Bio information: **ACCORDO DEI CONTRARI**
Title: *UR–* (Cuneiform Rune 489)
Format: CD / DIGITAL
www.cuneiformrecords.com
FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / FUSION / PROGRESSIVE ROCK**

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Leading up to Its Fifth Studio Album
ACCORDO DEI CONTRARI
Had One Simple Yet Ambitious Goal:
To Make Music That Was
"Original, Challenging, and Beautiful at the Same Time"

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By that measure, *UR-* is a resonant success [—and an impressive introduction to North American listeners]. Laced with sky-soaring melodies, complex polyrhythms, and dark riffage, the Bologna-based art-rock ensemble's latest music – released in the band's 20th year – invokes elements of the musical past while sounding distinctly Italian, undeniably sophisticated, and utterly new.

One obvious touchstone for **Accordo dei Contrari** is the ecstatic energy of the Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds of Fire*. In fact, the title of *UR-*'s second track, "Così respirano gli incendi del tempo", even makes a veiled allusion to the pioneering fusion ensemble's masterwork; it translates as "This is how the fires of time breathe". The musical connection is even more pronounced, at least with the episodic work's opening passage, in which **Marco Marzo Maracas**'s chiming guitar and guest musician **Alessandro Bonetti**'s assertive violin invoke some of Mahavishnu's signature sounds. But the piece quickly pirouettes through an evolving series of musical landscapes. Drummer **Cristian Franchi**—whom leader and primary composer **Giovanni Parmeggiani** credits with "a special ear for both rhythm and melody, which enables him to understand the most complex musical accents"—soon drops out, while rippling piano arpeggios introduce a stately melody that slowly builds to a near-classical apex. After that**,** the band changes gears again and charges into a obsessive, hiccuping riff that supports a jazz-tinged improvisation from saxophonist **Stefano Radaelli.** Further developments follow.

Here, the musical story-telling is almost filmic—as it *often* is, according to Parmeggiani.

"My writing takes inspiration from imaginary scenes or dreams," the keyboardist explains, citing *UR-*'s opening track, "Tergeste", as an instance of how he might blend one of his mental movies with real-life experience. Named after the ancient name for the Adriatic port now known as Trieste, the piece follows a series of shifting viewpoints, beginning at sea.

"It describes the following situation," Parmeggiani says. "The fogs of the morning are thinning, and reveal to the sailor the profile of an irregular city. As the sailor approaches the city, its irregularity persists, but its buildings reveal the details and light colors of monumental facades. As he gets off the boat, the man enters narrow and curved streets which take him upwards. He looks for a center, a point to which all the lines converge; but he doesn't find it. And in this uphill and aimless run he occasionally turns back, without being able to recognize his path, and he is disturbed by vertigo, seeing the sea waves, agitated and foamy, from high."

This oceanic scenario, he adds, is purely imaginary—but it also mirrors his own first experience of Trieste, a city he found both beautiful and disorienting.

Listeners might have the same reaction to Accordo dei Contrari's music, and one way to approach it might be to construct your own fictional scenarios for each piece. Parmeggiani notes that while his band has never composed soundtracks for film or stage, he's often thought about that kind of work and would find it "very stimulating".

A further key to *Ur-* can be found in the structural elements Parmeggiani builds into his compositions. He's especially fond of basing certain passages—the new record's "Secolo breve" would be a good example—on a repeated keyboard ostinato, something he describes as both a considered nod towards minimal composition and a playful elaboration on the hard-rock riff.

These repetitive passages "serve to capture the listener's focus," he says. "But there is more. On a 'merely' musical level, they are evolving/developing patterns, somewhat obligatory channels which, on the one hand, lead the whole band to find the groove, and, on the other, contribute to setting up the structure of the whole song. On a more personal level, i.e. in my imagination, they describe a line which changes in direction and colour, curves, slows down and speeds up, suddenly stops, suddenly restarts, and takes a different orientation, crossing other lines. A bit like the arabesques that decorate the Arabian buildings. But they are not merely decorative, they are also structural. Taken together, they configure an elaborate but agile, almost fluid, structure."

Parmeggiani admits that as Accordo dei Contrari's bandleader and principal composer, he can occasionally "act like a tyrant". "I have the parts of each instrument already in my mind, and I give specific instructions to the other guys as for both melody and rhythm," he says. "They are very patient with me; one time, during rehearsals, Marco told me with an exasperated and somewhat reproachful tone, 'These are rhythms that only you feel, man!' Stefano is persuaded that I have Bulgarian ancestors because of the intricacy of the rhythms I conceive. Still, I also take into account what the other guys can give in terms of personal musical expression. So there are not only non-written solos for specific instruments within a song, but sometimes also improvised sections for the whole band, embodied in the written music."

Tyrant or not, Parmeggiani is also generous in his praise. He points out that Maracas's relatively open-ended pieces offer a beautiful counterpoint to his own more densely structured work, and says that Accordo dei Contrari's initial venture beyond its native Italy is well timed.

"The present lineup is the best group I have worked with so far," he enthuses. "Accordo dei Contrari now sounds more cohesive than ever, and it is a very solid band."

The evidence is here, on *Ur-*. Listen, and enjoy!

For more information on Accordo dei Contrari

accordodeicontrari.wordpress.com – www.facebook.com/AccordoDeiContrari – www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS (Digital [High-Resolution] images available on request.)