

Ian William Craig - Centres (2016)

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1 *Contain (Astoria Version)* 10:04 2 *A Single Hope* 6:26 3 *Drifting To Void On All Sides* 4:14 4 *The Nearness* 7:45 5 *Set To Lapse* 2:47 6 *Power Colour Spirit Animal* 6:28 7 *Arrive, Arrive* 2:39 8 *A Circle Without Having To Curve* 9:52 9 *An Ocean Only You Could See* 6:02 10 *Purpose (Is No Country)* 3:18 11 *It Need Not Be Hopeless* 4:21 12 *Innermost* 3:28 13 *Contain (Cedar Version)* 4:21 Ian William Craig - composer, performer Marek Joseph - drums (track 2)

After two well-received albums on Sean McCann's Recital label, Canadian composer Ian William Craig moved up to FatCat Records' neo-classical imprint 130701 for the release of his most ambitious statement to date, *Centres*. As with his previous recordings, Craig employs obsolete, faulty tape machines, layering his operatic vocals in decaying static. *Centres* is significantly more polished, with some clearer sonic elements and a few compositions that push closer to traditional song structures (especially "A Single Hope," which even features drums), but it's still as otherworldly as his previous works. Basically, the increased production budget makes everything sound more. It's smoother and more accessible in some ways, yet it's also more abrasive and intense. The sounds are fuller and more haunting, with tape hiss layered so heavily that it often approximates torrential rainstorms. He begins "The Nearness" with a light accordion drone and singing, eventually building up thick, noisy distortion clouds before drifting back to the sounds of the accordion sputtering away off of a tape recorder on its last legs. "Power Colour Spirit Animal" opens with the sound of a heavily throbbing machine that sounds like it's giving off sparks and about to conk out, and this transforms into a lovely wash of bright yet diseased-sounding synths. Eventually this gets doused in sizzling static, and waves of vocals emerge from underneath. "Innermost" features faint vocals struggling to speak out from under the skipping tape loops and organ drone. Some songs consist entirely of Craig's multi-tracked vocals, either floating in effects as on the breathtaking "Set to Lapse" or more straightforward as on the graceful hymn "Purpose (Is No Country)." "A Circle Without Having to Curve" (one of two ten-minute tracks on the album) might be Craig's darkest composition to date, evoking imagery of a city ravaged by a hurricane through chilling vocal drones and swarms of Fennesz-esque processing, and eventually meeting a sudden end. The album ends with a stripped-back acoustic guitar version of opening piece "Contain," captured by a wire

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recorder so it sounds sepia-toned but not hissy or blurry. Taking Craig's already distinctive, powerful sound to extremes, Centres is another truly remarkable work. ---Paul Simpson, AllMusic Review

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