



Bio information: **UPSILON ACRUX**

Title: **RADIAN FUTURA** (Cuneiform Rune 284)

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / POST-PUNK

"...a stunning example of both virtuosity and clever composition...amazing, and amazingly consistent...." – All Music Guide

"Seldom is music so challenging also so easy to listen to." – Prefix

"...there's something revitalizing about hearing a band like Upsilon Acrux hitting their stride...." – Dusted

"There are plenty of bands out there trying hard to play music this technical, but very few succeed to the level that Upsilon Acrux does, and so effortlessly." – Exposé

Upsilon Acrux is among the best of the bands (**The Flying Luttenbachers, Hella, Orthrelm, Ahleuchatistas**) transforming math-rock's post-punk landscape, reinvigorating modern music's physically powerful, aggressive and speed-driven sound by infusing it with a compositional intensity and technical prowess long associated with various forms of metal (speedcore, technical metal, thrash) and progressive rock. In Upsilon Acrux's hands, this sonic fusion results in an explosive new music that is both exhilarating and abstract. While the band cites an encyclopedic array of influences – everything from progressive and math rock (**Magma, Henry Cow, King Crimson, Magma, Univers Zero, The Muffins, The Ruins, The Flying Luttenbachers, Zappa, Don Caballero**); Krautrock (**Faust, Neu!, Kraftwerk**); metal and death metal (**Morbid Angel, Necrophagist, Meshuggah**); the energy and spirituality of jazz and free jazz (**John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman** and **The Mahavishnu Orchestra**); and more (**This Heat, Nels Cline**) – its music is not derivative of, nor directly comparable to, any one band – or any pre-established genre. A tapestry of complex and hyperkinetic instrumental sound, Upsilon Acrux's music is composed of disparate elements, dissonance and unexpected time changes daringly interwoven with, and/or punctuated by, beautiful and accessible melodies. In the words of one of the guitarists/founders, **Paul Lai**:

"Those really obvious genre trappings, signature stuff from any genre – that's something I always wanted to stay away from. ...Ultimately, I'm looking for singularity. We strive for unprecedented music. It's not to impress or associate; really just to make unprecedented music."

Upsilon Acrux formed in 1997. Guitarist **Paul Lai** recalls that he and another guitarist, **Cameron Presley**, started the band in Vista, a town in rural California "45 minutes from San Diego but several world's away," and "out of a desperate need to play interesting music." Adding **Tom Cutler** and drummer **Jesse (Klecker) Appelhans** to their lineup, they plunged into serious practice and adopted the name **Upsilon Acrux** – a name without specific meaning, but which the band agrees increasingly "fit" the music. The band played its second live show in November 1997, on Klecker's 21st birthday.

The band's recorded debut was auspicious – the 10-minute instrumental "**Before The Pirates Came**" appeared as the opening track on a compilation of San Diego experimental music called **Trummerflora 2**, released by **Accretions** in 1998. Accretions released Upsilon Acrux's first full-length album, **In the Acrux of the Upsilon King**, in 1999. The debut CD's "inexhaustible musical invention" caught the attention of avant music's most prestigious magazine, *The Wire*, who praised the music as "free jazz and hardcore fusion dominated by an astonishing kind of Splatter Prog." Recorded by Lai, Klecker (Appelhans), Presley and **Muir Tennerstet** on bass, the 74-minute album was a "consistent assault on your regular rock instruments, accompanied by moogs and wacky sax" [*Audion*]. Upsilon Acrux released its 2nd CD that same year on **Win**. Titled **The Last Pirates of Upsilon** and featuring a new bass player, **Josh Quon**, it contained 70 minutes of dense, tightly woven original compositions that the *All Music Guide* called "both cerebral and physical at once." It won the admiration of **Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth)**, who proclaimed: "Upsilon Acrux is Amazzzzzzzzing."

By the time Upsilon Acrux's 3rd album, **Last Train Out**, came out on **Hactivist** in 2001, the now-trio of Lai, Appelhans and Presley had surgically sharpened its technical skills into "stop-on-a-dime tightness" and condensed its knotty compositions into 34 minutes of music "filled with enough ideas to easily flesh out a CD twice that length" [*AMG*]. Critics hailed **Last Train Out** as "the group's most dynamic release to date" [*Splendid*], and in a 4-star review, *AMG* noted that the album would "further establish Upsilon Acrux's complex, spastic, yet robotic style as something distinct from its varied predecessors – King Crimson, Massacre, Don Caballero, Henry Cow..." *Splendid* also noted that: "UA is no longer a band that *sounds* like Don Caballero or Ornette Coleman on crack; it has defined its own sub-genre of self-effacing guitar theatrics and unconventional drumming..." A stylistically mature work, **Last Train Out** marked Upsilon Acrux's coming-of-age.

Upsilon Acrux's 4th release, **Volucris Avis Dirae-Arum (Epicene/Planaria)**, featured a radical new lineup with two drummers. Lai and Appelhans had wanted to do a dual-drummer project since seeing King Crimson do one and being disappointed at "the promise unfulfilled." While Lai boasted that "we outdid King Crimson with our polyrhythms," *Dusted* noted that the CD "relies on more than these jaw-dropping pyrotechnics to be successful. ...It's Upsilon Acrux's songwriting that sets them apart, not flashy instrumentalism or fiery bombast." "Technically brilliant, rhythmically unbelievable, with just the right amount of melody," said *Disagreement*. "...**Volucris Avis Dirae-Arum** is the album Henry Cow might have recorded, had they been founded in this millennium, and their refusal to improvise plus the not too long running time make this a perfect entry point into modern complex music."

