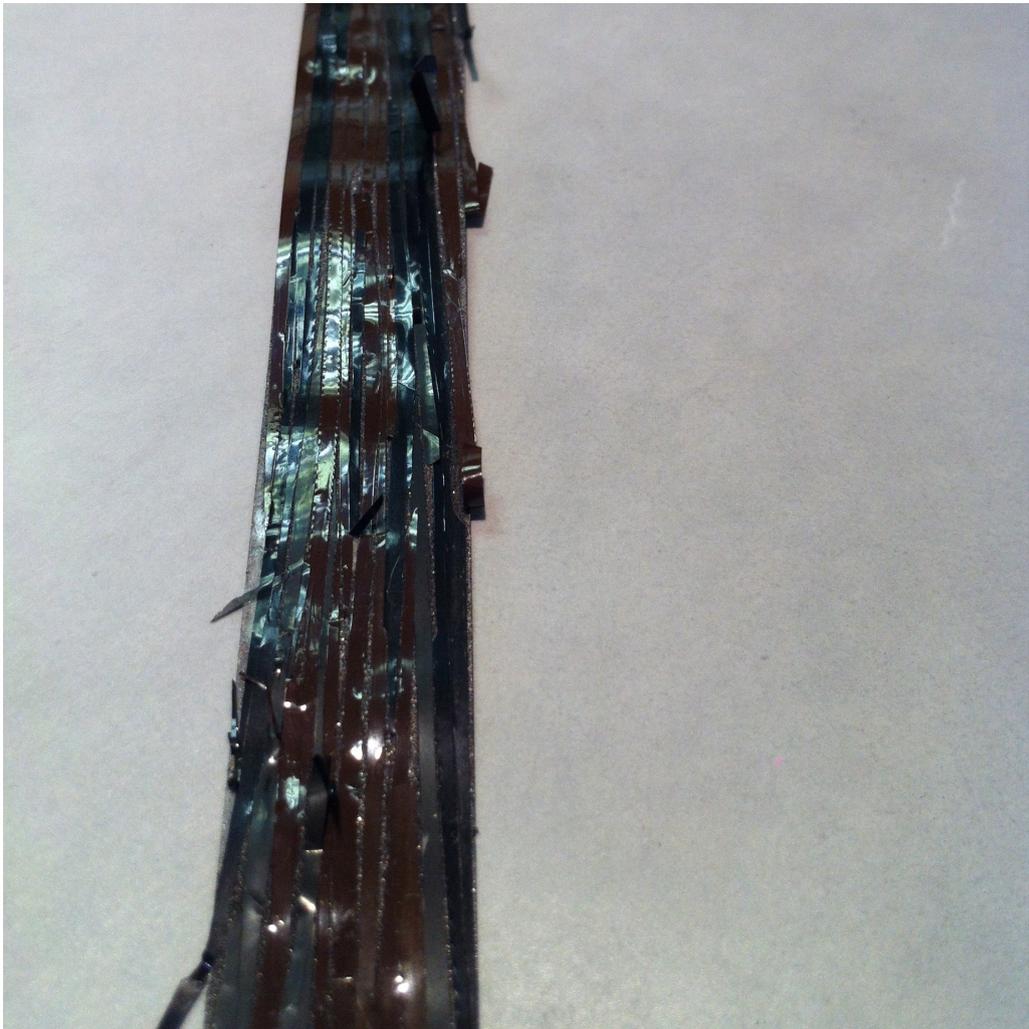


c.reider



tape loops

c.reider - tape loops (33.00)



Tape Loops was the result a few active months of experimentation during the Summer of 2014, using previously owned cassettes that I bought from a thrift store. This text will give some context and describe the methods used for this album.

