie towns.

MR. DAVIS: Another keynote sound of the prairies is the humming telephone lines and we managed to pick a good example of a very interesting power-line hum on a secondary highway not far from the main Trans-Canada road. . .

MR. HUSE: In Manitoba.

MR. DAVIS: That was where we heard our first snowmobile, by Lake Winnipeg, and this began a new . . .

MR. HUSE: Seasonal sound change.

MR. DAVIS: As November rolled on more and more of these sounds came our way.

MR. HUSE: Before we left Manitoba we managed to record a fire burning at a dump, another isolated sound way out in the middle of a field. This was a continuation of the fire theme started for us on this trip at a gas burn-off in Alberta; we had picked up a roadside fire burning in Algonquin Park. . .

MR. DAVIS: And the very heavy flame in the Sydney steel plant blast furnace, a manmade flame but still an elemental sound . . .

MR. HUSE: A heavy steel flame.

MR. DAVIS: On to Saskatchewan, and now churches, which are as obvious as grain elevators in the Prairies, caught our ears and we recorded several of these churches, even if they were only broadcasting Gordon McRae singing hymns off a record player or records of someone else's bells . . .

MR. HUSE: As we did in fact record in Hanley, Saskatchewan.

MR. DAVIS: In every main city we automatically took a five-minute traffic sample at the main intersection and again automatically in more or less the centre of each province took a sample of the local radio reception.

MR. HUSE: In the vein of Canadian dialects we noted marked differences all across the country; in Newfoundland the predominance of Irish inflections, in Quebec the French dialect and language, in



Weaving, Saint Andrew's, New Brunswick.

Manitoba we encountered the Russian and Ukranian element.

MR. DAVIS: The Russian and Ukranian churchbells were an interesting variation in the churchbells we took.

MR. HUSE: The strange modern harmonies in Portage-La-Prairie. One of the areas of our world soundscape study has always been events and entertainments. We had recorded Sunday morning churchbells, Saturday night in Toronto with the hockey game and Hallowe'en in both Quebec and Ontario, and. . .

MR. DAVIS: A lot of games all over the place.

MR. HUSE: We timed our journey to arrive in Regina the night before Armistice Day and we took a room on the main square where the cenotaph was, and the next morning we recorded the entire service, which was punctuated throughout with the sounds of cannons being fired from the distant headquarters of the RCMP and the military detachments.

MR. DAVIS: During the two minutes of silence in the lobby of the Hotel Saskatchewan the Moozak played on.

MR. HUSE: After a lengthy nocturnal solo by a snowmobile and traffic samples in the cities of Regina and Saskatoon we re-entered Alberta on our way to Calgary. We recorded more of our own vehicle driving, as we had done periodically across the country. We were hitting winter weather by this time and frequently passed cars in the ditch, watched them slide off, do a very slow ballet as they left the road. The snow and sleet on the road and windshield punctuated these recordings of our car travelling.

MR. DAVIS: To the foothills of the Rockies with a morning's stop in Calgary where we taped the chimes of Central United Church and some pneumatic drills directly across from the church which registered about 111 dB as an accompanying motif. That afternoon we took off for Banff National Park, where our poet friend Sid Marty lives off the main highway, on Lake Minnewanka, where we recorded . . .

MR. HUSE: Wind.

MR. DAVIS: Sid was living in a grove of dense. . .

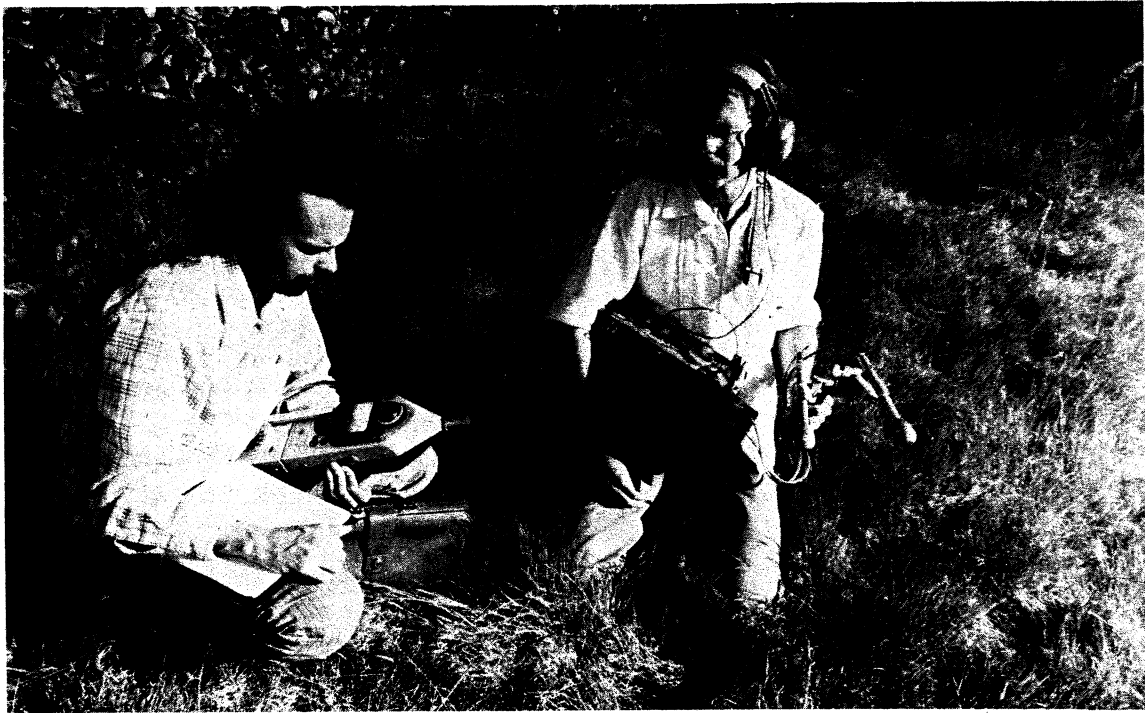
MR. HUSE: Lodgepole pine. . .

MR. DAVIS: A fine place to record him chopping wood because the clarity of the sound was emphasized against the background of the slowly sighing pine trees and was an interesting comparison to the chopping we had recorded back east on a farmyard on Cape Breton Island, in quite a different ambience. . .

MR. HUSE: Created by wind and deciduous trees, more of a rattling.

MR. DAVIS: Our next hop was over the Rocky Mountains. In the middle we took a radio sample . . .

MR. HUSE: At the Great Divide. While we were still in the park we recorded some interesting wildlife sounds: elk and deer eating by the side of the road, punctuated by passing automobiles. After we recorded a stream forming part of the headwaters of the Columbia River, we travelled farther down the Columbia to



World Soundscape researchers Bruce Davis (left) and Peter Huse on a field recording assignment. The recording apparatus at right is complemented by sound level meter readings and other notes being taken at left.

Trail and culminated our industrial theme here by taking a lengthy tour through the large smelter . . .

MR. DAVIS: And culminated our river theme by taping the Columbia River as it flows past the smelter. . .

MR. HUSE: With the sound of the smelter rumbling. . .

MR. DAVIS: In the background.

MR. HUSE: In Trail we recorded curling as the last touch of our games and entertainments theme. . .

MR. DAVIS: And our last radio sample was in Trail – it consisted of a single radio station. . .

MR. HUSE: And our last shift whistle, which we recorded below the smelter.

MR. DAVIS: On the way to the coast we passed some men doing some blasting. We were able to catch the last blast on the recorder before they quit for the day.

MR. HUSE: So it could truly be said we ended the World Soundscape Canada Tour with a BANG!