(This press release is continued on the next page...)

In 2006, the owner of Cuneiform ran across a video on Youtube of Upsilon performing their latest material and was utterly shellacked by it. Contacting the band, arrangements were made for Cuneiform to release their next album. This CD, *Galapagos Momentum*, was Upsilon Acrux's 5th release. In it, the band returns to a "more natural rock-band" lineup with one drummer – Appelhans, two guitarists, **Lai** and **Braden Miller**, as well as bass player **Eric Kiersnowski**. *Galapagos Momentum* features 41 minutes of aggressive, intricate, athletic and composed post-punk instrumental rock contained on 10 tracks.

Shortly after the release of *Galapagos Momentum*, Paul assembled a new version of the band featuring himself and **David Moeggenberg** on guitars, keyboardist **Phil Cobb**, bassist **Marty Sataman** and drummer **Chris Meszler** and Upsilon went on an extensive tour, traveling and performing all the way across the US to the east coast and back again over a 4 week period. Soon after, they were tapped to open for Mission of Burma at a music festival in Kalamazoo, MI, where they performed for 3,000 people.

Returning home, the band played local shows and festivals and began working on new music, which culminated in the band's sixth album, *Radian Futura*. *Radian Futura* is an album of explosive, intense and surprisingly beautiful, intricate, instrumental rock. Simultaneously physical and cerebral, challenging and melodic, *Radian Futura* is Upsilon Acrux's most accessible yet sophisticated release to date.

An active touring band, in addition to local shows in the southern California area, Upsilon Acrux will be heading to the east coast for 10 days of shows and then going to Europe for a full month of touring during the early fall.

WE ASKED PAUL LAI TO DISCUSS THE MAKING OF THE ALBUM AND HOW UPSILON ACRUX OPERATES:

How did you or the band compose this album?

"There were a couple of different ways we approach each album, there are songs that one person comes up with their parts and the rest of us contribute where needed. Then we all agree on length of parts and what needs to be done to polish the piece off. Specifically the first, fourth, fifth and sixth are mine and the second is Dave's and the third song is Phil's. The most difficult song was obviously the longest one, Transparent Seas. This took me 6 months from beginning to end, that's 6 months of half sleeping, half problem solving to attain what I personally think is the best thing Upsilon has ever done."

Did anything special influence the band in terms of the compositions or the recording of this album?

"For me the big thing was conversation..."

It may surprise people that playing on a grid of any kind is stupid to me, and almost completely useless because it's what we've done so much of before and there's so many people who are better at it than me. I'm not doing this music to compete, I do it because I have to. This shit keeps me up, it strains and tugs at me all the time. I've made a personal effort to keep the compositions more conversational. You know how people repeat musical phrases and usually complete them on even bars? Well when we speak to each other in any kind of conversation, the conversation can change on a word, any given word; a phrase can be interrupted and taken in a different direction because that word triggered something. I tried to use that logic in these songs, but not overtly, just knowing that if something felt right to me I would move and go on to the next sentence without completing the previous sentence. Additionally, sometimes the sentence doesn't start with the first phrase, it might start on the 3rd or 4th word because it felt more human to me. That to me was the breakthrough. It opened up phrases in a way that I think makes more human sense but perhaps less musical sense in that phrases don't start and finish where the listener might expect it to. Also *Transparent Seas* was an unbelievably hard song to write. If our other songs are short stories or long conversations, this was like writing *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* (Marcel Proust). And to keep it sane and make perfect sense at least to me and keep the emotional context without deviating was near impossible. I'm proud as shit of this album."

Where and how was Radian Futura recorded?

"We recorded this album at the same place as the last Cuneiform release, which is Infrasonic Studios in Alhambra, but this time we did it with **Pete Lyman** who we absolutely adore!! We recorded it one weekend a month over a 3 month span, then mixed.

We set everything up in the studio and did live takes and added flourishes as required. We were able to overdub a lot of sounds that I've always wanted but either didn't have the money or the sympathy of my band mates to attempt.

Pete Lyman really helped us out in ways more than any engineer has. We credit him with producing the album because he did in a lot of ways. He kept things open, got great sounds, kept us focused, and made it an easy and fun environment for staying creative. I don't think we've ever been less stressed as a band during the recording process. Plus he helped out tons in processing some sounds and some wacky ideas that I had, some of which we used, some of which he let me see that that they didn't work and to let them go."

What about the artwork?

"The front cover is **Rob Sato**, he's amazing and the back cover is **Allison Schulnik** who's also completely amazing!! They were both given the phrase "Radian Futura" and asked to do what they felt was right. We gave them no specifics or any direction; these two amazing paintings are what they came up with and the instant we saw them, we knew we had our cover(s). We are grateful to have such amazing artists making us look better, and better yet, giving the music inside some images that will stick.

Do you have any thoughts on the band's 'evolution' over the last dozen years?

"I think each incarnation of the band has done the best that it can. The goal has always been the same: make unprecedented music. There's a new band personnel on every record and I think the new blood always helps; it takes so much energy and dedication to do this kind of music because the rewards are like wounds of a well studied kung fu master... internal. With each album by Upsilon that has come out, a different version of the band then arrives on tour to play the material to people who swear the previous version of the band was the best. Well, things have changed – this is the band that wrote and recorded this album, and this is the band you will see this year. This is a first!!

For more information, please see:

www.meszlermedia.com/upsilonacrux

www.myspace.com/upsilonacrux

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS:



(Credit: Chris Meszler)



(Credit: Yen Lai)

Digital [High-Resolution / Color] versions of these images are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the “Press” section.