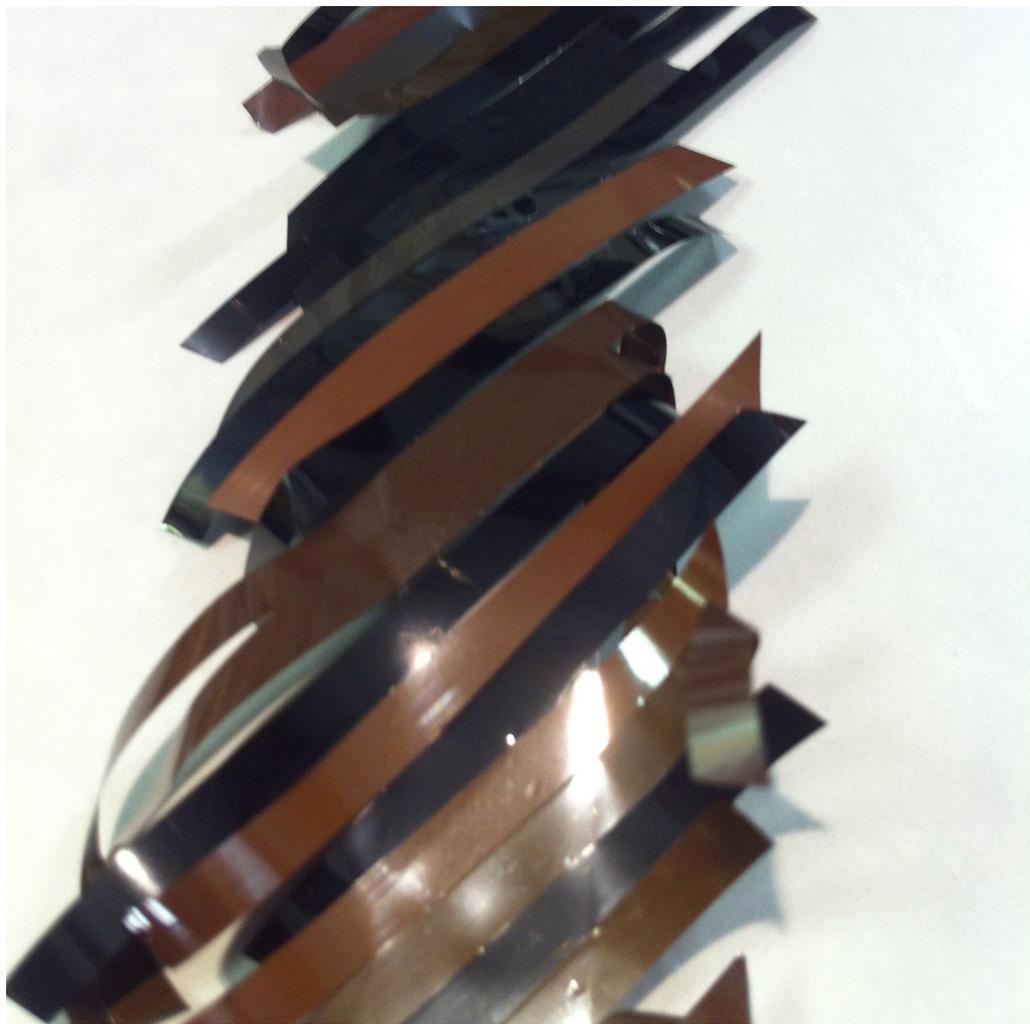
I remember first reading about the use of tape loops in music when I was in High School in the 1980s. I had read about Brian Eno and Robert Fripp's work with 'Frippertronics' and was fascinated by the idea of it. I lived in a small town without a record store, so I didn't really get to hear any of their work until later. I didn't own a reel-to-reel so I couldn't replicate Eno & Fripp's specific method, but I was very keen on wanting to make some loops. I honestly cannot remember how I arrived at the idea of making a tape loop by enclosing a circle of tape in a normal tape shell, whether someone told me about it or if I stumbled onto it for myself. Either possibility seems plausible. Once I learned how to do it, I used the technique on some of my tape releases in the 1990s. I haven't really used them much in the intervening years, due to the ease of digital editing.

One of my early projects bears mentioning as being foundational to the conceptualization of this one - in fact, it was my first cohesive musical project that saw release. It was titled GRIME: The Secret Content of the Abandoned Roadside Tapes. Work on it began in 1989 and it was completed and released in 1991. That project involved asking the good people of the mail art network to send me any tape they found disembodied and abandoned anywhere (usually along roadways.) I asked, and by golly they responded! Hundreds of people mailed me little strands of tape, which I spliced together using common transparent tape. This created a collage music that was a fragmented and degraded cross-stylistic snapshot of what music was popular during that time period. Given the relative rarity of music on tape

today, I don't often see tape fluttering in the wind beside the roads the way I did back then, but it was a very common sight in the 80s and 90s. I always guessed people threw tapes out their car windows while driving, and I always wondered why they did that.

