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Duo Hymn for Her lives, travels and records in a 16-foot trailer

By Walter Tunis Contributing Music Writer

We all know the adage that the family that plays together stays together. But does that also apply when the family plays, works, lives, travels and records together in an enclosed space approximately 16 feet long?

In the case of Hymn for Her, the answer is yes. The rustic Americana duo, which performs in Frankfort on Thursday, currently calls a 1961 Airstream Bambi trailer home. The members — multiinstrumentalists and vocalists Lucy Tight and Wayne Waxing — work and live out of the Airstream with their 3-year-old daughter, their dog and, when touring is in full swing, Waxing's brother, who doubles as a nanny. "It's 16 feet of pure love and fun," Tight said with a laugh.

It's more than that, really. The Airstream also was a recording studio for Hymn for Her's new album, *Lucy and Wayne and the Amairican Stream*. The duo set up makeshift recording equipment during a recent cross-country tour, and they cut songs in whatever location during whatever free time was available. Sometimes they would record at a campground. Other times, it would be someone's driveway.

"We were at a campsite at Malibu when we decided to start recording," Tight said. "Then a friend at Venice Beach helped us record a couple of songs. That was the test. So as we traveled and toured from the West Coast to the East, we just kept recording during stops along the way. That's how we put together the entire album."

If it sounds as if Tight and Waxing had to lug around an arsenal of recording equipment, think again. They set up much in the same way they would for a performance, with Tight playing a three-stringed cigar box/broom handle guitar. The device boasts two regular guitar strings and a single bass string, allowing Tight to, in effect, play lead, rhythm and bass guitar simultaneously. Waxing plays kick drum with his feet while his fingers work a guitar or a banjo. Often, he also blows into a harmonica that hangs on his neck.

"Being 16 feet, the Airstream seemed really small, even with our recording gear," Tight said. "It was kind of hard to get in and maneuver around. But it made for a nice, tight sound. I think the new recording captured exactly what we do."

The music itself has as an understandably folkish foundation, even as elements of country and blues develop. The *Amairican Stream* tune *Fiddlestix*, which is fueled by Waxing's loose-limbed banjo lead, falls into those categories. But *Montana* and *Thursday* rock things up considerably, thanks to the slide-induced charge that Tight often creates on her 3-stringed instrument.

"A lot of people who might be in another room when we play and then walk in to check us out usually say, 'I can't believe there are only two people at work.' They go, 'I thought there was a four-piece band in here.' That happens all the time.

"The music requires 100 percent focus, though, when we're playing, Our minds can't be somewhere else. I've been in other bands where I've played drums or I've played acoustic guitar. Here we pretty much have to cover everything. Add in the fact that we sing a lot of harmonies, and it becomes a pretty full sound."

That sound is enhanced all the more by the mix Jim Diamond provides on *Amairican Stream*. But then, Diamond knows his way around two-member bands. He was responsible for mixing the debut album by The White Stripes.

"Jim was working at this bar in Detroit where he was recording a show where we were the opener," Tight said. "So he recorded our show, too. From there we struck up a friendship. So when the album was complete, we gave him a call and drove back to Detroit. The record became everything we hoped for."

But perhaps the most obvious question about the gypsylike existence that Tight, Waxing, their daughter (whose name Tight requested not to be printed) and their dog is: How do you work, live and travel in a portable home 16 feet long and, well, not kill one another?

"Well, we have to get our workouts in," Tight said. "I definitely have to work out every day, whether it's going for a run or a bike ride or doing some hard-core yoga. And we take care of ourselves on the road, eat right and try to get enough sleep. All of that stuff is important when you're traveling. Other than that, we just get along."