

CARL CRAIG presents
VERSUS

Featuring Francesco Tristano
& Les Siècles orchestra conducted
by Francois-Xavier Roth

InFiné / Planet E
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For two hours on the evening of May 18th, 2008, Paris' **Cité de la Musique** resonated with a peculiar symphony, as iconoclastic conductor **François-Xavier Roth's Les Siècles** orchestra was possessed by the spirit of **Carl Craig**. Six seminal tracks handpicked from the techno master's futuristic synth-driven oeuvre, 'Desire', 'Dominas', 'At Les', 'Technology', 'Darkness' and 'Sandstorms' took on an extra dimension, alongside Steve Reich's 'City Life' and Bruno Mantovani's 'Streets' as complements to this singular musical family tree.

The evening's two standing ovations and four encores stand as proof that this Clash of the Titans was more than a mere mash-up. The momentous concert, during which the hedonism of club culture made a rare incursion into the hallowed grounds of serious music, merged the vocabularies and syntaxes of two genres that seem to be from their own faraway galaxies, but turn out to be more porous than expected, as they collide into one another. A bemused Carl Craig recalls that the "audience stopped just short of snapping their fingers to the rhythm. Everyone was literally on the verge of dancing, and François-Xavier was getting his first taste of that thrill that DJs get when they are playing for a room. We were like two kids rummaging through a candy shop – I toured him through my universe and he showed me his."

The *Cité de la Musique* project, christened 'Versus Live' is the first fully-fledged production to emerge from this byzantine web of events – and there are plenty more to come... It all started at the dawn of the 2000s, when the Detroit Symphony Orchestra approached Craig with a proposal to create symphonic adaptations of a few of his tracks. The cumbersome project would not see the light of day in this proposed form, but was taken over by **Alexandre Cazac**, co-founder and art direction of avant-electronic label InFiné.

Starting in 2004, Cazac set out to convince the Cité, but more importantly Roth, to respectively lend their space and unique talents to the adventure. With Les Siècles on board and the venue secured, the next step was to recruit a composer capable of transcribing Craig's machine music into partitions that could be read by a symphonic orchestra. Enter upstart pianist **Francesco Tristano**, whose recently-released *Not for Piano* album contained pianissimo covers of Detroit classics, alongside an Autechre adaptation. To provide both spiritual and rhythmic support, Carl called on

long-time friend and collaborator Moritz von Oswald, whose Maurizio project had given birth to the minimal movement by folding dub into techno.

47-year-old Carl Craig hails from Detroit, the city that served as a backdrop for the automotive industry's Golden Age – a petri dish for the development of all manner of soul, funk, rock, and eventually hip hop and techno. Craig started producing techno tracks in his early twenties, as the early 90s had crowned the genre's first batch of legends: Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson and Juan Atkins. Over the next two decades, the self-taught producer (also known under a coterie of aliases, among which 69, Paperclip People, Tres Demented, Psyche, and Innerzone Orchestra) and his label, **Planet-e**, released the requisite plethora of singles and remixes, in addition to a clutch of now-classic albums, such as *Landcruising*, *More Songs About Food and Revolutionary Arts*. Not content with being Detroit's ambassador in the techno universe, Craig would go on a number of diplomatic missions to faraway musical lands, like the time Innerzone Orchestra (itself a blueprint for drum'n'bass) mediated between jazz and electronic. He later created the Detroit Music Festival as a landing pad for international artists, and the 501-C3 Foundation, to initiate children to new forms of underground music. "I want to produce music that can be adapted just as well to clubs as to classical orchestras and jazz ensembles" he perfectly summarises.



The Versus project could therefore not be bound to a single stage performance. This work in progress, as a perfect encapsulation of InFiné's philosophy, would serve double duty as a platform for hybridization between genres, and as the label's ten-year anniversary gift to itself. From a first recording (2010, **Studios Davout**) the project became a full album containing two original compositions by Tristano, as well as symphonic versions of Craig classics, reworked and edited in the studio by the man himself with help from **Johann Pätzold** (aka Secret of Elements whose participation to an InFiné Explorer compilation brought him to Carl's attention) is in charge of hammering out the instrumental parts based on Tristano's arrangements.