At any rate, GRIME is worth mentioning because I learned how physical manipulation of tape can affect the sound. The experience of making so many thousands of tape splices for that project gave me a lot of confidence with tape manipulation (though I did get a bit burned out on it.) GRIME also led me to doing some experiments that relate directly to the work I've done on Tape Loops, such as doing a huge amount of splices per inch, and utilizing 1/4" 8-track tape, 2" 24 track tape, and video tape, and excising 1/8" strips so they could be played back on a standard tape player. Lastly, there were a few pieces of tape submitted to the GRIME project that were so utterly degraded from being exposed to the elements that the plastic would crumble in my hands, so I learned to use transparent tape as a new substrate to back up the old, crumbling, plastic filament. Many of the loops heard on Tape Loops use these techniques.

My early use of loops in the 1990s was pretty straightforward, just an unmolested strand of tape connected with one splice to make a circle to record new music onto. For this album, however, I used more exploratory methods. I wanted to see what kinds of sounds could result from the physical manipulation of tape and shell.



The source material I used during the Summer of 2014 was a small collection of used music and instructional tapes that I bought from thrift stores for 25 to 50 cents a piece. These were a complete hodgepodge of different styles of music, from subliminal relaxation tapes to Van Halen, Elvis, Michael Bolton, Eagles, Enya, Suzanne Ciani, Alabama and on and on. While working on Tape Loops with those sources, I also did some layering and relayering of the appropriated music using multiple tape players and recorders. Those recordings became the Not Subliminal album, released in early 2015 on the Control Valve netlabel.

For Tape Loops, I cracked open the shells of many of these thrift tapes and dumped the innards into a box, giving me a big squirming tangle of unspooled tape in various shades of brown and black surrounding the odd blue or red leader. From that box, I could grab a strand of tape at random and not have any idea what was on it.

Manipulation of the physical media, including destruction and reconstruction was the focus for this project. The following are specific methods I used for individual loops (some of these descriptions may make more sense on viewing the photos):

- I minced little sections of tape into dust, tiny fragments averaging 1/32" square. This tape dust was sprinkled onto an adhesive-tape substrate and cut down to fit in a tape shell. That method resulted in rumbling, noisy sounds such as those that begin and end Tape Loops.
- I sliced very thin strips varying from hair's width to 1/16" and placed them side-by-side (sometimes overlapping) on adhesive tape substrate.
- I laid many strands of tape one after another at angles differing from the direction that the loop would travel. These loops would look kind

of like a barbershop pole, but not sound like one.

- I made excisions of  $1/8$ "-wide strips out of  $1/4$ " 8-track tape and  $1/2$ " video tape. I cut in a curving line across the area of these wider strips, so that when the loop was played back it would wobble around unpredictably.
- I twisted several strands of tape together into a braid and pressed that onto adhesive tape.
- I pulled out the erasing magnet from a handheld tape recorder and recorded sound-on-sound through the lo-fidelity little microphone onto one loop for many revolutions.

Some of my experiments involved extending the length of the loop inside the shell. When making a loop housed in a standard tape shell, the filament can't be too slack or too tight. If it's too slack, it will get caught in the playback mechanism resulting in the tape being "eaten" (is that how they say it outside of the US?) If too tight the loop just won't play back. Normally, I would loop the tape around the two tape guide rollers and the two reels inside the re-used tape shells, requiring a strand of tape 9.125 inches in length. That would result in a loop that comes back to the splice point every 5 seconds when played back at the normal speed of 1.875 inches per second. The physical barriers inside the shell dictate the length of the loop. To shorten or lengthen a loop one has to remove or provide more barriers around which the tape will pass. I found that if there were a bunch of new barriers inside the shell, the tape makes a turn at each one (imagine a serpentine fan belt in a car,) meaning more length can fit. More length equals more time. To add barriers, I drilled holes through one side of the cassette shell, and pressed through pieces of PTFE Teflon rod to give me pivot points around which to guide the tape. The most complicated of my pivot-point alterations had the

tape traveling around nine different points resulting in a tape length of 19 inches that looped every 10 seconds.

