

I began listening to Craig fifteen years ago, when I moved to New York. As his music had a big influence on me as both pianist and composer, I was thrilled when he agreed to play on my last album, Duopoly. That project captured — in real time, with no editing, mixing or overdubbing — eight duets with artists with whom I'd never recorded. For Craig, I brought in a new composition of mine called "Fox Fire," a heavily-notated and through-composed piece exploring a series of evolving harmonies that rhythmically bounced between pianos. I suggested using the material as a springboard rather than a restrictive form so that we could focus on improvisation and interaction. From the moment we started playing, I felt instantly transported and free within the music, and had the sense we could go anywhere. There was a feeling of deep listening, a dynamic sense of push and pull, and yet it strangely felt like a conversation we'd been having for years.

My producer, David Breskin, and engineer, Ron Saint Germain, heard this same connection from the control room. After the recording, David pulled us into a small room at the studio, and asked if we would be interested in further developing this duo. Sixteen months later, we had a dozen concerts planned across the U.S. and the very same, amazing Ron Saint Germain to travel with us and document every night with a light-weight, carry-on-ready system he'd designed to optimize recording two grand pianos in a diverse array of settings.

Craig and I each wrote a few pieces for the tour, and we added Carla Bley's "Sing Me Softly of The Blues" and Sun Ra's "Love in Outer Space." Each concert was different, in some cases radically so. As the tour went on, we often left out large sections of the compositions in favor of developing new, wholly improvised sections which became more and more expansive. For me, this was an optimal experience as an improviser and something that can only be accomplished when musicians play night after night, with structure but complete freedom, not knowing where things might go, exploring the unknown.

An occasional response of listeners during the tour was that Craig and I, in performance, were not so much two different musicians as one sort of shape-shifting organism. As such, we've decided to name the duo Octopus. We hope you enjoy listening!

--Kris Davis, Ossining, Sept. 23, 2017