The process reveals the timelessness of tracks such as 'At Les' and 'Darkness' through tense yet fragile new arrangements. The album is also a logical outgrowth in the Carl Craig discography, which is replete with reinventions of other artists' work (think LCD Soundsystem, Hot Chip, Caribou, and Yello), imaginary soundtracks to well-known films, and excursions into jazz and classical. With *Versus* this same modus operandi once again transforms Craig's mechanical dancefloor creations – from classic techno into modern classical.

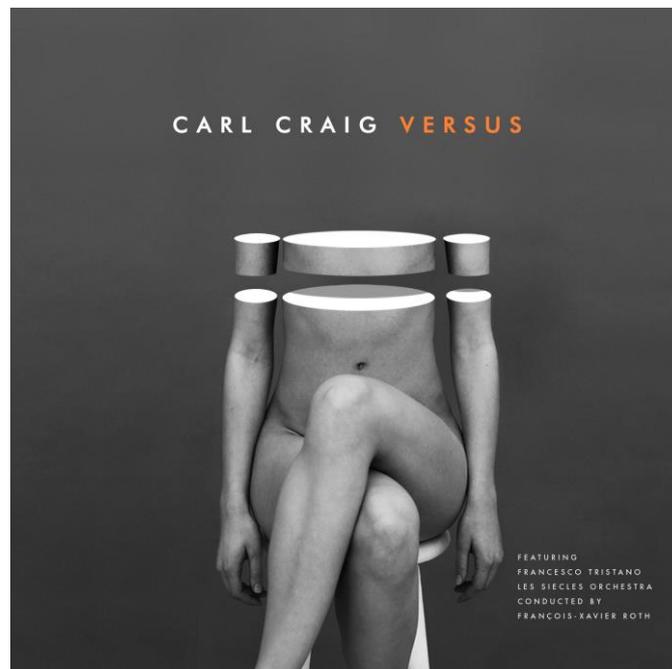
And *Versus* is already budding new branches, with the album's release set to coincide with the launch of the *Versus* Synthesizer Ensemble, a back-to-basics live performance featuring six synthesizers and a piano, as directed by Craig. Detroit's Movement Festival will be the tour's launching pad, allowing for the possible grafting of a full symphonic orchestra as time progresses. The *Versus* universe is thus one that is predicated on transforming, remixing and reinterpreting, on creating of new forms of expression, but also on breaking down hierarchies to confront genres and worlds that seem further apart than they really are. An optimistic, if not idealistic project, with a title that was perfectly chosen to echo Carl's mantra: "the point is to change the audience's perceptions, to surprise people, but also blow the dust off the conventional wisdom about music, its place in the world, and its audience – without demagoguery and with fresh and new arguments."

Quotes:

François-Xavier Roth: “There have been many electronic-classical collaborations, but this was a true musical meeting of the minds. We set our sights a bit higher than just dressing up orchestral arrangements with electronic flourishes, and tried to create a conversation between the genres.”

Francesco Tristano: “John Cage taught us long ago that music is just organised sound. A piano is, first and foremost, a machine, a source of sound that I am using in a way that is clearly influenced by the way techno is composed.”

Carl Craig: “I’m not sure that this is the logical extension of the tracks I compose in my home studio, but having my music transposed to other musical styles is something I’ve dreamed about, ever since I was a budding producer who wanted to be the next Quincy Jones.”



Production and electronics by Carl Craig
 Pre-production by Johann Pätzold
 Orchestra editing by Justin Messina
 Recording by Joachim Olaya
 Mastering by Christophe Chapelle at Sinetracks
 Moritz Von Oswald as Spiritual Advisor

Credits artwork/ Matthieu Bourel
 Credits photos/ Pierre Terdjman

TRACKLISTING:

CD / DIG

1. Enter the Darkness
2. Darkness
3. Coding Sequence
4. Sandstorms
5. At Les
6. You're Our Best and Only Friend
7. Desire
8. Barcelona Trist
9. The Melody
10. Domina
11. Error In Replication
12. C-Beams Glitter
13. Technology
14. Coding Cycle

VINYL

- A1_ Darkness
- A2_ Sandstorms
- B1_ At Les
- B2_ Desire
- C1_ Barcelona Trist
- C2_ Domina
- D1_ The Melody
- D2_ Technology

LIMITED EDITION VINYL, "Acoustic versions"

- E1_ At Les (acoustic version)
- E2_ Desire (acoustic Version)
- F1_ The Melody (acoustic Version)
- F2_ Sandstorms (acoustic Version)