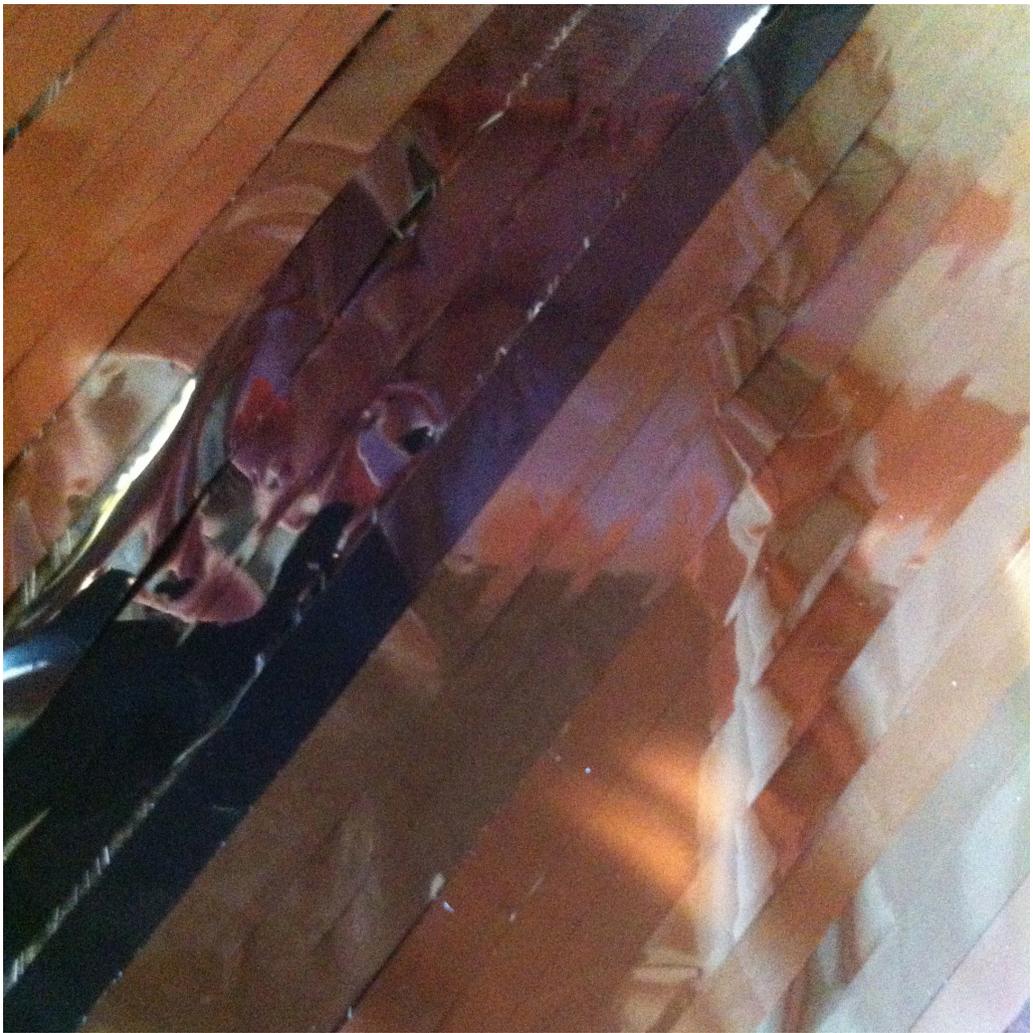
As with most techniques I use in my sound practice, the process of these modifications were easy to do in terms of technique, but they did require some amount of patience and mindfulness. I hope others will use some of these techniques to make some cool sounds, let me know if you do.

