



In the Hallowed tradition we write about the year that have passed, just a few things.

So, it has come to an end, this year and along with it this decade. That marks a dozen years for us here at Hallowed and lots has happened over these years, but I might take on the decade later so let's focus on 2019.

SIAMMEE
SUPERHUMAN



TEXT:: DANIEL KÄLLMALM
PHOTOS: PROMO PICS AND COVERS
PUBLISHED ON: 2020-01-06

In 2019 it was the highest amount of reviews since 2015 with little over 300 of them, 308 to be more precise and that is exactly thirty more than last year. The average rating was lower than last year with just under four as an average rating, there were more reviews towards

the ends of the scale with more twos, sixes, fives and threes than last year. Like last year we had no top-rated albums, and again it was not the most diligent year in terms of articles. We also had the highest number of visits to the site in our history after dropping a bit the year before.

And I think the conclusion of the year in music has to be that this year kind of reflects the part of the world I live in with much

of the music I have listened to has been looking in the rear-view mirror rather than forward. Examples of this are all the bland AOR-releases that we get, the extremely dull extreme metal albums we get and classic hard rock that sounds like it was made in the eighties. That kind of reflects our world where people dream of a past that never existed, they vote for neo-Nazis and other fascist groupings. Either I am get-

ting old or the world is getting mad with a joke as president for the US, lunatics in The Philippines, Brazil and Hungary to name just a few. People seem to vote away from freedom in favour of pathological liars, parties and politicians with dictatorial ambitions, but as seen in the world of art and music it would appear as though we don't want freedom – perhaps many of us likes to be told what to do and what to

think. I don't. Fortunately I am not alone, I may be in a minority but at least there is hope when we see people like Greta Thunberg or Arjen Lucassen and many others who are creatively brilliant or just brilliant in other ways.

As I am an optimist I don't really want to be negative but 2019 was not the best year in terms of art or humanity – not even here

in Sweden where the neo-Nazis called SD are growing in support. I attribute that to people's lack of critical thinking and fear of knowledge. It looks the same in most of the world so instead of caring about those fuckers, lets focus on the music that impressed this year. Old favourites like Coronatus, Eclipse, Rexoria, Cats in Space, Mob Rules, Helsingland Underground and many more along with some you



Devin Townsend seems happy to second place on our list for his album Empath

can read about in the lists made new strong albums. There were some positive surprises as well and here I can mention VA Rocks, Svarta Stugan, Jerkstore, The Riven and more along with some that I have in the top list that I will get back to at the end of this article.

So what about 2020 then? The first reviews I have been looking at will be positive, so I hope I get to listen to some really great albums next year. I guess Ayreon will release a live album/video

of his "Into the Electric Castle" show - I saw it in Tilburg, and it was great and the album itself is excellent so it could be a brilliant as an album. Other than that, I don't really know what to expect in terms of releases, but I hope for some brilliance and some new articles. I was thinking about trying to summarise this decade, but we will see about that and perhaps I

will attempt some smaller changes to the website as well, I have already made some minor changes that are not visible but will improve some loading aspects, but we will see about that too. I don't know if I will be able to review at the same pace as this year, but I will try to achieve about the same amount. And I really hope that more creative and original

music comes this year because all this copying and paint by numbers stuff is really tiring and sometimes this year I have almost lost hope and just felt that everything is sad an unoriginal in the world of music. I hope that changes to next year.

Outside of Hallowed I hope for a renaissance of tolerance and respect as well as cultural diversity and creativity. Hopefully we don't get to see any more Marvel crap or other superhero shit in the world of movies - I hate

that. At least I hope that movie studios change the focus to more original movies instead of boring derivatives, remakes, and other uncreative shit. And it would be great if Trump, Bolsonaro (or however the idiot spells his name), Åkesson and all the other Fascist politicians were tortured and sent somewhere to rot - I don't really like violence but people like that deserve it. It would also be great if people started to think about their carbon footprint, perhaps it isn't that important but the cli-

mate is warming and carbon dioxide have increased rapidly in the last hundred years so the logical choice would be to try and reduce our burning of fossil fuels - there is nothing to lose by doing it, but we might win something. If you think me and all the scientists are in error, look at Australia right now and the fact that we are looking at an increasing number of weather-related disasters - or look at Svalbard to name just a few. So, think before you buy stuff, don't vote for idiots and

don't watch Marvel crap in the movies, that would improve the world a little bit.

So, here comes my list of the best albums from 2019, from 20 to 1 with comments about the ten favourites.

20. *Season of Ghosts - A Leap of Faith*

19. *Ivory Tower - Stronger*

18. *Vanden Plas - The Ghost Experiment - Awakening*

17. *Dizzy Mystics - Wanderlost*

16. *Kafka - s/t*

15. *Mustan Kuun Lapset - Valo*

14. *Bent Knee - You Know What They Mean*

13. *Vintersea - Illuminated*

12. *Vanha - Melancholia*

11. *Mind Key - MKIII - Aliens in Wonderland*

10. *Birdeatsbaby - The World Conspires* ++ So The World Conspires when this album that doesn't fit in a genre box impresses, Birdseatsbaby really knows how to make something exciting.

9. *Dream Theater - Distance Over Time* ++ Ever dependable and always fresh, Dream Theater may not have made one of their greatest albums but Distance Over Time is still a great one.

8. *Eternal Storm - Come the Tide* ++ This was a surprise; Come the Tide is not only an excellent debut but it is an excellent showcase of what death metal can sound like if it is done by a band with a vision.

7. *Steve Hackett - At the Edge of Light* ++ Like Dream Theater it is a safe bet to go for Steve Hackett who reliably puts out great albums, this is one of his best.

6. *Sum 41 - Order in Decline* ++ I didn't think Sum 41 was capable of something like this, one of the biggest positive surprises in 2019.

5. *Freedom Call - M.E.T.A.L.* ++ Top five is opened by one of my favourite bands, Freedom Call that offers us a brilliant metal al-

bum topped by the excellent and wonderful vocals skills of Chris Bay.

4. *Lonely Robot - Under Stars* ++ The third and final part in Mitchell's wonderful story about his astronaut protagonist, and it is just as great as the previous two parts.

3. *IQ - Resistance* ++ The Intelligence Quotient is high and there is some original and fresh idea when IQ gives us their latest effort - perhaps it is resistance against the conservative waves that flow through our society nowadays.

2. *Devin Townsend - Empath* ++ Devin Townsend never seems to stagnate or be satisfied to be placed in a box; his Empath album is probably his best to date.

1. *Siamese - Super Human* ++ Siamese gives us something really super human, it would really be bananas not to get this one.

With that I say goodbye to 2019 and welcome 2020 - let's hope for a brilliant year in which we respect one another and get some fantastic new albums. And I will end by thanking all the labels, bands, promoters and readers that have helped make 2019 a fine year for Hallowed.

Happy New Year!



Lonely Robot's third album lived up to expectations

