

Voices From The Lake

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate running time: 90 mins, no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Martin Aston sits down with Voices From The Lake's Donato Dozzy and Neel to shed light on their collaborative works to date, and the conception behind their latest ground-breaking ambient techno album.

'A love letter to slow, concentrated listening,' declared Resident Advisor when the dance music bible voted the self-titled debut by Italian duo Voices From The Lake the Best Album of 2012. On the tenth anniversary of Donato Dozzy and Neel's masterpiece of ambient techno, the album is being reissued, and to celebrate, they are performing it live for only the second time. The first was the Sunday headline slot at Japan's Labyrinth festival in 2011, for which the album was expressly created.

'We were maturing our own vision of sound, alone and then together, when Neel suggested we play our stuff on stage,' recalls Dozzy. 'During our preparations, we accidentally wrote an album! We think it's one of the most important records we have made, and it had a big resonance with an audience.'

With aliases already in place – Dozzy and Neel were born respectively Donato Scaramuzzi and Guiseppe Tillieci – their collaboration took the name Voices From The Lake from a shared connection with water. Both grew up on the coast: Dozzy in Saboudia between Rome and Naples and Neel in Curinga in the south-west region of Calabria. They met when Neel was only 17, after he moved to Rome and caught a Dozzy DJ set. They began co-hosting private parties in Saboudia, by a lake. When technical issues thwarted Neel's solo DJ set in honour of Dozzy's marriage, he created one at home, and christened it Voices From The Lake. 'From there, I had that image in my head,' says Dozzy. 'The Labyrinth festival has a beautiful lake and river too.'

Labyrinth was also set in a forest, 'which gave me a precise image for the sound,' says Dozzy. 'Trees, skies, stars, a perfect sound system.'

On one hand, the album has a rural feel, a soundtrack to those dark, twinkling skies at Labyrinth, but it also feels urban, as if the listener is gliding in a car, under glowing streetlights. For an album created 'accidentally,' it still seems to follow what Resident Advisor described as, 'an unmistakable narrative arc, leading us through a carefully paced sequence of scenes, almost like some kind of wordless, abstract musical.'

What most reviews projected – no doubt encouraged by the aquatic association of the duo's name – was an 'underwater' quality to the sound, which Dozzy and Neel are happy to acknowledge. 'The sound is floating,' says Neel. 'To put it in a technical and scientific way, sound runs faster through water than air, but you don't understand the direction that it's coming from - which I think is reflected in our music.'

Before their collaboration, Dozzy and Neel were already respected individual creators, albeit more in the field of minimalist techno before Dozzy released his more ambient-leaning debut album K in 2010. Dozzy – the senior and more prolific of the pair – had been releasing records since 2004 whilst Neel started in 2011 with Voices From The Lake's first collaboration, the *Silent Drops* EP, a tauter, eerier experience than the subsequent album but no less an immersive experience, simultaneously relaxing and restless.

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Dozzy and Neel reached this point through different routes. Dozzy cites the impact of Italy's experimental composer Franco Battiato before a full conversion to electronica triggered by UK duo Future Sound of London, after which he backtracked to FSOL influences Tangerine Dream and Brian Eno. For Neel, growing up in a small village in the south, 'not much went on, not even a record shop,' only the wildly eclectic jukebox in his grandfather's bar. Over time, he discovered Pink Floyd, the Alan Parsons Project and Tangerine Dream, whilst an older friend encouraged Neel to DJ.

Spinning discs on stage is one skill; playing your own music live using banks of analogue and digital equipment is something else entirely. The duo has taken live performance a stage further, by taking what Dozzy calls, 'a more cosmic attitude. We have both developed enough knowledge to improvise from scratch, creating every time a unique experience. Three minutes before we play, we don't even know where to start from. At the Barbican, we will be, in a sense, remixing the album.'

One of those spontaneous adventures was captured on the second Voices From The Lake album, Live at Maxxi (2015), whilst they have also released EPs such as Velo Di Maya, Secondo Tempo and Quarto Freddo, the last in 2020. But they have scaled back the live sets, 'because we took a break for our own careers,' says Dozzy. 'But we do miss playing live. We used to fly somewhere every month.'

Before the Barbican, Voices From The Lake are playing Berlin's Trebor 31 Festival in August. Might there even be a new VFTL album in the works? 'Spoiler alert!,' Neel laughs. 'Maybe next year.'

For now, we have the reissued debut album to savour, and this rare live performance, a chance to dive deep into this, 'love letter to slow, concentrated listening,' in the plush ambient surrounds of the Barbican; it promises to be a very special occasion.

In support is Grand River & Marco Ciceri present FOG – a live audio-visual piece described as a journey between the comfortable feeling of the known and the uncomfortable exploration of the limits of one's incomprehension. Grand River (who records for Dozzy and Neel's label Spazio Disponibile) is Berlin-based, Dutch-Italian composer and sound designer Aimée Portioli, who is joined by visual and media artist Marco Ciceri.

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