C. Reider, 2015



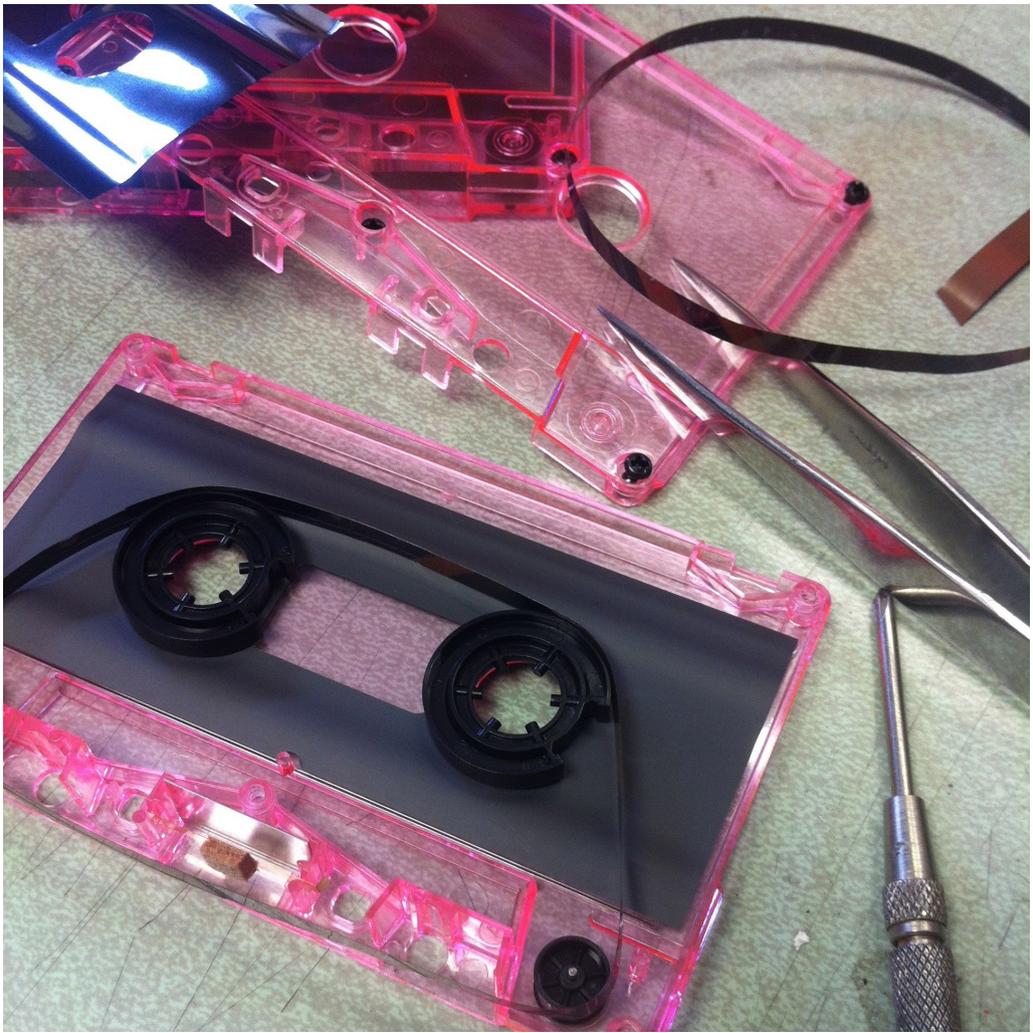
A note about the limited edition of 20 unique loops made for this album release:

I rubbed graphite powder over the finished loops so that any exposed adhesive should not gum up the playback head. I have never experienced any tape player damage from using my loops, but if concerned, a lesser tape player might be used. These loops were made with common transparent adhesive tape serving as substrate and for splicing. While the adhesive tape I am using is of a higher quality than some other common brands, I cannot attest to the longevity of that material. It is conceivable that the adhesive may decay or liquefy over time. If retaining the sound for a long time is important, I might suggest making a digital transfer. Then again, digital archives are as susceptible to decay as anything else. The 20 loop tapes are each completely individual and unique, and I have not kept a copy of any of them. They are licensed CC-BY, so you can feel free to use them in your own sound project if you wish, as long as you give proper attribution.



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